

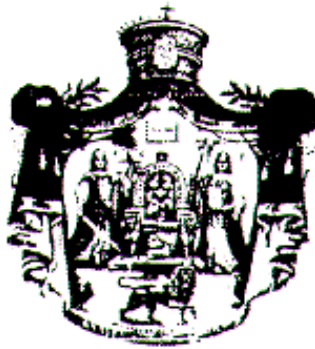
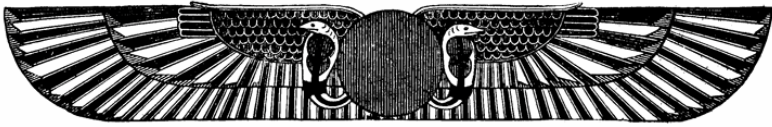
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እናቀርባለን።**

We present our many thanks to Our God-Father
and to Our King of Kings, to His Imperial
Majesty, HAILE SELASSIE I's Kingdome in the
Glorious name of *Iyesus Kristos*, Our Saviour –
Our Lord of Lords.

AMEN AND AMEN.



**THE BIBLE SOCIETY OF
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*Our mission is to bring good tidings, that publisheth peace;
that bringeth good tidings of good, that saith to Zion, Thy God
reigneth. – Isaiah 52:7*

Printed in the United States of America.

NAM ET IPSA SCIENTIA POTESTAS EST¹

«አውቀትም ደግሞ በራሱ ሥልጣን ሆኖ»²

¹ Often, translated as “Knowledge is power,” an aphorism borrowed and much repeated, based upon Francis Bacon’s original, “*for Knowledge too is itself power.*”

² Ras Iadonis Tafari’s accurate rendering, and translation into the AMHARIC, of the LATIN phrase favoured and quoted above by Sir Bacon.

בְּ.רֵאשִׁית יֵת

BEREISHIT

HEBREW BOOK OF THE GENESIS:

TORAH PORTION VOL.1,

Introduction & compilation

by

Ras Iadonis Tafari



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INTRODUCTORY NOTES

WE, THE BLACK JEWS of the world, along with the progressive Rastafari and collectively, the “Ethiopian-Hebrews,” i.e. *the Beta-Israel (or, Falashas³) of the West*, for more than a two to three millennia prior to the other “Jews”, the other ‘Israel⁴’; also have a written testimony to our Divine Heritage, possessing our own ancient religious, metaphysical and spiritual literature that endeavours to explain, clarify and explicate the revealed word of scripture, the Holy Bible. Amongst the other “Israel,” or European converts called ‘Jews,’ these writings have been expanded upon and preserved in voluminous commentaries to the Torah, the Hebrew Bible, and thus further divided into various categories according to content. Overall, these traditional oral interpretations, scriptural ordinances, were compiled by certain Rabbis about A.D. 200; according to Orthodox Judaism, Judaic Studies and Yeshiva Schooling , i.e. **TALMUD, MISHNA, GEMARA, HAGGADAH, HALACHA**, and **THE KABBALAH**, inclusive of so-called **THE ZOHAR** and other like and similar ‘Extra-biblical’ and interlinear writings by distinguished (European) Jewish Rabbis.

THE FOLLOWING COMPILATIONS of each Book of the Hebrew Bible’s Weekly Torah Portions are intended as a basic and preliminary introduction to modern “JUDAISM”, as it presently, that is to say, the current form based predominantly upon the prevailing European-Jewish, i.e. Germanic-Polish tradition, commentaries, interpretations and related studies, that

³ *Falashas*, from the Ge’ez/Ethiopic root **ፈለሰ** *fellese* – meaning “to separate, go away, depart, emigrate, to secede, split off (from)”; **ፍልሰተ ባቢሎን** *filsete babilon*, the Babylonian exile; **ፈለሰ** *felasi* – “an exile, alien, pilgrim.” The implication here, is that, namely the “lost sheep” in the Americas and the Caribbean are also “Falashas of the West,” or Exilist in the Trans-Ethiopic, falsely called “TransAtlantic,” Ocean Slave Trade of the 16th and 17th centuries.

⁴ Particularly, the Israelis, i.e. those who also call themselves ‘Jews,’ the ‘wild olive grafted in,’ (Romans 11:17, 24) namely the so-called Gypsies, Khazars or better known, ‘European Jews’ (Ashkenaz), et al, who history documents converted to a form of Judaism after 70 A.D. and the global dispersion and later captivity of the ethnically African, or ‘Black’ Hebrews; see Rudolph R. Winsor’s, *From Babylon to Timbuktu*.

collectively are derived from what is called the Babylonian Talmud. Also inclusive in these Wikipedia free encyclopedia references are certain Sephardic, or Spanish-Jewish alternative points-of-view to the Torah studies that are highly instructive, especially in our exploration of the wide diversity of possible interpretation that have, and greatly continues to define modern Judaism.

We, the BLACK JEWS, are very conscious and aware of the fact that certain Black Hebrews and Ethiopian Jews may rightly object to the preponderance of whitewashed art and images in this volume, the majority created by the “wild olive tree” (Romans 11:17, 24), European-Jews, Anglo-Europeans and Romanist/Catholic pseudonymous Christians, all that were grafted, over nearly 16 centuries, since the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., into our natural vine tree, i.e. the True and Ancient Judaism that was Black, Egyptian/Kamite or Ethiopic in its primary origination, racial ethnicity, linguistic composition and biblical revelation. This we hope to, and intend to, by the Almighty’s help, sufficiently prove in our related volumes containing our Ethiopian-Hebrew commentaries (Amos 9:7) and exegesis, mainly based upon the various writings and research, by authors such as Mr. Gerald Massey, and others, both past and present, Black and White, who wrote (or, whose works and documents were subsequently translated) in English. We, for our part, have also studied, translated and interpreted from many of the original documents and manuscripts in order to compose our own extensive research and reconstruction of the Ethiopic Torah (Orit) from several of the ancient Black Race’s biblical languages (i.e., Kamo-Semitic) of the antiquity: namely, Ancient Egyptian (Hieroglyphs), Ethiopic (Western Semitic), Ge’ez, Tigre, biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, Assyrian (Eastern Semitic), Sabaeen, Oromo (or, Galla) dialects and even archaic Amharic.

HOWEVER, we must be greater in spirit and broader in outlook and approach this sensitive subject matter by dealing with the facts on the ground and what is believed, or thought to be the case by the other Jews, and then present our case and the other side of this suppressed, neglected and avoided controversial story, our Black “Jewish” or African-based, and Ethiopian-

Hebrew story. **The views presented in this volume are not our own** and do not necessarily reflect the Ethiopian-Hebraic interpretation to the Old Testament, or Ethiopic Orit (Torah) in particular, but is being compiled into these five volumes: Bereishit, Shemot, Vayikra, Bamidbar, and Devarim (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) and printed separately, largely due to side per volume. Nevertheless, this study, and these volumes have been compiled by the Lion of Judah Society, and are designed for the Brotherhood of the Rastafari disciples and Ethiopian-Hebrew faithful to get better acquainted with the primary and prevailing opinions on Judaism and the interpretations of the Hebrew Bible.

THE TORAH PORTIONS IN THE FIRST BOOK, CALLED BEREISHIT (Hebrew Genesis) are composed 12 portions, including the first portion, or self-named parsha of **Bereishit · Noach · Lech-Lecha · Vayeira · Chayei Sarah · Toledot · Vayetze · Vayishlach · Vayeshev · Miketz · Vayigash · Vayechi.**

As ethnic, or “Black” Hebrews, and Afro-Israelities, we have several well-attested to, thoroughly researched and duly documented ancient Ethiopian books and manuscripts (MSS), that thankfully help serve as resource and reference materials, comprising what the present author and compiler has suitably named, the Ethiopic Talmud, many of these written in the Ge’ez language. These manuscripts assist us in forming our own Ethiopian-Hebrew and Black Jewish commentaries and exegeses, from a non-Eurocentric perspective. A few of the main Ethiopic Talmudic commentary source materials and titles are namely, but not strictly limited to, the following volumes:

The Queen of Sheba and Her only son Menyelek (Kebra Nagast), The Book of Jubilees, or Little Genesis (Kufale), the Book of Enoch (Ethiopic Henok), Gadla Adam (Conflict of Adam), Ancient Egyptian Wisdom & Kamite Mysteries (Gerald Massey’s A Book of the Beginnings, Natural Genesis, Ancient Egypt: Light of the World, and Lectures), Lefafa Sedeq: Bandlet of Righteousness, to only name a few of the many texts, that we, by the Grace of the Almighty, soon expect to compose our Ethiopian-Hebrew commentaries and

exegesis based upon both the “Wisdom of the Egyptians (or, Egypt)” (Acts 7:22) coupled with our Judeo-Christian Ethiopian “Divine Heritage”. Yet, this is still to come, and we hope and pray to the Most High for guidance, perseverance and life eternal. Amen.

ONE FINAL NOTE is in order here, namely: There are several smaller volumes, some books, many fragments and a host of rare manuscripts written in Ethiopic, some of them original compositions, and others allegedly based on, what foreign scholars consider to be, translations from Coptic (Sabaeen?), Hebrew, Syretic (Arabic?) and early Greek (koine?); thus, these are not listed and enumerated in detail here because of the numerous and contradictory names, codices and other cataloging systems used by various museums and libraries, namely in England, France, Germany and elsewhere that have arbitrarily assigned to these Ethiopic writings, dubiously misappropriated from Ethiopia (sometime referred to by Orientalists as ‘Abyssinia’) over the past four to five centuries, by conservative estimations. Due to the anonymity of these Ethiopic ancient, cultural, historical and biblical documents, coupled the lack of access, and therefore the availability, presently to verify and thus corroborate these records, we cannot confirm all of the details without further study, but will reference, and quote, where possible, from any and all available sources and resources in circulation.

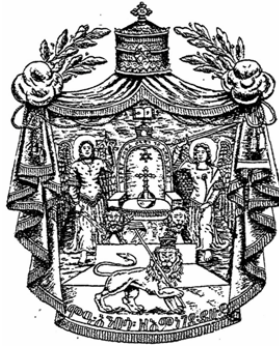
RAS IADONIS TAFARI ⁵

Chairman, LOJS

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & FINE-ARTS

c. 28th October, 2011

⁵ *Alius dictus, Debtera: Rasiadonis Tafari, A Sometime Scholar of LOJS' Black Christ College; H.I.M. HAILE SELASSIE I University in Exile [USA], An Ethiopian-Hebrew Scholar; and Keeper of the Department of Ethiopic & Amharic Antiquities in the Black Lion Museum, USA-ET.*



የዮሐንስ ራእይ ምዕራፍ ፮ ቁጥር ፮
«ከሽማግሌዎቹም አንዱ። አታልቅሰኝ እነሆ፥ ከይሁዳ ነገድ
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አለኝ።»

REVELATION CHAPTER 5, VERSE 5
“And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the
Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath
prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals
thereof.”

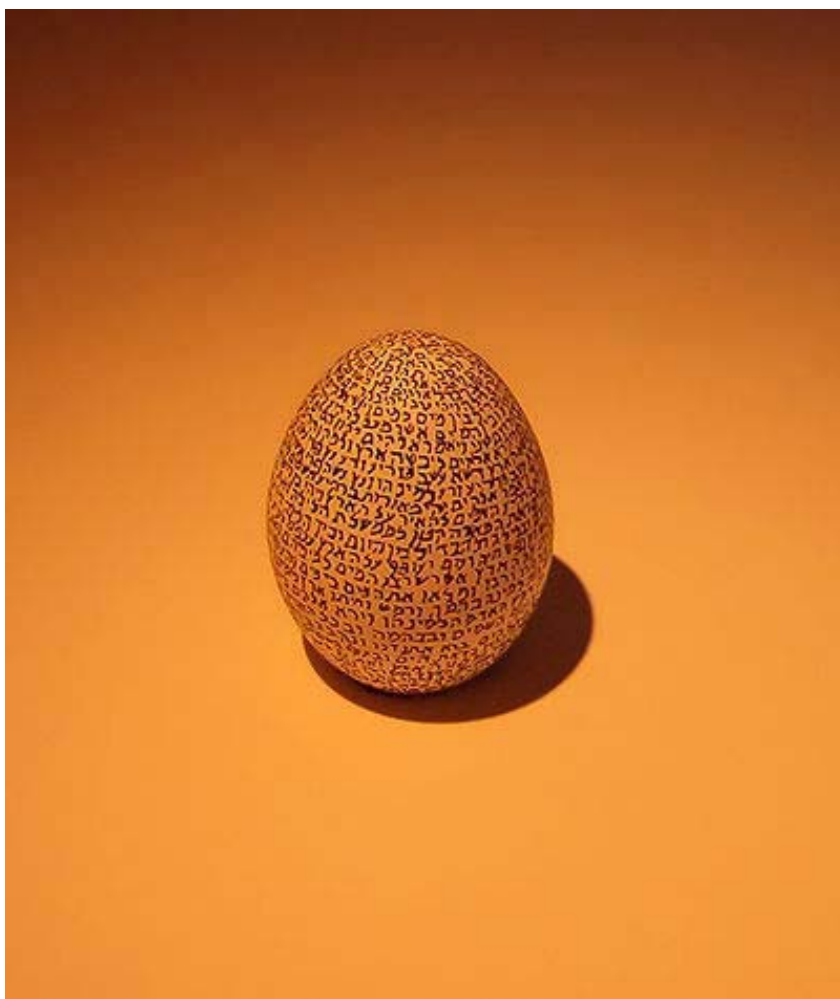
Bereishit (parsha)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Jump to: [navigation](#), [search](#)

Bereishit, **Bereshit**, **Bereishis**, **B'reshith**, **Beresheet**, or **Bereshees** (בְּרֵאשִׁית — [Hebrew](#) for “in beginning,” the [first word](#) in the parshah) is the first [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#). The parshah consists of [Genesis 1:1–6:8](#). [Jews](#) read it on the first [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in October. Jews also read the beginning part of the parshah, [Genesis 1:1–2:3](#), as the second Torah reading for Simchat Torah, after reading the last parts of the [book of Deuteronomy](#), parshah [V'Zot HaBerachah](#), [Deuteronomy 33:1–34:12](#)

In the parshah, [God](#) creates the world, and [Adam](#) and [Eve](#). They commit the first sin, however, and God expels them from the [Garden of Eden](#). One of their sons, [Cain](#), becomes the first murderer by killing his brother Abel out of jealousy. Adam and Eve also have other children, whose descendants populate the Earth, but each generation becomes more and more degenerate until God, despairing, decides to destroy humanity. Only one man, [Noah](#), finds favor in the eyes of God.



The first chapter of Genesis written on an egg in the [Israel Museum](#).

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



Creation of Light (engraving by [Gustave Doré](#) from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) Creation

When God began [creation](#), the earth was unformed and void, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and God's wind swept over the water. ([Genesis 1:1:2](#))

God spoke and created in six days:

- First day: God separated light from darkness. ([Genesis 1:3–5](#))
- Second day: God separated the waters, creating sky. ([Genesis 1:6–8](#))

- Third day: God gathered the water below the sky, creating land and sea, and God caused vegetation to sprout from the land. ([Genesis 1:9–13](#))
- Fourth day: God set lights in the sky to separate days and years, creating the sun, the moon, and the stars. ([Genesis 1:14–19](#))
- Fifth day: God had the waters bring forth living creatures, and blessed them to be fruitful and multiply. ([Genesis 1:20–23](#))
- Sixth day: God had the earth bring forth living creatures, and made man in God’s image, male and female, giving man dominion over the animals and the earth, and blessed man to be fruitful and multiply. ([Genesis 1:24–28](#)) God gave vegetation to man and to the animals for food. ([Genesis 1:29–30](#))
- Seventh day: God ceased work and blessed the [seventh day](#), declaring it holy. ([Genesis 2:1–3](#))



[The Creation of Adam](#) (fresco circa 1509 by [Michelangelo](#) in the [Sistine Chapel](#))

[\[edit\]](#) The Garden of Eden

Before any shrub or grass had yet sprouted on earth, and before God had sent rain for the earth, a flow would well up from the ground to water the earth. ([Genesis 2:4–6](#)) God formed man from the dust, blew the breath of life into his nostrils, and made him a living being. ([Genesis 2:7](#)) God planted a garden in the east in Eden, caused to grow there every good and pleasing tree, and placed the [tree of life](#) and the [tree of knowledge of good and bad](#) in the middle of the garden. ([Genesis 2:8–9](#)) A river issued from Eden to water the garden, and then divided into four branches: the [Pishon](#), which winds through [Havilah](#), where the gold is; the [Gihon](#), which winds through [Cush](#); the [Tigris](#), which flows east of [Asshur](#); and the [Euphrates](#). ([Genesis 2:10–14](#)) God placed the man in the garden of Eden to till and tend it, and freed him to eat from every tree of the garden, except for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, warning that if the man ate of it, he would die. ([Genesis 2:15–17](#))



The Garden of Eden (1828 painting by [Thomas Cole](#))

Announcing that it was not good for man to be alone and that God would make for him a fitting helper, God formed out of the earth all the beasts and birds and brought them to the man to name. ([Genesis 2:18–19](#)) The man Adam named all the animals, but found no fitting helper. ([Genesis 2:20](#)) So God cast a deep sleep upon the man and took one of his ribs and fashioned it into a woman and brought her to the man. ([Genesis 2:21–22](#)) The man declared her bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, and called her woman. ([Genesis 2:23](#)) Thus a man leaves his parents and clings to his wife, so that they become one flesh. ([Genesis 2:24](#)) The man and the woman were naked, but felt no shame. ([Genesis 2:25](#))



The Fall of Man (16th Century painting by [Lucas Cranach the Elder](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Adam and Eve

The [serpent](#), the shrewdest of the beasts, asked the woman whether God had really forbidden her to eat any of the fruit in the garden. ([Genesis 3:1](#)) The woman replied that they could eat any fruit other than that of the tree in the middle of the garden, which God had warned them neither to eat nor to touch, on pain of death. ([Genesis 3:2–3](#)) The serpent told the woman that she would not die, but that as soon as she ate the fruit, her eyes would be opened and she would be like divine beings who knew good and bad. ([Genesis 3:4–4](#)) When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing in appearance, and desirable as a

source of wisdom, she ate some of its fruit and gave some to her husband to eat. ([Genesis 3:6](#)) Then their eyes were opened and they saw that they were naked; and they sewed themselves loincloths out of [fig](#) leaves. ([Genesis 3:7](#))



Adam and Eve Driven out of Eden (engraving by Gustave Doré from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

Hearing God move in the garden, they hid in the trees. ([Genesis 3:8](#)) God asked the man where he was. ([Genesis 3:9](#)) The man replied that he grew afraid when he heard God, and he hid because he was naked. ([Genesis 3:10](#)) God asked him who told him that he was naked and whether he had eaten the forbidden fruit. ([Genesis 3:11](#)) The man replied that the woman whom God put at his side gave him the fruit, and he ate. ([Genesis 3:12](#)) When God asked the woman what she had done, she replied that the

serpent duped her, and she ate. ([Genesis 3:13](#)) God cursed the serpent to crawl on its belly, to eat dirt, and to live in enmity with the woman and her offspring. ([Genesis 3:14–15](#)) God cursed the woman to bear children in pain, to desire her husband, and to be ruled by him. ([Genesis 3:16](#)) And God cursed Adam to toil to earn his food from the ground, which would sprout [thorns](#) and [thistles](#), until he returned to the ground from which he was taken. ([Genesis 3:17–19](#))

Adam named his wife Eve, because she was the mother to all. ([Genesis 3:20](#)) And God made skin garments to clothe Adam and Eve. ([Genesis 3:21](#))

Remarking that the man had become like God, knowing good and bad, God became concerned that he should also eat from the tree of life and live forever, so God banished him from the garden of Eden, to till the soil. ([Genesis 3:22–23](#)) God drove the man out, and stationed [cherubim](#) and a fiery ever-turning sword east of the garden to guard the tree of life. ([Genesis 3:24](#))



Death of Abel (engraving by Gustave Doré from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) Cain and Abel

Eve bore Cain and Abel, who became a [farmer](#) and a [shepherd](#) respectively. ([Genesis 4:1–2](#)) Cain brought God an offering from the fruit of the soil, and Abel brought the choicest of the firstlings of his flock. ([Genesis 4:3–4](#)) God paid heed to Abel and his offering, but not to Cain and his, distressing Cain. ([Genesis 4:4–5](#)) God asked Cain why he was distressed, because he had free will, and if he acted righteously, he would be happy, but if he didn't, [sin](#) crouched at the door. ([Genesis 4:6–7](#)) Cain spoke to Abel, and when they were in the field, Cain [killed](#) Abel. ([Genesis 4:8](#)) When God asked Cain where his brother was, Cain replied

that he did not know, asking if he was his brother's keeper. ([Genesis 4:9](#)) God asked Cain what he had done, as his brother's blood cried out to God from the ground. ([Genesis 4:10](#)) God cursed Cain to fail at farming and to become a ceaseless wanderer. ([Genesis 4:11–12](#)) Cain complained to God that his [punishment](#) was too great to bear, as anyone who met him might kill him. ([Genesis 4:14](#)) So God put a mark on Cain and promised to take sevenfold vengeance on anyone who would kill him. ([Genesis 4:15](#)) Cain left God's presence and settled in the [land of Nod](#), east of Eden. ([Genesis 4:16](#))

[[edit](#)] Lamech followed Cain

Cain had a son, Enoch, and founded a city, and naming it after Enoch. ([Genesis 4:16](#)) Enoch's great-great-grandson [Lamech](#) took two wives: [Adah](#) and Zillah. ([Genesis 4:17–19](#)) Adah bore Jabal, the ancestor of those who dwell in [rents](#) and amidst herds, and Jubal, the ancestor of all who play the [lyre](#) and the pipe. ([Genesis 4:20–21](#)) And Zillah bore Tubal-cain, who forged implements of [copper](#) and [iron](#). ([Genesis 4:22](#)) Lamech told his wives that he had slain a lad for bruising him, and that if Cain was avenged sevenfold, then Lamech should be avenged seventy-sevenfold. ([Genesis 4:23–24](#))



The Death of Adam (painting circa 1452–1466 by [Piero della Francesca](#))

[edit] Adam's line

Adam and Eve had a third son and named him [Seth](#), meaning “God has provided me with another offspring in place of Abel.” ([Genesis 4:25](#)) Seth had a son named Enosh, and then men began to invoke the Lord by name. ([Genesis 4:26](#)) After the birth of Seth, Adam had more sons and daughters, and lived a total of 930 years before he died. ([Genesis 5:4–5](#)) Adam's descendants and their lifespans were: Seth, 912 years; [Enosh](#), 905 years; [Kenan](#), 910 years; [Mahalalel](#), 895 years; and [Jared](#), 962 years. ([Genesis 5:6–20](#)) Jared's son [Enoch](#) walked with God 300 years, and when he reached age 365, God took him. ([Genesis 5:22–24](#)) Enoch's son [Methuselah](#) lived 969 years and his son Lamech lived 777 years. ([Genesis 5:21–31](#)) Lamech had a son Noah, saying that Noah would provide relief from their work and toil on the soil that God had cursed. ([Genesis 5:28–29](#)) When Noah had lived

500 years, he had three sons: [Shem](#), [Ham](#), and [Japheth](#). ([Genesis 5:32](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Wickedness among men

Divine beings admired and took wives from among the daughters of men, who bore the [Nephilim](#), heroes of old, men of renown.

([Genesis 6:2–4](#)) God set the days allowed to man at 120 years.

([Genesis 6:3](#)) God saw how great man's wickedness was and how man's every plan was evil, and God regretted making man and became saddened.

([Genesis 6:5–6](#)) God expressed an intention to blot men and animals from the earth, but Noah found God's

favor. ([Genesis 6:7–8](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Key words

Words used frequently in the parshah include:

- God, gods — 67 times ([Genesis 1:1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#) (2 times), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#) (2 times), [11](#), [12](#), [14](#), [16](#), [17](#), [18](#), [20](#), [21](#) (2 times), [22](#), [24](#), [25](#) (2 times), [26](#), [27](#) (2 times), [28](#) (2 times), [29](#), [31](#); [2:2](#), [3](#) (2 times), [4](#), [5](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [15](#), [16](#), [18](#), [19](#), [21](#), [22](#); [3:1](#) (2 times), [3](#), [5](#) (2 times), [8](#) (2 times), [9](#), [13](#), [14](#), [21](#), [22](#), [23](#); [4:25](#); [5:1](#) (2 times), [22](#), [24](#) (2 times); [6:2](#), [4](#).)



Ancient of Days (1794 etching and watercolor by [William Blake](#))

- man, men — 41 times ([Genesis 1:26, 27; 2:5, 7](#) (2 times), [8, 15, 16, 18, 19](#) (2 times), [20, 21, 22](#) (2 times), [23](#) (2 times), [24, 25; 3:8, 9, 12, 20, 22, 24; 4:1](#) (2 times), [23](#) (2 times), [26; 5:1; 6:1, 2, 3, 4](#) (3 times), [5, 6, 7](#) (2 times).)
- said — 37 times ([Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29; 2:18, 23; 3:1](#) (2 times), [2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13](#) (2 times), [14, 16, 17, 22; 4:1, 6, 9](#) (2 times), [10, 13, 15, 23; 6:3, 7](#).)
- Lord (the Name of God) — 36 times ([Genesis 2:4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22; 3:1, 8](#) (2 times), [9, 13, 14, 21, 22, 23; 4:1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 13, 15](#) (2 times), [16, 26; 5:29; 6:3, 5, 6, 7, 8](#).)

- day, days — 35 times ([Genesis 1:5](#) (2 times), [8](#), [13](#), [14](#) (2 times), [16](#), [18](#), [19](#), [23](#), [31](#); [2:2](#) (2 times), [3](#), [4](#), [17](#); [3:5](#), [8](#), [14](#), [17](#); [4:14](#); [5:1](#), [2](#), [4](#), [5](#), [8](#), [11](#), [14](#), [17](#), [20](#), [23](#), [27](#), [31](#); [6:3](#), [4](#).)
- begot — 31 times ([Genesis 4:18](#) (3 times); [5:3](#), [4](#) (2 times), [6](#), [7](#) (2 times), [9](#), [10](#) (2 times), [12](#), [13](#) (2 times), [15](#), [16](#) (2 times), [18](#), [19](#) (2 times), [21](#), [22](#) (2 times), [25](#), [26](#) (2 times), [28](#), [30](#) (2 times), [32](#).)
- years — 30 times ([Genesis 1:14](#); [5:3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#), [14](#), [15](#), [16](#), [17](#), [18](#), [19](#), [20](#), [21](#), [22](#), [23](#), [25](#), [26](#), [27](#), [28](#), [30](#), [31](#), [32](#); [6:3](#).)
- live, lived, living — 26 times ([Genesis 1:20](#), [21](#), [24](#), [28](#), [30](#); [2:7](#), [19](#), [20](#), [22](#); [5:3](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [9](#), [10](#), [12](#), [13](#), [15](#), [16](#), [18](#), [19](#), [21](#), [25](#), [26](#), [28](#), [30](#).)
- hundred — 25 times ([Genesis 5:3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [10](#), [11](#), [13](#), [14](#), [16](#), [17](#), [18](#), [19](#), [20](#), [22](#), [23](#), [25](#), [26](#), [27](#), [28](#), [30](#), [31](#), [32](#); [6:3](#).)
- eat, eaten — 20 times ([Genesis 2:16](#), [17](#) (2 times); [3:1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [5](#), [6](#) (2 times), [11](#) (2 times), [12](#), [13](#), [14](#), [17](#) (3 times), [18](#), [19](#), [22](#).)
- tree, trees — 20 times ([Genesis 1:11](#), [12](#), [29](#) (2 times); [2:9](#) (3 times), [16](#), [17](#); [3:1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [6](#) (2 times), [8](#), [11](#), [12](#), [17](#), [22](#), [24](#).)

- call, called — 17 times ([Genesis 1:5](#) (2 times), [8](#), [10](#) (2 times); [2:19](#) (2 times), [23](#); [3:9](#), [20](#); [4:17](#), [25](#), [26](#) (2 times); [5:2](#), [3](#), [29](#).)
- name, names — 17 times ([Genesis 2:11](#), [13](#), [14](#), [19](#), [20](#); [3:20](#); [4:17](#) (2 times), [19](#) (2 times), [21](#), [25](#), [26](#) (2 times); [5:2](#), [3](#), [29](#).)



The Body of Abel Found by Adam and Eve (watercolor by William Blake)

- Cain — 16 times ([Genesis 4:1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [5](#) (2 times), [6](#), [8](#) (2 times), [9](#), [13](#), [15](#) (2 times), [16](#), [17](#), [24](#), [25](#).)
- made — 16 times ([Genesis 1:7](#), [16](#), [25](#), [31](#); [2:2](#) (2 times), [3](#), [4](#), [9](#), [22](#); [3:1](#), [7](#), [21](#); [5:1](#); [6:6](#), [7](#).)
- good — 15 times ([Genesis 1:4](#), [10](#), [12](#), [18](#), [21](#), [25](#), [31](#); [2:9](#) (2 times), [12](#), [17](#), [18](#); [3:5](#), [6](#), [22](#).)

- ground — 15 times ([Genesis 1:25](#); [2:5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [9](#), [19](#); [3:17](#), [19](#), [23](#); [4:2](#), [3](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#); [5:29](#))
- let — 15 times ([Genesis 1:3](#), [6](#) (2 times), [9](#) (2 times), [11](#), [14](#) (2 times), [15](#), [20](#) (2 times), [22](#), [24](#), [26](#) (2 times).)
- garden — 13 times ([Genesis 2:8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [15](#), [16](#); [3:1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [8](#) (2 times), [10](#), [23](#), [24](#).)
- light, lights — 13 times ([Genesis 1:3](#) (2 times), [4](#) (2 times), [5](#), [14](#), [15](#) (2 times), [16](#) (3 times), [17](#), [18](#).)
- water, waters, watered — 13 times ([Genesis 1:2](#), [6](#) (3 times), [7](#) (2 times), [9](#), [10](#), [20](#), [21](#), [22](#); [2:6](#), [10](#).)
- daughters — 12 times ([Genesis 5:4](#), [7](#), [10](#), [13](#), [16](#), [19](#), [22](#), [26](#), [30](#); [6:1](#), [2](#), [4](#).)
- created — 11 times ([Genesis 1:1](#), [21](#), [27](#) (3 times); [2:3](#), [4](#); [5:1](#), [2](#) (2 times); [6:7](#))
- see, saw — 11 times ([Genesis 1:4](#), [10](#), [12](#), [18](#), [21](#), [25](#), [31](#); [2:19](#); [3:6](#); [6:2](#), [5](#).)
- woman — 11 times ([Genesis 2:22](#), [23](#); [3:1](#), [2](#), [4](#), [6](#), [12](#), [13](#) (2 times), [15](#), [16](#).)
- fruit, fruitful — 10 times ([Genesis 1:11](#) (2 times), [12](#), [22](#), [28](#), [29](#); [3:2](#), [3](#), [6](#); [4:3](#))
- Lamech — 10 times ([Genesis 4:18](#), [19](#), [23](#) (2 times), [24](#); [5:25](#), [26](#), [28](#), [30](#), [31](#).)

- Adam — 9 times ([Genesis 2:20](#); [3:17](#), [21](#); [4:25](#); [5:1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#).)

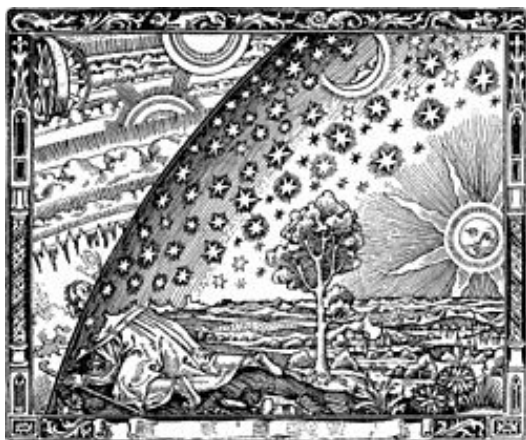


The Expulsion from Eden (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

[\[edit\]](#) In early nonrabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 2

The Book of [Jubilees](#) interpreted God’s warning to Adam in [Genesis 2:17](#) that “on the day that you eat of it you shall die” in the light of the words of [Psalm 90:4](#) that “a thousand years in [God’s] sight are but as yesterday,” noting that Adam died 70 years short of the 1000 years that would constitute one day in the testimony of the heavens. ([Jubilees 4:29–31](#); see also [Justin Martyr Dialogue with Trypho 81](#).) And the Books of 4 Ezra (or [2 Esdras](#)) and [2 Baruch](#) interpreted [Genesis 2:17](#) to teach that because Adam transgressed God’s commandment, God decreed death to Adam and his descendents for all time. ([4 Ezra 3:7](#); [2 Baruch 23:4](#).)



Rabbi Jonah taught not to investigate what was before
(illustration from [Camille Flammarion](#)'s 1888 *L'atmosphère: météorologie populaire*)

[[edit](#)] In classical rabbinic interpretation

[[edit](#)] Genesis chapter 1

ב ב



the Hebrew letter *bet*

Rabbi Jonah taught in the name of Rabbi Levi that the world was created with a letter [bet](#) (the first letter in [Genesis 1:1](#), which begins בְּרֵאשִׁית, *Bereishit bara Elohim*, “In the beginning God created”) because just as the letter *bet* is closed at

the sides but open in front, so one is not permitted to investigate what is above and what is below, what is before and what is behind. Similarly, [Bar Kappara](#) reinterpreted the words of [Deuteronomy 4:32](#) to say, “ask *not* of the days past, which were before you, since the day that God created man upon the earth,” teaching that one may speculate from the day that days were created, but one should not speculate on what was before that. And one may investigate from one end of heaven to the other, but one should not investigate what was before this world. ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 1:10.) Both [Rabbi Johanan](#) and [Resh Lakish](#) compared this to a human king who instructed his servants to build a great palace upon a dunghill. They built it for him. Thereafter, the king did not wish to hear mention of the dunghill. ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 16a.](#))



The First Day of Creation (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

A [midrash](#) (rabbinic commentary) explained that six things preceded the creation of the world: the [Torah](#) and the Throne of Glory were created, the creation of the [Patriarchs](#) was contemplated, the creation of [Israel](#) was contemplated, the creation of the [Temple in Jerusalem](#) was contemplated, and the name of the [Messiah](#) was contemplated, as well as repentance. (Genesis Rabbah 1:4.)



First Day of Creation (illustration from the 1493 [Nuremberg Chronicle](#))

Rab Zulra bar Tobiah said in the name of [Rab](#) that the world was created with ten things: (1) wisdom, (2) understanding, (3) reason, (4) strength, (5) rebuke, (6) might, (7) righteousness, (8) judgment, (9) loving-kindness, and (10) compassion. The [Gemara](#) cited verses to support Rab Zulra's proposition: wisdom and understanding, as [Proverbs 3:19](#) says, "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; and by understanding established the heavens"; reason, as [Proverbs 3:20](#) says, "By His reason the

depths were broken up”; strength and might, as [Psalm 65:7](#) says, “Who by Your strength sets fast the mountains, Who is girded about with might”; rebuke, as [Job 26:11](#) says, “The pillars of heaven were trembling, but they became astonished at His rebuke”; righteousness and judgment, as [Psalm 89:15](#) says, “Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of Your throne”; and loving-kindness and compassion, as [Psalm 25:6](#) says, “Remember, O Lord, Your compassions and Your mercies; for they have been from of old.” ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 12a.](#))

Rav Assi of Hozna'ah deduced from the words, “And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month,” in [Exodus 40:17](#) that the [Tabernacle](#) was erected on the first of [Nisan](#). With reference to this, a [Tanna](#) taught that the first of Nisan took ten crowns of distinction by virtue of the ten momentous events that occurred on that day. The first of Nisan was: (1) the first day of the Creation (as reported in [Genesis 1:1–5](#)), (2) the first day of the princes’ offerings (as reported in [Numbers 7:10–17](#)), (3) the first day for the priesthood to make the sacrificial offerings (as reported in [Leviticus 9:1–21](#)), (4) the first day for public sacrifice, (5) the first day for the descent of fire from Heaven (as reported in [Leviticus 9:24](#)), (6) the first for the priests’ eating of sacred food in the sacred area, (7) the first for the dwelling of the Shechinah in Israel (as implied by [Exodus 25:8](#)), (8) the first for the [Priestly Blessing](#) of Israel (as reported in [Leviticus 9:22](#), employing the blessing prescribed by [Numbers 6:22–27](#)), (9) the first for the prohibition of the [high places](#) (as stated in [Leviticus 17:3–4](#)), and (10) the first of the months of the

year (as instructed in [Exodus 12:2](#)). ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 87b.](#))



Second Day of Creation (illustration from the 1493 Nuremberg Chronicle)

The [Mishnah](#) taught that God created the world with ten Divine utterances. Noting that surely God could have created the world with one utterance, the Mishnah asks what we are meant to learn from this, replying, if God had created the world by a single utterance, men would think less of the world, and have less compunction about undoing God's creation. ([Mishnah Avot 5:1.](#))

Rabbi Johanan taught that the ten utterances with which God created the world account for the rule taught in a Baraita cited by Rabbi Shimi that no fewer than ten verses of the Torah should be read in the synagogue. The ten verses represent God's ten utterances. The Gemara explained that the ten utterances are indicated by the ten uses of "And [God] said" in [Genesis 1](#). To the objection that these words appear only nine times in [Genesis](#)

1, the Gemara responded that the words “In the beginning” also count as a creative utterance. For [Psalm 33:6](#) says, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth” (and thus one may learn that the heavens and earth were created by Divine utterance before the action of [Genesis 1:1](#) takes place). ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 21b.](#))



The Second Day of Creation (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

[Rab Judah](#) said in Rab’s name that ten things were created on the first day: (1) heaven, (2) earth, (3) chaos (תֹהוּ, *tobu*), (4) desolation (בֹהוּ, *bobu*), (5) light, (6) darkness, (7) wind, (8) water, (9) the length of a day, and (10) the length of a night. The Gemara cited verses to support Rab Judah’s proposition: heaven and earth, as [Genesis 1:1](#) says, “In the beginning God created heaven and earth”; *tobu* and *bobu*, as [Genesis 1:2](#) says, “and the earth was *tobu* and *bobu*”; darkness, as [Genesis 1:2](#) says, “and

darkness was upon the face of the deep; light, as [Genesis 1:3](#) says, “And God said, ‘Let there be light’”; wind and water, as [Genesis 1:2](#) says, “and the wind of God hovered over the face of the waters”; and the length of a day and the length of a night, as [Genesis 1:5](#) says, “And there was evening and there was morning, one day.” A [Baraita](#) taught that *tohu* (chaos) is a green line that encompasses the world, out of which darkness proceeds, as [Psalm 18:12](#) says, “He made darkness His hiding-place round about Him”; and *bohu* (desolation) means the slimy stones in the deep out of which the waters proceed, as [Isaiah 34:11](#) says, “He shall stretch over it the line of confusion (*tohu*) and the plummet of emptiness (*bohu*).” The Gemara questioned Rab Judah’s assertion that light was created on the first day, as [Genesis 1:16–17](#) reports that “God made the two great lights . . . and God set them in the firmament of the heaven,” and [Genesis 1:19](#) reports that God did so on the fourth day. The Gemara explained that the light of which Rab Judah taught was the light of which [Rabbi Eleazar](#) spoke when he said that by the light that God created on the first day, one could see from one end of the world to the other; but as soon as God saw the corrupt generations of [the Flood](#) and the Dispersion, God hid the light from them, as [Job 38:15](#) says, “But from the wicked their light is withheld.” Rather, God reserved the light of the first day for the righteous in the time to come, as [Genesis 1:4](#) says, “And God saw the light, that it was good.” The Gemara noted a dispute among the Tannaim over this interpretation. Rabbi Jacob agreed with the view that by the light that God created on the first day one could see from one end of the world to the other. But the Sages equated the light

created on the first day with the lights of which [Genesis 1:14](#) speaks, which God created on the first day, but placed in the heavens on the fourth day. ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 12a.](#))



The Third Day of Creation (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

Rab Judah taught that when God created the world, it went on expanding like two unraveling balls of thread, until God rebuked it and brought it to a standstill, as [Job 26:21](#) says, "The pillars of heaven were trembling, but they became astonished at His rebuke." Similarly, Resh Lakish taught that the words "I am God Almighty" (אֱלֹהֵי שַׁדַּי, *El Shaddai*) in [Genesis 35:11](#) mean, "I am He Who said to the world: 'Enough!'" (אֵל דַּי, *El Dai*). Resh Lakish taught that when God created the sea, it went on expanding, until God rebuked it and caused it to dry up, as [Nahum 1:4](#) says, "He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers." ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 12a.](#))



Third Day of Creation (illustration from the 1493 Nuremberg Chronicle)

The Rabbis reported in a Baraita that the [House of Shammai](#) taught that heaven was created first and the earth was created afterwards, as [Genesis 1:1](#) says, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” But the [House of Hillel](#) taught that the earth was created first and heaven was created afterwards, as [Genesis 2:4](#) says, “In the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven.” The House of Hillel faulted the House of Shammai for believing that one can build a house’s upper stories and afterwards builds the house, as [Amos 9:6](#) calls heaven God’s “upper chambers,” saying, “It is He Who builds His upper chambers in the heaven, and has founded His vault upon the earth.” The House of Shammai, in turn, faulted the House of Hillel for believing that a person builds a footstool first, and afterwards builds the throne, as [Isaiah 66:1](#) calls heaven God’s throne and the earth God’s footstool. But the Sages said that

God created both heaven and earth at the same time, as [Isaiah 48:13](#) says, “My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has spread out the heavens: When I call to them, they stand up together.” The House of Shammai and the House of Hillel, however, interpreted the word “together” in [Isaiah 48:13](#) to mean only that heaven and earth cannot be separated from each another. Resh Lakish reconciled the differing verses by positing that God created heaven first, and afterwards created the earth; but when God put them in place, God put the earth in place first, and afterwards put heaven in place. ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 12a.](#))

Rabbi Jose bar Hanina taught that “heaven” (שָׁמַיִם, *shamayim*) means “there is water” (*sham mayim*). A Baraita taught that it means “fire and water” (*eish u'mayim*), teaching that God brought fire and water together and mixed them to make the firmament. ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 12a.](#))



Fourth Day of Creation (illustration from the 1493 Nuremberg Chronicle)



The Fourth Day of Creation (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

Interpreting the words “God called the light (אֹר, *or*) day” in [Genesis 1:5](#), the Gemara hypothesized that *or* (אֹר) might thus be read to mean "daytime." The Gemara further hypothesized from its use in [Genesis 1:5](#) that *or* (אֹר) might be read to mean the time when light begins to appear — that is, daybreak. If so, then one would need to interpret the continuation of [Genesis 1:5](#), "and the darkness He called night," to teach that "night" (לַיְלָה, *lailah*) similarly must mean the advancing of darkness. But it is established (in [Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 2b](#)) that day continues until stars appear. The Gemara therefore concluded that when “God called the light” in [Genesis 1:5](#), God summoned the light and appointed it for duty by day, and similarly God

summoned the darkness and appointed it for duty by night.

([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 2a.](#))

The Rabbis taught in a Baraita that once Rabbi [Joshua ben Hananiah](#) was standing on a step on the [Temple Mount](#), and [Ben Zoma](#) (who was younger than Rabbi Joshua) saw him but did not stand up before him in respect. So Rabbi Joshua asked Ben Zoma what was up. Ben Zoma replied that he was staring at the space between the upper and the lower waters (described in [Genesis 1:6–7](#)). Ben Zoma said that there is only a bare three fingers' space between the upper and the lower waters. Ben Zoma reasoned that [Genesis 1:2](#) says, “And the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters,” implying a distance similar to that of a mother dove that hovers over her young without touching them. But Rabbi Joshua told his disciples that Ben Zoma was still outside the realm of understanding. Rabbi Joshua noted that [Genesis 1:2](#) says that “the spirit of God hovered over the face of the water” on the *first* day of Creation, but God divided the waters on the *second* day, as [Genesis 1:6–7](#) reports. (And thus the distance that God hovered above the waters need not be the distance between the upper and lower waters). The Gemara presented various views of how great the distance is between the upper and the lower waters. Rav [Aha bar Jacob](#) said that the distance was a hair's breadth. The Rabbis said that the distance was like that between the planks of a bridge. [Mar Zutra](#) (or some say [Rav Assi](#)) said that the distance was like that between two cloaks spread one over another. And others said that the distance

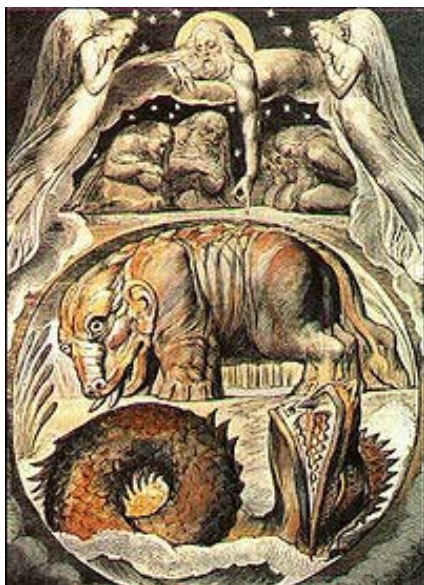
was like that between two cups nested one inside the other.

([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 15a.](#))



The Fifth Day of Creation (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

Rabbi Judah ben Pazi noted that a similar word appears in both [Genesis 1:6](#) — where רָקִיעַ, *rakya* is translated as “firmament” — and [Exodus 39:3](#) — where וַיִּרְקְּעוּ, *vayraku* is translated as “and they flattened.” He thus deduced from the usage in [Exodus 39:3](#) that [Genesis 1:6](#) taught that on the second day of creation, God spread the heavens flat like a cloth. ([Jerusalem Talmud](#) Berakhot 6a.) Or Rabbi Judah ben Simon deduced from [Exodus 39:3](#) that [Genesis 1:6](#) meant “let a lining be made for the firmament.” (Genesis Rabbah 4:2.)



Behemoth and Leviathan (watercolor by William Blake from his 1826 [*Illustrations of the Book of Job*](#))

A Baraita taught that the upper waters created in [Genesis 1:6–7](#) remain suspended by Divine command, and their fruit is the rainwater, and thus [Psalm 104:13](#) says: "The earth is full of the fruit of Your works." This view accords with that of [Rabbi Joshua](#). [Rabbi Eliezer](#), however, interpreted [Psalm 104:13](#) to refer to other handiwork of God. ([Babylonian Talmud Taanit 10a.](#))

Rabbi Johanan taught that the words “and God created the great sea-monsters” in [Genesis 1:21](#) referred to [Leviathan](#) the slant serpent and Leviathan the tortuous serpent, also referred to in [Isaiah 27:1](#) Rab Judah taught in the name of Rab that God created all living things in this world male and female, including Leviathan the slant serpent and Leviathan the tortuous serpent.

Had they mated with one another, they would have destroyed the world, so God castrated the male and killed the female, preserving it in salt for the righteous in the world to come, as reported in [Isaiah 27:1](#) when it says: “And he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.” Similarly, God also created male and female the “[Behemoth](#) upon a thousand hills” referred to in [Psalm 50:10](#). Had they mated, they also would have destroyed the world, so God castrated the male and cooled the female and preserved it for the righteous for the world to come. Rab Judah taught further in the name of Rab that when God wanted to create the world, God told the [angel](#) of the sea to open the angel’s mouth and swallow all the waters of the world. When the angel protested, God struck the angel dead, as reported in [Job 26:12](#), when it says: “He stirs up the sea with his power and by his understanding he smites through [Rahab](#).” Rabbi Isaac deduced from this that the name of the angel of the sea was Rahab, and had the waters not covered Rahab, no creature could have stood the smell. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 74b.](#))





The Sixth Day of Creation (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

Rabbi Johanan explained that [Genesis 1:26](#) uses the plural pronoun when God says, "Let us make man," to teach that God does nothing without consulting God's Heavenly Court of angels (thus instructing us in the proper conduct of humility among subordinates). ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 38b.](#))

Rabbi Eleazar read the words "since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven" in [Deuteronomy 4:32](#) to read, "from the day that God created Adam on earth and to the end of heaven." Thus Rabbi Eleazar read [Deuteronomy 4:32](#) to intimate that when God created Adam in [Genesis 1:26–27](#), Adam extended from the earth to the firmament. But as soon as Adam sinned, God placed God's hand upon Adam and diminished him, as [Psalm 139:5](#) says: "You have fashioned me after and before, and laid Your hand upon me." Similarly, Rab Judah in the name of Rab taught that when God created Adam in [Genesis 1:26–27](#), Adam extended from one end of the world to the other, reading [Deuteronomy 4:32](#) to read, "Since the day that God created man upon the earth, and from one end of heaven to the other." (And Rab Judah in the name of Rab also taught that as soon as Adam sinned, God placed God's hand upon Adam and diminished him.) The Gemara reconciled the interpretations of Rabbi Eleazar and Rab Judah in the name of Rab by concluding that the distance from the earth to the

firmament must equal the distance from one end of heaven to the other. ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 12a.](#))



Seventh Day of Creation (illustration from the 1493 Nuremberg Chronicle)

The Mishnah taught that in [Second Temple](#) times, Jews would acknowledge God's creation and read the verses of the creation story when representatives of the people would assemble (as what were called *ma'amadot*) to participate in sacrifices made in [Jerusalem](#) on their behalf. (Mishnah Megillah 3:6; [Babylonian Talmud Megillah 30b.](#)) The people of the delegation would fast four days during the week that they assembled. On the first day (Sunday), they would read [Genesis 1:1–8](#) On the second day, they would read [Genesis 1:6–13](#) On the third day, they would read [Genesis 1:9–19](#) On the fourth day, they would read [Genesis 1:14–23](#) On the fifth day, they would read [Genesis 1:20–31](#) And

on the sixth day, they would read [Genesis 1:24–2:3](#) (Mishnah Taanit 4:3; [Babylonian Talmud Taanit 26b.](#)) [Rabbi Ammi](#) taught that if had not been for the worship of these delegations, heaven and earth would not be firmly established, reading [Jeremiah 33:25](#) to say, “If it were not for My covenant [observed] day and night, I would not have established the statutes of heaven and earth.” And Rabbi Ammi cited [Genesis 15:8–9](#) to show that when Abraham asked God how Abraham would know that his descendants would inherit the Land notwithstanding their sins, God replied by calling on Abraham to sacrifice several animals. Rabbi Ammi then reported that Abraham asked God what would happen in times to come when there would be no Temple at which to offer sacrifices. Rabbi Ammi reported that God replied to Abraham that whenever Abraham’s descendents will read the sections of the Torah dealing with the sacrifices, God will account it as if they had brought the offerings, and forgive all their sins. ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 31b.](#))



The Sabbath (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

It was recorded in Rabbi [Joshua ben Levi](#)'s notebook that a person born on the first day of the week (Sunday) will lack one thing. The Gemara explained that the person will be either completely virtuous or completely wicked, because on that day (in [Genesis 1:3–5](#)) God created the extremes of light and darkness. A person born on the second day of the week (Monday) will be bad-tempered, because on that day (in [Genesis 1:6–7](#)) God divided the waters (and similarly division will exist between this person and others). A person born on the third day of the week (Tuesday) will be wealthy and promiscuous, because on that day (in [Genesis 1:11](#)) God created fast-growing herbs. A person born on the fourth day of the week (Wednesday) will be bright, because on that day (in [Genesis 1:16–17](#)) God set the luminaries in the sky. A person born on the fifth day of the week (Thursday) will practice kindness, because on that day (in [Genesis 1:21](#)) God created the fish and birds (who find their sustenance through God's kindness). A person born on the eve of the Sabbath (Friday) will be a seeker. [Rav Nahman bar Isaac](#) explained: a seeker after good deeds. A person born on the Sabbath (Saturday) will die on the Sabbath, because they had to desecrate the great day of the Sabbath on that person's account to attend to the birth. And Raba son of [Rav Shila](#) observed that this person shall be called a great and holy person. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 156a.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 2

[Raba](#) (or some say Rabbi Joshua ben Levi) taught that even a person who prays on the eve of the Sabbath must recite [Genesis 2:1–3](#), “And the heaven and the earth were finished . . .” (וַיֵּכֻלּוּ מִיָּמִים וְהָאָרֶץ, *va-yachulu hashamayim v’baaretz* . . .), for Rav [Hamnuna](#) taught that whoever prays on the eve of the Sabbath and recites “and the heaven and the earth were finished,” the Writ treats as though a partner with God in the Creation, for one may read *va-yachulu* (וַיֵּכֻלּוּ) — “and they were finished” — as *va-yekallu* — “and they finished.” Rabbi Eleazar taught that we know that speech is like action because [Psalm 33:6](#) says, “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made.” [Rav Hisda](#) said in [Mar Ukba's](#) name that when one prays on the eve of the Sabbath and recites “and the heaven and the earth were finished,” two ministering angels place their hands on the head of the person praying and say (in the words of [Isaiah 6:7](#)), “Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.” ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 119b](#).)





The Creation of Eve (1825 drawing by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld)

The Mishnah taught that God created humanity from one person in [Genesis 2:7](#) to teach that Providence considers one who destroys a single person as one who has destroyed an entire world, and Providence considers one who saves a single person as one who has saved an entire world. And God created humanity from one person for the sake of peace, so that none can say that their ancestry is greater than another's. And God created humanity from one person so that heretics cannot say that there are many gods who created several human souls. And God created humanity from one person to demonstrate God's greatness, for people stamp out many coins with one coin press and they all look alike, but God stamped each person with the seal of Adam, and not one of them is like another. Therefore, every person is obliged to say, "For my sake the world was created." ([Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 37a.](#))





Creation of Eve (marble bas-relief by [Lorenzo Maitani](#) on the [Orvieto Cathedral](#))

Rav Nahman bar Rav Hisda expounded on the words, “Then the Lord God formed (וַיִּצְרֶה, *wa-yitzzer*) man,” in [Genesis 2:7](#). Rav Nahman bar Rav Hisda taught that the word וַיִּצְרֶה, *wa-yitzzer* is written with two *yuds* (י) to show that God created people with two inclinations (*yetzerim*), one good and one evil. [Rav Nahman bar Isaac](#) demurred, arguing that according to this logic, animals, of which [Genesis 2:19](#) writes וַיִּצְרֶה, *wa-yitzzer* with a single *yud*, should have no evil inclination, but we see that they injure, bite, and kick, plainly evincing an evil inclination. Rather, Rabbi Simeon ben Pazzi explained that the two *yuds* by saying, “Woe is me because of my Creator (*yotzri*), woe is me because of my evil inclination (*yitzri*)!” Rabbi Simeon ben Pazzi thus indicated that the two *yuds* indicate the human condition, where God punishes us for giving in to our evil inclination, but our evil inclination tempts us when we try to resist. Alternatively, Rabbi Jeremiah ben Eleazar explained that the two *yuds* reflect that God created two countenances in the first man, one man and one woman, back to back, as [Psalm 139:5](#) says, “Behind and before have You formed me.” ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 61a.](#))

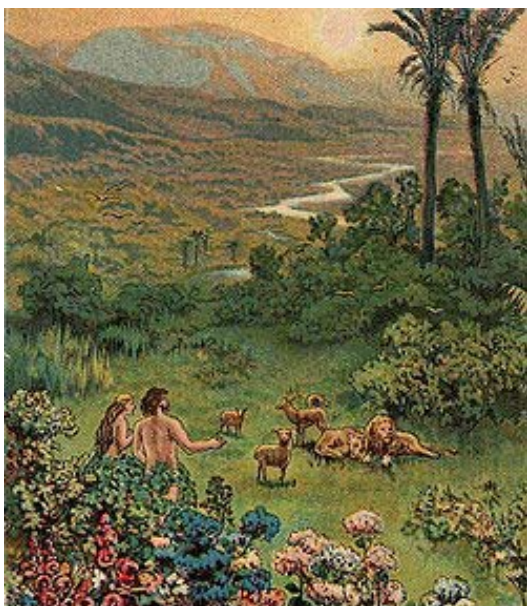
Similarly, a midrash recounts that Rabbi Jeremiah ben Leazar taught that when God created Adam, God created him a hermaphrodite — two bodies, male and female, joined together — for [Genesis 5:2](#) says, “male and female created He them . . . and called their name Adam.” Rabbi [Samuel ben Nahman](#) taught

that when God created Adam, God created Adam double-faced, then God split Adam and made Adam of two backs, one back on this side and one back on the other side. An objection was raised that [Genesis 2:21](#) says, “And He took one of his ribs” (implying that God created Eve separately from Adam). Rabbi Samuel ben Nahman replied that the word read as “rib” — מִצַּלְעֵי תַּיִו, *mi-ṣalotav* — actually means one of Adam’s sides, just as one reads in [Exodus 26:20](#), “And for the second side (צִלְעַת, *ṣela*) of the tabernacle.” (Genesis Rabbah 8:1.)



Adam and Eve were both naked and were not ashamed
(illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

The Gemara taught that all agree that there was only one formation of humankind (not a separate creation of man and woman). Rab Judah, however, noted an apparent contradiction: [Genesis 1:27](#) says, “And God created man in His own image” (in the singular), while [Genesis 5:2](#) says, “Male and female created He them” (in the plural). Rab Judah reconciled the apparent contradiction by concluding that in the beginning God intended to create two human beings, and in the end God created only one human being. ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 8a.](#))



The Garden of Eden (illustration from Bible card published 1906 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

Rab and Samuel offered different explanations of the words in [Genesis 2:22](#), “And the rib which the Lord God had taken from

man made He a woman.” One said that this “rib” was a face, the other that it was a tail. In support of the one who said it was a face, [Psalm 139:5](#) says, “Behind and before have You formed me.” The one who said it was a tail explained the words, “Behind and before have You formed me,” as Rabbi Ammi said, that humankind was “behind,” that is, later, in the work of creation, and “before” in punishment. The Gemara conceded that humankind was last in the work of creation, for God created humankind on the eve of the Sabbath. But if when saying that humankind was first for punishment, one means the punishment in connection with the serpent, [Rabbi](#) taught that, in conferring honor the Bible commences with the greatest, in cursing with the least important. Thus, in cursing, God began with the least, cursing first the serpent, then the people. The punishment of the Flood must therefore be meant, as [Genesis 7:23](#) says, “And He blotted out every living substance which was upon the face of the ground, both man and cattle,” starting with the people. In support of the one who said that Eve was created from a face, in [Genesis 2:7](#), the word וַיִּצְרֶהּ, *wa-yitẓer* is written with two *yuds*. But the one who said Eve was created from a tail explained the word וַיִּצְרֶהּ, *wa-yitẓer* as Rabbi Simeon ben Pazzi said, “Woe is me because of my Creator (*yotẓer*), woe is me because of my evil inclination (*yitẓer*)!” In support of the one who said that Eve was created from a face, [Genesis 5:2](#) says, “male and female created He them.” But the one who said Eve was created from a tail explained the words, “male and female created He them,” as Rabbi [Abbahu](#) explained when he contrasted the words, “male and female created He them,” in [Genesis 5:2](#) with the words, “in

the image of God made He man,” in [Genesis 9:6](#). Rabbi Abbahu reconciled these statements by teaching that at first God intended to create two, but in the end created only one. In support of the one who said that Eve was created from a face, [Genesis 2:22](#) says, “He closed up the place with flesh instead thereof.” But the one who said Eve was created from a tail explained the words, “He closed up the place with flesh instead thereof,” as Rabbi Jeremiah (or as some say Rav Zebid, or others say Rav Nahman bar Isaac) said, that these words applied only to the place where God made the cut. In support of the one who said that Eve was created from a tail, [Genesis 2:22](#) says, “God built.” But the one who said that Eve was created from a face explained the words “God built” as explained by Rabbi Simeon ben Menasia, who interpreted the words, “and the Lord built the rib,” to teach that God braided Eve's hair and brought her to Adam, for in the seacoast towns braiding (*keli'ata*) is called building (*binyata*). Alternatively, [Rav Hisda](#) said (or some say it was taught in a Baraita) that the words, “and the Lord built the rib,” teach that God built Eve after the fashion of a storehouse, narrow at the top and broad at the bottom so as to hold the produce safely. So Rav Hisda taught that a woman is narrower above and broader below so as better to carry children. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 61a](#); see also [Eruvin 18a](#).)



God admonishes Eve regarding the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (marble bas-relief by Lorenzo Maitani on the Orvieto Cathedral)

The Rabbis taught in a Baraita that if an orphan applied to the community for assistance to marry, the community must rent a house, supply a bed and necessary household furnishings, and put on the wedding, as [Deuteronomy 15:8](#) says, “sufficient for his need, whatever is lacking for him.” The Rabbis interpreted the words “sufficient for his need” to refer to the house, “whatever is lacking” to refer to a bed and a table, and “for him (יָלָד, לוֹ)” to refer to a wife, as [Genesis 2:18](#) uses the same term, “for him (יָלָד, לוֹ),” to refer to [Adam](#)’s wife, whom [Genesis 2:18](#) calls “a helpmate *for him*.” ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 67b.](#))



Adam Is Tempted by Eve (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

Rabbi Jeremiah ben Eleazar interpreted the words, “and he brought her to the man,” in [Genesis 2:22](#) to teach that God acted as best man to Adam, teaching that a man of eminence should not think it amiss to act as best man for a lesser man. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 61a.](#))

Interpreting the words “And the man said: *This is now* bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman” in [Genesis 2:23](#), Rabbi Judah ben Rabbi taught that the first time God created a woman for Adam, he saw her full of discharge and blood. So God removed her from Adam and recreated her a second time. (Genesis Rabbah 18:4.)

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 3

A midrash explained that because the serpent was the first to speak slander in [Genesis 3:4–5](#), God punished the Israelites by means of serpents in [Numbers 21:6](#) when they spoke slander.

God cursed the serpent, but the Israelites did not learn a lesson from the serpent's fate, and nonetheless spoke slander. God therefore sent the serpent, who was the first to introduce slander, to punish those who spoke slander. ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 19:22.)

Judah ben Padiah noted Adam's frailty, for he could not remain loyal even for a single hour to God's charge that he not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, yet in accordance with [Leviticus 19:23](#), Adam's descendants the Israelites waited three years for the fruits of a tree. (Genesis Rabbah 21:7.)



God's Curse (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)



Adam and Eve Driven from Paradise (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina taught that [Genesis 3:21](#) demonstrates one of God’s attributes that humans should emulate. Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina asked what [Deuteronomy 13:5](#) means in the text, “You shall walk after the Lord your God.” How can a human being walk after God, when [Deuteronomy 4:24](#) says, “[T]he Lord your God is a devouring fire”? Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina explained that the command to walk after God means to walk after the attributes of God. As God clothes the naked — for [Genesis 3:21](#) says, “And the Lord God made for [Adam](#) and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them” — so should we also clothe the naked. God visited the sick — for [Genesis 18:1](#) says, “And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of [Mamre](#)” (after [Abraham](#) was circumcised in [Genesis 17:26](#)) — so should we also visit the sick. God comforted mourners — for [Genesis 25:11](#) says, “And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed [Isaac](#) his son” — so should we also comfort mourners. God buried the dead — for [Deuteronomy 34:6](#) says, “And He buried him in the valley” — so should we also bury the dead. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 14a.](#)) Similarly, the [Sifre](#) on [Deuteronomy 11:22](#) taught that to walk in God’s ways means to be (in the words of [Exodus 34:6](#)) “merciful and gracious.” (Sifre to Deuteronomy 49:1.)



Cain leads Abel to death (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[\[edit\]](#) **Genesis chapter 4**

The Mishnah taught that court officials admonished witnesses testifying in capital cases to beware that the blood of the defendant and all the defendant's offspring to the end of the world depended on the witness, for [Genesis 4:10](#) says concerning Cain that “the bloods of your brother cry . . . from the ground,” using the plural “bloods” to signify the victim's blood and the blood of the victim's offspring. The Mishnah reported that another interpretation of “brother's bloods” was that Abel's blood spattered in several places on the surrounding trees and stones. ([Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 37a.](#))



God Took Enoch (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 5

The Mishnah taught that [Genesis 5:1–31](#) enumerated ten generations from Adam to Noah to demonstrate how patient God is, for according to the Mishnah, all those generations provoked God, until God brought on them the waters of the flood. ([Mishnah Avot 5:2.](#))

[Rabbi Tanhuma](#) taught in Rabbi Banayah's name, and Rabbi Berekiah taught in Rabbi Eleazar's name, that God created Adam a shapeless mass, and Adam lay stretching from one end of the

world to the other, as [Psalm 139:16](#) says, “Your eyes did see my shapeless mass.” Rabbi Judah ben Rabbi Simon taught that while Adam lay a shapeless mass before God, God showed Adam every succeeding generation of mankind and its Sages, judges, scribes, interpreters, and leaders. God told Adam, in the words of [Psalm 139:16](#), “Your eyes did see unformed substance,” Adam’s potential descendants, and God told Adam that all of those descendants had already been written in the book of Adam, as [Genesis 5:1](#) says: “This is the book of the generations of Adam.” (Genesis Rabbah 24:2.)

Rabbi Eleazar read the words of [Genesis 5:2](#), “male and female created He them, and called their name ‘man,’” and deduced that one cannot be called a complete “man” unless one is married. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 63a.](#))

Noting that [Genesis 5:24](#) says of Enoch not that he died, but that “God took him,” some sectarians (Judeo-Christians or Christians) challenged Rabbi Abbahu, saying that they did not find that Enoch died, but that God “took” him, just as [2 Kings 2:1](#) says that God would “take” [Elijah](#). Rabbi Abbahu reasoned that one could read the verb “took” in [Genesis 5:24](#) just as “take” is used in [Ezekiel 24:16](#), which says, “Behold, I take away from you the desire of your eyes,” and there definitely refers to death. (Genesis Rabbah 25:1.)

Also interpreting [Genesis 5:24](#), Rabbi Aibu taught that Enoch was a hypocrite, acting sometimes righteously and sometimes wickedly. So God removed Enoch while Enoch was acting

righteously, judging Enoch on [Rosh Hashanah](#), when God judges the whole world. (Genesis Rabbah 25:1.)



The Deluge (engraving by Gustave Doré from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 6

Rabbi Levi, or some say [Rabbi Jonathan](#), said that a tradition handed down from the Men of the [Great Assembly](#) taught that wherever the Bible employs the term “and it was” or “and it came to pass” (וַיְהִי, *wa-yehi*), as it does in [Genesis 6:1](#), it indicates misfortune, as one can read *wa-yehi* as *wai, hi*, “woe, sorrow.” Thus the words, “And it came to pass when man began to multiply,” in [Genesis 6:1](#), are followed by the words, “God Saw that the wickedness of man was great,” in [Genesis 6:5](#). And the Gemara

also cited the instances of [Genesis 11:2](#) followed by [Genesis 11:4](#); [Genesis 14:1](#) followed by [Genesis 14:2](#); [Joshua 5:13](#) followed by the rest of [Joshua 5:13](#); [Joshua 6:27](#) followed by [Joshua 7:1](#); [1 Samuel 1:1](#) followed by [1 Samuel 1:5](#); [1 Samuel 8:1](#) followed by [1 Samuel 8:3](#); [1 Samuel 18:14](#) close after [1 Samuel 18:9](#); [2 Samuel 7:1](#) followed by [1 Kings 8:19](#); [Ruth 1:1](#) followed by the rest of [Ruth 1:1](#); and [Esther 1:1](#) followed by [Haman](#). But the Gemara also cited as counterexamples the words, “And there was evening and there was morning one day,” in [Genesis 1:5](#), as well as [Genesis 29:10](#), and [1 Kings 6:1](#). So [Rav Ashi](#) replied that *wa-yehi* sometimes presages misfortune, and sometimes it does not, but the expression “and it came to pass in the days of” always presages misfortune. And for that proposition, the Gemara cited [Genesis 14:1](#), [Isaiah 7:1](#), [Jeremiah 1:3](#), [Ruth 1:1](#), and [Esther 1:1](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 10b](#).)

Reading the words of [Genesis 6:2](#), “the sons of God (בְּנֵי-הָאֱלֹהִים, *bene elohim*) saw the daughters of men,” Rabbi [Simeon bar Yohai](#) called them “the sons of *nobles*,” and Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai cursed all who called them “the sons of God.” Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai taught that all real demoralization proceeds from the leaders, as they are in a position to stop it. Rabbi [Haninah](#) and Resh Lakish reasoned that [Genesis 6:2](#) calls them “the sons of God” because they lived a long time without trouble or suffering. ([Genesis Rabbah 26:5](#).)

[Rav Huna](#) said in Rav Joseph's name that the generation of the flood were not blotted out from the world until they composed

nuptial songs (or others say, wrote marriage contracts) in honor of pederasty and bestiality. (Genesis Rabbah 26:5.)

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to the [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), a noted authority on the [commandments](#), there is one positive commandment in the parshah:

- To "be fruitful and multiply" ([Genesis 1:28](#))

(*Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1: 82–85. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-515-8](#).)

[Maimonides](#), however, attributes the commandment to [Genesis 9:7](#) (Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#), [Positive Commandment 212](#). [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 1:228. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#).)

Most rabbis agree, based on the [Shulchan Aruch](#), that one does not *have* to have children but merely *try* to. Raising adopted children as your own also fulfils this mitzvah. ([Ask the rabbi at Ohr Somayach](#). Retrieved October 15, 2006.)



[Isaiah](#) (1509 fresco by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel)

[[edit](#)] Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) is a text selected from the books of [Nevi'im](#) ("The Prophets") that is read publicly in the synagogue after the reading of the Torah. The haftarah usually has a thematic link to the Torah reading that precedes it. The haftarah for Bereishit is:

- for [Ashkenazi Jews](#): [Isaiah 42:5–43:10](#)
- for [Sephardi Jews](#), [Frankfurt am Main](#), and [Chabad Lubavitch](#): [Isaiah 42:5–21](#)
- for [Yemenite Jews](#): [Isaiah 42:1–16](#)
- for [Italian Jews](#): [Isaiah 42:1–21](#)
- for [Karaite Jews](#): [Isaiah 65:7–66:13](#)

The parshah and haftarah in [Isaiah 42](#) both report God's absolute power. [Genesis 1:1–2:4](#) and [Isaiah 42:5](#) both tell of God's creation of heaven and earth. The haftarah in [Isaiah 42:6–7, 16](#) echoes the word “light” (and God's control of it) from [Genesis 1:3–5](#), but puts the word to broader use. And the haftarah puts the idea of “opening . . . eyes” (in [Isaiah 42:7](#)) in more favorable light than does the parshah (in [Genesis 3:5–7](#)).

[\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy

The first word of [Genesis 1:1](#), *bereshit*, and thus God's role as Creator, is recited in the *Aleinu*, a prayer near the end of each of the three [prayer services](#). (Reuven Hammer. *Or Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 11, 51, 183. New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2003. [ISBN 0916219208](#).)

God's creation of heaven and earth in [Genesis 1:1](#) is reflected in [Psalm 96:5,11](#), which is in turn one of the six Psalms recited at the beginning of the Kabbalat Shabbat prayer service. (Hammer, at 16.)



A page from the Kaufmann Haggadah

The waters of creation in [Genesis 1:2](#) may be reflected in [Psalm 29:3](#), which is in turn one of the six Psalms recited at the beginning of the Kabbalat Shabbat prayer service. (Hammer, at 20.)

At the beginning of the K'riat [Sh'ma](#) prayer service, following the *Barchu*, Jews recite a blessing that acknowledges God's miracle of creation, noting, among other acts, God's "separating day from night," as recounted in [Genesis 1:18](#). (Hammer, at 28.)

In the [Passover Haggadah](#), if the [Seder](#) takes place on Friday night, then many Jews recite [Genesis 1:31–2:3](#) or [2:1–3](#) at the beginning of the [Kiddush](#) section of the Seder. (Menachem Davis. *The Interlinear Haggadah: The Passover Haggadah, with an Interlinear Translation, Instructions and Comments*, 29. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005. [ISBN 1-57819-064-9](#). Joseph Tabory. *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, 79. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. [ISBN 978-0-8276-0858-0](#).)

Following the Kabbalat Shabbat service and prior to the Friday evening (*Ma'ariv*) service, Jews traditionally read rabbinic sources on the observance of the Sabbath, including an excerpt from [Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 119b](#). In Shabbat 119b, [Rava](#) instructed that one should recite [Genesis 2:1–3](#) on the eve of the Sabbath. (Hammer, at 26.)

The [Lekhah Dodi](#) liturgical poem of the Kabbalat Shabbat prayer service reflects the role of the Sabbath described in [Genesis 2:2–](#)

[3](#), characterizing the Sabbath as the “last of the work (of Creation)” (*sof ma’aseh*). (Hammer, at 21.)

Reuven Kimelman found in the “awake and arise” stanza of the Lekhah Dodi poem a play between the root *or*, from which stems the word for “skin” or “leather,” and the homonym *or* that means “light.” In [Genesis 3:21](#), Adam exchanged garments of light for garments of leather; the Lekhah Dodi poem calls on God to exchange our current garments of skin for garments of light. (Hammer, at 21.)

The “Divine beings” or “sons of God” mentioned in [Genesis 6:2](#) are reflected in [Psalm 29:1](#), which is in turn one of the six Psalms recited at the beginning of the Kabbalat Shabbat prayer service. (Hammer, at 20.)

[\[edit\]](#) The Weekly Maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), [Sephardi Jews](#) each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parshah. For parshah Bereshit, Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Rast, the maqam that shows a beginning or an initiation of something. In this case it is appropriate, because we are initiating the Book of Genesis.

[\[edit\]](#) See also

- [Adam in rabbinic literature](#)
- [Curse and mark of Cain](#)
- [Noah in rabbinic literature](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:



Gilgamesh tablet

[\[edit\]](#) Ancient

- [Enûma Elish](#).
- [Epic of Gilgamesh](#): [11:258–307](#).
- [Hesiod](#). *Theogony* Greece, circa 700 BCE. (creation story).

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 9:1,7](#), [35:11](#) (to be fruitful).
- [Numbers 13:31–33](#) (Nephilim); [22:21–35](#) (talking animal).
- [Deuteronomy 4:19](#).
- [2 Samuel 7:12–14](#).
- [Isaiah 42:5](#); [44:24](#); [51:9–10](#).
- [Jeremiah 4:23–28](#); [18:1–10](#); [23:3](#); [51:15–19](#) (creation).

- [Ezekiel 1:5–14, 22, 26–28](#) (cherubim; firmament; man in God’s image); [10:1–22](#) (cherubim); [28:13](#) (Eden).
- [Malachi 2:15–16.](#)
- [Psalms 8:5–8; 33:6–9; 74:12–17; 82:6–7; 89:9–11; 95:3–5; 100:3; 104:1–30.](#)
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Talmud

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[Chagigah 2b, 11b–12b, 13b, 15a](#); [Yevamot 61a–63a, 65b, 121a](#); [Ketubot 5a, 8a, 10b, 61a, 67b](#); [Nedarim 39b, 41a](#); [Sotah 9b, 12a, 14a](#); [Gittin 43b, 60a](#); [Kiddushin 6a, 13b, 30b, 35a, 61b](#); [Bava Kamma 55a](#); [Bava Metzia 18a, 85b](#); [Bava Batra 16a–b, 74b, 84a, 113a, 121a](#); [Sanhedrin 29a, 37a–b, 38b–39a, 46b, 56a–b, 58a, 59b, 67b, 70b, 91b, 99a, 101b, 107b–108b, 110a, 113b](#); [Makkot 23a](#); [Shevuot 47b](#); [Avodah Zarah 3a, 5a, 11b, 29a, 43b](#); [Zevachim 116a](#); [Menachot 29b](#); [Chullin 26b, 27b, 60a–b, 71a, 83a](#); [Bekhorot 8a, 47a, 55a–b](#); [Tamid 32a](#); [Niddah 22b, 25a, 30b, 45b](#). Babylonia, 6th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

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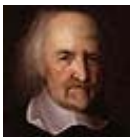
- [Song of Songs Rabbah](#) 1:6, 16, 17, 25, 47; 2:41, 47; 3:18, 22; 4:32; 5:1, 13; 6:25; 7:17; 8:1.
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- [Lamentations Rabbah](#): prologue 4, 24, 26; 1:1, 37, 43, 52; 2:10; 3:13; 5:22.
- [Ecclesiastes Rabbah](#) 1:3, 12–14, 35–37; 2:15, 23, 26–27; 3:1, 13–15, 17–18, 22; 5:7, 11; 6:9; 7:6–7, 20, 33, 35, 39, 42; 8:2; 9:8; 10:12.
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Noach (parsha)

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This article is about the Torah portion "Noach." For the Biblical figure, see [Noah](#).

Noach or **Noah** (נֹחַ — [Hebrew](#) for the name "Noah," the third word, and [first distinctive word](#), of the parshah) is the second [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#). It constitutes [Genesis 6:9–11:32](#). [Jews](#) read it on the second [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in October or November.

The parshah tells the stories of the [Flood](#) and [Noah's Ark](#), of Noah's subsequent [drunkenness](#) and [cursing](#) of [Canaan](#), and of the [Tower of Babel](#).



Noah's Ark (1846 painting by [Edward Hicks](#))

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The Building of Noah's Ark (painting by a French master of 1675)



The Deluge (illustration by [Gustave Doré](#) from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) The Flood

[Noah](#) was a righteous man, blameless in his age, who walked with [God](#). ([Genesis 6:9](#)) Noah had three sons: [Shem](#), [Ham](#), and [Japheth](#). ([Genesis 6:10](#)) God saw that all flesh on earth had become corrupt and lawless, and God told Noah that God had decided to bring a flood to destroy all flesh. ([Genesis 6:11–17](#)) God directed Noah to make an [ark](#) of [gopher wood](#) and cover it with [pitch](#) inside and outside. ([Genesis 6:14](#)) The Ark was to be 300 [cubits](#) long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high, and have an opening for daylight near the top, an entrance on its side, and

three decks. ([Genesis 6:15–16](#)) God told Noah that God would establish a [covenant](#) with Noah, and that he, his sons, his wife, his sons' wives, and two of each kind of beast — male and female — would survive in the Ark. ([Genesis 6:18–20](#))

Seven days before the Flood, God told Noah to go into the Ark with his household, and to take seven pairs of every [clean animal](#) and every bird, and one pair of every other animal, to keep their species alive. ([Genesis 7:1–4](#)) When Noah was 600 years old, the Flood came, and that same day, Noah, his family and the beasts went into the Ark, and God shut him in. ([Genesis 7:6–16](#)) The rains fell 40 days and 40 nights, the waters swelled 15 cubits above the highest mountains, and all flesh with the merest breath of life died, except for Noah and those with him on the Ark. ([Genesis 7:12–23](#))

When the waters had swelled 150 days, God remembered Noah and the beasts, and God caused a wind to blow and the waters to recede steadily from the earth, and the Ark came to rest on the mountains of [Ararat](#). ([Genesis 7:24–8:4](#)) At the end of 40 days, Noah opened the window and sent out a raven, and it went to and fro. ([Genesis 8:6–7](#)) Then he sent out a dove to see if the waters had decreased from the ground, but the dove could not find a resting place, and returned to the Ark. ([Genesis 8:8–9](#))



The Return of the Dove (1851 painting by [John Everett Millais](#))

He waited another seven days, and again sent out the dove, and the dove came back toward evening with an olive leaf. ([Genesis 8:10–11](#)) He waited another seven days and sent out the dove, and it did not return. ([Genesis 8:12](#)) When Noah removed the covering of the Ark, he saw that the ground was drying. ([Genesis 8:13](#)) God told Noah to come out of the Ark with his family and to free the animals. ([Genesis 8:16](#))



Landscape with Noah's Thank Offering (painting circa 1803 by Joseph Anton Koch)

Then Noah built an [altar](#) to God and offered [burnt offerings](#) of every clean animal and of every clean bird. ([Genesis 8:20](#)) God smelled the pleasing odor and vowed never again to doom the earth because of man, as man's imaginings are evil from his youth, but God would preserve the seasons so long as the earth endured. ([Genesis 8:21–22](#))

God blessed Noah and his sons to be fertile and increase, and put the fear of them into all the beasts, which God gave into their hands to eat. ([Genesis 9:1–3](#)) God prohibited eating flesh with its life-[blood](#) in it. ([Genesis 9:4](#)) God would require a reckoning of every man's and beast's life-blood, and whoever shed the blood

of man would have his blood shed by man, for in God's [image](#) did God make man. ([Genesis 9:5–6](#)) God told them to be fertile and increase. ([Genesis 9:7](#)) And God made a covenant with Noah, his sons, and every living thing that never again would a flood destroy the earth. ([Genesis 9:8–11](#)) God set the [rainbow](#) in the clouds as the sign of God's covenant with earth, so that when the bow appeared in the clouds, God would remember God's covenant and the waters would never again flood to destroy all flesh. ([Genesis 9:12–17](#))



Noah cursing Canaan (illustration by Gustave Doré from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) The curse on Canaan

Noah was the first to plant a vineyard, and he drank himself drunk, and uncovered himself within his tent. ([Genesis 9:20–21](#)) Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers. ([Genesis 9:22](#)) Shem and Japheth placed a cloth against both their backs and, walking backward, covered their father, without seeing their father's nakedness. ([Genesis 9:23](#)) When Noah woke up and learned what Ham had done to him, he cursed Ham's son Canaan to become the lowest of slaves to Japheth and Shem, prayed that God enlarge Japheth, and blessed the God of Shem. ([Genesis 9:24–27](#))



The dispersion of the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (map from the 1854 *Historical Textbook and Atlas of Biblical Geography*)

Noah lived to the age of 950 and then died. ([Genesis 9:28–29](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Noah's descendants

[Genesis 10](#) sets forth the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, from whom the nations branched out over the earth after the Flood. Among Japheth's descendants were the maritime nations. ([Genesis 10:2–5](#)) Ham's son [Cush](#) had a son named [Nimrod](#), who became the first man of might on earth, a mighty hunter, king in [Babylon](#) and the land of [Shinar](#). ([Genesis 10:6–10](#)) From there [Asshur](#) went and built [Nineveh](#). ([Genesis 10:11–12](#)) Canaan's descendants — Sidon, [Heth](#), the [Jebusites](#), the [Amorites](#), the Girgashites, the [Hivites](#), the Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites — spread out from [Sidon](#) as far as [Gerar](#), near [Gaza](#), and as far as [Sodom and Gomorrah](#). ([Genesis 10:15–19](#)) Among Shem's descendants was [Eber](#). ([Genesis 10:21](#))



The Tower of Babel (1563 painting by [Pieter Bruegel](#))

[\[edit\]](#) **The Tower of Babel**

Everyone on earth spoke the same language. ([Genesis 11:1](#)) As people migrated from the east, they settled in the land of Shinar. ([Genesis 11:2](#)) People there sought to make bricks and build a city and a tower with its top in the sky, to make a name for themselves, so that they not be scattered over the world. ([Genesis 11:3–4](#)) God came down to look at the city and tower, and remarked that as one people with one language, nothing that they sought would be out of their reach. ([Genesis 11:5–6](#)) God went down and confounded their speech, so that they could not understand each another, and scattered them over the face of the earth, and they stopped building the city. ([Genesis 11:7–8](#)) Thus the city was called [Babel](#). ([Genesis 11:9](#))

[\[edit\]](#) **The line of Terah**

[Genesis 11](#) sets forth the descendants of Shem. Eight generations after Shem came [Terah](#), who had three sons: Abram (who would become [Abraham](#)), [Nahor](#), and [Haran](#). ([Genesis 11:10–26](#)) Haran had a son [Lot](#) and two daughters [Milcah](#) and Iscah, and then died in [Ur](#) during the lifetime of his father Terah. ([Genesis 11:27–28](#)) Abram married [Sarai](#), and Nahor married Haran's daughter Milcah. ([Genesis 11:29](#)) Sarai was barren. ([Genesis 11:30](#)) Terah took Abram, Sarai, and Lot and set out together from Ur for the land of Canaan, but when they had come as far as Haran, they settled there, and there Terah died. ([Genesis 11:31–32](#))



God Appears to Noah (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

[[edit](#)] In classical rabbinic interpretation

[[edit](#)] Genesis chapter 6

Interpreting the words, "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations," in [Genesis 6:9](#), [Rabbi Johanan](#) taught that Noah was considered righteous in his generations, but would not have been considered righteous in other generations. [Resh Lakish](#), however, maintained that if even in his generations Noah was able to be righteous, then he certainly would have been righteous in other generations. Rabbi [Haninah](#) compared Rabbi Johanan's

view of Noah to a barrel of wine lying in a vault of acid. In its place, its aroma is fragrant (compared to that of the acid). Elsewhere, its aroma would not be considered fragrant. Rabbi [Oshaia](#) compared Resh Lakish's view of Noah to a vial of [spikenard](#) oil lying amidst refuse. If it is fragrant where it is, how much more so would it be among spices! ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108a.](#))



The Prophecy of the Flood (engraving by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

Similarly, [Rabbi Judah](#) and [Rabbi Nehemiah](#) differed interpreting the words, "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations," in [Genesis 6:9](#). Rabbi Judah taught that only "in his generations" was he a righteous man (by comparison). Had he lived in the generation of [Moses](#) or [Samuel](#), he would not have been called righteous. Rabbi Judah said that in the street of the totally blind,

the one-eyed man is called clear-sighted, and the infant is called a scholar. Rabbi Judah compared it to a man with a wine vault who opened one barrel and found it vinegar, opened another and found it vinegar, and opened a third to find it turning sour. When people told him that it was turning, he asked if the vault contained any better. Similarly, "in his generations" Noah was a righteous man. Rabbi Nehemiah, however, taught that if Noah was righteous even in his generation (in spite of the corrupt environment), how much more so would he have been, had he lived in the age of Moses. Rabbi Nehemiah compared Noah to a tightly closed vial of perfume in a graveyard, which nevertheless gave forth a fragrant aroma. How much more fragrant would it have been outside the graveyard. ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 30:9.)

Rabbi Judah contrasted the words "Noah walked with God" in [Genesis 6:9](#) with God's words to Abraham, "walk before Me," in [Genesis 17:1](#). Rabbi Judah compared it to a king who had two sons, one grown up and the other a child. The king asked the child to walk *with* him. But the king asked the adult to walk *before* him. Similarly, to Abraham, whose moral strength was great, God said, "Walk before Me." But of Noah, who was feeble, [Genesis 6:9](#) says, "Noah walked with God." ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 30:10.)

Similarly, Rabbi Abba bar Kahana read [Genesis 6:7–8](#) together to report God saying, "I repent that I have made them and Noah." Thus even Noah, who was left, was not worthy, save that (in the words of [Genesis 6:8](#)) "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 31:1.)



The Earth was corrupt before God and filled with violence
(illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

The [Mishnah](#) concluded that the generation of the Flood and the generation of the dispersion after the Tower of Babel were both so evil as to have no share in the world to come. (Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:3; [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 107b–08a.](#)) Rabbi [Akiba](#) deduced from the words of [Genesis 7:23](#) that the generation of the Flood will have no portion in the world to come; he read the words "and every living substance was destroyed" to refer to this world and the words "that was on the

face of the ground" to refer to the next world. Rabbi [Judah ben Bathyra](#) deduced from the words "My spirit will not always enter into judgment with man" of [Genesis 6:3](#) that God will neither revive nor judge the generation of the Flood on Judgment Day. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108a.](#))

The [Tosefta](#) taught that the generation of the Flood acted arrogantly before God, thinking that because they had great rivers, they did not need God's rain, so God punished them using those same waters. (Tosefta Sotah 3:7–8.) The Rabbis taught in a [Baraita](#) that the good that God lavished upon the generation of the Flood led them to become arrogant. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108a.](#))

Interpreting the words, "And the earth was corrupt ([תִּשְׁבַּחַת, tishbachet](#)) before God," in [Genesis 6:11](#), a Baraita of the School of [Rabbi Ishmael](#) taught that whenever Scripture uses the word "corruption," it refers to sexual immorality and idolatry. Reference to sexual immorality appears in [Genesis 6:12](#), which says, "for all flesh had corrupted ([בִּשְׁבָּחִית, bishchit](#)) their way upon the earth" (and the use of the term "their way" ([דַּרְכּוֹ, darko](#)) connotes sexual matters, as [Proverbs 30:19](#) indicates when it says, "the way ([דֶּרֶךְ, derech](#)) of a man with a young woman"). And [Deuteronomy 4:16](#) shows that "corruption" connotes idolatry when it says, "lest you deal corruptly ([תִּשְׁבָּחִית, tashchitun](#)), and make a graven image." ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 57a.](#))

Rabbi Johanan deduced from the words "all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth" in [Genesis 6:12](#) that they mated domesticated animals with wild animals, and animals with

humans. Rav Abba bar Kahana taught that after the Flood, they all returned to their own kind, except for the tushlami bird.

([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108a.](#))

Interpreting [Genesis 6:13](#), Rabbi Johanan deduced that the consequences of robbery are great. For though the generation of the Flood transgressed all laws, God sealed their decree of punishment only because they robbed. In [Genesis 6:13](#), God told Noah that "the earth is filled with violence (that is, robbery) through them, and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." And [Ezekiel 7:11](#) also states, "Violence (that is, robbery) is risen up into a rod of wickedness; none of them shall remain, nor of their multitude, nor any of theirs; neither shall there be wailing for them." [Rabbi Eleazar](#) interpreted [Ezekiel 7:11](#) to teach that violence stood up before God like a staff, and told God that there was no good in any of the generation of the Flood, and none would bewail them when they were gone. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108a.](#))

Similarly, [midrash](#) interpreted the words, "the earth is filled with violence," in [Genesis 6:13](#) to teach that it was because they were steeped in robbery that they were blotted out from the world. (Genesis Rabbah 31:1; see also 31:2–4.)

Interpreting [Genesis 6:13](#), Rabbi Haninah told what the people of the age of the Flood used to do. When a person brought out a basket of beans for sale, one would come and seize less than the worth of the smallest coin in circulation, a *perutah* (and thus there was no redress under the law). And then everyone would come and seize less than a *perutah's* worth, so that the seller had no

redress at law. Seeing this, God said that the people had acted improperly, so God would deal with them improperly (in a way that they would not relish). (Genesis Rabbah 31:5.)

Interpreting [Genesis 6:13](#), Rabbi Levi taught that "violence" (חָמָס, *chamas*) connotes idolatry, sexual immorality, and murder, as well as robbery. Reference to sexual immorality appears in [Jeremiah 51:35](#), which says, "The violence done to me (חָמָסִי, *chamasi*) and to my flesh (שֶׁ'עֲרִי, *she'eri*) be upon Babylon" (and שֶׁ'עֲרִי, *she'er* refers to sexual immorality, for example, in [Leviticus 18:6](#)). And reference to murder appears in [Joel 4:19](#), which says, "for the violence (חָמָס, *chamas*) against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land." (Genesis Rabbah 31:6.)

Interpreting God's words in [Genesis 6:13](#), "I will destroy them with the earth," [Rav Huna](#) and [Rabbi Jeremiah](#) in [Rav Kahana's](#) name taught that the Flood washed away even the three handbreadths of the Earth's surface that a [plough](#) turns. It was as if a prince had a tutor, and whenever the prince did wrong, the king punished the tutor. Or it was as if a young prince had a nurse, and whenever the prince did wrong, the king punished the nurse. Similarly, God said that God would destroy the generation of the Flood along with the earth that nurtured them. (Genesis Rabbah 31:7.)



Building the Ark (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[Rav Adda](#) taught that the scholars of [Rav Shila](#) interpreted "gopher wood" in [Genesis 6:14](#) to mean *mabliga* (a resinous species of [cedar](#)), while others maintained it was *golanish* (a very hard and stone-like species of cedar). ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108b.](#))

While [Genesis 6:14](#) tells that Noah's Ark had pitch "within and without," [Exodus 2:3](#) tells that [Jochebed](#) daubed the Ark of the infant Moses "with slime and with pitch." A [Tanna](#) taught that the slime was inside and the pitch outside so that that righteous child would not have to smell the bad odor of the pitch. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 12a.](#))

Rabbi Johanan interpreted the words, "A light ([צִהָר](#), *tzohar*) shall you make to the Ark," in [Genesis 6:16](#) to teach that God instructed Noah to set therein luminous precious stones and jewels, so that they might give light as bright as noon ([צִהָרַיִם](#), *tzabarayim*). ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108b.](#))



The Building of Noah's Ark (16th Century painting by [Jacopo Bassano](#))

The [Gemara](#) read the words, "and to a cubit shall you finish it upward," in [Genesis 6:16](#) to ensure that thus would it stand firm (with the sides of the roof sloping, so that the rain would fall off it). ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108b.](#))

A Tanna read the words, "with lower, second, and third stories shall you make it," in [Genesis 6:16](#) to teach that the bottom story was for the dung, the middle for the animals, and the top for Noah's family. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108b.](#)) A midrash, however, reported that some said that the words, "with lower, second, and third stories shall you make it," meant that the bottom story was for waste, the second for Noah's family and the clean animals, and the third for the unclean animals. And the midrash reported that others said that the bottom story was for the unclean animals, the second for Noah's family and the clean

animals, and the top for the garbage. The midrash taught that Noah managed to move the waste by arranging a kind of trapdoor through which he shoveled it sideways. (Genesis Rabbah 31:11.)

Noting that [Genesis 6:9](#) calls Noah "a man," a midrash taught that wherever Scripture employs the term "a man," it indicates a righteous man who warned his generation. The midrash taught that for 120 years (deduced from [Genesis 6:3](#)), Noah planted cedars and cut them down. When they would ask him what he was doing, he would reply that God had informed him that God was bringing a flood. Noah's contemporaries replied that if a flood did come, it would come only on Noah's father's house. Rabbi Abba taught that God said that one herald arose for God in the generation of the Flood — Noah. But they despised him and called him a contemptible old man. (Genesis Rabbah 30:7.)



Noah's Ark (illustration from the 1493 [Nuremberg Chronicle](#))

Similarly, Rabbi Jose of [Caesarea](#) read the words, "He is swift upon the face of the waters; their portion is cursed in the earth, he turns not by the way of the vineyards," in [Job 24:18](#) to teach that the righteous Noah rebuked his contemporaries. Noah urged them to repent, or God would bring a deluge upon them and cause their bodies to float upon the water like gourds, reading [Job 24:18](#) to say, "He floats lightly upon the face of the waters."

Moreover, Noah told them that they would be taken as a curse for all future generations, as [Job 24:18](#) says, "their portion is cursed." And Rabbi Jose of Caesarea taught that the words, "he turns not by the way of the vineyards," indicate that as the people worked in their vineyards, they asked Noah what prevented God from bringing the Flood at that moment. And Noah replied that God had one dear one, one dove, to draw out before God could bring the Flood. (That is, the aged [Methuselah](#) had to die first, so that he would not suffer the punishment of the Flood).

([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108a.](#))

Similarly, a midrash taught that Noah reproved them, calling them good-for-nothings who forsook the One whose voice breaks cedars, to worship a dry log. But they reacted as in [Amos 5:10](#), which says, "They hate him that reproves in the gate, and they abhor him that speaks uprightly." (Genesis Rabbah 31:3.)



Construction of Noah's Ark (late 16th Century painting by Kaspar Memberger the Elder)

And [Raba](#) interpreted the words of [Job 12:5](#), "He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a stone despised in the thought of him that is at ease," to teach that when Noah rebuked them and spoke words as hard as fiery flints, they would deride him. They called Noah "old man," and asked him what the Ark was for. Noah replied that God was bringing a flood upon them. They asked with what God would flood the earth. If God brought a flood of fire, they said, they had a thing called alitha (that would extinguish fire). If God brought a flood of water up from the earth, they said, they had iron plates with which they could cover the earth (to prevent the water from coming up). If God brought a flood of water from heaven, they said, they had a thing called akob (or some say akosh) (that could ward it off). Noah replied that God would bring it from between the heels of their feet, as [Job 12:5](#)

says, "He is ready for the steps of your feet." ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108b](#).)

Similarly, a Baraita interpreted [Job 12:5](#) to teach that the waters of the Flood were as hot and viscous as bodily fluids. And [Rav Hisda](#) taught that since it was with hot passion that they sinned, it was with hot water that they were punished. For [Genesis 8:1](#) says, "And the water cooled" (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יָשְׁכוּ הַמַּיִם, *yashokū*), and [Esther 7:10](#) says, "Then the king's wrath cooled down" (שָׁכַח הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-אַחַז, *shachachah*). ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108b](#); see also [Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 12a](#); [Zevachim 113b](#).)

Rabbi Hanan said in the name of Rabbi Samuel ben Isaac that as soon as Noah entered the Ark, God prohibited his family from cohabitation, saying in [Genesis 6:18](#): "you shall come into the Ark, you, and your sons," speaking of them apart, and, "your wife, and your sons' wives," speaking of them apart. When Noah left the Ark, God permitted cohabitation to him again, saying in [Genesis 8:16](#): "Go forth from the Ark, you and your wife," speaking of them together. (Genesis Rabbah 31:12.) Similarly, Rabbi Johanan deduced from the same sources that God had forbidden cohabitation for all the Ark's inhabitants. The Rabbis taught in a Baraita that three nonetheless cohabited in the Ark — the dog, the raven, and Ham — and they were all punished. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108b](#).)



Noah's Ark (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)



The Animals Enter the Ark (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 7

Reading in [Genesis 7:2](#) the command that "of every clean beast you shall take seven, man and wife," the Gemara asked whether beasts have marital relationships. Rabbi [Samuel bar Nahman](#) said in [Rabbi Jonathan](#)'s name that the command means of those animals with which no sin had been committed (that is, animals that had not mated with other species). The Gemara asked how Noah would know. Rav Hisda taught that Noah led them past the Ark, and those that the Ark accepted had certainly not been the object of sin, while those that the Ark rejected had certainly been the object of sin. And Rabbi [Abbahu](#) taught that Noah took

only those animals (fulfilling that condition) that came of their own accord. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108b](#); see also [Zevachim 116a](#).) Similarly, Rav Hisda asked how Noah knew (before the giving of [Leviticus 11](#)) which animals were clean and which were unclean. Rav Hisda explained that Noah led them past the Ark, and those that the Ark accepted (in multiples of seven) were certainly clean, and those that the Ark rejected were certainly unclean. Rabbi Abbahu cited [Genesis 7:16](#), "And they that went in, went in male and female," to show that they went in of their own accord (in their respective pairs, seven of the clean and two of the unclean). ([Babylonian Talmud Zevachim 116a](#).)

Reading in [Genesis 7:3](#) the command to take into the Ark "of the fowl also of the air, seven each," a midrash hypothesized that the command might have meant seven of each kind of animal (three of one gender and four of the other). But then one of them would lack a mate. Hence the midrash concluded that God meant seven males and seven females. Of course God did not need them, but they were to come (in the words of [Genesis 7:3](#)) "to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth." (Genesis Rabbah 32:4.)

Rabbi [Simeon ben Yohai](#) taught that because the generation of the Flood transgressed the Torah that God gave humanity after Moses had stayed on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights (as reported in [Exodus 24:18](#) and [34:28](#) and [Deuteronomy 9:9–11](#), [18](#), [25](#), and [10:10](#)), God announced in [Genesis 7:4](#) that God would "cause it to rain upon the earth 40 days and 40 nights." Similarly, Rabbi Johanan taught that because the generation of

the Flood corrupted the features that take shape after 40 days (in the womb), God announced in [Genesis 7:4](#) that God would "cause it to rain upon the earth 40 days and 40 nights, and every living substance that I have made will I blot out." (Genesis Rabbah 32:5.)



The Deluge (1869 painting by Wassilij Petrovich Wereschtschagin)



The Deluge (late 19th Century painting by [Léon Comerre](#))

Reading in [Genesis 7:4](#) that God said, "every living substance (יְקוּם, *yekum*) that I have made will I blot out," Rabbi Abin taught that this included the one who rose up (יָקַם, *yakam*) against his brother — [Cain](#). Rabbi Levi said in the name of Resh Lakish that God kept Cain's judgment in suspense until the Flood and then God swept Cain away. And thus Rabbi Levi read [Genesis 7:23](#) to say, "And He blotted out every one that had arisen." (Genesis Rabbah 32:5.)

A midrash read the words "And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him," in [Genesis 7:5](#) narrowly to refer to the taking in of the animals, beasts, and birds. (Genesis Rabbah 32:5.)

The Gemara read [Genesis 7:8](#) to employ the euphemistic expression "not clean," instead of the brief, but disparaging

expression "unclean," so as not to speak disparagingly of unclean animals. The Gemara reasoned that it was thus likely that Scripture would use euphemisms when speaking of the faults of righteous people, as with the words, "And the eyes of [Leah](#) were weak," in [Genesis 29:17](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 123a](#); see also [Genesis Rabbah 32:4](#) (attributing a similar teaching to Rabbi Judan in Rabbi Johanan's name).)

Reading in [Genesis 7:10](#) that "it came to pass, after seven days, that the waters of the Flood were upon the earth," the Gemara asked what the nature of these seven days was (that God delayed the Flood on their account). [Rab](#) taught that these were the days of mourning for Methuselah, and thus that lamenting the righteous postpones retribution. Another explanation is that during "the seven days" God reversed the order of nature ([תְּרַאשֵׁי יוֹם](#), *bereishit*) (established at the beginning of creation), and the sun rose in the west and set in the east (so that sinners might be shocked into repentance). Another explanation is that God first appointed for them a long time (the 120 years to which [Genesis 6:3](#) alludes), and then a short time (a seven-day grace period in which to repent). Another explanation is that during "the seven days," God gave them a foretaste of the world to come, so that they might know the nature of the rewards of which they were depriving themselves. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108b](#).)



The Flood (1516 painting by [Hans Baldung](#))



Noah's Ark floats in the background while people struggle to escape the rising water of the Flood (fresco circa 1508–1512 by [Michelangelo](#) in the [Sistine Chapel](#))

[Rabbi Joshua](#) and [Rabbi Eliezer](#) differed about when the events took place in [Genesis 7:11](#), where it says, "In the sixth hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month." Rabbi Joshua taught that the events of [Genesis 7:11](#) took place on the seventeenth day of [Iyar](#), when the constellation of the [Pleiades](#) sets at daybreak and the fountains begin to dry up. Because the generation of the Flood perverted its ways (from the way of creation), God changed for them the work of creation and made the constellation of the Pleiades rise at daybreak. God took two stars from the Pleiades and brought the Flood on the world. Rabbi Eliezer, however, taught that the events of [Genesis 7:11](#) took place on the seventeenth of [Cheshvan](#), a day on which the constellation of the Pleiades rises at daybreak, and the season when the fountains begin to fill. Because the generation of the Flood perverted its ways (from the way of creation), God changed for them the work of creation, and caused the constellation of the Pleiades to rise at daybreak. God took away two stars from it and brought the Flood on the world. If one accepts the view of Rabbi Joshua, then one can understand why [Genesis 7:11](#) speaks of the "second month" (to describe Iyar, because [Exodus 12:2](#) describes [Nisan](#) as the first month, and Iyar follows Nisan). If one accepts Rabbi Eliezer's view, the "second month" means the month that is second to the Day of Judgment ([Rosh Hashanah](#), which [Deuteronomy 11:12](#) recognizes as the beginning of a year when it says, "The eyes of the Lord are upon it (the [Land of Israel](#)) from the beginning of the year"). If one accepts Rabbi Joshua's view, the change in the work of creation was the change in the constellation and the

waters. If one accepts Rabbi Eliezer's view, the Gemara asked what change there was in the natural order (as the constellation usually rose at that time and that time of year is usually the rainy season). The Gemara found the answer in the dictum of Rabbi Hisda, when he said that with hot passion they sinned, and with hot waters were they punished. The Rabbis taught in a Baraita that the Sages of Israel follow Rabbi Eliezer in dating the Flood (counting Rosh Hashanah as the beginning of the year) and Rabbi Joshua in dating the annual cycles (holding that God created the world in Nisan). The scholars of other peoples, however, follow Rabbi Joshua in dating the Flood as well. ([Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 11b–12a.](#))

Rabbi Johanan taught that because the corruption of the generation of the Flood was great, their punishment was also great. [Genesis 6:5](#) characterizes their corruption as great (רַבָּה, *rabbah*), saying, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth." And [Genesis 7:11](#) characterizes their punishment as great (רַבָּה, *rabbah*), saying, "on the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up." Rabbi Johanan reported that three of those great thermal fountains remained open after the Flood — the gulf of Gaddor, the hot-springs of [Tiberias](#), and the great well of [Biram](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108a.](#))

The Gemara interpreted the words "every bird (צִפּוֹר, *tzippor*) of any winged (כָּנָף, *kanaf*) [species]" in [Genesis 7:14](#). The Gemara read the word "bird" (צִפּוֹר, *tzippor*) here to refer only to clean

birds, and "winged" (כנף, *kanaf*) to include both unclean birds and grasshoppers. ([Babylonian Talmud Chullin 139b.](#))



Noah's Ark (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)

In a Baraita, Rabbi [Eleazar of Modi'im](#) interpreted [Genesis 7:22](#), "Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered." Rabbi Eleazar of Modi'im asked whether waters that measured fifteen cubits high on the mountains could also measure fifteen cubits in the valley. To do so, the waters would have to stand like a series of walls (terraced with the topography). And if so, the ark could not have come to rest on the top of the mountains. Rather, Rabbi Eleazar of Modi'im taught that all the fountains of the great deep came up first until the water was even with the mountains, and then the water rose fifteen more cubits. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 76a.](#))

Reading in [Genesis 7:22](#) that "all that was on the dry land died," the Gemara deduced that the fish in the sea did not die (apparently not having committed the transgressions that land animals had). ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108a](#); see also [Babylonian Talmud Zevachim 113b](#).)

The Tosefta taught that the Flood killed people before animals (as seen in the order of [Genesis 7:23](#)), because man sinned first (as shown in [Genesis 6:5](#)). (Tosefta Sotah 4:11.)



Noah and the Dove (mosaic circa 12th–13th century in [St Mark's Basilica, Venice](#))

[Rabbi](#) taught that, in conferring honor, the Bible commences with the greatest, in cursing with the least important. With regard to cursing, the Gemara reasoned that Rabbi must have meant the punishment of the Flood, as [Genesis 7:23](#) says, "And He blotted out every living substance which was upon the face of the ground, both man and cattle," starting with the people before the cattle. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 61a](#).)

Reading in [Genesis 7:23](#) that "every living substance was destroyed that was upon the face of the ground" — people and animals alike — the Gemara asked how the beasts had sinned (to deserve this punishment). A Baraita on the authority of Rabbi [Joshua ben Karha](#) compared this to a father who set up a bridal canopy for his son, and prepared a banquet with every sort of food. But then his son died. So the father broke up the canopy, saying that he had prepared it only for his son. Now that the son was dead, the father had no need for a banquet. Thus God created the animals only for the benefit of people. Now that people had sinned, God had no need for the animals. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108a.](#))

[edit] Genesis chapter 8

Reading "and he sent forth a raven" in [Genesis 8:7](#), Resh Lakish taught that the raven gave Noah a triumphant retort, arguing that both God and Noah must have hated the raven. It was evident that God hated the raven because God commanded Noah to save seven pairs of the clean creatures on the Ark, but only two of the unclean (among which the raven counted itself under [Leviticus 11:15](#)). And it was evident that Noah hated the raven because Noah had left in the Ark the species of which there were seven pairs, and sent one of which there were only two. If the angel of heat or cold had smitten the raven, the world would have been missing the raven's kind. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108b.](#))



Noah sends off a dove from the Ark (miniature on vellum by Jean Dreux circa 1450–1460 at the [Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum](#), [The Hague](#))



The Dove Returns to Noah (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Similarly, interpreting the words, "and it went forth to and fro" in [Genesis 8:7](#), Rabbi Judan said in the name of Rabbi Judah ben Rabbi Simon that the raven began arguing with Noah. The raven asked Noah why of all the birds that Noah had in the Ark Noah sent none but the raven. Noah retorted that the world had no need of the raven; the raven was fit neither for food nor for sacrifice. [Rabbi Berekiah](#) said in Rabbi Abba's name that God told Noah to take that back, because the world would need ravens in the future. Noah asked God when the world would

need ravens. God replied that (in the words of [Genesis 8:7](#)) "when the waters dry off from on the earth," a righteous man ([Elijah](#)) would arise and dry up the world (threatening drought, and then see the threat fulfilled). And God would cause him to have need of ravens, as [1 Kings 17:6](#) reports, "And the ravens (עֲרֻבִים, *orvim*) brought him bread and flesh." Rabbi Judah maintained that the word *orvim* (עֲרֻבִים) referred to a town within the borders of [Bashan](#) called Arbo. But Rabbi Nehemiah insisted that [1 Kings 17:6](#) literally meant ravens, and the ravens brought Elijah food from King [Jehoshaphat](#)'s table. (Genesis Rabbah 33:5.)

From the discussion of the dove in [Genesis 8:8](#), Rabbi Jeremiah deduced that the clean fowl lived with the righteous people on the Ark. (Of the raven, [Genesis 8:7](#) says, "he sent forth a raven." But of the dove, [Genesis 8:8](#) says, "he sent forth a dove *from him*" indicating that the dove was *with him*.) ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108b](#).)

Reading of the dove in [Genesis 8:11](#), "and lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf," a midrash asked where the dove found it. Rabbi Abba taught that the dove brought it from the young shoots of the Land of Israel. Rabbi Levi taught that the dove brought it from the [Mount of Olives](#), for the Flood had not submerged the Land of Israel. Thus God told [Ezekiel](#) (in [Ezekiel 22:24](#)): "Son of man, say to her: 'You are a land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon on the day of indignation.'" Rabbi Birai (or some say Rabbi Berekiah) taught that the gates of the [Garden of Eden](#) were opened for the dove, and from there the dove brought the olive

leaf. Rabbi Abbahu asked if the dove had brought it from the Garden of Eden, would the dove not have brought something better, like cinnamon or a balsam leaf. But in fact the dove was giving Noah a hint, saying to him in effect that better is bitterness from God than sweetness from Noah's hand. (Genesis Rabbah 33:6.)



Noah's Ark (1882 painting by [Andrei Ryabushkin](#) at the [State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg](#))

Similarly, reading of the dove in [Genesis 8:11](#), "and lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf," Rabbi Eleazar (or others say Rabbi Jeremiah ben Eleazar) taught that the dove prayed to God that God might let the dove's sustenance be as bitter as the olive but given by God, rather than sweet as honey and given by flesh and blood (upon whom the dove was therefore dependent).

([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108b](#) (attributing to Rabbi Eleazar); [Eruvin 18b](#) (attributing to Rabbi Jeremiah ben Eleazar).)



The Ark Rests upon Ararat (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

A midrash taught that when [Psalm 142:8](#) says, "Bring my soul out of prison," it refers to Noah's imprisonment 12 months in the Ark, and when [Psalm 142:8](#) says, "for You will deal bountifully with me," it refers to God's bounty to Noah when God told Noah in [Genesis 8:16](#), "Go forth from the Ark." (Genesis Rabbah 34:1.)

Rabbi Johanan interpreted the words, "After their kinds they went forth from the Ark," in [Genesis 8:19](#) to teach that the animals went out by their families, not alone. Rabbi Hana bar Bizna taught that Abraham's servant [Eliezer](#) once inquired of Noah's son Shem about these words in [Genesis 8:19](#), asking Shem how his family managed. Shem replied that they had a difficult time in the Ark. During the day they fed the animals that

usually fed by day, and during the night they fed those that normally fed by night. But Noah did not know what the [chameleon](#) ate. One day Noah was cutting a [pomegranate](#), when a worm dropped out of it, and the chameleon ate it. From then on, Noah mashed up bran for the chameleon, and when the bran became wormy, the chameleon would eat. A fever struck the [lion](#), so it lived off of its reserves rather than eating other animals. Noah discovered the *avarshinah* bird (some say the [phoenix](#) bird) lying in the hold of the Ark and asked it if it needed food. The bird told Noah that it saw that Noah was busy and decided not to give him any more trouble. Noah replied by asking that it be God's will that the bird not perish, as [Job 19:18](#) says, "Then I said: 'I shall die with my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the phoenix.'" ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108b.](#))



The Covenant of the Rainbow (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

A midrash recounted that Noah fed and provided for the Ark's inhabitants for all of 12 months. But Rav Huna said in Rabbi Liezer's name that when Noah was leaving the Ark, a lion nonetheless set on him and maimed him, so that he was not fit to offer sacrifices, and his son Shem sacrificed in his stead. The midrash took this as an application of the words of [Proverbs 11:31](#): "the righteous shall be requited on earth; how much more the wicked and the sinner." From this, the midrash inferred that if in spite of his comparative righteousness, Noah was punished for his sins, "how much more" was the generation of the Flood. (Genesis Rabbah 30:6.)



Noah's Sacrifice (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Rav Huna cited the report in [Genesis 8:20](#) that Noah offered burnt offerings from every clean animal and bird to support the proposition in a Baraita that all animals were eligible to be offered, as the words "animal" (*behemah*) and bird (*bea*) refer to

any animal or bird, and the term "animal" (*behemah*) includes wild beasts (*hayyah*). ([Babylonian Talmud Zevachim 115b.](#))

Rabbi Haninah cited the report of [Genesis 8:21](#) that "the Lord smelled the sweet savor; and . . . said . . . 'I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake,'" for the proposition that those who allow themselves to be pacified when drinking wine possesses some of the characteristics of the Creator. ([Babylonian Talmud Eruvin 65a.](#))

Rav Awira (or some say Rabbi [Joshua ben Levi](#)) taught that the Evil Inclination has seven names. God called it "Evil" in [Genesis 8:21](#), saying, "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Moses called it "the Uncircumcised" in [Deuteronomy 10:16](#), saying, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart." [David](#) called it "Unclean" in [Psalm 51:12](#); [Solomon](#) called it "the Enemy" in [Proverbs 25:21–22](#); [Isaiah](#) called it "the Stumbling-Block" in [Isaiah 57:14](#); [Ezekiel](#) called it "Stone" in [Ezekiel 36:26](#); and [Joel](#) called it "the Hidden One" in [Joel 2:20](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 52a.](#))



Noah Descending from Ararat (1889 painting by [Ivan Aivazovsky](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 9



[Genesis 6:18–7:8](#) in a Torah scroll

The Rabbis interpreted [Genesis 9](#) to set forth [seven Noahide laws](#) binding on all people: (1) to set up courts of justice, (2) not to commit idolatry, (3) not to commit blasphemy, (4) not to commit sexual immorality, (5) not to commit bloodshed ([Genesis 9:6](#)), (6) not to commit robbery, and (7) not to eat flesh cut from a living animal ([Genesis 9:4](#)). (Tosefta Avodah Zarah 8:4–6; see also [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 56a](#); Genesis Rabbah 34:8.) Rabbi Hanina taught that they were also commanded not to consume blood from a living animal. Rabbi Leazar taught that they were also commanded not to cross-breed animals. [Rabbi Simeon](#) taught that they were also commanded not to commit witchcraft.

Rabbi Johanan taught that they were also commanded not to emasculate animals. And [Rabbi Assi](#) taught that the children of Noah were also prohibited to do anything stated in [Deuteronomy 18:10–11](#): "There shall not be found among you any one that makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, one that uses divination, a soothsayer, or an enchanter, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or one that consults a ghost or a familiar spirit, or a necromancer." (Genesis Rabbah 34:8.) The Tosefta instructed that Israelites should not tempt anyone to violate a Noahide law. (Tosefta Demai 2:24.)

Rabbi Shimon ben Eleazar deduced from [Genesis 9:2](#) that even a one-day-old child scares small animals, but said that the corpse of even the giant [Og](#) of [Bashan](#) would need to be guarded from weasels and rats. (Tosefta Shabbat 17:19.)

Rabbi Tanhum ben Hanilai compared the laws of [kashrut](#) to the case of a physician who went to visit two patients, one whom the physician judged would live, and the other whom the physician judged would die. To the one who would live, the physician gave orders about what to eat and what not to eat. On the other hand, the physician told the one who would die to eat whatever the patient wanted. Thus to the nations who were not destined for life in the World to Come, God said in [Genesis 9:3](#), "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you." But to Israel, whom God intended for life in the World to Come, God said in [Leviticus 11:2](#), "These are the living things which you may eat." ([Leviticus Rabbah](#) 13:2.)

[Rabbi Akiva](#) said that it demonstrated the value of human beings that God created us in God's image, and that it was an act of still greater love that God let us know (in [Genesis 9:6](#)) that God had created us in God's image. ([Mishnah Avot 3:14](#).) And Rabbi Akiva also said that whoever spills blood diminishes the Divine image. (Tosefta Yevamot 8:7.) Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah and Ben Azzai both said that whoever does not have children diminishes the Divine image as demonstrated by proximity of the notice that God created us in God's image ([Genesis 9:6](#)) and the command to be fruitful and multiply ([Genesis 9:7](#)). (Tosefta Yevamot 8:7.)

[Rabbi Meir](#) taught that while it was certain that God would never again flood the world with water ([Genesis 9:11](#)), God might bring a flood of fire and brimstone, as God brought upon [Sodom and Gomorrah](#). (Tosefta Taanit 2:13)



Noah's Drunkenness (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)



The Drunkenness of Noah (1509 fresco by Michelangelo at the Sistine Chapel)

The Mishnah taught that the rainbow (of [Genesis 9:13](#)) was one of ten miraculous things that God created on the sixth day of creation at twilight on the eve of the Sabbath. (Avot 5:6) [Rabbi Jose](#) and Rabbi Judah disagreed whether verses of remembrance referring to the rainbow ([Genesis 9:15–16](#)) needed to be said together or individually. (Tosefta Rosh Hashanah 2:14)

The Gemara helped explain why (as [Genesis 9:13](#) reports) God chose a rainbow as the symbol of God's promise. The Mishnah taught with regard to those who take no thought for the honor of their Maker, that it would have been better if they had not been born. (Mishnah Chagigah 2:1; [Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 11b.](#)) Rabbi Abba read this Mishnah to refer to those who stare at a rainbow, while Rav Joseph said that it refers to those who commit transgressions in secret. The Gemara explained that those who stare at a rainbow affront God's honor, as [Ezekiel 1:28](#) compares God's appearance to that of a rainbow: "As the

appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." Thus those who stare at a rainbow behave as if they were staring directly at God. Similarly, Rabbi Judah ben Rabbi Nahmani, the speaker for Resh Lakish, taught that because [Ezekiel 1:28](#) compares God's appearance to that of a rainbow, staring at the rainbow harms one's eyesight. ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 16a.](#))



Noah damning Ham (19th Century painting by Ivan Stepanovitch Ksenofontov)



Noah's curse of Canaan (engraving by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

The Talmud deduced two possible explanations (attributed to [Rav](#) and [Rabbi Samuel](#)) for what Ham did to Noah to warrant Noah's curse of Canaan. According to one explanation, Ham [castrated](#) Noah, while the other says that Ham sexually abused Noah. The textual argument for castration goes this way: Since Noah cursed Ham by his fourth son Canaan, Ham must have injured Noah with respect to a fourth son, by emasculating him, thus depriving Noah of the possibility of a fourth son. The argument for abuse from the text draws an analogy between "and he saw" written in two places in the Bible: With regard to Ham and Noah, it was written, "And Ham the father of Canaan saw the nakedness of his father (Noah)"; while in [Genesis 34:2](#), it was written, "And when Shechem the son of Hamor saw her ([Dinah](#)), he took her and lay with her and defiled her." Thus this explanation deduced that similar abuse must have happened each

time that the Bible uses the same language. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 70a](#). See also Genesis Rabbah 36:7; Leviticus Rabbah 17:5.)

[[edit](#)] Genesis chapter 10

A [Baraita](#) employed [Genesis 10:6](#) to interpret the words "and Hebron was built seven years before [Zoan](#) in [Egypt](#)" in [Numbers 13:22](#) to mean that Hebron was seven times as fertile as Zoan. The Baraita rejected the plain meaning of "built," reasoning that Ham would not build a house for his younger son Canaan (in whose land was Hebron) before he built one for his elder son [Mizraim](#) (in whose land was Zoan, and [Genesis 10:6](#) lists (presumably in order of birth) "the sons of Ham: Cush, and Mizraim, and [Put](#), and Canaan." The Baraita also taught that among all the nations, there was none more fertile than Egypt, for [Genesis 13:10](#) says, "Like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt." And there was no more fertile spot in Egypt than Zoan, where kings lived, for [Isaiah 30:4](#) says of [Pharaoh](#), "his princes are at Zoan." And in all of Israel, there was no more rocky ground than that at Hebron, which is why the Patriarchs buried their dead there, as reported in [Genesis 49:31](#). But rocky Hebron was still seven times as fertile as lush Zoan. ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 112a](#).)

Rab and [Samuel](#) equated the Amraphel of [Genesis 14:1](#) with the [Nimrod](#) whom [Genesis 10:8](#) describes as "a mighty warrior on the earth," but the two differed over which was his real name. One held that his name was actually [Nimrod](#), and [Genesis 14:1](#)

calls him Amraphel because he ordered Abraham to be cast into a burning furnace (and thus the name Amraphel reflects the words for "he said" (*amar*) and "he cast" (*hipil*)). But the other held that his name was actually Amraphel, and [Genesis 10:8](#) calls him Nimrod because he led the world in rebellion against God (and thus the name Nimrod reflects the word for "he led in rebellion" (*himrid*)). ([Babylonian Talmud Eruvin 53a.](#))



Building the Tower of Babel (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 11

The Tosefta taught that the men of the Tower of Babel acted arrogantly before God only because God had been so good to them (in [Genesis 11:1–2](#)) as to give them a single language and allow them to settle in Shinar. And as usage elsewhere indicated that "settle" meant "eat and drink" (see [Exodus 32:6](#)), this eating

and drinking was what led them to say (in [Genesis 11:4](#)) that they wanted to build the Tower. (Tosefta Sotah 3:10.)



The Tower of Babel (1594 painting by [Lucas van Valckenborch](#) at the [Louvre](#))

Rabbi Levi, or some say Rabbi Jonathan, said that a tradition handed down from the Men of the [Great Assembly](#) taught that wherever the Bible employs the term "and it was" or "and it came to pass" (וַיְהִי, *wa-yehi*), as it does in [Genesis 11:2](#), it indicates misfortune, as one can read *wa-yehi* as *wai, hi*, "woe, sorrow." Thus the words, "And it came to pass," in [Genesis 11:2](#) are followed by the words, "Come, let us build us a city," in [Genesis 11:4](#). And the Gemara also cited the instances of [Genesis 6:1](#) followed by [Genesis 6:5](#); [Genesis 14:1](#) followed by [Genesis 14:2](#); [Joshua 5:13](#)

followed by the rest of [Joshua 5:13](#); [Joshua 6:27](#) followed by [Joshua 7:1](#); [1 Samuel 1:1](#) followed by [1 Samuel 1:5](#); [1 Samuel 8:1](#) followed by [1 Samuel 8:3](#); [1 Samuel 18:14](#) close after [1 Samuel 18:9](#); [2 Samuel 7:1](#) followed by [1 Kings 8:19](#); [Ruth 1:1](#) followed by the rest of [Ruth 1:1](#); and [Esther 1:1](#) followed by [Haman](#). But the Gemara also cited as counterexamples the words, "And there was evening and there was morning one day," in [Genesis 1:5](#), as well as [Genesis 29:10](#), and [1 Kings 6:1](#). So [Rav Ashi](#) replied that *wa-yebi* sometimes presages misfortune, and sometimes it does not, but the expression "and it came to pass in the days of" always presages misfortune. And for that proposition, the Gemara cited [Genesis 14:1](#), [Isaiah 7:1](#) [Jeremiah 1:3](#), [Ruth 1:1](#), and [Esther 1:1](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 10b](#).)



The Confusion of Tongues (engraving by Gustave Doré from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

Rabbi [Simeon bar Yohai](#) taught that the report of [Genesis 11:5](#) that "the Lord came down to see the city and the tower" was one of ten instances when the Torah reports that God descended. (Genesis Rabbah 38:9.)

The Sages taught that the God who punished the generation of the Flood and the generation of the Dispersion would take vengeance on people who renege on their word after money has been paid. (Mishnah Bava Metzia 4:2; [Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 44a.](#))



The Dispersion (engraving by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

The Gemara taught that Abraham asked God if God would ever punish Israel for its sins as God did to the generation of the Flood or the generation of the Dispersion, and God replied that

God would not. God told Abraham that God had provided the order of sacrifices for Israel in the Torah, and whenever Jews read these passages, God would consider it as if they had offered the sacrifices, and God would pardon them for all their iniquities. ([Babylonian Talmud Taanit 27b](#), [Megillah 31b](#).)

The Gemara taught that Sarah was one of seven prophetesses who prophesied to Israel and neither took away from nor added anything to what is written in the Torah. (The other prophetesses were [Miriam](#), [Deborah](#), [Hannah](#), [Abigail](#), [Huldah](#), and [Esther](#).)

The Gemara derived Sarah's status as a prophetess from the words, "Haran, the father of Milkah and the father of Yiscah," in [Genesis 11:29](#). Rabbi Isaac taught that Yiscah was Sarah. [Genesis 11:29](#) called her Yiscah (יִסְכָּח) because she discerned (*saketah*) by means of Divine inspiration, as [Genesis 21:12](#) reports God instructing Abraham, "In all that Sarah says to you, hearken to her voice." Alternatively, [Genesis 11:29](#) called her Yiscah because all gazed (*sakin*) at her beauty. ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 14a](#).)

[Rav Nahman](#) said in the name of Rabbah bar Abbuha that the redundant report, "And Sarai was barren; she had no child," in [Genesis 11:30](#) demonstrated that Sarah was incapable of procreation because she did not have a womb. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 64b](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

[Maimonides](#) cited the parshah for one positive [commandment](#):

- To "be fruitful and multiply" ([Genesis 9:7](#))

(Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#), Positive Commandment 212. [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 1:228. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#).)

The [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), however, attributed the commandment to [Genesis 1:28](#). (*Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:82–85. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-515-8](#).)



Isaiah (1509 fresco by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel)

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is:

- for [Ashkenazi Jews](#), [Yemenite Jews](#), and [Mizrahi Jews](#):
[Isaiah 54:1–55:5](#)
- for [Sephardi Jews](#): [Isaiah 55:1–10](#)

- for some Yemenite communities: [Isaiah 54:1–55:3](#)
- for [Italian Jews](#): [Isaiah 54:1–55:5](#)
- for [Karaite Jews](#): [Isaiah 54:9–55:12](#)
- for [Frankfurt am Main](#) and [Chabad Lubavitch](#): [Isaiah 54:1–10](#)

[[edit](#)] Connection to the Parshah

The parshah and haftarah both tell the power of God's covenant. The parshah (in [Genesis 6:18](#) and [9:8–11](#)) and the haftarah (in [Isaiah 54:9–10](#)) both report God's covenant with Noah never again to destroy the earth by flood. In the parshah (in [Genesis 6:13](#)) and the haftarah (in [Isaiah 54:7–8](#)), God confesses to anger at human transgression. In the wake of God's punishment, [Genesis 9:11,15](#) and [Isaiah 54:10](#) and [55:3](#) all use the words "no . . . more" (*lo' 'ad*). The "righteousness" of Israel's children in [Isaiah 54:14](#) echoes that Noah is "righteous" in his age in [Genesis 6:9](#).

[[edit](#)] In the liturgy

God's dominion over the Flood in [Genesis 7:6–8:14](#) is reflected in [Psalm 29:10](#), which is in turn one of the six Psalms recited at the beginning of the Kabbalat Shabbat [prayer service](#) and again as the Torah is returned to the [Torah ark](#) at the end of the Shabbat morning Torah service. ([Reuven Hammer](#). *Or Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 20, 153. New York: The [Rabbinical Assembly](#), 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-](#)

8. Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals with an Interlinear Translation*, 69, 399. Brooklyn: [Mesorah Publications](#), 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-697-3](#).)

Some Jews read the words "for in the image of God made He man" from [Genesis 9:6](#) as they study [chapter 3](#) of *Pirkei Avot* on a Sabbath between [Passover](#) and [Rosh Hashanah](#). (Davis. *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 553.) And then they encounter the discussion of the ten generations from Adam to the Flood and then the ten generations from Noah to Abraham (enumerated in [Genesis 11:10–26](#)) as they study [chapter 5](#) of *Pirkei Avot* thereafter. (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 568.)

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Ancient



Gilgamesh tablet

- [Atra-Hasis](#). Mesopotamia, 18th century BCE. In, e.g., W.G. Lambert and [A.R. Millard](#), *Atra-Hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1999. [ISBN 1-57506-039-6](#)

- [Epic of Gilgamesh tablet 11](#). Mesopotamia, 14th–11th century BCE. In e.g. [James B. Pritchard](#). *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 93–95. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. [ISBN 0-691-03503-2](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 1:28](#) (to be fruitful); [19:23–29](#) (God’s destruction of [Sodom and Gomorrah](#)); [35:11&src=! 35:11](#) (to be fruitful).
- [Exodus 12:29–30](#)(God’s destruction of Egypt’s firstborn).
- [Isaiah 54:9–10](#).
- [Jeremiah 18:1–10](#); [23:3](#).
- [Ezekiel 9:4–6](#) (God’s destruction of Jerusalem’s sinners); [14:20](#) (Noah as righteous intercessor).

[\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic

- [The Book of Noah. Jerusalem](#), early 2nd century BCE.
- [The Genesis Apocryphon](#). [Dead Sea scroll](#) 1Q20. Land of Israel, 1st century BCE. Reprinted in [Géza Vermes](#). *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 448, 450–53. New York: Penguin Press, 1997. [ISBN 0-7139-9131-3](#).



Josephus

- [Josephus](#), *Antiquities of the Jews* 1:3:2–3, 5, 7–8, 4:1, 6:1, 3–5. Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 32–38. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).
- [Qur'an](#) [3:33–34](#); [4:163](#); [6:84](#); [7:59–64](#); [9:70](#); [71:1–28](#). Arabia, 7th century.

[[edit](#)] Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): Sanhedrin 10:3; [Avot 3:14](#), 5:6. Land of Israel, circa 200 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#). New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Tosefta](#): Demai 2:24; Shabbat 17:19; Rosh Hashanah 1:3, 2:14; Taanit 2:13; Yevamot 8:7; Sotah 3:6–10, 4:11, 10:3; Bava Kamma 9:31; Sanhedrin 13:6–7; Avodah Zarah 8:4–6. Land of Israel, circa 300 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).

- [Sifra](#) 34:1, 4; 35:2; 93:1; 99:5; 108:2; 109:3; 243:1. Land of Israel, 4th century CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Sifra: An Analytical Translation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:211, 214–15, 219; 2:87, 134, 173, 178; 3:286. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988. Vol. 1 [ISBN 1-55540-205-4](#). Vol. 2 [ISBN 1-55540-206-2](#). Vol. 3 [ISBN 1-55540-207-0](#).



Talmud

- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Berakhot 40a, 45a. Land of Israel, circa 400 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vol. 1. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2005.
- Genesis Rabbah 30:1–38:14. Land of Israel, 5th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Leviticus Rabbah](#) 17:5. Land of Israel, 5th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Leviticus*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 25b, 40a](#); [Shabbat 31b, 109a, 113b, 137a, 150a, 151b](#); [Eruvin 18a–b, 53a, 65a](#); [Pesachim 3a, 54a](#); [Yoma 9b–10a, 52b, 75a, 76a, 85a](#); [Sukkah 52a](#); [Rosh Hashanah 10b, 11b–12a](#); [Ta'anit 19a, 27b](#); [Megillah 9b, 14a, 17a](#); [Moed Katan 25b](#); [Chagigah 12a, 16a](#); [Yevamot 62a, 63b, 64b](#); [Ketubot 8a, 77b, 112a](#); [Sotah 34b, 45b](#); [Kiddushin 13a, 30b](#); [Bava Kamma 91b](#); [Bava Metzia 44a, 106b](#); [Bava Batra 16b, 74a](#); [Sanhedrin 17a, 24a, 38b, 44a, 56a–57b, 58b–59b, 69b–70a, 72b, 84b, 91a, 100b, 108a–09a](#); [Makkot 8b, 11a](#); [Shevuot 36a](#); [Avodah Zarah 5a–6a, 11b, 19a, 23b, 51a](#); [Horayot 13a](#); [Zevachim 108b, 113b, 115b–16a](#); [Chullin 23a, 89a, 102a, 139b](#); [Bekhorot 46b, 57a](#); [Temurah 28b](#); [Keritot 6b](#); [Meilah 16a](#). Babylonia, 6th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.



Rashi

[\[edit\]](#) Medieval

- [Rashi](#). *Commentary*. [Genesis 6–11](#). [Troyes](#), France, late 11th century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With*

Rasbi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated.

Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg,
1:65–114. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1995. [ISBN
0-89906-026-9](#).

- [Zohar 59b–76b](#). Spain, late 13th century. Reprinted in,
e.g., *The Zohar*. Translated by Harry Sperling and Maurice
Simon. 5 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1934.

[\[edit\]](#) Modern

- [Thomas Hobbes](#). [Leviathan](#), [3:34](#), [38](#). England, 1651.
Reprint edited by [C. B. Macpherson](#), 430–31, 486.
Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1982. [ISBN
0140431950](#).
- "[Mary Don't You Weep](#)." United States, 19th century.



Dickinson

- [Emily Dickinson](#). [Poem 48 \(Once more, my now bewildered Dove\)](#). Circa 1858. [Poem 403 \(The Winters are so short —\)](#). Circa 1862. [Poem 1473 \(We talked with each other about each other\)](#). Circa 1879. In *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*.

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Wiesel

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Steinsaltz

- [Adin Steinsaltz](#). *Simple Words: Thinking About What Really Matters in Life*, 49. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999. [ISBN 068484642X](#).
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[[edit](#)] See also

- [Curse of Ham](#)

- [Noah in rabbinic literature](#)
- [Seven Laws of Noah](#)

[\[edit\]](#) External links

[\[edit\]](#) Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, California](#)
- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
- [Aish.com](#)
- [American Jewish University](#)
- [Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles](#)
- [Bar-Ilan University](#)
- [Chabad.org](#)

- [Department for Jewish Zionist Education](#)
- [eparsha.com](#)
- [Jewish Theological Seminary](#)
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- [RabbiShimon.com](#)
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- [Torah from Dixie](#)
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- [Union for Reform Judaism](#)
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Lech-Lecha

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Lech-Lecha, **Lekh-Lekha**, or **Lech-L'cha** (לֵךְ-לְךָ — [Hebrew](#) for "go!" or "leave!" or "go for you" — the [fifth and sixth words](#) in the parshah) is the third [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#). It constitutes [Genesis 12:1–17:27](#). [Jews](#) read it on the third [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in October or November.



Abram and Melchizedek (painting circa 1625 by [Peter Paul Rubens](#))

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary

[\[edit\]](#) The calling of Abram



Abram Journeying into the Land of Canaan (engraving by [Gustave Doré](#) from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

[God](#) told [Abram](#) to leave his native land and his father's house for a land that God would show him, promising to make of him a great nation, [bless](#) him, make his name great, bless those who blessed him, and curse those who cursed him. ([Genesis 12:1–3](#)) Following God's command, at age 75, Abram took his wife [Sarai](#), his nephew [Lot](#), and the wealth and persons that they had acquired in [Haran](#), and traveled to the terebinth of [Moreh](#), at [Shechem](#) in [Canaan](#). ([Genesis 12:4–6](#))



Abram's Counsel to Sarai (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

God appeared to Abram to tell him that God would assign [the land](#) to his heirs, and Abram built an [altar](#) to God. ([Genesis 12:7](#))

Abram then moved to the hill country east of [Bethel](#) and built an altar to God there and invoked God by name. ([Genesis 12:8](#))

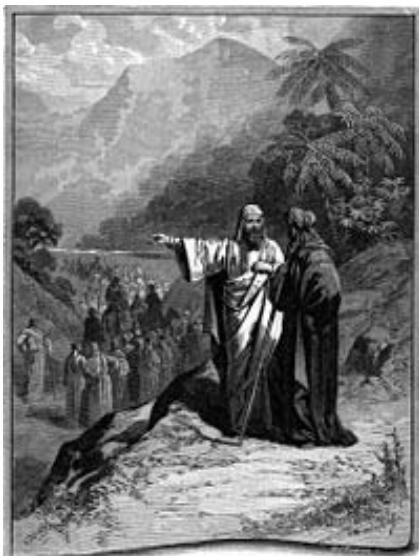
Then Abram journeyed toward the Negeb. ([Genesis 12:9](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Wife as sister

Famine struck the land, so Abram went down to [Egypt](#), asking Sarai to [say that she was his sister](#) so that the Egyptians would not kill him. ([Genesis 12:10–13](#)) When they entered Egypt, [Pharaoh](#)'s courtiers praised her beauty to Pharaoh, and she was taken into Pharaoh's palace. Pharaoh took Sarai as his wife. ([Genesis 12:14–15](#)) Because of her, Abram acquired sheep, oxen, donkeys, slaves, and camels, but God afflicted Pharaoh and his household with mighty plagues. ([Genesis 12:16–17](#)) Pharaoh questioned Abram why he had not told Pharaoh that Sarai was

Abram's wife, but had said that she was his sister. ([Genesis 12:18–19](#)) Pharaoh returned Sarai to Abram and had his men take them away with all their possessions. ([Genesis 12:19–20](#))

[edit] Abram and Lot divide the land



Abraham and Lot Divided the Land (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)

Abram, Sarai, and Lot returned to the altar near Bethel. ([Genesis 13:1–4](#)) Abram and Lot now had so many sheep and cattle that the land could not support them both, and their herdsmen quarreled. ([Genesis 13:5–7](#)) Abram proposed to Lot that they separate, inviting Lot to choose which land he would take. ([Genesis 13:8–9](#)) Lot saw how well watered the plain of the [Jordan](#) was, so he chose it for himself, and journeyed eastward,

settling near [Sodom](#), a city of very wicked sinners, while Abram remained in Canaan. ([Genesis 13:10–13](#))

God promised to give all the land that Abram could see to him and his offspring forever, and to make his offspring as numerous as the dust of the earth. ([Genesis 13:14–17](#)) Abram moved to the terebinths of [Mamre](#) in [Hebron](#), and built an altar there to God. ([Genesis 13:18](#))

[[edit](#)] War between the four kings and the five



Meeting of Abram and Melchizedek (painting circa 1464–1467 by [Dieric Bouts the Elder](#))

The [Mesopotamian](#) Kings [Amraphel](#) of [Shinar](#), [Arioch](#) of Ellasar, [Chedorlaomer](#) of [Elam](#), and Tidal of Goiim made war on the Canaanite kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, [Admah](#), [Zeboiim](#), and Zoar, who joined forces at the [Valley of Siddim](#), now the [Dead Sea](#). ([Genesis 14:1–3](#)) The Canaanite kings had served

Chedorlaomer for twelve years, but rebelled in the thirteenth year. ([Genesis 14:4](#)) In the fourteenth year, Chedorlaomer and the Mesopotamian kings with him went on a military campaign and defeated several peoples in and around Canaan: the [Rephaim](#), the [Zuzim](#), the [Emim](#), the [Horites](#), the [Amalekites](#), and the [Amorites](#). ([Genesis 14:5–7](#)) Then the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar engaged the four Mesopotamian kings in battle in the Valley of Siddim. ([Genesis 14:8–9](#)) The Mesopotamians routed the Canaanites, and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled into [bitumen](#) pits in the valley, while the rest escaped to the hill country. ([Genesis 14:10](#)) The Mesopotamians seized all the wealth of Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as Lot and his possessions, and departed. ([Genesis 14:11–12](#))

A fugitive brought the news to Abram, who mustered his 318 retainers, and pursued the invaders north to [Dan](#). ([Genesis 14:13–14](#)) Abram and his servants defeated them at night, chased them north of [Damascus](#), and brought back all the people and possessions, including Lot and his possessions. ([Genesis 14:15–16](#))

When Abram returned, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh, the Valley of the King. ([Genesis 14:17](#)) King [Melchizedek](#) of Salem ([Jerusalem](#)), a priest of [God Most High](#), brought out bread and wine and blessed Abram and God Most High, and Abram gave him a [tenth](#) of everything. ([Genesis 14:18–20](#)) The king of Sodom offered Abram to keep all the possessions if he would merely return the people, but Abram swore to God Most High not to take so much as a thread or a

sandal strap from Sodom, but would take only shares for the men who went with him. ([Genesis 14:21–24](#))

[\[edit\]](#) The covenant between the pieces



The Vision of the Lord Directing Abram to Count the Stars
(woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

Some time later, the word of God appeared to Abram, saying not to fear, for his reward would be very great, but Abram questioned what God could give him, as he was destined to die childless, and his steward [Eliezer](#) of Damascus would be his heir. ([Genesis 15:1–3](#)) The word of God replied that Eliezer would not be his heir, Abram's own son would. ([Genesis 15:4](#)) God took Abram outside and bade him to count the stars, for so numerous would his offspring be, and because Abram put his trust in God, God reckoned it to his merit. ([Genesis 15:5–6](#)) God directed Abram to bring three heifers, three goats, three rams, a turtledove, and a bird, to cut the non-birds in two, and to place each half opposite the other. ([Genesis 15:9–10](#)) Abram drove away birds of prey that

came down upon the carcasses, and as the sun was about to set, he fell into a deep sleep. ([Genesis 15:11–12](#)) God told Abram that his offspring would be strangers in a land not theirs, and be enslaved 400 years, but God would execute judgment on the nation they were to serve, and in the end they would go free with great wealth and return in the fourth generation, after the iniquity of the Amorites was complete. ([Genesis 15:13–16](#)) And there appeared a smoking oven, and a flaming torch, which passed between the pieces. ([Genesis 15:17](#)) And God made a covenant with Abram to assign to his offspring the land from the river of Egypt to the [Euphrates](#): the land of the [Kenites](#), the Kenizzites, the [Kadmonites](#), the [Hittites](#), the [Perizzites](#), the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the [Jebusites](#). ([Genesis 15:18–21](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Hagar and Ishmael





Sarah Presenting Hagar to Abraham (1699 painting by [Adriaen van der Werff](#))

Having borne no children after 10 years in Canaan, Sarai bade Abram to consort with her Egyptian [maidservant Hagar](#), so that Sarai might have a son through her, and Abram did as Sarai requested. ([Genesis 16:1–3](#)) When Hagar saw that she had conceived, Sarai was lowered in her esteem, and Sarai complained to Abram. ([Genesis 16:4–5](#)) Abram told Sarai that her maid was in her hands, and Sarai treated her harshly, so Hagar ran away. ([Genesis 16:6](#))



Hagar and the Angel in the Desert (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

An [angel](#) of God found Hagar by a spring of water in the wilderness, and asked her where she came from and where she was going, and she replied that she was running away from her mistress. ([Genesis 16:7–8](#)) The angel told her to go back to her mistress and submit to her harsh treatment, for God would make Hagar’s offspring too numerous to count; she would bear a son whom she should name [Ishmael](#), for God had paid heed to her suffering. ([Genesis 16:9–11](#)) Ishmael would be a wild donkey of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone’s hand against him, but he would dwell alongside his kinsmen. ([Genesis 16:12](#)) Hagar called God “[El-roi](#),” meaning that she had gone on seeing after God saw her, and the well was called Beer-lahai-roi. ([Genesis 16:13–14](#)) And when Abram was 86 years old, Hagar bore him a son, and Abram gave him the name Ishmael. ([Genesis 16:15–16](#))

[[edit](#)] The covenant of circumcision

When Abram was 99 years old, God appeared to Abram as [El Shaddai](#) and asked him to walk in God’s ways and be blameless, for God would establish a covenant with him and make him exceedingly numerous. ([Genesis 17:1–2](#)) Abram threw himself on his face, and God changed his name from Abram to Abraham, promising to make him the father of a multitude of nations and kings. ([Genesis 17:3–6](#)) God promised to maintain the covenant with Abraham and his offspring as an everlasting covenant throughout the ages, and assigned all the land of Canaan to him and his offspring as an everlasting holding. ([Genesis 17:7–8](#)) God

further told Abraham that he and his offspring throughout the ages were to keep God's covenant and every male (including every slave) was to be [circumcised](#) in the flesh of his foreskin at the age of eight days as a sign of the covenant with God. ([Genesis 17:9–13](#)) If any male failed to circumcise the flesh of his foreskin, that person was to be cut off from his kin for having broken God's covenant. ([Genesis 17:14](#))

And God renamed Sarai as Sarah, and told Abraham that God would bless her and give Abraham a son by her so that she would give rise to nations and rulers. ([Genesis 17:15–16](#)) Abraham threw himself on his face and laughed at the thought that a child could be born to a man of a hundred and a woman of ninety, and Abraham asked God to bless Ishmael. ([Genesis 17:17–18](#)) But God told him that Sarah would bear Abraham a son, and Abraham was to name him [Isaac](#), and God would maintain the everlasting covenant with him and his offspring. ([Genesis 17:19](#)) In response to Abraham's prayer, God blessed Ishmael as well and promised to make him exceedingly numerous, the father of twelve chieftains and a great nation. ([Genesis 17:20](#)) But God would maintain the covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah would bear at the same season the next year. ([Genesis 17:21](#)) And when God finished speaking, God disappeared. ([Genesis 17:22](#)) That very day, Abraham circumcised himself at the age of 99, Ishmael at the age of 13, and every male in his household, as God had directed. ([Genesis 17:23–27](#))



God's Promise to Abram (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)



The Caravan of Abram (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 12

While [Genesis 11:31](#) reports that Abram's father [Terah](#) took Abram, Lot, and Sarai from [Ur](#) of the [Chaldees](#) to Haran, and [Genesis 12:1](#) subsequently reports God's call to Abram to leave his country and his father's house, [Nehemiah 9:7](#) reports that God chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldees.

[\[edit\]](#) In early nonrabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 12

[Acts 7:2–4](#) reported that God appeared to Abram while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and told him to leave his country and his people, and then he left the land of the Chaldeans to settle in Haran. And then after Terah's death, God sent Abraham to Canaan.

[Philo](#) interpreted Abram's migration allegorically as the story of a soul devoted to virtue and searching for the true God. (*[On the Migration of Abraham](#)* 15:68.)

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 12



God's Promises to Abram (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

A [midrash](#) asked why God chose Abram. [Rabbi Hiyya](#) said that Abram's father Terah manufactured [idols](#) and once went away and left Abram to mind the store. A woman came with a plateful of flour and asked Abram to offer it to the idols. Abram took a stick, broke the idols, and put the stick in the largest idol's hand. When Terah returned, he demanded that Abram explain what he had done. Abram told Terah that the idols fought among themselves and the largest broke the others with the stick. “Why do you make sport of me?” Terah cried, “Do they have any knowledge?” Abram replied, “Listen to what you are saying!” ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 38:13.)

The [Mishnah](#) taught that Abraham suffered ten trials — starting at [Genesis 12:1](#) — and withstood them all. ([Avot 5:3](#).) The Babylonian [Talmud](#) reported that some deduced from [Genesis](#)

[12:1–2](#) that change of place can cancel a man’s doom, but another argued that it was the merit of the land of Israel that availed Abraham. ([Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 16b.](#))



Abram's Journey from Ur to Canaan (1850 painting by József Molnár)

[Rabbi Berekiah](#) noted that in [Genesis 12:2](#), God had already said, “I will bless you,” and so asked what God added by then saying, “and you be a blessing.” Rabbi Berekiah explained that God was thereby conveying to Abraham that up until that point, God had to bless God’s world, but thereafter, God entrusted the ability to bless to Abraham, and Abraham could thenceforth bless whomever it pleased him to bless. (Genesis Rabbah 39:11.)

[Rabbi Eleazar](#) interpreted the words, “And in you shall the families of the earth be blessed (וְנִבְרַכְּךָ, *venivrechku*)” in [Genesis 12:3](#) to teach that God told Abram that God had two good shoots to graft (*lihavrich*) onto Abram’s family tree: Ruth the

[Moabites](#) (whom [Ruth 4:13–22](#) reports was the ancestor of [David](#)) and [Naamah](#) the [Ammonite](#) (whom [1 Kings 14:21](#) reports was the mother of [Rehoboam](#) and thus the ancestor of good kings like [Hezekiah](#)). And Rabbi Eleazar interpreted the words, “All the families of the earth,” in [Genesis 12:3](#) to teach that even the other families who live on the earth are blessed only for Israel’s sake. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 63a.](#))



Abram and Lot Depart Out of Haran (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

Rab Judah deduced from [Genesis 12:3](#) that to refuse to say grace when given a cup to bless is one of three things that shorten a

man's life. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 55a.](#)) And Rabbi Joshua ben Levi deduced from [Genesis 12:3](#) that every [kohen](#) who pronounces the benediction is himself blessed. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 38b.](#))

[Resh Lakish](#) deduced from [Genesis 12:5](#) that the Torah regards the man who teaches Torah to his neighbor's son as though he had fashioned him. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 99b.](#))

Similarly, Rabbi Leazar in the name of Rabbi [Jose ben Zimra](#) observed that if all the nations assembled to create one insect they could not bring it to life, yet [Genesis 12:5](#) says, "the souls whom they had made in Haran." Rabbi Leazar in the name of Rabbi Jose ben Zimra interpreted the words "the souls whom they had made" to refer to the proselytes whom Abram and Sarai had converted. The midrash asked why then [Genesis 12:5](#) did not simply say, "whom they had converted," and instead says, "whom they had made." The midrash answered that [Genesis 12:5](#) thus teaches that one who brings a nonbeliever near to God is like one who created a life. Noting that [Genesis 12:5](#) does not say, "whom he had made," but instead says "whom they had made," Rabbi Hunia taught that Abraham converted the men, and Sarah converted the women. (Genesis Rabbah 39:14.)



Abram Called To Be a Blessing (illustration from a Bible card published 1906 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

The Mishnah equated the terebinth of Moreh to which Abram journeyed in [Genesis 12:6](#) with the terebinths of Moreh to which [Moses](#) directed the [Israelites](#) to journey in [Deuteronomy 11:30](#) to hear the blessings and curses at [Mount Gerizim](#) and [Mount Ebal](#) ([Mishnah Sotah 7:5](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sotah 32a](#)), and the Talmud equated both with Shechem. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 33b](#).)

Rabbi Elazar said that one should always anticipate misfortune with prayer; for it was only by virtue of Abram's prayer between Beth-el and [Ai](#) reported in [Genesis 12:8](#) that Israel's troops survived at the Battle of Ai in the days of [Joshua](#)." ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 44b](#).)

The Rabbis deduced from [Genesis 12:10](#) that when there is a famine in town, one should emigrate. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Kamma 60b.](#))

[Rab](#) deduced from [Genesis 12:11](#) that Abram had not even looked at his own wife before that point. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 16a.](#))

Reading the words, “And it came to pass, that, when Abram came into Egypt,” in [Genesis 12:14](#), a midrash asked why the text at that point mentioned Abraham but not Sarai. The midrash taught that Abram had put Sarai in a box and locked her in. The midrash told that when Abram came to the Egyptian customs house, the customs officer demanded that Abram pay the custom duty on the box and its contents, and Abram agreed to pay. The customs officer proposed that Abram must have been carrying garments in the box, and Abram agreed to pay the duty for garments. The customs officer then proposed that Abram must have been carrying silks in the box, and Abram agreed to pay the duty for silks. The customs officer then proposed that Abram must have been carrying precious stones in the box, and Abram agreed to pay the duty for precious stones. But then the customs officer insisted that Abram open the box so that the customs officers could see what it contained. As soon as Abram opened the box, Sarai’s beauty illuminated the land of Egypt. (Genesis Rabbah 40:5.)



The Egyptians Admire Sarai's Beauty (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)



Sarai Is Taken to Pharaoh's Palace (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Rabbi Azariah and [Rabbi Jonathan](#) in Rabbi Isaac's name taught that [Eve's](#) image was transmitted to the reigning beauties of each generation (setting the standard of beauty). [1 Kings 1:4](#) says of David's comforter [Abishag](#), “And the damsel was very fair” — יָפָה עַד-מְאֹד, *yafah ad me'od* — which the midrash interpreted to mean that she attained to Eve's beauty (as עַד-מְאֹד, *ad me'od*,

implies אָדָם, Adam, and thus Eve). And [Genesis 12:14](#) says, “the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair” — תְּנִיפָה, *me'od* — which the midrash interpreted to mean that Sarai was even more beautiful than Eve. Reading the words, “And the princes of Pharaoh saw her, and praised her to Pharaoh,” in [Genesis 12:15](#), [Rabbi Johanan](#) told that they tried to outbid each other for the right to enter Pharaoh's palace with Sarai. One prince said that he would give a hundred [dinars](#) for the right to enter the palace with Sarai, whereupon another bid two hundred dinars. (Genesis Rabbah 40:5.)

Rabbi Helbo deduced from [Genesis 12:16](#) that a man must always observe the honor due to his wife, because blessings rest on a man's home only on account of her. ([Babylonian Talmud Baba Metzia 59a.](#))

Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani said in the name of Rabbi Johanan that leprosy resulted from seven things: slander, bloodshed, vain oath, incest, arrogance, robbery, and envy. The [Gemara](#) cited God's striking Pharaoh with plagues in [Genesis 12:17](#) to show that incest had led to leprosy. ([Babylonian Talmud Arachin 16a.](#))

[[edit](#)] Genesis chapter 13



Lot and Abram (mosaic circa 432–440 in the nave of the [Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore](#) in [Rome](#))



The Oak of Hebron (illustration from the 1865 *The Land of Israel, a Journal of Travels in Palestine* by [H.B. Tristram](#))

A Baraita deduced from the words, “like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt,” in [Genesis 13:10](#) that among all the nations, there was none more fertile than Egypt. And the Baraita taught that there was no more fertile spot in Egypt than Zoan, where kings lived, for [Isaiah 30:4](#) says of [Pharaoh](#), “his princes are at Zoan.” And in all of Israel, there was no more rocky ground than that at Hebron, which is why the Patriarchs buried their dead there, as reported in [Genesis 49:31](#). But rocky Hebron was still seven times as fertile as lush Zoan, as the Baraita interpreted the words “and Hebron was built seven years before [Zoan](#) in [Egypt](#)” in [Numbers 13:22](#) to mean that Hebron was seven times as fertile as Zoan. The Baraita rejected the plain meaning of “built,” reasoning that [Ham](#) would not build a house for his younger son [Canaan](#) (in whose land was Hebron) before he built one for his elder son [Mizraim](#) (in whose land was Zoan, and [Genesis 10:6](#) lists (presumably in order of birth) “the sons of Ham: [Cush](#), and Mizraim, and [Put](#), and Canaan.” ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 112a.](#))

Rabbi Issi taught that there was no city in the plain better than Sodom, for Lot had searched through all the cities of the plain and found none like Sodom. Thus the people of Sodom were the best of all, yet as [Genesis 13:13](#) reports, “the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners.” They were “wicked” to each other, “sinners” in adultery, “against the Lord” in idolatry, and “exceedingly” engaged in bloodshed. (Genesis Rabbah 41:7.)

The Mishnah deduced from [Genesis 13:13](#) that the men of Sodom would have no place in the world to come. ([Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:3](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 107b, 109a.](#))

[[edit](#)] Genesis chapter 14



Abraham Makes the Enemies Flee Who Hold His Nephew (1613
etching by [Antonio Tempesta](#) at the [National Gallery of Art](#))



Abram Rescues Lot, the Women, and Goods (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

Rabbi Levi, or some say Rabbi Jonathan, said that a tradition handed down from the Men of the [Great Assembly](#) taught that wherever the Bible employs the term “and it was” or “and it came to pass” (וַיְהִי, *wa-yehi*), as it does in [Genesis 14:1](#), it indicates misfortune, as one can read *wa-yehi* as *wai, hi*, “woe, sorrow.” Thus the words, “And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel,” in [Genesis 14:1](#), are followed by the words, “they made war,” in [Genesis 14:2](#). And the Gemara also cited the instances of [Genesis 6:1](#) followed by [Genesis 6:5](#); [Genesis 11:2](#) followed by [Genesis 11:4](#); [Joshua 5:13](#) followed by the rest of [Joshua 5:13](#); [Joshua 6:27](#) followed by [Joshua 7:1](#); [1 Samuel 1:1](#) followed by [1 Samuel 1:5](#); [1 Samuel 8:1](#) followed by [1 Samuel 8:3](#); [1 Samuel 18:14](#) close after

[1 Samuel 18:9](#); [2 Samuel 7:1](#) followed by [1 Kings 8:19](#); [Ruth 1:1](#) followed by the rest of [Ruth 1:1](#); and [Esther 1:1](#) followed by [Haman](#). But the Gemara also cited as counterexamples the words, “And there was evening and there was morning one day,” in [Genesis 1:5](#), as well as [Genesis 29:10](#), and [1 Kings 6:1](#). So [Rav Ashi](#) replied that *wa-yehi* sometimes presages misfortune, and sometimes it does not, but the expression “and it came to pass in the days of” always presages misfortune. And for that proposition, the Gemara cited [Genesis 14:1](#), [Isaiah 7:1](#) [Jeremiah 1:3](#), [Ruth 1:1](#), and [Esther 1:1](#). (Babylonian Talmud Megillah 10b.)



Lot and His Family Recalled Home by Abraham (1613 etching by Antonio Tempesta at the National Gallery of Art)

Rab and [Samuel](#) equated the Amraphel of [Genesis 14:1](#) with the [Nimrod](#) whom [Genesis 10:8](#) describes as “a mighty warrior on the earth,” but the two differed over which was his real name. One held that his name was actually [Nimrod](#), and [Genesis 14:1](#) calls him Amraphel because he ordered Abram to be cast into a burning furnace (and thus the name Amraphel reflects the words

for “he said” (*amar*) and “he cast” (*hipil*). But the other held that his name was actually Amraphel, and [Genesis 10:8](#) calls him Nimrod because he led the world in rebellion against God (and thus the name Nimrod reflects the word for “he led in rebellion” (*himrid*)). ([Babylonian Talmud Eruvin 53a.](#))



Abram and Melchizedek (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

Rabbi [Abbahu](#) said in Rabbi Eleazar’s name that “his trained men” in [Genesis 14:14](#) meant Torah scholars, and thus when Abram made them fight to rescue Lot, he brought punishment on himself and his children, who were consequently enslaved in Egyptian for 210 years. But Samuel said that Abram was punished because he questioned whether God would keep God’s promise, when in [Genesis 15:8](#) Abram asked God “how shall I know that I shall inherit it?” And [Rabbi Johanan](#) said that Abram was punished because he prevented people from entering beneath the wings of the [Shekhinah](#) and being saved, when in [Genesis](#)

[14:21](#) the king of Sodom said it to Abram, “Give me the persons, and take the goods yourself,” and Abram consented to leave the prisoners with the king of Sodom. ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 32a.](#))

Rab interpreted the words “And he armed his trained servants, born in his own house” in [Genesis 14:14](#) to mean that Abram equipped them by teaching them the Torah. Samuel read the word *vayarek* (“he armed”) to mean “bright,” and thus interpreted the words “And he armed his trained servants” in [Genesis 14:14](#) to mean that Abram made them bright with gold, that is, rewarded them for accompanying him. ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 32a.](#))





Melchisedec King of Salem blesses Abram (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

Reading the report in [Genesis 14:14](#) that Abram led 318 men, Rabbi Ammi bar Abba said that Abram's servant Eliezer outweighed them all. The Gemara reported that others (employing [gematria](#)) said that Eliezer alone accompanied Abram to rescue Lot, as the Hebrew letters in Eliezer's name have a numerical value of 318. ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 32a.](#))



Melchisedec Is Holding Up His Hands and Blessing Abraham (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)

Midrash identified the Melchizedek of [Genesis 14:18](#) with [Noah's](#) son [Shem](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 32b](#); Genesis Rabbah

46:7, 56:10; [Leviticus Rabbah](#) 25:6; [Numbers Rabbah](#) 4:8.) The Rabbis taught that Melchizedek acted as a [priest](#) and handed down [Adam's](#) robes to Abraham. ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 4:8.) Rabbi Zechariah said on [Rabbi Ishmael's](#) authority (or others say, it was taught at the school of Rabbi Ishmael) that God intended to continue the priesthood from Shem's descendants, as [Genesis 14:18](#) says, "And he (Melchizedek/Shem) was the priest of the most high God." But then Melchizedek gave precedence in his blessing to Abram over God, and thus God decided to bring forth the priesthood from Abram. As [Genesis 14:19](#) reports, "And he (Melchizedek/Shem) blessed him (Abram), and said: 'Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God the Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.'" Abram replied to Melchizedek/Shem by questioning whether the blessing of a servant should be given precedence over that of the master. And straightaway, God gave the priesthood to Abram, as [Psalm 110:1](#) says, "The Lord (God) said to my Lord (Abram), Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool," which is followed in [Psalm 110:4](#) by, "The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, 'You (Abram) are a priest for ever, after the order (*dibrati*) of Melchizedek,'" meaning, "because of the word (*dibbur*) of Melchizedek." Hence [Genesis 14:18](#) says, "And he (Melchizedek/Shem) was the priest of the most high God," implying that Melchizedek/Shem was a priest, but not his descendants. ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 32b](#); [Leviticus Rabbah](#) 25:6.)

Rabbi Isaac the Babylonian said that Melchizedek was born circumcised. (Genesis Rabbah 43:6.) A Midrash taught that Melchizedek called Jerusalem “Salem.” (Genesis Rabbah 56:10.) The Rabbis said that Melchizedek instructed Abraham in the Torah. (Genesis Rabbah 43:6.) Rabbi Eleazar said that Melchizedek’s school was one of three places where the Holy Spirit manifested itself. ([Babylonian Talmud Makkot 23b.](#))

Rabbi Judah said in Rabbi Nehorai's name that Melchizedek’s blessing yielded prosperity for Abraham, Isaac, and [Jacob](#). (Genesis Rabbah 43:8.) Ephraim Miksha'ah the disciple of [Rabbi Meir](#) said in the latter's name that [Tamar](#) descended from Melchizedek. (Genesis Rabbah 85:10.)

Rabbi Hana bar Bizna citing Rabbi [Simeon Hasida](#) (or others say Rabbi Berekiah in the name of Rabbi Isaac) identified Melchizedek as one of the four craftsmen of whom [Zechariah](#) wrote in [Zechariah 2:3](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 52b](#); [Song of Songs Rabbah](#) 2:33.) The Gemara taught that [David](#) wrote the Book of [Psalms](#), including in it the work of the elders, including Melchizedek in [Psalm 110](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Baba Batra 14b–15a.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 15



Abram Guarding His Sacrifice (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)



A Deep Sleep Fell Upon Abram and a Horror Seized Him

(illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

The Gemara expanded on Abram's conversation with God in [Genesis 15:1–21](#), quoting Abram to ask: “Master of the Universe, should Israel sin before You, will You do to them as You have done to the generation of the Flood and to the generation of the Dispersion?” God replied: “No.” Abram then said to God: “Master of the Universe, ‘Let me know whereby I shall inherit it.’” ([Genesis 15:8](#)) God answered: “Take Me a heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old.” ([Genesis 15:9](#)) Abram then continued: “Master of the Universe! This holds good

while the [Temple](#) remains in being, but when the Temple will no longer be, what will become of them?” God replied: “I have already long ago provided for them in the Torah the order of sacrifices, and whenever they read it, I will deem it as if they had offered them before me, and I will grant them pardon for all their iniquities.” ([Babylonian Talmud Taanit 27b](#), [Megillah 31b](#).)

The Gemara expounded on the words, “And He brought him outside,” in [Genesis 15:5](#). The Gemara taught that Abram had told God that Abram had employed astrology to see his destiny and had seen that he was not fated to have children. God replied that Abram should go “outside” of his astrological thinking, for the stars do not determine Israel’s fate. ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 32a](#).)

A midrash taught that there was not a mighty man in the world more difficult to overcome than [Og](#), as [Deuteronomy 3:11](#) says, “only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the Rephaim.” The midrash told that Og had been the only survivor of the strong men whom Amraphel and his colleagues had slain, as may be inferred from [Genesis 15:5](#), which reports that Amraphel “smote the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim,” and one may read [Deuteronomy 3:1](#) to indicate that Og lived near Ashteroth. The midrash taught that Og was the refuse among the Rephaim, like a hard olive that escapes being mashed in the olive press. The midrash inferred this from [Genesis 15:13](#), which reports that “there came one who had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew,” and the midrash indentified the man who had escaped as Og, as [Deuteronomy 3:11](#) describes him as a remnant,

saying, “only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the Rephaim.” The midrash taught that Og intended that Abram should go out and be killed. God rewarded Og for delivering the message by allowing him to live all the years from Abraham to [Moses](#), but God collected Og’s debt to God for his evil intention toward Abraham by causing Og to fall by the hand of Abraham’s descendants. On coming to make war with Og, Moses was afraid, thinking that he was only 120 years old, while Og was more than 500 years old, and if Og had not possessed some merit, he would not have lived all those years. So God told Moses (in the words of [Numbers 21:34](#)), “fear him not; for I have delivered him into your land,” implying that Moses should slay Og with his own hand. ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 19:32.)

Resh Lakish taught that Providence punishes bodily those who unjustifiably suspect the innocent. In [Exodus 4:1](#), Moses said that the Israelites “will not believe me,” but God knew that the Israelites would believe. God thus told Moses that the Israelites were believers and descendants of believers, while Moses would ultimately disbelieve. The Gemara explained that [Exodus 4:13](#) reports that “the people believed” and [Genesis 15:6](#) reports that the Israelites’ ancestor Abram “believed in the Lord,” while [Numbers 20:12](#) reports that Moses “did not believe.” Thus, Moses was smitten when in [Exodus 4:6](#) God turned his hand white as snow. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 97a.](#))

A midrash noted the difference in wording between [Genesis 47:27](#), which says of the Israelites in [Goshen](#) that “they got possessions therein,” and [Leviticus 14:34](#), which says of the

Israelites in [Canaan](#), “When you come into the land of Canaan, which I gave you for a possession.” The midrash read [Genesis 47:27](#) to read, “and they were taken in possession by it.” The midrash thus taught that in the case of Goshen, the land seized the Israelites, so that their bond might be exacted and so as to bring about God's declaration to Abraham in [Genesis 15:13](#) that the Egyptians would afflict the Israelites for 400 years. But the midrash read [Leviticus 14:34](#) to teach the Israelites that if they were worthy, the Land of Israel would be an eternal possession, but if not, they would be banished from it. (Genesis Rabbah 95.)



Landscape with Hagar and the Angel (1646 painting by [Claude Lorrain](#))

The Mishnah pointed to God's announcement to Abram in [Genesis 15:16](#) that his descendants would return from Egyptian slavery to support the proposition that the merits of the father bring about benefits for future generations. ([Mishnah Eduyot 2:9.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 16



Sarai Sends Hagar Away (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Rabbi [Simeon bar Yohai](#) deduced from the words, “and she had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar,” in [Genesis 16:1](#) that Hagar was Pharaoh’s daughter. Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai taught that when Pharaoh saw what God did on Sarah’s behalf, Pharaoh gave his daughter to Sarai, reasoning that it would be better for his daughter to be a handmaid in Sarai’s house than a mistress in another house. Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai read the name “Hagar” in to mean “reward” (*agar*), imagining Pharaoh to say, “Here is your reward (*agar*).” (Genesis Rabbah 45:1.)

A Midrash deduced from Sarai's words in [Genesis 16:2](#), "Behold now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing; go into my handmaid; it may be that I shall be built up through her," that one who is childless is as one who is demolished. The Rabbi of the Midrash reasoned that only that which is demolished must be "built up." (Genesis Rabbah 45:2.)

The Gemara taught that if one sees Ishmael in a dream, then God hears that person's prayer (perhaps because the name "Ishmael" derives from "the Lord has heard" in [Genesis 16:11](#), or perhaps because "God heard" (*yishmah Elohim*, **יִשְׁמַח אֱלֹהִים**) Ishmael's voice in [Genesis 21:17](#)). ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 56b](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 17

Rabbi Judah contrasted the words "Noah walked with God" in [Genesis 6:9](#) with God's words to Abraham, "walk before Me," in [Genesis 17:1](#). Rabbi Judah compared it to a king who had two sons, one grown up and the other a child. The king asked the child to walk *with* him. But the king asked the adult to walk *before* him. Similarly, to Abraham, whose moral strength was great, God said, "Walk before Me." But of Noah, whose strength was feeble, [Genesis 6:9](#) says, "Noah walked with God." (Genesis Rabbah 30:10.)



Abraham Took Ishmael with All the Males Born in His House and Circumcised Them (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

[Rabbi](#) taught that notwithstanding all the precepts that Abram fulfilled, God did not call him “perfect” until he circumcised himself, for in [Genesis 17:1–2](#), God told Abram, “Walk before me and be perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and you,” and in [Genesis 17:10](#), God explained that God’s covenant required that every male be circumcised. ([Mishnah Nedarim 3:11](#); [Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 31b, 32a.](#))

Rab Judah said in Rab's name that when God told Abram in [Genesis 17:1](#), "Walk before me and be perfect," Abram was seized with trembling, thinking that perhaps there was some shameful flaw in him that needed correcting. But when God added in [Genesis 17:2](#), "And I will make My covenant between me and you," God set Abram's mind at ease. ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 32a.](#))

Rabbi [Hoshaiah](#) taught that if one perfects oneself, then good fortune will follow, for [Genesis 17:1](#) says, "Walk before me and be perfect," and shortly thereafter [Genesis 17:4](#) reports Abram's reward for doing so: "And you shall be a father of many nations." ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 32a.](#))



God Renews His Promises to Abraham (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Rabbi Ammi bar Abba employed gematria to interpret the meaning of Abram's name change in [Genesis 17:5](#) from Abram (אַבְרָם) to Abraham (אַבְרָהָם). According to Rabbi Ammi bar Abba, at first God gave Abram mastery over 243 of his body parts, as the numerical value of the Hebrew letters in Abram is 243. Then God gave Abraham mastery over 248 of his body parts, adding five body parts, as the numerical value of the Hebrew letter *hei* (ה) that God added to his name is five. The Gemara explained that as a reward for Abraham's undergoing circumcision, God granted Abraham control over his two eyes, his two ears, and the organ that he circumcised. ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 32b.](#))

The Mishnah notes that transgressing the command of circumcision in [Genesis 17:14](#) is one of 36 transgressions that cause the transgressor to be cut off from his people. (Mishnah Keritot 1:1; [Babylonian Talmud Keritot 2a.](#))

The Gemara read the command of [Genesis 17:14](#) to require an uncircumcised adult man to become circumcised, and the Gemara read the command of [Leviticus 12:3](#) to require the father to circumcise his infant child. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 132b.](#))

Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina taught that visiting those who have had medical procedures (as Abraham had in [Genesis 17:26](#)) demonstrates one of God's attributes that humans should emulate. Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina asked what [Deuteronomy 13:5](#) means in the text, "You shall walk after the Lord your God." How can a human being walk after God, when

[Deuteronomy 4:24](#) says, “[T]he Lord your God is a devouring fire”? Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina explained that the command to walk after God means to walk after the attributes of God. As God clothes the naked — for [Genesis 3:21](#) says, “And the Lord God made for [Adam](#) and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them” — so should we also clothe the naked. God visited the sick — for [Genesis 18:1](#) says, “And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre” (after Abraham was circumcised in [Genesis 17:26](#)) — so should we also visit the sick. God comforted mourners — for [Genesis 25:11](#) says, “And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed [Isaac](#) his son” — so should we also comfort mourners. God buried the dead — for [Deuteronomy 34:6](#) says, “And He buried him in the valley” — so should we also bury the dead. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 14a.](#)) Similarly, the [Sifre](#) on [Deuteronomy 11:22](#) taught that to walk in God’s ways means to be (in the words of [Exodus 34:6](#)) “merciful and gracious.” (Sifre to Deuteronomy 49:1.)

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there is one positive [commandment](#) in the parshah:

- The precept of circumcision ([Genesis 17:10](#))

(Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#), Positive Commandment 215. [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 1:230–31. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#).)

Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:85–87. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9](#).)



[Isaiah](#) (1509 fresco by [Michelangelo](#) in the [Sistine Chapel](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is:

- for [Ashkenazi](#) and [Sephardi Jews](#): [Isaiah 40:27-41:16](#)
- for [Karaite Jews](#): [Joshua 24:3–18](#)

[\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy



A page from a 14th century German Haggadah

The [Passover Haggadah](#), in the concluding *nirtzab* section of the [Seder](#), in a reference to [Genesis 14:15](#), recounts how God granted victory to the righteous convert Abram at the middle of the night. (Joseph Tabory. *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, 122. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. [ISBN 978-0-8276-0858-0](#). Menachem Davis. *The Interlinear Haggadah: The Passover Haggadah, with an Interlinear Translation, Instructions and Comments*, 108. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005. [ISBN 1-57819-064-9](#).)

The name “Elyon” or “God Most High,” which Melchizedek used in [Genesis 14:19](#), is used in [Psalm 92:2](#) to refer to God, and [Psalm 92](#) is in turn recited after the [Lekhah Dodi](#) liturgical poem of the Kabbalat Shabbat [prayer service](#). ([Reuven Hammer](#). *Or Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*,

23. New York: The [Rabbinical Assembly](#), 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#).)



A page from the Kaufmann Haggadah

The [Amidah](#) draws on God’s words in [Genesis 15:1](#), “Fear not, Abram, I am a shield to you,” to refer to God as “Shield of Abraham.” (Hammer, at 35a.) In the hymn [Adon Olam](#) (“Lord of the World”), use of the title “Adon” recalls the merit of Abraham, who first addressed God with the title in [Genesis 15:2](#). (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for Weekdays with an Interlinear Translation*, 14–15. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-686-8](#).)

The Haggadah, in the *magid* section of the Seder, quotes [Genesis 15:13–14](#) to demonstrate that God keeps God’s promises. (Davis, at 41–42; Tabory, at 89.) Thereafter, the Haggadah reports that Israel “went down to Egypt — forced to do so by the word [of God],” and many commentators think that this statement refers to God’s foretelling in [Genesis 15:13](#) that Abram’s descendants would “be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve

them.” (Tabory, at 90.) And in the concluding *nirtzah* section, in a reference to God’s promises to Abram in the Covenant Between the Pieces in [Genesis 15:13–21](#), the Haggadah reports that God “disclosed to the one from the Orient at midnight on Passover.” (Tabory, at 125.)

Following the Kabbalat Shabbat service and prior to the Friday evening (*Ma'ariv*) service, Jews traditionally read rabbinic sources on the observance of the Sabbath, including Mishnah Shabbat 18:3. Mishnah Shabbat 18:3, in turn, makes clear the precedence of the law of circumcision in [Genesis 17:12](#) over even the observance of the Sabbath. (Hammer, at 25.)

[\[edit\]](#) The Weekly Maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), Sephardi Jews each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parshah. For parshah Lech Lecha, Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Saba, the maqam that symbolizes a covenant (*berit*). It is appropriate because in this parshah, Abraham and his sons undergo circumcisions, a ritual that signifies a covenant between man and God.

[\[edit\]](#) See also

- [Islamic view of Hagar](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Ancient

- [Vassal treaties](#) of [Esarhaddon](#). Babylonia, 681–669 BCE.
- "To go/pass through" in Hans G. Guterbock & Harry A. Hoffner (eds.), [The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago](#), vol. P, 36-37. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997.

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 20:1–16; 22:17](#) (numerous as stars); [26:1–33](#).
- [Exodus 4:24–26](#) (circumcision).
- [Deuteronomy 1:10](#) (numerous as stars).
- [Jeremiah 34:18–20](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic

- [The Genesis Apocryphon](#). [Dead Sea scroll](#) 1Q20. Land of Israel, 1st century BCE. Reprinted in [Géza Vermes](#). *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 448, 453–59. New York: Penguin Press, 1997. [ISBN 0-7139-9131-3](#). (wife-sister, battle of the kings).
- [The Heavenly Prince Melchizedek](#). [Dead Sea scroll](#) 11Q13. Land of Israel, 1st century BCE. Reprinted in Géza Vermes. *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 500–02. New York: Penguin Press, 1997. [ISBN 0-7139-9131-3](#).



Philo

- [Philo. *Allegorical Interpretation 2*: 15:59; *Allegorical Interpretation 3*: 8:24; 13:39; 25:79; 26:82–27:83; 28:85; 70:197; 78:217; 81:228; 87:244; *On the Cherubim* 1:2; *That the Worse Is Wont To Attack the Better* 44:159; *On the Giants* 14:63; *On the Unchangableness of God* 1:4; *On Drunkenness* 7:24; 27:105; *On the Confusion of Tongues* 8:26; *On the Migration of Abraham* 1:1; 3:13; 9:43; 16:86; 19:107; 20:109; 27:148; 30:164; 39:216; *Who Is the Heir of Divine Things?* 1:2; 7:34; 12:58; 13:66; 14:69; 15:76; 16:81; 17:86; 18:90; 21:102; 25:125; 26:129; 43:207; 48:230; 49:237; 51:249; 54:267; 55:272; 56:275, 277; 60:300; 61:307, 312; 62:313; *On Mating with the Preliminary Studies* 1:1; 13:63; 14:71; 17:92; 18:99; 25:139; 27:153; *On Flight and Finding* 1:1–6; 22:119; 35:196; *On the Change of Names* 1:1; 3:15, 18, 22; 4:27; 5:39, 42; 6:51–52; 23:130, 136; 27:148; 33:175, 177; 37:201; 44:253; 45:263–46:264; 47:267; 48:270; *On Dreams, That They Are God-Sent* 1:9:47, 41:240; 2:39:255 *On Abraham* 17:77; 46:273; *The Decalogue* 10:37–38; *On the Virtues* 39:215–16; *Every Good Man Is Free* 5:29; *Questions and Answers on Genesis 2*: 80; **3**: 1–62. Alexandria, Egypt, early 1st century CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of*](#)

Philo: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition.

Translated by [Charles Duke Yonge](#), 44, 52, 54, 59, 73, 75–76, 78, 80, 129, 157–58, 209, 216, 236, 253–54, 257, 261, 263, 267, 269, 274, 276, 278, 281–84, 286, 293, 295–97, 299–300, 302–04, 309–10, 312, 316–17, 321, 331, 339, 341–46, 352–53, 356, 358, 363–64, 369, 386, 406, 418, 434, 521, 662, 684, 839, 841–63. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1993. [ISBN 0-943575-93-1](#).



Josephus

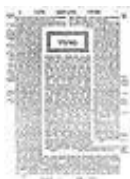
- [Josephus](#). *The Wars of the Jews*, [5:9:4](#); [7:10:1](#). Circa 75 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 716. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).
- [Qur'an 2:258](#); [4:163](#); [6:74–84](#); [19:41–50](#). Arabia, 7th century.

[[edit](#)] Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): [Nedarim 3:11](#); [Sotah 7:5](#); [Sanhedrin 10:3](#); [Eduyot 2:9](#); [Avot 5:3](#); [Keritot 1:1](#). Land of Israel, circa 200 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New*

Translation. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 412, 458, 605, 645–46, 685, 836. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).

- [Tosefta](#): Berakhot 1:12–13; Shabbat 7:24, 15:9; Yevamot 8:5; Nedarim 2:5; Sotah 5:12; Sanhedrin 13:8; Eduyot 1:14. Land of Israel, circa 300 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).
- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Berakhot 17a–b; Sheviit 43b; Bikkurim 5b. Land of Israel, circa 400 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 1, 6b, 12. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2005–2008.
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Talmud

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 7b, 9b, 13a, 49a, 55a, 56b, 64a](#); [Shabbat 89b, 97a, 105a, 108a, 118b, 130a, 132a–b, 133b, 135a–b, 156a](#); [Eruvin 40b, 53a](#); [Pesachim 52a, 69b, 87b, 92a](#); [Sukkah 31a](#); [Beitzah 8b](#); [Rosh Hashanah 16b](#); [Taanit 27b](#); [Megillah 16b, 31b](#); [Moed Katan 13a, 25b, 27b, 29a](#); [Chagigah 12a, 13a](#); [Yevamot 5b, 13b–14a, 42a, 64a, 70b–71a, 72a, 100b](#); [Ketubot 112a](#); [Nedarim 31b–32b](#); [Nazir 23a–b](#); [Sotah 4b, 17a, 32a, 33b, 38b, 46b](#); [Gittin 2a](#); [Kiddushin 29a, 39a, 41b](#); [Bava Kamma 38b, 60b, 88a, 92b–93a](#); [Bava Metzia 59a](#); [Bava Batra 15b–16a, 56a, 100a, 127a, 163a](#); [Sanhedrin 38b, 44a–b, 59b, 92b, 95b–96a, 99a–b, 107b, 109a, 111a](#); [Makkot 8b, 13b, 23b–24a](#); [Avodah Zarah 9a, 26b–27a](#); [Horayot 10b](#); [Menachot 42a](#); [Chullin 49a, 65a, 89a](#); [Arakhin 16a–b](#); [Keritot 2a](#); [Meilah 17b](#); [Niddah 61a](#). Babylonia, 6th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.
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Vayeira

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

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Vayeira, **Vayera**, or **Va-yera** (וַיֵּרָא — [Hebrew](#) for "and He appeared," the [first word](#) in the parshah) is the fourth [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#). It constitutes [Genesis 18:1–22:24](#) [Jews](#) read it on the fourth [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in October or November.

Jews also read parts of the parshah as Torah readings for [Rosh Hashanah](#). [Genesis 21](#) is the Torah reading for the first day of Rosh Hashanah, and [Genesis 22](#) is the Torah reading for the second day of Rosh Hashanah. In [Reform Judaism](#), [Genesis 22](#) is the Torah reading for the one day of Rosh Hashanah.



The Destruction of [Sodom and Gomorrah](#) (1852 painting by [John Martin](#))

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



Abraham and the Three Angels (engraving by [Gustave Doré](#) from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)



Abraham and the Three Angels (painting circa 1695 by [Sebastiano Ricci](#))

[[edit](#)] Abraham's three visitors

As [Abraham](#) was sitting at the entrance of his tent by the [terebinths](#) of [Mamre](#) at the heat of the day, he looked up and saw [God](#) in the form of three men, and he ran, [bowed](#) to the ground, and welcomed them. ([Genesis 18:1–3](#)) Abraham offered to wash their feet and fetch them a morsel of bread, and they assented. ([Genesis 18:4–6](#)) Abraham rushed to [Sarah](#)'s tent to order cakes made from choice flour, ran to select a choice calf for a servant-boy to prepare, set curds and milk and the calf before them, and waited on them under the tree as they ate. ([Genesis 18:6–8](#))

One of the visitors told Abraham that he would return the next year, and Sarah would have a son, but Sarah laughed to herself at the prospect, with Abraham so old. ([Genesis 18:10–12](#)) God then questioned Abraham why Sarah had laughed at bearing a child at her age, noting that nothing was too wondrous for God. ([Genesis 18:13–14](#)) Frightened, Sarah denied laughing, but God insisted that she had. ([Genesis 18:15](#))

[[edit](#)] Abraham bargains with God

The men set out toward [Sodom](#) and Abraham walked with them to see them off. ([Genesis 18:16](#)) God considered whether to confide in Abraham what God was about to do, since God had singled out Abraham to become a great nation and instruct his posterity to keep God's way by doing what was just and right. ([Genesis 18:17–19](#)) God told Abraham that the outrage and sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was so great that God was going to see whether they had acted according to the outcry that had reached God. ([Genesis 18:20–21](#)) The men went on to Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before God. ([Genesis 18:22](#)) Abraham pressed God whether God would sweep away the innocent along with the guilty, asking successively if there were 50, or 45, or 40, or 30, or 20, or 10 innocent people in Sodom, would God not spare the city for the sake of the innocent ones, and each time God agreed to do so. ([Genesis 18:23–32](#)) When God had finished speaking to Abraham, God departed, and Abraham returned to his place. ([Genesis 18:33](#))



Lot prevents violence against the Angels, (1555 engraving by [Heinrich Aldegrever](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Lot's two visitors

As [Lot](#) was sitting at the gate of Sodom in the evening, the two [angels](#) arrived, and Lot greeted them and bowed low to the ground. ([Genesis 19:1](#)) Lot invited the angels to spend the night at his house and bathe their feet, but they said that they would spend the night in the square. ([Genesis 19:2](#)) Lot urged them strongly, so they went to his house, and he prepared a feast for them and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. ([Genesis 19:3](#))



Flight of Lot (engraving by Gustave Doré from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

[[edit](#)] Lot bargains with the Sodomites

Before they had retired for the night, all the people of Sodom gathered about the house shouting to Lot to bring his visitors out so that they might be intimate with them. ([Genesis 19:4–5](#)) Lot went outside the entrance, shutting the door behind him, and begged the men of Sodom not commit such a wrong. ([Genesis 19:6–7](#)) Lot offered the men his two virgin daughters for them to do with as they pleased, if they would not do anything to his guests, but they disparaged Lot as one who had come as an alien and now sought to rule them, and they pressed threateningly

against him and the door. ([Genesis 19:8–9](#)) But the visitors stretched out their hands and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door and struck the people with blinding light that made them unable to find the entrance. ([Genesis 19:10–11](#))

[\[edit\]](#) The flight of Lot

The visitors directed Lot to bring what family he had out of the city, for they were about to destroy the place, because the outcry against its inhabitants had become so great. ([Genesis 19:12–13](#)) So Lot told his sons-in-law that they needed to get out of the place because God was about to destroy it, but Lot's sons-in-law thought that he was joking. ([Genesis 19:14](#))





Lot and His Daughters (painting circa 1509 by [Lucas van Leyden](#))

As dawn broke, the angels urged Lot to flee with his wife and two remaining daughters, but still he delayed. ([Genesis 19:15–16](#)) So out of God's mercy, the men seized Lot, his wife, and daughters by the hand and brought them out of the city, telling them to flee for their lives and not to stop or look back anywhere in the plain. ([Genesis 19:16–17](#)) But Lot asked them whether he might flee to a little village nearby, and the angel replied that he would grant Lot this favor too, and spare that town. ([Genesis 19:18–21](#)) The angel urged Lot to hurry there, for the angel could not do anything until he arrived there, and thus the town came to be called Zoar. ([Genesis 19:22](#))

As the sun rose and Lot entered Zoar, God rained sulfurous fire from heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah and annihilated the entire plain. ([Genesis 19:23–25](#)) Lot's wife looked back, and she turned into a pillar of salt. ([Genesis 19:26](#)) Next morning, Abraham hurried to the place where he had stood before God and looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and saw the smoke rising like at a kiln. ([Genesis 19:27–28](#))



Lot and his Daughters (1616 painting by [Hendrik Goltzius](#))

Lot was afraid to dwell in Zoar, so he settled in a cave in the hill country with his two daughters. ([Genesis 19:30](#)) The older daughter told the younger that their father was old, and there was not a man on earth with whom to have children, so she proposed that they get Lot drunk and lie with him so that they might maintain life through their father. ([Genesis 19:31–32](#)) That night they made their father drink wine, and the older one lay with her father without his being aware. ([Genesis 19:33](#)) And the next day the older one persuaded the younger to do the same. ([Genesis 19:34–35](#)) The two daughters thus had children by their father, the older one bore a son named Moab who became the father of the [Moabites](#), and the younger bore a son named Ben-ammi who became the father of the [Ammonites](#). ([Genesis 19:36–38](#))

[[edit](#)] Wife as sister

Abraham settled between [Kadesh](#) and Shur. ([Genesis 20:1](#)) While he was sojourning in [Gerar](#), Abraham said that Sarah was his

sister, so King [Abimelech](#) had her brought to him, but God came to Abimelech in a dream and told him that taking her would cause him to die, for she was a married woman. ([Genesis 20:1–3](#)) Abimelech had not approached her, so he asked God whether God would slay an innocent, as Abraham and Sarah had told him that they were brother and sister. ([Genesis 20:4–5](#)) God told Abimelech in the dream that God knew that Abimelech had a blameless heart, and so God had kept him from touching her. ([Genesis 20:6](#)) God told Abimelech to restore Abraham’s wife, since he was a [prophet](#), and he would intercede for Abimelech to save his life, which he and his household would lose if he failed to restore her. ([Genesis 20:7](#))

Early next morning, Abimelech told his servants what had happened, asked Abraham what he had done and why he had brought so great a guilt upon Abimelech and his kingdom. ([Genesis 20:8–10](#)) Abraham replied that he had thought that Gerar had no fear of God and would kill him because of his wife, and that she was in fact his father’s daughter though not his mother’s, so he had asked of her the kindness of identifying him as her brother. ([Genesis 20:11–13](#)) Abimelech restored Sarah to Abraham, gave him sheep, oxen, and slaves, and invited him to settle wherever he pleased in Abimelech’s lands. ([Genesis 20:14–15](#)) And Abimelech told Sarah that he was giving Abraham a thousand pieces of silver to serve her as vindication before all. ([Genesis 20:16](#)) Abraham then prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and the women in his household, so that they bore

children, for God had stricken the women with infertility because of Sarah. ([Genesis 20:17–18](#))

[[edit](#)] The birth of Isaac

[God](#) took note of [Sarah](#), and she [bore Abraham](#) a [son](#) as God had predicted, and Abraham [named](#) him [Isaac](#). ([Genesis 21:1–3](#)) Abraham [circumcised](#) Isaac when he was eight days old. ([Genesis 21:4](#)) Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born, and Sarah remarked that God had brought her [laughter](#) and everyone would laugh with her about her bearing Abraham a [child](#) in his [old age](#). ([Genesis 21:5–7](#)) Abraham held a great [feast](#) on the day that Sarah [weaned](#) Isaac. ([Genesis 21:8](#))



The Expulsion of Hagar (1719 painting by [Giovanni Battista Tiepolo](#))



[Hagar](#) and [Ishmael](#) (painting circa 1732 by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo)

[edit] The expulsion of Hagar

Sarah saw [Hagar's](#) son [Ishmael](#) playing, and Sarah told Abraham to cast Hagar and Ishmael out, saying that Ishmael would not share in Abraham's [inheritance](#) with Isaac. ([Genesis 21:9–10](#)) Sarah's words greatly distressed Abraham, but God told Abraham not to be distressed but to do whatever Sarah told him, for Isaac would carry on Abraham's line, and God would make a nation of Ishmael, too. ([Genesis 21:11–13](#)) Early the next morning, Abraham placed some [bread](#) and [water](#) on Hagar's [shoulder](#), together with Ishmael, and sent them away. ([Genesis 21:14](#))

Hagar and Ishmael wandered in the [wilderness](#) of [Beersheba](#), and when the water ran out, she left the child under a [bush](#), sat down two bowshots away so as not to see the child die, and burst into

tears. ([Genesis 21:14–16](#)) God heard the cry of the boy, and an [angel](#) called to Hagar, saying not to fear, for God had heeded the boy's cry, and would make of him a great nation. ([Genesis 21:17–18](#)) Then God opened her eyes to a well of water, and she and the boy drank. ([Genesis 21:19](#)) God was with Ishmael and he grew up in the wilderness and became a [bowman](#). ([Genesis 21:20](#)) Ishmael lived in the [wilderness of Paran](#), and Hagar got him an [Egyptian wife](#). ([Genesis 21:21](#))

[[edit](#)] Beersheba

[Abimelech](#) and [Phicol](#) the chief of his troops asked Abraham to swear not to deal falsely with them. ([Genesis 21:22–24](#)) Abraham reproached Abimelech because Abimelech's servants had seized Abraham's well, but Abimelech protested ignorance. ([Genesis 21:25–26](#)) Abraham gave Abimelech [sheep](#) and oxen and two men made a pact. ([Genesis 21:27](#)) Abraham then offered Abimelech seven ewes as proof that Abraham had dug the well. ([Genesis 21:28–30](#)) They called the place Beersheba, for the two of them swore an oath there. ([Genesis 21:31](#)) After they concluded their pact, Abimelech and Phicol returned to [Philistia](#), and Abraham planted a [tamarisk](#) and invoked God's name. ([Genesis 21:32–33](#)) Abraham lived in Philistia a long time. ([Genesis 21:34](#))



The Angel Hinders the Offering of [Isaac](#) (1635 painting by [Rembrandt](#))



Trial of Abraham's Faith (engraving by Gustave Doré from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

[[edit](#)] The binding of Isaac

Sometime later, God tested Abraham, directing him to take Isaac to the land of [Moriah](#) and offer him there as a [burnt offering](#). ([Genesis 22:1–2](#)) Early the next morning, Abraham [saddled](#) his [donkey](#) and split [wood](#) for the burnt offering, and then he, two of his [servants](#), and Isaac set out for the place that God had named. ([Genesis 22:3](#)) On the third day, Abraham saw the place from afar, and directed his servants to wait with the donkey, while Isaac and he went up to [worship](#) and then return. ([Genesis 22:4–5](#)) Abraham took the firestone and the [knife](#), put the wood on

Isaac, and the two walked off together. ([Genesis 22:6](#)) When Isaac asked Abraham where the sheep was for the burnt offering, Abraham replied that God would see to the sheep for the burnt offering. ([Genesis 22:7–8](#))

They arrived at the place that God had named, and Abraham built an [altar](#), laid out the wood, bound Isaac, laid him on the altar, and picked up the knife to slay him. ([Genesis 22:9–10](#)) Then an angel called to Abraham, telling him not to raise his hand against the boy, for now God knew that Abraham feared God, since he had not withheld his son. ([Genesis 22:11–12](#)) Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught in a thicket by its horns, so he offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son. ([Genesis 22:13](#)) Abraham named the site Adonai-yireh. ([Genesis 22:14](#))

The angel called to Abraham a second time, saying that because Abraham had not withheld his son, God would bless him and make his descendants as numerous as the [stars](#) of heaven and the [sands](#) on the [seashore](#), and victorious over their foes. ([Genesis 22:15–17](#)) All the nations of the earth would bless themselves by Abraham's descendants, because he obeyed God's command. ([Genesis 22:18](#)) Abraham returned to his servants, and they departed for Beersheba; where Abraham stayed. ([Genesis 22:19](#))

Later, Abraham learned that [Milcah](#) had borne eight children to his brother [Nahor](#), among whom was [Bethuel](#), who became the father of [Rebekah](#). ([Genesis 22:20–23](#)) Nahor's [concubine](#) Reumah also bore him four children. ([Genesis 22:24](#))

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 18

[Ezekiel 16:49–50](#) explains what the “grievous” sin was that [Genesis 18:20](#) reported in Sodom. [Ezekiel 16:49–50](#) says that Sodom’s iniquity was pride. Sodom had plenty of bread and careless ease, but Sodom did not help the poor and the needy. Thus the people of Sodom were haughty and committed abomination before God. And for that reason, God removed them.

[Lamentations 4:6](#) judged the iniquity of [Jerusalem](#) that lead to the [Babylonian captivity](#) as greater than the sin of Sodom that lead to its destruction in an instant.

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 19

[Judges 19](#) tells a story parallel in many regards to that of Lot and the men of Sodom in [Genesis 19:1–11](#).





Abraham and the Three Angels (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))



Abraham Bows Down before the Angelic Visitors at Mamre (mosaic in the 12th Century [Monreale](#) Cathedral)

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 18

The [Mishnah](#) taught that Abraham suffered ten trials (several in this parshah), and withstood them all. ([Mishnah Avot 5:3](#).)

Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina taught that visiting the infirm (as God did in [Genesis 18:1](#)) demonstrates one of God's

attributes that humans should emulate. Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina asked what [Deuteronomy 13:5](#) means in the text, “You shall walk after the Lord your God.” How can a human being walk after God, when [Deuteronomy 4:24](#) says, “[T]he Lord your God is a devouring fire”? Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina explained that the command to walk after God means to walk after the attributes of God. As God clothes the naked — for [Genesis 3:21](#) says, “And the Lord God made for [Adam](#) and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them” — so should we also clothe the naked. God visited the sick — for [Genesis 18:1](#) says, “And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of [Mamre](#)” (after Abraham was circumcised in [Genesis 17:26](#)) — so should we also visit the sick. God comforted mourners — for [Genesis 25:11](#) says, “And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac his son” — so should we also comfort mourners. God buried the dead — for [Deuteronomy 34:6](#) says, “And He buried him in the valley” — so should we also bury the dead. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 14a.](#)) Similarly, the [Sifre](#) on [Deuteronomy 11:22](#) taught that to walk in God’s ways means to be (in the words of [Exodus 34:6](#)) “merciful and gracious.” (Sifre to Deuteronomy 49:1.)



Abraham Entertaining the Angels (1656 etching by Rembrandt at the [National Gallery of Art](#))



Abraham Entertaining the Angels (drawing circa 1610–1620 by [Jan Tengnagel](#) at the National Gallery of Art

A [midrash](#) interpreted the words of [Job 19:26](#), "And when after my skin thus is destroyed (נִכְכֶּפֶּי, *nikkefui*), then through my flesh shall I see God," to allude to Abraham. According to the midrash, Abraham reasoned that after he circumcised himself, many proselytes flocked (*bikkif*) to attach themselves to the covenant, and it was thus because Abraham did so that God revealed God's Self to Abraham, as [Genesis 18:1](#) reports, "And the Lord appeared to him." (And thus through circumcision

performed on his flesh did Abraham come to see God.) ([Genesis Rabbah 48:2](#).)

Rabbi Isaac taught that God reasoned that if God said in [Exodus 20:21](#), "An altar of earth you shall make to Me [and then] I will come to you and bless you," thus revealing God's Self to bless him who built an altar in God's name, then how much more should God reveal God's Self to Abraham, who circumcised himself for God's sake. And thus, "the Lord appear to him." ([Genesis Rabbah 48:4](#).)

A midrash interpreted the words of [Psalm 43:36](#), "Your condescension has made me great," to allude to Abraham. For God made Abraham great by allowing Abraham to sit (on account of his age and weakness after his circumcision) while the [Shekhinah](#) stood, as [Genesis 18:1](#) reports, "And the Lord appeared to him in the plains of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door." ([Genesis Rabbah 48:1](#).)

A [Baraita](#) taught that in [Genesis 18:1](#), "in the heat of the day" meant the sixth hour, or exactly midday. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 27a](#).)

[Rab Judah](#) said in [Rab's](#) name that [Genesis 18:1–3](#) showed that hospitality to wayfarers is greater than welcoming the [Divine Presence](#). Rab Judah read the words "And he said, 'My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, pass not away'" in [Genesis 18:3](#) to reflect Abraham's request of God to wait for Abraham while Abraham saw to his guests. And Rabbi Eleazar said that God's acceptance of this request demonstrated how God's

conduct is not like that of mortals, for among mortals, an inferior person cannot ask a greater person to wait, while in [Genesis 18:3](#), God allowed it. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 127a.](#))



Abraham Stands by the Three Men under the Tree (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

The [Tosefta](#) taught that God rewarded measure for measure Abraham's good deeds of hospitality in [Genesis 18:2–16](#) with benefits for Abraham's descendants the [Israelites](#). (Tosefta Sotah 4:1–6.)

The [Gemara](#) identified the “three men” in [Genesis 18:2](#) as the angels [Michael](#), [Gabriel](#), and [Raphael](#). Michael came to tell Sarah

of Isaac's birth, Raphael came to heal Abraham, and Gabriel came to destroy Sodom. Noting that [Genesis 19:1](#) reports that "the two angels came to Sodom," the Gemara explained that Michael accompanied Gabriel to rescue Lot. The Gemara cited the use of the singular "He" in [Genesis 19:25](#), where it says, "*He* overthrew those cities," instead of "*they* overthrew" to demonstrate that a single angel (Gabriel) destroyed the cities. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 86b.](#))



Three angels with Abraham, announcing the birth of Isaac
(woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

In [Genesis 18:5](#), the heart is refreshed. A midrash catalogued the wide range of additional capabilities of the heart reported in the Hebrew Bible. The heart speaks ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), sees ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), hears ([1 Kings 3:9](#)), walks ([2 Kings 5:26](#)), falls

[\(1 Samuel 17:32\)](#), stands ([Ezekiel 22:14](#)), rejoices ([Psalm 16:9](#)),
 cries ([Lamentations 2:18](#)), is comforted ([Isaiah 40:2](#)), is troubled
 ([Deuteronomy 15:10](#)), becomes hardened ([Exodus 9:12](#)), grows
 faint ([Deuteronomy 20:3](#)), grieves ([Genesis 6:6](#)), fears
 ([Deuteronomy 28:67](#)), can be broken ([Psalm 51:19](#)), becomes
 proud ([Deuteronomy 8:14](#)), rebels ([Jeremiah 5:23](#)), invents
 ([1 Kings 12:33](#)), cavils ([Deuteronomy 29:18](#)), overflows ([Psalm](#)
[45:2](#)), devises ([Proverbs 19:21](#)), desires ([Psalm 21:3](#)), goes astray
 ([Proverbs 7:25](#)), lusts ([Numbers 15:39](#)), can be stolen ([Genesis](#)
[31:20](#)), is humbled ([Leviticus 26:41](#)), is enticed ([Genesis 34:3](#)),
 errs ([Isaiah 21:4](#)), trembles ([1 Samuel 4:13](#)), is awakened ([Song of](#)
[Songs 5:2](#)), loves ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#)), hates ([Leviticus 19:17](#)),
 envies ([Proverbs 23:17](#)), is searched ([Jeremiah 17:10](#)), is rent ([Joel](#)
[2:13](#)), meditates ([Psalm 49:4](#)), is like a fire ([Jeremiah 20:9](#)), is like a
 stone ([Ezekiel 36:26](#)), turns in repentance ([2 Kings 23:25](#)),
 becomes hot ([Deuteronomy 19:6](#)), dies ([1 Samuel 25:37](#)), melts
 ([Joshua 7:5](#)), takes in words ([Deuteronomy 6:6](#)), is susceptible to
 fear ([Jeremiah 32:40](#)), gives thanks ([Psalm 111:1](#)), covets
 ([Proverbs 6:25](#)), becomes hard ([Proverbs 28:14](#)), makes merry
 ([Judges 16:25](#)), acts deceitfully ([Proverbs 12:20](#)), speaks from out
 of itself ([1 Samuel 1:13](#)), loves bribes ([Jeremiah 22:17](#)), writes
 words ([Proverbs 3:3](#)), plans ([Proverbs 6:18](#)), receives
 commandments ([Proverbs 10:8](#)), acts with pride ([Obadiah 1:3](#)),
 makes arrangements ([Proverbs 16:1](#)), and aggrandizes itself
 ([2 Chronicles 25:19](#)). ([Ecclesiastes Rabbah](#) 1:36.)



Abraham Waiting on the Three Men (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)





Sarah Hears and Laughs (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

The Gemara reported that sages in the [Land of Israel](#) (and some said Rabbi Isaac) deduced from Sarah’s practice as shown in [Genesis 18:9](#) that while it was customary for a man to meet wayfarers, it was not customary for a woman to do so. And the Gemara cited this deduction to support the ruling of [Mishnah Yevamot 8:3](#) that while a male Ammonite or Moabite was forbidden from entering the congregation of Israel, a Ammonite or Moabite woman was permitted. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 77a.](#))

At the School of [Rabbi Ishmael](#), it was taught that [Genesis 18:12–13](#) demonstrated how great is the cause of peace, for Sarah said of Abraham in [Genesis 18:12](#), “My lord [Abraham] being old,” but when God reported Sarah’s statement to Abraham, God reported Sarah to have said, “And I [Sarah] am old,” so as to preserve peace between Abraham and Sarah. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 65b.](#))

Reading “set time” in [Genesis 18:14](#) to mean the next “holy day” (as in [Leviticus 23:4](#)), the Gemara deduced that God spoke to Abraham on [Sukkot](#) to promise that Isaac would be born on [Passover](#), and that there must have been a leap year that year, as those deductions allow the maximum 7 months between any two holy days. ([Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 11a.](#))

[Rabina](#) asked one of the Rabbis who expounded [Aggadah](#) before him for the origin of the Rabbinic saying, “The memory of the righteous shall be for a blessing.” The Rabbi replied that [Proverbs 10:7](#) says, “The memory of the righteous shall be for a blessing.” Rabina asked from where in the Torah one might derive that teaching. The Rabbi answered that [Genesis 18:17](#) says, “Shall I hide from Abraham that which I am doing?” And right after that mention of Abraham’s name, God blessed Abraham in [Genesis 18:18](#), saying, “Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation.” ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 38b.](#))

Rabbi Eleazar interpreted the words, “*All* the nations of the earth,” in [Genesis 18:18](#) to teach that even those who spend their time on the ships that go from Gaul to Spain (and thus spend very little time on the dry earth) are blessed only for Israel’s sake. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 63a.](#))

The Gemara taught that [Genesis 18:19](#) sets forth one of the three most distinguishing virtues of the Jewish People. The Gemara taught that [David](#) told the [Gibeonites](#) that the Israelites are distinguished by three characteristics: They are merciful, bashful, and benevolent. They are merciful, for [Deuteronomy 13:18](#) says that God would “show you (the Israelites) mercy, and have compassion upon you, and multiply you.” They are bashful, for [Exodus 20:16](#) (20:17 in NJPS) says “that God’s fear may be before you (the Israelites).” And they are benevolent, for [Genesis 18:19](#) says of Abraham “that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice.” The Gemara taught that David

told the Gibeonites that only one who cultivates these three characteristics is fit to join the Jewish People. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 79a.](#))



The Sodomites are smitten with blindness (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

Rabbi Eleazar taught that from the blessing of the righteous one may infer a curse for the wicked. The Gemara explained that one may see the principle at play in the juxtaposition of [Genesis 18:19](#) and [18:20](#). For [Genesis 18:19](#) speaks of the blessing of the

righteous Abraham, saying, “For I have known him, to the end that he may command.” And soon thereafter [Genesis 18:20](#) speaks of the curse of the wicked people of Sodom and Gomorrah, saying, “Truly the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great.” ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 38b.](#))

The Mishnah taught that some viewed the people of Sodom as embracing a philosophy of “what’s mine is mine.” The Mishnah taught that there are four types of people: (1) One who says: “What’s mine is mine, and what’s yours is yours”; this is a neutral type, some say this was the type of Sodom. (2) One who says: “What’s mine is yours, and what’s yours is mine”; this is an unlearned person. (3) One who says: “What’s mine is yours, and what’s yours is yours”; this is a pious person. And (4) one who says: “What’s mine is mine, and what’s yours is mine;” this is a wicked person. ([Mishnah Avot 5:10.](#))

The Tosefta employed verses from the book of Job to teach that the people of Sodom acted arrogantly before God because of the good that God had lavished on them. As [Job 28:5–8](#) says, “As for the land, out of it comes bread . . . Its stones are the place of sapphires, and it has dust of gold. That path, no bird of prey knows . . . The proud beasts have not trodden it.” The people of Sodom reasoned that since bread, silver, gold, precious stones, and pearls came forth from their land, they did not need immigrants to come to Sodom. They reasoned that immigrants came only to take things away from Sodom and thus resolved to forget the traditional ways of hospitality. (Tosefta Sotah 3:11–12; [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 109a.](#)) God told the people of

Sodom that because of the goodness that God had lavished upon them, they had deliberately forgotten how things were customarily done in the world, and thus God would make them be forgotten from the world. As [Job 28:4](#) says, “They open shafts in a valley from where men live. They are forgotten by travelers. They hang afar from men, they swing to and fro.” As [Job 12:5–6](#) says, “In the thought of one who is at ease, there is contempt for misfortune; it is ready for those whose feet slip. The tents of robbers are at peace, and those who provoke God are secure, who bring their god in their Hand.” And so as [Ezekiel 16:48–50](#) says, “As I live, says the Lord God, Sodom your sister has not done, she nor her daughters, as you and your daughters have done. Behold, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: pride, plenty of bread, and careless ease was in her and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before Me; therefore I removed them when I saw it.” (Tosefta Sotah 3:12.)



The Flight of Lot (painting from the first half of 17th Century by [Peter Paul Rubens](#))

[Raba](#) interpreted the words of [Psalm 62:4](#), “How long will you imagine mischief against a man? You shall be slain all of you; you are all as a bowing wall, and as a tottering fence.” Raba interpreted this to teach that the people of Sodom would cast envious eyes on the wealthy, place them by a tottering wall, push the wall down on them, and take their wealth. Raba interpreted the words of [Job 24:16](#), “In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the daytime; they know not the light.” Raba interpreted this to teach that they used to cast envious eyes on wealthy people and entrust fragrant balsam into their keeping, which they placed in their storerooms. In the evening the people of Sodom would smell it out like dogs, as

[Psalm 59:7](#) says, “They return at evening, they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city.” Then they would burrow in and steal the money. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 109a.](#))



Burning of Sodom (1874 illustration by Alexander Bida)

The Gemara told of the victims of the people of Sodom, in the words of [Job 24:7](#), “They (would) lie all night naked without clothing, and have no covering in the cold.” The Gemara said of the people of Sodom, in the words of [Job 24:3](#), “They drive away the donkey of the fatherless, they take the widow’s ox for a pledge.” In the words of [Job 24:2](#), “They remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed them.” And the Gemara told of their victims, in the words of [Job 21:32](#), “he shall be

brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 109a.](#))



Lot flees with his daughters out of Sodom, his wife frozen as a pillar of salt (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

The Gemara told that there were four judges in Sodom, named Shakrai, Shakurai, Zayyafi, and Mazle Dina (meaning “Liar,” “Awful Liar,” “Forger,” and “Perverter of Justice”). If a man assaulted his neighbor’s wife and caused a miscarriage, the judges would tell the husband to give his wife to the neighbor so that the neighbor might make her pregnant. If a person cut off the ear of a neighbor’s donkey, they would order the owner to give it to the offender until the ear grew again. If a person wounded a neighbor, they would tell the victim to pay the offender a fee for bleeding the victim. A person who crossed over with the ferry

had to pay four [zuzim](#), but the person who crossed through the water had to pay eight. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 109b.](#))



Lot and his Daughters Flee Sodom (1908 illustration by the Providence Lithograph Company)

Explaining the words, “the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great (*rabbah*, רַבָּהּ, הַ),” in [Genesis 18:20](#), the Gemara told the story of a certain maiden (*ribah*) in Sodom who gave some bread to a poor man, hiding it in a pitcher. When the people of Sodom found out about her generosity, they punished her by smearing her with honey and placing her on the city wall, where the bees consumed her. Rab Judah thus taught in Rab's name that [Genesis 18:20](#) indicates that God destroyed Sodom on account of the maiden (*ribah*). ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 109b.](#))

Did Abraham's prayer to God in [Genesis 18:23–32](#) change God's harsh decree? Could it have? On this subject, Rabbi [Abbahu](#) interpreted David's last words, as reported in [2 Samuel 23:2–3](#), where David reported that God told him, "Ruler over man shall be the righteous, even he that rules through the fear of God." Rabbi Abbahu read [2 Samuel 23:2–3](#) to teach that God rules humankind, but the righteous rule God, for God makes a decree, and the righteous may through their prayer annul it. ([Babylonian Talmud Moed Katan 16b.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) **Genesis chapter 19**

The rabbis in a midrash asked why the angels took so long to travel from Abraham's camp to Sodom, leaving Abraham at noon and arriving in Sodom only (as [Genesis 19:1](#) reports) "in the evening." The midrash explained that they were angels of mercy, and thus they delayed, thinking that perhaps Abraham might find something to change Sodom's fate, but when Abraham found nothing, as [Genesis 19:1](#) reports, "the two angels came to Sodom in the evening." ([Genesis Rabbah 50:1.](#))



Escape of Lot from Sodom (engraving from the first half of the 17th Century by [Matthäus Merian](#))

[The Master](#) deduced from [Genesis 19:15](#) and [19:23](#) that one can walk five mils (about 15,000 feet) in the time between the break of dawn and sunrise, as [Genesis 19:15](#) reports that “when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot,” and [Genesis 19:23](#) reports that “The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot came to Zoar,” and Rabbi [Haninah](#) said that it was five mils from Sodom to Zoar. ([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 93b.](#)) But the Gemara noted that as [Genesis 19:15](#) reports that “the angels hastened Lot,” they could naturally have covered more ground than a typical person. ([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 94a.](#))



Abraham Sees Sodom in Flames (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Rabbi Eliezer taught that Lot lived in Sodom only on account of his property, but Rabbi Eliezer deduced from [Genesis 19:22](#) that Lot left Sodom empty-handed with the angels telling him, “It is enough that you escape with your life.” Rabbi Eliezer argued that Lot’s experience proved the maxim (of [Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:5](#)) that the property of the wicked, whether inside or outside the town, will be lost. (Tosefta Sanhedrin 14:4.)

[Rabbi Meir](#) taught that while [Genesis 9:11](#) made clear that God would never again flood the world with water, [Genesis 19:24](#) demonstrated that God might bring a flood of fire and brimstone, as God brought upon Sodom and Gomorrah. (Tosefta Taanit 2:13.)

Rabbi [Joshua ben Levi](#) (according to the [Jerusalem Talmud](#)) or a Baraita in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yose the son of Rabbi Chanina (according to the Babylonian Talmud) said that the three [daily prayers](#) derived from the [Patriarchs](#), and cited [Genesis 19:27](#) for the proposition that Jews derived the morning prayer from Abraham, arguing that within the meaning of [Genesis 19:27](#), “stood” meant “pray,” just as it did in [Psalm 106:30](#) (Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 43a; [Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 26b](#).)

[Rabbi Hiyya](#) bar Abba, citing [Rabbi Johanan](#), taught that God rewards even polite speech. In [Genesis 19:37](#), Lot’s older daughter named her son Moab (“of my father”), and so in [Deuteronomy 2:9](#), God told [Moses](#), “Be not at enmity with Moab, neither contend with them in battle”; God forbade only war with the Moabites, but the Israelites might harass them. In [Genesis 19:38](#), in contrast, Lot’s younger daughter named her son Ben-Ammi (the less shameful “son of my people”), and so in [Deuteronomy 2:19](#), God told Moses, “Harass them not, nor contend with them”; the Israelites were not to harass the Ammonites at all. ([Babylonian Talmud Nazir 23b](#).)



Abimelech Rebukes Abraham (17th Century illustration by [Wenceslas Hollar](#))

[[edit](#)] Genesis chapter 20

The Rabbis taught that God appears to non-Jews only in dreams, as God appeared to Abimelech “in a dream of the night” in [Genesis 20:3](#), God appeared to [Laban](#) the “in a dream of the night” in [Genesis 31:24](#), and God appeared to [Balaam](#) “at night” in [Numbers 22:20](#). The Rabbis taught that God thus appeared more openly to the prophets of Israel than to those of other nations. The Rabbis compared God’s action to those of a king who has both a wife and a [concubine](#); to his wife he goes openly, but to his concubine he goes stealthily. ([Genesis Rabbah 52:5](#).) And a midrash taught that God’s appearance to Abimelech in [Genesis 20:3](#) and God’s appearance to Laban in [Genesis 31:24](#)

were the two instances where the Pure and Holy One allowed God's self to be associated with impure (idolatrous) people, on behalf of righteous ones. (Midrash [Tanhuma](#) Vayeitzei 12.)

The Mishnah deduced from the example of Abimelech and Abraham in [Genesis 20:7](#) that even though an offender pays the victim compensation, the offence is not forgiven until the offender asks the victim for pardon. And the Mishnah deduced from Abraham's example of praying for Abimelech in [Genesis 20:17](#) that under such circumstances, the victim would be churlish not to forgive the offender. ([Mishnah Bava Kamma 8:7](#).) The Tosefta further deduced from [Genesis 20:17](#) that even if the offender did not seek forgiveness from the victim, the victim must nonetheless seek mercy for the offender. (Tosefta Bava Kamma 9:29.)

Rabbi Isaac taught that Abimelech's curse of Sarah caused her son Isaac's blindness (as reported in [Genesis 27:1](#)). Rabbi Isaac read the words, "it is for you a covering (*kesut*) of the eyes," in [Genesis 20:16](#) not as *kesut*, "covering," but as *kesiyat*, "blinding." Rabbi Isaac concluded that one should not consider a small matter the curse of even an ordinary person. ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 28a](#), [Bava Kamma 93a](#).)

Raba derived from [Genesis 20:17](#) and [Genesis 21:1–2](#) the lesson that if one has a need, but prays for another with the same need, then God will answer first the need of the one who prayed. Raba noted that Abraham prayed to God to heal Abimelech and his wife of infertility ([Genesis 20:17](#)), and immediately thereafter

God allowed Abraham and Sarah to conceive ([Genesis 21:1–2](#)).
([Babylonian Talmud Bava Kamma 92a.](#))



Hagar and Ishmael Banished by Abraham (1781 painting by
Pieter Jozef Verhaghen)

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 21

The Rabbis linked parts of the parshah to [Rosh Hashanah](#). The Talmud directs that Jews read [Genesis 21](#) (the expulsion of Hagar) on the first day of Rosh Hashanah and [Genesis 22](#) (the binding of Isaac) on the second day. ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 31a.](#)) And in the Talmud, Rabbi Eliezer said that God visited both Sarah and [Hannah](#) to grant them conception on Rosh Hashanah. Rabbi Eliezer deduced this from the [Bible](#)’s parallel uses of the words “visiting” and “remembering” in description of Hannah, Sarah, and Rosh Hashanah. First, Rabbi

Eliezer linked Hannah’s visitation with Rosh Hashanah through the Bible’s parallel uses of the word “remembering.” [1 Samuel 1:19–20](#) says that God “remembered” Hannah and she conceived, and [Leviticus 23:24](#) describes Rosh Hashanah as “a remembering of the blast of the trumpet.” Then Rabbi Eliezer linked Hannah’s conception with Sarah’s through the Bible’s parallel uses of the word “visiting.” [1 Samuel 2:21](#) says that “the Lord had visited Hannah,” and [Genesis 21:1](#) says that “the Lord visited Sarah.” ([Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 11a.](#))



Abraham Sends Hagar and Ishmael into the [Desert](#) (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

Rav Awira taught (sometimes in the name of [Rabbi Ammi](#), sometimes in the name of [Rabbi Assi](#)) that the words “And the child grew, and was weaned (*va-yigamal*, וַיִּגְמַל), and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned” in [Genesis](#)

[21:8](#) teach that God will make a great feast for the righteous on the day that God manifests (*yigmoḥ*) God's love to Isaac's descendants. After they have eaten and drunk, they will ask Abraham to recite the Grace after meals ([Birkat Hamazon](#)), but Abraham will answer that he cannot say Grace, because he fathered Ishmael. Then they will ask Isaac to say Grace, but Isaac will answer that he cannot say Grace, because he fathered [Esau](#). Then they will ask [Jacob](#), but Jacob will answer that he cannot, because he married two sisters during both their lifetimes, which [Leviticus 18:18](#) was destined to forbid. Then they will ask Moses, but Moses will answer that he cannot, because God did not allow him to enter the Land of Israel either in life or in death. Then they will ask [Joshua](#), but Joshua will answer that he cannot, because he was not privileged to have a son, for [1 Chronicles 7:27](#) reports, "[Nun](#) was his son, Joshua was his son," without listing further descendants. Then they will ask David, and he will say Grace, and find it fitting for him to do so, because [Psalm 116:13](#) records David saying, "I will lift up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." ([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 119b.](#))



Hagar (19th Century painting by [Jean Michel Prosper Guérin](#))

The Gemara taught that if one sees Ishmael in a dream, then God hears that person's prayer (perhaps because the name "Ishmael" derives from "the Lord has heard" in [Genesis 16:11](#), or perhaps because "God heard" (*yishmah Elohim*, *יִשְׁמַח אֱלֹהִים*). Ishmael's voice in [Genesis 21:17](#)). ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 56b](#).)

The Gemara cited [Genesis 21:12](#) to teach that Sarah was one of seven prophetesses who prophesied to Israel and neither took away from nor added anything to what is written in the Torah. (The other prophetesses were [Miriam](#), [Deborah](#), [Hannah](#), [Abigail](#), [Huldah](#), and [Esther](#).) The Gemara established Sarah's status as a prophetess by citing the words, "Haran, the father of Milkah and the father of Yiscah," in [Genesis 11:29](#). Rabbi Isaac taught that Yiscah was Sarah. [Genesis 11:29](#) called her Yiscah (*יִסְכָּה*) because she discerned (*saketah*) by means of Divine inspiration, as [Genesis 21:12](#) reports God instructing Abraham, "In all that Sarah says to you, hearken to her voice." Alternatively, [Genesis](#)

[11:29](#) called her Yiscah because all gazed (*sakin*) at her beauty.
([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 14a.](#))



Abraham and Isaac (1645 etching by Rembrandt at the National Gallery of Art)

[Rab Nahman](#) taught that when Jacob “took his journey with all that he had, and came to [Beersheba](#)” in [Genesis 46:1](#), he went to cut down the cedars that [Genesis 21:33](#) reports his grandfather Abraham had planted there. (Genesis Rabbah 94:4.)

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 22

Rabbi Johanan, on the authority of Rabbi Jose ben Zimra, asked what [Genesis 22:1](#) means by the word “after” in “And it came to pass after these words, that God did tempt Abraham.” Rabbi Johanan explained that it meant after the words of [Satan](#), as

follows. After the events of [Genesis 21:8](#), which reports that Isaac grew, was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast the day that Isaac was weaned, Satan asked God how it could be that God graciously granted Abraham a child at the age of 100, yet of all that feast, Abraham did not sacrifice one turtle-dove or pigeon to God. Rather, Abraham did nothing but honor his son. God replied that were God to ask Abraham to sacrifice his son to God, Abraham would do so without hesitation. Straightway, as [Genesis 22:1](#) reports, “God did tempt Abraham.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 89b.](#))



Abraham Going up To Offer Isaac as a Sacrifice (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

Rabbi Simeon bar Abba explained that the word *na* (נָא) in [Genesis 22:2](#), “Take, I pray (*na*, נָא) your son,” can denote only

entreaty. Rabbi Simeon bar Abba compared this to a king who was confronted by many wars, which he won with the aid of a great warrior. Subsequently, he was faced with a severe battle. Thereupon the king asked the warrior, “I pray, assist me in battle, so that people may not say that there was nothing to the earlier battles.” Similarly, God said to Abraham, “I have tested you with many trials and you withstood all of them. Now, be firm, for My sake in this trial, so that people may not say that there was nothing to the earlier trials.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 89b.](#))

The Gemara expanded on [Genesis 22:2](#), explaining that it reports only one side of a dialog. God told Abraham, “take your son,” but Abraham replied, “I have two sons!” God said, “Your only one,” but Abraham replied, “Each is the only one of his mother!” God said, “Whom you love,” but Abraham replied, “I love them both!” Then God said, “Isaac!” The Gemara explained that God employed all this circumlocution in [Genesis 22:2](#) so that Abraham’s mind should not reel under the sudden shock of God’s command. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 89b.](#))



Abraham Climbs Mount Moriah (illustration by Schirmer from the 1908 *Bible and Its Story Taught by One Thousand Picture Lessons*)

A Baraita interpreted [Leviticus 12:3](#) to teach that the whole eighth day is valid for circumcision, but deduced from Abraham's rising "early in the morning" to perform his obligations in [Genesis 22:3](#) that the zealous perform circumcisions early in the morning. ([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 4a, Yoma 28b.](#))

A Tanna taught in the name of Rabbi Simeon ben Eleazar that intense love and hate can cause one to disregard the perquisites of one's social position. The Tanna deduced that love may do so from Abraham, for [Genesis 22:3](#) reports that "Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his donkey," rather than allow

his servant to do so. Similarly, the Tanna deduced that hate may do so from Balaam, for [Numbers 22:21](#) reports that “Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his donkey,” rather than allow his servant to do so. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 105b.](#))



Isaac Bears the Wood for His Sacrifice (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

The [Sifra](#) cited [Genesis 22:11](#), [Genesis 46:2](#), [Exodus 3:4](#), and [1 Samuel 3:10](#) for the proposition that when God called the name of a prophet twice, God expressed affection and sought to provoke a response. (Sifra 1:4.) Similarly, Rabbi Hiyya taught that it was an expression of love and encouragement. Rabbi Liezer taught that the repetition indicated that God spoke to Abraham and to future generations. Rabbi Liezer taught that there is no

generation that does not contain people like Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and [Samuel](#). ([Genesis Rabbah 56:7](#).)

Noting that [Genesis 22:13](#) reports that “Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him (*ahar*, אַחֲרָי) a ram,” a midrash asked what “behind” (*ahar*, אַחֲרָי) meant. Rabbi Judan taught that it meant *after all that happened*, Israel would still fall into the clutches of sin and thus become victims of persecution. But they would be ultimately redeemed by the ram’s horn, as [Zechariah 9:14](#) says, “And the Lord God will blow the horn.” ([Genesis Rabbah 56:9](#).)



Abraham Prepared To Sacrifice His Son Isaac (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

Noting that [Genesis 22:19](#) speaks of only Abraham when it says, “So Abraham returned to his young men,” a midrash asked: Where was Isaac? Rabbi Berekiah said in the name of the Rabbis

of [Babylon](#) that Abraham sent Isaac to [Shem](#) to study Torah. The midrash compared this to a woman who became wealthy through her spinning. She concluded that since she had become wealthy through her [distaff](#), it would never leave her hand. Similarly, Abraham deduced that since all that had come to him was only because he engaged in Godly pursuits, he was unwilling that those should ever depart from his descendants. And Rabbi Jose the son of Rabbi [Haninah](#) taught that Abraham sent Isaac home at night, for fear of the [evil eye](#). ([Genesis Rabbah 56:11.](#))



The Sacrifice of Isaac (painting circa 1590–1610 by [Caravaggio](#))

A midrash interpreted the words “his eyes were dim from seeing” in [Genesis 27:1](#) to teach that Isaac’s eyesight dimmed as a result of his near sacrifice in [Genesis 22](#), for when Abraham bound Isaac, the ministering angels wept, as [Isaiah 33:7](#) says, “Behold, their valiant ones cry without, the angels of peace weep bitterly,” and tears dropped from the angels’ eyes into Isaac’s, leaving their

mark and causing Isaac's eyes to dim when he became old.
(Genesis Rabbah 65:10.)

A midrash told that at the very moment in [Genesis 22:11–12](#) that the angel of the Lord stayed Abraham from sacrificing Isaac, the [Satan](#) appeared to Sarah in the guise of Isaac. When Sarah saw him, she asked what Abraham had done to him. He told Sarah that Abraham had taken him to a mountain, built an altar, placed wood upon it, tied him down on it, and took a knife to slaughter him, and had God not told him not to lay a hand on him, Abraham would have slaughtered him. And as soon as he finished speaking, Sarah's soul departed. Thus the midrash deduced from the words "Abraham *came* to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her" in [Genesis 23:2](#) that Abraham came directly from Mount Moriah and the binding of Isaac. (Midrash Tanhuma Vayeira 23.)

Interpreting God's command to Isaac in [Genesis 26:2](#) not to go to Egypt, Rabbi Hoshaya taught that God told Isaac that he was, by virtue of his near sacrifice in [Genesis 22](#), a burnt-offering without blemish, and as a burnt offering became unfit if it was taken outside of the Temple grounds, so would Isaac become unfit if he went outside of the Promised Land. (Genesis Rabbah 64:3.)

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are no [commandments](#) in the parshah. (Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#). [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The*

Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvoth of Maimonides. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 2 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:87. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy



A page from a 14th century German Haggadah

The [Passover Haggadah](#), in the concluding *nirtzah* section of the [Seder](#), in a reference to Abraham's visitors in [Genesis 18:1](#), recounts how God knocked on Abraham's door at the heat of the day on Passover and Abraham fed his visitors [matzah](#) cakes, deducing the season from the report in [Genesis 19:3](#) that Lot fed his visitors matzah. (Joseph Tabory. *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, 126. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. [ISBN 978-0-8276-](#)

[0858-0](#).) The Haggadah recounts that Abraham ran to the herd. (Menachem Davis. *The Interlinear Haggadah: The Passover Haggadah, with an Interlinear Translation, Instructions and Comments*, 111.

Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005. [ISBN 1-57819-064-9](#).)

And the Haggadah continues that it was thus on Passover that the Sodomites were consumed by God's fire, as reported in [Genesis 19:24–25](#). (Davis, at 111; Tabory, at 126.)

Also in the *nirtzah* section of the seder, in a reference to [Genesis 20:3](#) or [20:6](#), the Haggadah recounts how God judged the King of Gerar Abimelech in the middle of the night. (Davis, at 108; Tabory, at 123.)

The rabbis understood Abraham's devotion to God in the binding of Isaac in [Genesis 22:1–19](#) to have earned God's mercy for Abraham's descendents when they are in need. The 16th century [Safed](#) Rabbi Eliezer Azikri drew on this rabbinic understanding to call for God to show mercy for Abraham's descendents, "the son of Your beloved" (*ben ohavach*), in his [kabbalistic](#) poem *Yedid Nefesh* ("Soul's Beloved"), which many congregations chant just before the Kabbalat Shabbat [prayer service](#). (Reuven Hammer. *Or Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 14. New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2003. [ISBN 0916219208](#).)

And many Jews, following Kabbalistic masters from the [Zohar](#) to [Arizal](#), recite [Genesis 22:1–19](#), the binding of Isaac, after the morning blessings (*Birkat HaShachar*). The recitation of Abraham's and Isaac's willingness to put God above life itself is meant to invoke God's mercy, to inspire worshipers to greater

love of God, and to bring atonement to the penitent. (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for Weekdays with an Interlinear Translation*, 27–31. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-686-8](#).)

[[edit](#)] Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is:

- for [Ashkenazi Jews](#): [2 Kings 4:1-37](#)
- for [Sephardi Jews](#): [2 Kings 4:1-23](#)
- for [Karaite Jews](#): [Isaiah 33:17–35:10](#)

The parshah and haftarah in 2 Kings both tell of God’s gift of sons to childless women. In both the parshah and the haftarah: God’s representative visits the childless woman, whose household extends the visitor generous hospitality ([Genesis 18:1–15](#); [2 Kings 4:8–16](#)); the husband’s age raises doubt about the couple’s ability to have children ([Genesis 18:12](#); [2 Kings 4:14](#)); God’s representative announces that a child will come at a specified season in the next year ([Genesis 18:10](#); [2 Kings 4:16](#)); the woman conceives and bears a child as God’s representative had announced ([Genesis 21:1–2](#); [2 Kings 4:17](#)); death threatens the promised child ([Genesis 22:1–10](#); [2 Kings 4:18–20](#)); and God’s representative intervenes to save the promised child ([Genesis 22:11–12](#); [2 Kings 4:32–37](#)).

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:



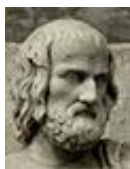
Hammurabi

[\[edit\]](#) Ancient

- [Code of Hammurabi 170–171](#). Circa 1780 BCE.

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 7:12–23](#) (God’s destruction in the flood); [12:10–20](#); [15:5](#)(numerous as stars); [26:1–33](#).
- [Exodus 2:3](#) (abandoned infant); [12:29–30](#) (God’s destruction of Egypt’s firstborn); [13:11–15](#); [22:28–29](#).
- [Numbers 22:21–22](#) (rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and his two servants were with him).
- [Deuteronomy 1:10](#) (numerous as stars).
- [Judges 11:1–40](#); [19:1–30](#).
- [2 Kings 3:26–27](#); [16:2–3](#); [21:1–6](#).
- [Jeremiah 32:27](#) (nothing too hard for God).



Euripides

- [Ezekiel 9:4–6](#) (God’s destruction of Jerusalem’s sinners); [16:3–5](#) (abandoned infant); [16:46–51](#) (Sodom); [20:25–26](#).

[[edit](#)] Early nonrabbinic

- [Euripides](#). *Iphigeneia at Aulis*. 410 BCE.
- Philo the Epic Poet. *On Jerusalem*. Fragment 2. 3rd–2nd century BCE. Quoted in [Eusebius](#). *Preparation for the Gospel*. [9:20:1](#). Translated by H. Attridge. In *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume 2: Expansions of the “Old Testament” and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic works*. Edited by [James H. Charlesworth](#), 783. New York: [Anchor Bible](#), 1985. [ISBN 0-385-18813-7](#). (binding of Isaac).
- [Virgil](#). *Georgics* [4:456](#). 37–30 BCE. ([Orpheus](#) and [Eurydice](#).)





Josephus

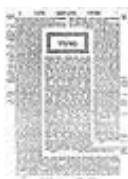
- [Jubilees 17:1–18:19.](#)
- [Josephus. *Antiquities*, 1:10:5; 1:11:1–4; 1:12:1–4; 1:13:1–4.](#)
Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#). Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).
- [4 Maccabees 13:11–12; 16:18–20.](#)
- [Epistle of Barnabas 7:3–4.](#)
- [Hebrews 11:11–19.](#)
- [James 2:20–24.](#)
- [Qur'an 2:124–32; 11:69–83; 15:51–79; 29:31–35; 37:99–113; 51:24–37; 53:53–54; 69:9–10.](#) Arabia, 7th century.

[\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah: Bava Kamma 8:7; Avot 5:3, 10.](#) 3rd century.
Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#). New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Tosefta](#): Berakhot 1:15; Maaser Sheni 5:29; Rosh Hashanah 2:13; Taanit 2:13; Megillah 3:6; Sotah 4:1–6,

12, 5:12, 6:1, 6; Bava Kamma 9:29; Sanhedrin 14:4. 3rd–4th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).

- [Sifre](#) to Deuteronomy 2:3. Reprinted in, e.g., *Sifre to Deuteronomy*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, vol. 1, 26. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987. [ISBN 1-55540-145-7](#).



Talmud

- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Berakhot 4b–5a, 43a–b; Peah 8b. 4th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi: Tractate Peah*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus. Vols. 1, 3. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.
- [Genesis Rabbah 48:1–57:4](#). Land of Israel, 5th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 26b–27a, 29a, 56b, 62b](#); [Pesachim 4a, 54a, 88a, 119b](#); [Yoma 28b, 38b](#); [Rosh](#)

[Hashanah 11a, 16b](#); [Taanit 8a–b, 16a](#); [Megillah 28a, 31a](#);
[Moed Katan 16b](#); [Yevamot 63a, 65b, 76b–77a, 79a](#);
[Ketubot 8b](#); [Nedarim 31a](#); [Sotah 9b–10b](#); [Kiddushin 29a](#);
[Bava Kamma 92a, 93a](#); [Sanhedrin 89b](#); [Chullin 60b](#).

Babylonia, 6th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*.

Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

[\[edit\]](#) Medieval



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[[edit](#)] See also

- [Binding of Isaac](#)
- [Islamic view of Hagar](#)

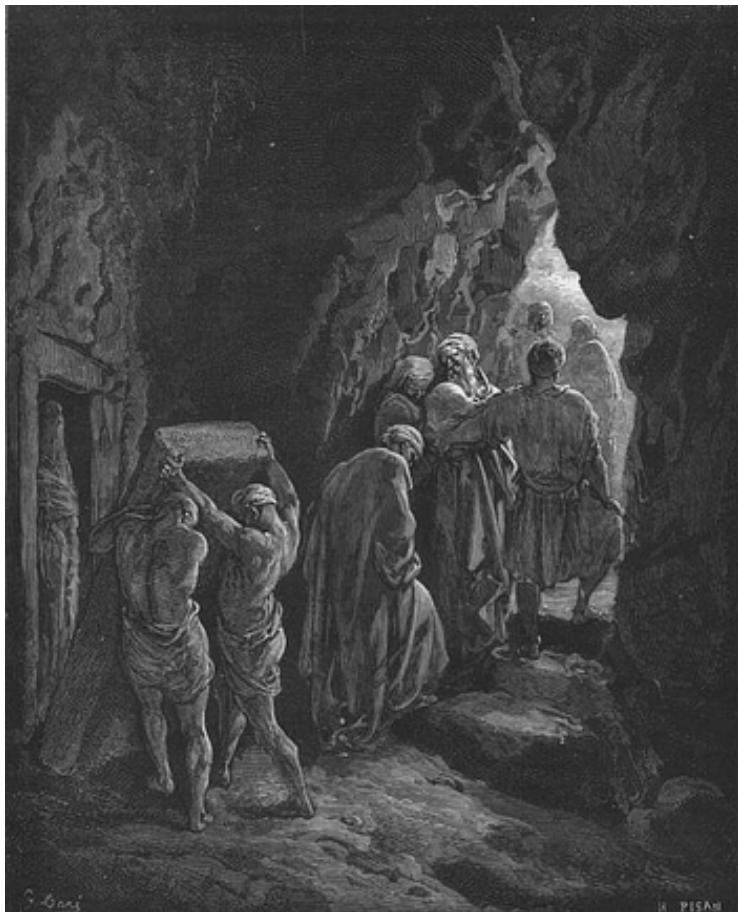
Chayei Sarah

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Chayei Sarah, **Chaye Sarah**, or **Hayye Sarah** (חַיֵּי שָׂרָה — [Hebrew](#) for “life of [Sarah](#),” the [first words](#) in the parshah) is the fifth [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#). It constitutes [Genesis 23:1–25:18](#). [Jews](#) read it on the fifth [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in

November.



Burial of Sarah (engraving by [Gustave Doré](#) from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



Abraham Weighs Silver (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

[[edit](#)] A burial place for Sarah

[Sarah](#) lived 127 years and died in [Hebron](#), and [Abraham](#) mourned for her. ([Genesis 23:1–2](#)) Abraham asked the [Hittites](#) to sell him a burial site, and the Hittites invited him to bury his dead in the choicest of their burial places. ([Genesis 23:3–6](#)) Abraham asked the Hittites to intercede for him with Ephron son of Zohar to sell Abraham the [cave of Machpelah](#) at full price. ([Genesis 23:7–9](#)) Before the Hittites at the town gate, Ephron offered to give Abraham the field and the cave that was in it, but Abraham insisted on paying the price of the land. ([Genesis 23:10–13](#)) Ephron named the value of the land at 400 [shekels](#) of silver and Abraham accepted Ephron's terms, gave him the silver, and purchased the land. ([Genesis 23:14–18](#)) Abraham buried Sarah in the cave. ([Genesis 23:19](#))

[[edit](#)] A wife for Isaac

Abraham was old, and instructed his senior servant to put his hand under Abraham's thigh and swear by [God](#) that he would not take a wife for [Isaac](#) from the [Canaanites](#), but would go to the land of Abraham's birth to get Isaac a wife. ([Genesis 24:1–4](#)) The servant asked if the woman did not consent to follow him to Canaan, should he take Isaac back to the land from which Abraham came? ([Genesis 24:5–6](#)) Abraham told him on no account to take Isaac back there, for God — who took Abraham

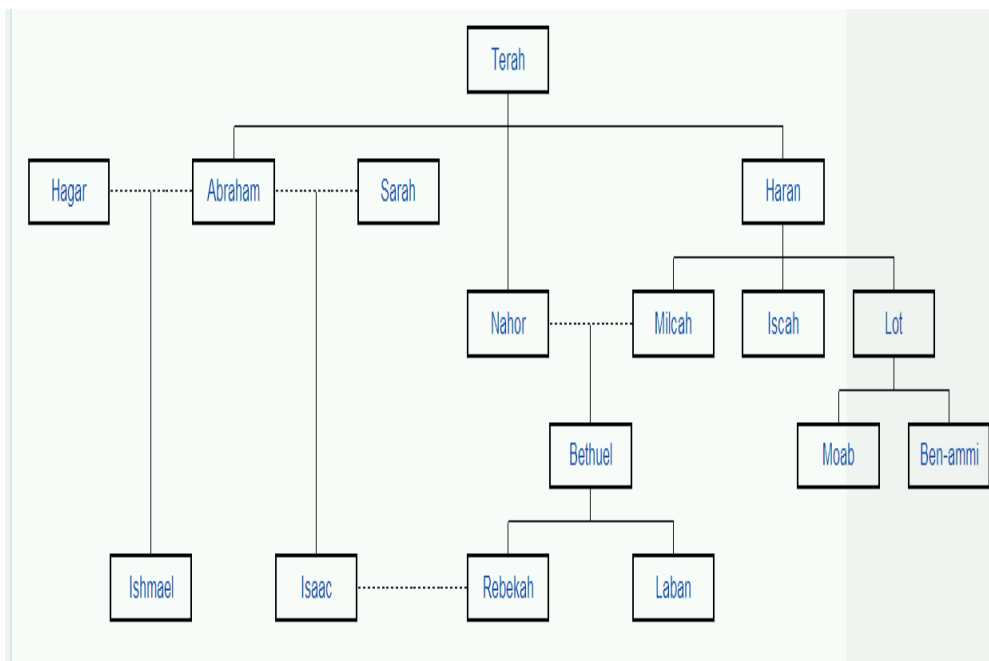
from there and promised Abraham the [land of Canaan](#) for his offspring — would send an [angel](#) before the servant and allow him successfully to get a wife for Isaac from there, and if the woman did not consent to follow him, he would then be clear of his oath. ([Genesis 24:7–8](#)) So the servant put his hand under Abraham's thigh and swore to him as Abraham had asked. ([Genesis 24:9](#))



[Eliezer](#) and Rebekah (engraving by Gustave Doré from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

[edit] Rebekah by the well

The servant took Abraham's bounty and ten of Abraham's camels and traveled to [Aram-Naharaim](#), the city of [Nahor](#). ([Genesis 24:9](#)) He made the camels kneel by the well outside the city at evening, when women come out to draw water. ([Genesis 24:10](#)) The servant asked God to grant that the maiden whom he would ask to draw water for him and who replied by offering also to water his camels might be the one whom God had decreed for Isaac. ([Genesis 24:11–14](#)) He had scarcely finished speaking when [Rebekah](#), the beautiful virgin daughter of Abraham's nephew [Bethuel](#), came out with her jar on her shoulder, went down to the spring, filled her jar, and came up. ([Genesis 24:15–16](#)) The servant ran toward her and asked to sip a little water from her jar, and she quickly let him drink and when he had drunk his fill, she offered to draw water for his camels until they finish drinking. ([Genesis 24:17–19](#)) When the camels had finished drinking, the servant took a gold nose-ring and two gold bands for her arms, and asked her whose daughter she was and whether there was room in her father's house for him to spend the night. ([Genesis 24:22–23](#)) She identified herself and told him that there was plenty of straw and feed and room at her home for him to spend the night. ([Genesis 24:24–25](#)) The servant bowed low to God and blessed God for steadfast faithfulness to Abraham. ([Genesis 24:26–27](#))



[[edit](#)] Rebekah's mother's household

Rebekah ran and told everything to her mother's household.

([Genesis 24:28](#)) Rebekah's brother [Laban](#) ran out to the servant at the spring, and when he saw the nose-ring and the bands on Rebekah's arms, and when he heard his sister tell the story, Laban invited the servant to their house, had the camels unloaded and fed, and had water brought to bathe the feet of the servant and his party. ([Genesis 24:28–32](#)) But the servant would not eat before he had told his tale. ([Genesis 24:33](#)) The servant told how God had greatly blessed Abraham with sheep and cattle, silver and gold, male and female slaves, camels and asses, and a son and sole heir. ([Genesis 24:34–36](#)) The servant told how Abraham made him swear to go to Abraham's kindred to get Isaac a wife,

and that God would send an angel to make his errand successful. ([Genesis 24:37–40](#)) And the servant told how he met Rebekah at the well. ([Genesis 24:42–48](#)) The servant then asked whether or not they meant to treat Abraham with true kindness, and Laban and Bethuel answered that the matter had been decreed by God and Rebekah could go and be Isaac’s wife. ([Genesis 24:49–51](#)) The servant bowed low to God and brought out silver, gold, and garments for Rebekah and presents for her brother and her mother. ([Genesis 24:52–53](#)) Then the servant and his party ate, drank, and spent the night. ([Genesis 24:54](#)) The next morning, the servant asked leave to return to Abraham, but Laban and her mother asked that Rebekah remain a period of time. ([Genesis 24:54–55](#)) The servant persisted, so they called Rebekah to ask for her reply, and she agreed to go. ([Genesis 24:56–58](#)) So they blessed Rebekah — wishing that her children be thousands of myriads and seize the gates of their foes — and they sent off Rebekah and her nurse with the servant. ([Genesis 24:59–60](#))



Meeting of Isaac and Rebekah (engraving by Gustave Doré from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) Isaac meets Rebekah

Isaac had just come back from the vicinity of Beer-lahai-roi to his home in the Negeb and was out walking in the field toward evening when he looked up and saw camels approaching.

([Genesis 24:62–63](#)) Raising her eyes, Rebekah saw Isaac, alighted from the camel, and asked the servant who the man was.

([Genesis 24:64–65](#)) The servant said that Isaac was his master, so she covered herself with her veil. ([Genesis 24:65](#)) The servant told Isaac everything that had happened, and Isaac brought her

into Sarah's tent and took her as his wife. ([Genesis 24:66–67](#))

Isaac loved Rebekah, and found comfort after his mother's death.

([Genesis 24:67](#))



Isaac and Ishmael Bury Abraham (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

[[edit](#)] Family matters

Abraham took another wife, named [Keturah](#), who bore him [Zimran](#), [Jokshan](#), [Medan](#), [Midian](#), Ishbak, and Shuah. ([Genesis 25:1–2](#)) Abraham willed all that he owned to Isaac, but to his sons by concubines he gave gifts while he was still living, and he sent them away from his son Isaac to the land of the East. ([Genesis 25:5–6](#))

Sons of [Abraham](#) by wife in order of birth

Sons of Abraham by wife in order of birth	
Hagar	Ishmael (1)
Sarah	Isaac (2)
Keturah	Zimran Jokshan Medan Midian Ishbak Shuah

Abraham lived 175 years and died old and contented. ([Genesis 25:7–8](#)) Isaac and [Ishmael](#) buried him in the cave of Machpelah with Sarah. ([Genesis 25:9–10](#)) After Abraham’s death, God blessed Isaac and he settled near Beer-lahai-roi. ([Genesis 25:11](#))

Ishmael had 12 sons, who became chieftains of 12 tribes.

([Genesis 25:12–16](#)) Ishmael lived 137 years and then died.

([Genesis 25:17](#)) Ishmael’s progeny dwelt in lands all the way from [Havilah](#), near [Egypt](#), to [Asshur](#). ([Genesis 25:18](#))

Sons of Ishmael in order of birth (Genesis)	
Nebaioth Kedar Adbeel Mibsam Mishma Dumah Massa Hadad Tema Jetur Naphish Kedemah	

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-Biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 23

The 400 shekels of silver that Abraham paid Ephron the Hittite to buy the cave of Machpelah and adjoining land in [Genesis 23:14–16](#) compares with the 100 pieces of silver that [Jacob](#) paid the children of Hamor for the parcel of ground where he had spread his tent outside the city of [Shechem](#) in [Genesis 33:18–19](#); the 50 shekels of silver that King [David](#) paid [Araunah](#) the [Jebusite](#) for Araunah’s threshing floor, oxen, and wood in [2 Samuel 24:18–24](#) (but [1 Chronicles 21:24](#) reports cost 600 shekels of *gold*); and the 17 shekels of silver that [Jeremiah](#) paid his cousin

Hanamel for his field in [Anathoth](#) in the land of [Benjamin](#) in [Jeremiah 32:7–9](#).

The cave of Machpelah in which [Genesis 23:18](#) reports Abraham buried Sarah later became the burial site for Abraham himself (as reported in [Genesis 25:8–10](#)) and thereafter Isaac, Rebekah, [Leah](#), and Jacob (as reported in [Genesis 49:29–31](#)).

[edit] Genesis chapter 24

The story of Eliezer’s mission to get a wife for Isaac is told twice, once by the narrator in [Genesis 24:1–27](#), and then a second time by Abraham’s servant in [Genesis 24:34–48](#). [Isaac Abrabanel](#) and other commentators noted a number of differences between the two recountings. (See, e.g., Yehudah Nachshoni. *Studies in the Weekly Parashah: The Classical Interpretations of Major Topics and Themes in the Torah*, 114–16. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1988. [ISBN 0-89906-933-9](#).)

Genesis 24:1–27 As Told by the Narrator	Genesis 24:34–48 As Told by Abraham’s Servant
¹ And Abraham was old, well stricken in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things.	³⁵ And the Lord has blessed my master greatly; and he is become great; and He has given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and men-servants and maid-servants, and camels and asses. ³⁶ And Sarah my master’s wife bore a son to my

master when she was old;
and to him has he given all
that he has.

² And Abraham said to his servant,
the elder of his house, that ruled
over all that he had: "Put, I pray
you, your hand under my thigh.

³⁴ And he said: "I am
Abraham's servant.

³ And I will make you swear by the
Lord, the God of heaven and the
God of the earth, that you shall not
take a wife for my son of the
daughters of the Canaanites, among
whom I dwell.

³⁷ And my master made me
swear, saying: You shall
not take a wife for my son
of the daughters of the
Canaanites, in whose land
I dwell.

⁴ But you shall go to my country,
and to my kindred, and take a wife
for my son, even for Isaac."

³⁸ But you shall go to my
father's house, and to my
kindred, and take a wife
for my son.

⁵ And the servant said to him:
"Perhaps the woman will not be
willing to follow me to this land;
must I bring your son back to the
land from which you came?"

³⁹ And I said to my master:
'Perhaps the woman will
not follow me.'

⁶ And Abraham said to him:
"Beware you that you do not bring
my son back there.

⁷ The Lord, the God of heaven, who
took me from my father's house,
and from the land of my nativity,
and who spoke to me, and who
swore to me, saying: 'To your seed
will I give this land'; He will send
His angel before you, and you shall
take a wife for my son from there.

⁴⁰ And he said to me: The
Lord, before whom I walk,
will send His angel with
you, and prosper your way;
and you shall take a wife
for my son of my kindred,
and of my father's house;

⁸ And if the woman is not willing to
follow you, then you shall be clear

⁴¹ then shall you be clear
from my oath, when you

from my oath; only you shall not bring my son back there.”

come to my kindred; and if they do not give her to you, you shall be clear from my oath.

⁹ And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.

¹⁰ And the servant took ten camels, of the camels of his master, and departed; having all good things of his master's in his hand; and he arose, and went to Aram-naharaim, to the city of Nahor.

¹¹ And he made the camels to kneel down without the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time that women go out to draw water.

¹² And he said: “O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, send me, I pray, good speed this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham.

⁴² And I came this day to the fountain, and said: ‘O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, if now You do prosper my way that I go:

¹³ Behold, I stand by the fountain of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water

⁴³ behold, I stand by the fountain of water; and let it come to pass, that the maiden that comes forth to draw, to whom I shall say: ‘Give me, I pray, a little water from your pitcher to drink’;

¹⁴ So let it come to pass, that the maiden to whom I shall say: ‘Let down your pitcher, I pray, that I may drink’; and she shall say: ‘Drink, and I will give your camels drink also’; let her be the one whom You have appointed for Your servant, even for Isaac; and thereby shall I know that You have shown kindness to my master.”

⁴⁴ and she shall say to me: ‘Both you drink, and I will also draw for your camels’; let her be the woman whom the Lord has appointed for my master's

son.

¹⁵ And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.

¹⁶ And the maiden was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her; and she went down to the fountain, and filled her pitcher, and came up. ¹⁷ And the servant ran to meet her, and said: "Give me to drink, I pray, a little water of your pitcher."

¹⁸ And she said: "Drink, my lord"; and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.

¹⁹ And when she had done giving him drink, she said: "I will draw for your camels also, until they have done drinking." ²⁰ And she hastened, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again to the well to draw, and drew for all his camels.

²¹ And the man looked steadfastly on her; holding his peace, to know whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not.

²² And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold;

⁴⁵ And before I had done speaking to my heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down to the fountain, and drew. And I said to her: 'Let me drink, I pray.'

⁴⁶ And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said: 'Drink, and I will give your camels drink also.' So I drank, and she made the camels drink also.

⁴⁷ And I asked her, and said: 'Whose daughter are you?' And she said: 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him.' And I put the

²³ and said: “Whose daughter are you? tell me, I pray. Is there room in your father’s house for us to lodge in?” ²⁴ And she said to him: “I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.”

ring upon her nose, and the bracelets upon her hands.

²⁵ She said moreover to him: “We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in.”

²⁶ And the man bowed his head, and prostrated himself before the Lord.

⁴⁸ And I bowed my head, and prostrated myself before the Lord, and blessed the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me in the right way to take my master’s brother’s daughter for his son.

²⁷ And he said: “Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master; as for me, the Lord has led me to the house of my master’s brethren.”

Abraham’s servant’s meeting (on behalf of Isaac) of Rebekah at the well in [Genesis 24:11–27](#) is the Torah’s first of several meetings at watering holes that lead to marriage. Also of the same type scene are Jacob’s meeting of [Rachel](#) at the well in [Genesis 29:1–12](#) and [Moses](#)’ meeting of [Zipporah](#) at the well in [Exodus 2:15–21](#).

[\[edit\]](#) In early nonrabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 24

[Josephus](#) reported that Rebekah told Abraham’s servant, “my father was Bethuel, but he is dead; and Laban is my brother; and,

together with my mother, takes care of all our family affairs, and is the guardian of my virginity.” ([Antiquities 1:16:2:248](#).)

[[edit](#)] In classical rabbinic interpretation

[[edit](#)] Genesis chapter 23

A [midrash](#) noted that [Genesis 23:1](#) recorded that “the life of Sarah was a hundred and seven and twenty years” rather than “one-hundred-twenty-seven years,” and deduced that as the righteous are whole and unblemished by sin, so are their years reported whole in the Bible. Thus the midrash taught that at the age of 20, Sarah was as at the age of seven in beauty, and at the age of 100, she was as at the age of 20 in sin (the age below which Providence does not punish for sin). ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 58:1.)

Rabbi Abba bar Kahana interpreted the words, "The sun rises, and the sun sets," in [Ecclesiastes 1:5](#) to teach that before God causes the sun of one righteous person to set, God causes the sun of another righteous person to rise. Thus a midrash taught that before God allowed Sarah's sun to set, God caused Rebekah's sun to rise. Thus [Genesis 22:20–23](#) first says, "Behold, Milcah, she also has borne children . . . and Bethuel begot Rebekah," and after that, [Genesis 23:1](#) says, "and the lifetime of Sarah was a hundred years" ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 58:2.)

Once while lecturing, [Rabbi Akiba](#) asked why [Esther](#) deserved to reign over 127 provinces (as indicated by [Esther 1:1](#)). Rabbi Akiba taught that the reason was this: Let Esther, the descendant

of Sarah, who lived 127 years (as [Genesis 23:1](#) reports), come and reign over 127 provinces. (Genesis Rabbah 58:3.)

Noting that [Genesis 23:2](#) reports that "Sarah died in Kiriath-arba," literally, "city of four," a midrash taught that the city had four names — Eshcol, Mamre, Kiriath-arba, and Hebron. Midrash taught that it was called Kiriath-arba because four righteous men dwelt there — Aner, Eshcol, Mamre, and Abraham; four righteous men were circumcised there — Abraham, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; four righteous men were buried there — [Adam](#), Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and four matriarchs were buried there — [Eve](#), Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah. (Genesis Rabbah 58:4.)



The Sacrifice of Isaac (painting circa 1590–1610 by [Caravaggio](#))

A midrash deduced from the words "Abraham *came* to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her" in [Genesis 23:2](#) that Abraham came directly from Mount [Moriah](#) and the [binding of Isaac](#). The midrash told that at the very moment in [Genesis 22:11–12](#) that

the angel of the Lord stayed Abraham from sacrificing Isaac, the [Satan](#) appeared to Sarah in the guise of Isaac. When Sarah saw him, she asked what Abraham had done to him. He told Sarah that Abraham had taken him to a mountain, built an altar, placed wood upon it, tied him down on it, and took a knife to slaughter him, and had God not told him not to lay a hand on him, Abraham would have slaughtered him. And as soon as he finished speaking, Sarah's soul departed. (Midrash [Tanhuma](#) Vayeira 23.)

The [Gemara](#) deduced from the use of the verb "came" in the account of [Genesis 23:2](#), "And Abraham *came* to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her," that Abraham delayed Sarah's funeral until he could travel to where her body lay. The Gemara further taught that Sarah would have been pleased that Abraham delayed her funeral so that he could eulogize her. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 46b.](#))

[Rav Ashi](#) deduced from [Genesis 23:3](#) that as long as a person has the obligation to bury a body, it is as if the corpse lay before the person. [Genesis 23:3](#) says: "And Abraham rose up from before his dead," indicating that he departed from the presence of Sarah's body. And then [Genesis 23:4](#) says: "that I may bury my dead out of my sight," showing that Abraham still spoke as if Sarah's corpse were lying before him. (And this status affects a person's obligation to perform other commandments.) ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 18a.](#)) Similarly, [Rabbi Johanan](#) taught that we learn from the words, "And Abraham rose up from before his dead and spoke," in [Genesis 23:3](#) that one whose

dead lies before him is exempt from reciting the [Shema](#) (as the verse implies that until Sarah's burial, Abraham did nothing but make arrangements for it). (Genesis Rabbah 58:6.)



Satan Inflicting Plagues on Job (watercolor by [William Blake](#) from his 1826 [*Illustrations of the Book of Job*](#))

The Gemara expanded on the conversation between God and Satan in [Job 1:6–8](#) to teach that Abraham's patience in receiving the Promised Land even in the face of the need to buy land to bury his wife in [Genesis 23:3–16](#) showed faith comparable to that of [Job](#). [Job 1:6–7](#) begins: "Now one day the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came among them. And the Lord said to Satan: 'From where do you come?' Then Satan answered. . . ." The Gemara taught that Satan then told God: "Sovereign of the Universe, I have traversed the whole world and found none so faithful as Your servant Abraham. For You said to him, 'Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for to you will I give it' ([Genesis 13:17](#)), and even so, when he was unable to find any place in which to

bury Sarah until he bought one for 400 shekels of silver, he did not complain against Your ways.” Only then did God say to Satan the words of [Job 1:8](#), “Have you considered my servant Job? For there is none like him in the earth” ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 15b](#).)

[Rabbi Berekiah](#) and [Rabbi Helbo](#) taught in the name of [Rabbi Samuel bar Nahman](#) that the [Valley of Siddim](#) (mentioned in [Genesis 14:3](#) in connection with the [battle between the four kings and the five kings](#)) was called the Valley of Shaveh (which means "as one") because there all the peoples of the world agreed as one, felled cedars, erected a large dais for Abraham, set him on top, and praised him, saying (in the words of [Genesis 23:6](#)), "Hear us, my lord: you are a prince of God among us." They told Abraham that he was king over them and a god to them. But Abraham replied that the world did not lack its King, and the world did not lack its God. ([Genesis Rabbah 42:5](#).)

A midrash taught that Abraham said (beginning with the words of [Genesis 22:1](#) and [22:11](#)), "'Here I am' — ready for priesthood, ready for kingship" (ready to serve God in whatever role God chose), and Abraham attained both priesthood and kingship. He attained priesthood, as [Psalm 110:4](#) says, "The Lord has sworn, and will not repent: 'You are a priest forever after the manner of Melchizedek.'" And he attained kingship, as [Genesis 23:6](#) says, "You are a mighty prince among us." ([Genesis Rabbah 55:6](#).)

[Ray](#) and [Samuel](#) differed as to its meaning of “Machpelah” — meaning “double cave” — in [Genesis 23:9](#). One held that the cave consisted of two chambers one within the other, and the

other held that it consisted of a lower and upper chamber.

According to one, the term “double cave” meant that it was the burial place of multiple couples — Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah. ([Babylonian Talmud Eruvin 53a.](#))

The Gemara deduced from the use of the term “take” in [Genesis 23:13](#) that “taking” means by monetary exchange. And thus the Gemara deduced that money effects betrothal by noting the common use of “take” in [Genesis 23:13](#) and in [Deuteronomy 22:13](#), in the words, “If any man take a wife.” ([Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 2a–b, 4b.](#))

The [Mishnah](#) attributed to Abraham a good eye (a magnanimous spirit in financial matters, based, for example, on Abraham's generous and ungrudging nature in his dealings with Ephron the Hittite in [Genesis 23:16](#)). ([Mishnah Avot 5:19.](#))

Rabbi [Haninah](#) taught that every time the Torah refers to silver coin (שֶׁקֶל כֶּסֶף, *shekel kesef*) without any qualification, it means a [sela](#) ([shekel](#)), except for the silver coin that [Genesis 23:16](#) cites in the transaction with Ephron. For although [Genesis 23:16](#) mentions the coinage without qualification, it means *centenaria* (worth 100 shekels each), because [Genesis 23:16](#) says: "400 shekels of silver current money with the merchant" (implying that wherever there were merchants, these shekels had to be accepted as such), and there is a place where they call *centenaria* "shekels." ([Babylonian Talmud Bekhorot 50a.](#))



Abraham's Servant Swears (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

[Rav Judah](#) said in the name of Rav that [Genesis 23:17](#), which says, "So the field of Efron which was in Machpelah . . . and all the trees that were in the field that were in the border thereof," indicates that Abraham in buying the field acquired all the small trees that were identified by their surrounding boundary. But the purchase did not include those large, distinctive trees that did not require a surrounding boundary for people to know to whom they belonged. And Rav Mesharsheya deduced from [Genesis 23:17](#) that one who buys a field also gains title to the border strips

and the trees on these strips surrounding the field. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 69b.](#))

[[edit](#)] Genesis chapter 24

The Mishnah and [Tosefta](#) deduced from [Genesis 24:1](#) that God blessed Abraham in his old age because (as the Mishnah deduced from [Genesis 26:5](#)) he kept the entire Torah even before it was revealed. ([Mishnah Kiddushin 4:14](#); [Tosefta Kiddushin 5:17.](#))

And the Tosefta deduced from the contrast between the plenty indicated in [Genesis 24:1](#) and the famine indicated in [Genesis 26:1](#) that God gave the people food and drink and a glimpse of the world to come while the righteous Abraham was alive, so that the people might understand what it had lost when he was gone. ([Tosefta Sotah 10:5.](#))

The Tosefta reported that Jewish judicial proceedings adopted the oath that Abraham imposed in [Genesis 24:3](#). ([Tosefta Sotah 7:3.](#)) And Rav Judah said that Rav said that the judge adjures the witness with the oath stated in [Genesis 24:3](#), “And I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven.” [Ravina](#) explained that this accorded with the view of Rabbi Haninah bar Idi, who said that Jewish judicial proceedings require swearing by the Name of God. Rav Ashi replied that one might even say that it accorded with the view of the Rabbis, who said that a witness can be adjured with a Substitute for the Name of God. They concluded that the witness needs to hold something sacred in his hand, as Abraham’s servant did when in [Genesis 24:9](#) he put his hand under Abraham’s thigh and held Abraham’s circumcision.

[Rava](#) said that a judge who adjures by “the Lord God of heaven” without having the witness hold a sacred object errs and has to repeat the swearing correctly. [Rav Papa](#) said that a judge who adjures with [tefillin](#) errs and has to repeat the swearing. The law follows Rava, but not Rav Papa, as tefillin are considered sacred. ([Babylonian Talmud Shevuot 38b.](#))



The Return of Jephtha (painting circa 1700–1725 by [Giovanni Antonio Pellegrini](#))

Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani said in the name of [Rabbi Jonathan](#) that Abraham’s servant Eliezer made an improper request when in [Genesis 24:14](#) he asked God to grant that the young woman whom he would ask to draw water for him and who replied by offering also to water his camels might be the one whom God had decreed for Isaac. Rabbi Samuel asked what would have happened if she had happened to be lame or blind, and concluded that Eliezer was fortunate that Providence answered him by sending Rebekah to meet him. Rabbi Samuel compared Eliezer’s request to the improvident oaths that [Saul](#) made in [1](#)

[Samuel 17:25](#) when he promised his daughter to the man who would kill [Goliath](#) and that [Jephtha](#) made in [Judges 11:31](#) when he promised to sacrifice whatever came out of his house to meet him on his return. ([Babylonian Talmud Taanit 4a.](#)) And Rav cited Eliezer's request in [Genesis 24:14](#) along with the omen sought by [Jonathan](#) in [1 Samuel 14:9–10](#) as forms of improper acts of divination. ([Babylonian Talmud Chullin 95b.](#))



Rebecca and Eliezer (painting circa 1652 by [Bartolomé Esteban Murillo](#))

Rabbi [Simeon bar Yohai](#) taught that God answered three men even while their petition was still on their lips: Abraham's servant Eliezer, [Moses](#), and [Solomon](#). With regard to Eliezer, [Genesis 24:15](#) reports: "And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out." With regard to Moses, [Numbers 16:31](#) reports: "And it came to pass, as he made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground did cleave asunder." And with regard to Solomon, [2 Chronicles 7:1](#) reports: "Now

when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven.” (Genesis Rabbah 60:4.)

Rav [Nahman bar Isaac](#) cited a Tanna that interpreted [Genesis 24:16](#) to teach that Rebekah was virgin between the ages of 12 and 12½ (a *naarah*) when Abraham’s servant encountered her. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 61b.](#))



Eliezer and Rebecca (18th Century painting by [Giovanni Battista Tiepolo](#))

The Rabbis read the words “And I came this day to the well” in [Genesis 24:42](#) to imply that Eliezer had set out that day from Abraham’s household and arrived on the same day in [Aram-Naharaim](#). The Rabbis thus taught that the earth shrank to speed Eliezer’s journey, as it would again for Jacob (as implied in [Genesis 28:10–11](#)) and [Abishai](#) the son of [Zeruiah](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 95a–b.](#))

Rabbi Isaac called Bethuel a wicked man. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 64a](#); see also Genesis Rabbah 60:12 (wicked); 63:4 (a rogue); [Leviticus Rabbah](#) 23:1 (a deceiver); [Song of Songs Rabbah](#) 2:4 (a trickster).) A midrash identified Bethuel as a king. ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 14:11.)

Rav in the name of Rabbi Reuben ben Estroble cited Laban's and Bethuel's response to Abraham's servant that "The matter was decreed by the Lord" in [Genesis 24:50–51](#) as a proof text for the proposition that God destines a woman and a man for each other in marriage. ([Babylonian Talmud Mo'ed Katan 18b](#); see also Genesis Rabbah 68:3.) Rabbi Joshua ben Rabbi Nehemiah in the name of Rabbi Haninah ben Isaac said that the decree with regard to Rebekah that Laban and Bethuel acknowledged came from Mount [Moriah](#). (Genesis Rabbah 60:10.)

Noting that [Genesis 24:55](#) reports that the next day, Rebekah's "brother and her mother said, 'Let the maiden remain with us some ten days'" ([Genesis 24:55](#)), the Rabbis asked where Bethuel was. The midrash concluded that Bethuel wished to hinder Rebekah's marriage, and so he was smitten during the night. (Genesis Rabbah 60:12.) The Rabbis said that Abraham's servant did not disclose Bethuel's fate to Isaac. (Genesis Rabbah 60:15.)



Rebecca Meets Isaac by the Way (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))



Rebekah Sees Isaac (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

[Rav Hisda](#) interpreted the word “days” (*yamim*) in [Genesis 24:55](#) to mean “a year.” [Genesis 24:55](#) says, “And her brother and her mother said: ‘Let the maiden abide with us *yamim*, at the least ten.’” The Gemara reasoned that if *yamim* in [Genesis 24:55](#) means “days” and thus to imply “two days” (as the plural implies more than one), then [Genesis 24:55](#) would report Rebekah’s brother and mother suggesting first two days, and then when Eliezer said that that was too long, nonsensically suggesting ten days. The Gemara thus deduced that *yamim* must mean “a year,” as [Leviticus 25:29](#) implies when it says, “if a man sells a house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; for a full year (*yamim*) shall he have the right of redemption.”

Thus [Genesis 24:55](#) might mean, “Let the maiden abide with us a year, or at the least ten months.” The Gemara then suggested that *yamim* might mean “a month,” as [Numbers 11:20](#) suggests when it uses the phrase “a month of days (*yamim*).” The Gemara concluded, however, that *yamim* means “a month” only when the term “month” is specifically mentioned, but otherwise means either “days” (at least two) or “a year.” ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 57b.](#))

A midrash noted that in [Genesis 24:57](#), Rebekah’s brother and mother asked Rebekah if she assented to going with Abraham’s servant to marry Isaac. The midrash deduced from this inquiry that a fatherless maiden may not be given in marriage without her consent. (Genesis Rabbah 60:12.)

Rabbi [Joshua ben Levi](#) (according to the [Jerusalem Talmud](#)) or a [Baraita](#) in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yose the son of Rabbi Chaninah (according to the Babylonian Talmud) said that the three [daily prayers](#) derived from the [Patriarchs](#), and cited [Genesis 24:63](#) for the proposition that Jews derived the afternoon prayer from Isaac, arguing that within the meaning of [Genesis 24:63](#), “speak” meant “pray,” just as it did in [Psalm 102:1](#). (Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 43a; [Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 26b.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 25

Rabbi Judah said that Keturah was another name for [Hagar](#). (Genesis Rabbah 61:4.)

Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Haninah taught that [Genesis 25:11](#) shows God comforting the mourning Isaac, and thus demonstrates one of God’s attributes that humans should emulate. Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Haninah asked what [Deuteronomy 13:5](#) means in the text, “You shall walk after the Lord your God.” How can a human being walk after God, when [Deuteronomy 4:24](#) says, “[T]he Lord your God is a devouring fire”? Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Haninah explained that the command to walk after God means to walk after the attributes of God. As God clothes the naked — for [Genesis 3:21](#) says, “And the Lord God made for [Adam](#) and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them” — so should we also clothe the naked. God visited the sick — for [Genesis 18:1](#) says, “And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of [Mamre](#)” (after [Abraham](#) was circumcised in [Genesis 17:26](#)) — so should we also visit the sick. God comforted mourners — for [Genesis 25:11](#) says, “And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac his son” — so should we also comfort mourners. God buried the dead — for [Deuteronomy 34:6](#) says, “And He buried him in the valley” — so should we also bury the dead. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 14a.](#)) Similarly, the [Sifre](#) on [Deuteronomy 11:22](#) taught that to walk in God’s ways means to be (in the words of [Exodus 34:6](#)) “merciful and gracious.” ([Sifre to Deuteronomy 49:1.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are no [commandments](#) in the parshah. (Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#).

[Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 2 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:87. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9](#).)



Abishag at the bed of David, with Bathsheba, Solomon, and Nathan (from a Dutch Bible circa 1435)

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is:

- for [Ashkenazi Jews](#), [Sephardi Jews](#), and [Dardai](#) communities: [1 Kings 1:1-31](#)
- for [Yemenite Jews](#): [1 Kings 1:1-36,46](#)

- for [Karaites](#): [Isaiah 51:2-22](#)
- for [Italian Jews](#): [1 Kings 1:1-34](#)

[\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy

In the Blessing after Meals (*Birkat Hamazon*), at the close of the fourth blessing (of thanks for God's goodness), Jews allude to God's blessing of the [Patriarchs](#) described in [Genesis 24:1](#), [27:33](#) and [33:11](#). (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals with an Interlinear Translation*, 172. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-697-3](#). Reuven Hammer. *Or Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 342. New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#).)

The Sages deduced from Isaac's "meditation . . . toward evening" in [Genesis 24:63](#) that Isaac began the practice of the afternoon *Mincha* prayer service. (Hammer at 1.)

[\[edit\]](#) The Weekly Maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), Sephardi Jews each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parasha. For parshah Chayei Sarah, Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Hijaz, the maqam that expresses mourning and sadness. This maqam is appropriate here, because it is the parshah that contains the deaths of both Sarah and Abraham.

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 29:1–12](#) (courtship at the well).
- [Exodus 2:15–21](#) (courtship at the well).

[\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): [Kiddushin 4:14](#); [Avot 5:19](#). Land of Israel, circa 200 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#). New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Tosefta](#): Sotah 7:3, 10:5; Kiddushin 5:17. Land of Israel, circa 300 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).
- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Berakhot 43a; Orlah 9b. Land of Israel, circa 400 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 1, 12. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2005–2009.
- [Genesis Rabbah 8:13](#); [38:10](#); [42:5](#); [45:9](#); [48:16](#); [55:6](#); 58:1–62:5; 65:9; 66:4; 68:2–4, 9; 70:12; 79:7; 85:7; 96; 97. Land

of Israel, 5th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).

- [Leviticus Rabbah](#) 19:5; 20:11; 30:10; 37:4. Land of Israel, 5th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Leviticus*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).



Talmud

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 18a, 26b, 61a](#); [Shabbat 62b, 77a](#); [Eruvin 18b, 53a](#); [Pesachim 3a](#); [Yoma 28b](#); [Taanit 4a](#); [Megillah 17a](#); [Moed Katan 18b](#); [Yevamot 61b](#); [Ketubot 57b](#); [Nedarim 41b](#); [Sotah 5a, 14a](#); [Gittin 76a](#); [Kiddushin 2a, 4b, 82a](#); [Bava Kamma 92b](#); [Bava Metzia 87a](#); [Bava Batra 16b, 69b, 141a](#); [Sanhedrin 46b, 59b, 91a, 95a, 107b](#); [Shevuot 38b](#); [Avodah Zarah 7b](#); [Zevachim 62b](#); [Chullin 95b, 120a](#); [Bekhorot 50a](#). Babylonia, 6th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

[\[edit\]](#) Medieval

- [Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 2:11; 9:4; 11:1. Land of Israel, 9th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Deuteronomy*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Exodus Rabbah](#) 1:32; 31:17; 32:9. 10th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Exodus*. Translated by S. M. Lehrman. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Song of Songs Rabbah](#) 2:41; 3:8.
- [Ruth Rabbah](#) 4:3; 7:12.
- [Lamentations Rabbah](#) 1:19.
- [Ecclesiastes Rabbah](#) 2:30.
- [Esther Rabbah](#) 2:9.
- [Solomon ibn Gabirol](#). *A Crown for the King*, [16:199–200](#); [22:269–70](#). Spain, 11th Century. Translated by David R. Slavitt, 28–29, 36–37. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. [ISBN 0-19-511962-2](#).



Rashi

- [Rashi](#). *Commentary. Genesis 23–25*. Troyes, France, late 11th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 1:241–70. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1995. [ISBN 0-89906-026-9](#).
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- [Zohar](#) 1:21a, 50a, 100b, 103a, [121a–34a](#), 135b, 141a, 142a, 181b, 187a, 223a, 224a; 2:39b, 236a; 3:103a, 148b, 158a; Raya Mehemna 60a. Spain, late 13th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Zohar*. Translated by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon. 5 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1934.

[\[edit\]](#) Modern

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Mann

- [Thomas Mann](#). *Joseph and His Brothers*. Translated by [John E. Woods](#), 11, 58, 93–94, 100, 127–28, 130, 133–34, 173, 185, 187, 203, 339–43, 353–54, 394–95, 476–77, 492–93, 496–98, 623, 779, 806. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. [ISBN 1-4000-4001-9](#). Originally published as *Joseph und seine Brüder*. Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer Verlag, 1943.
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- Suzanne A. Brody. “Rebecca’s Goodbye.” In *Dancing in the White Spaces: The Yearly Torah Cycle and More Poems*, 66. Shelbyville, Kentucky: Wasteland Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-60047-112-9.](#)
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Toledot

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Toledot, **Toldot**, or **Tol'doth** (תּוֹלְדוֹת — [Hebrew](#) for “generations” or “descendants,” the second word and the first distinctive word in the parshah) is the sixth [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#). It constitutes [Genesis 25:19–28:9](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it the sixth [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in November or early December.



Isaac Blessing Jacob (1637 painting by [Giuseppe Ribera](#))

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Summary



Esau and Jacob Presented to Isaac (painting circa 1779–1801 by [Benjamin West](#))

Esau and Jacob

[Isaac](#) was 40 years old when he married [Rebekah](#), and when she proved [barren](#), Isaac pleaded with [God](#) on her behalf, and God allowed Rebekah to [conceive](#). ([Genesis 25:20–21](#)) As [twins](#) struggled in her womb, she inquired of God, who answered her that two separate nations were in her womb, one mightier than the other, and the older would serve the younger. ([Genesis 25:22–23](#)) When Rebekah gave birth, the first twin emerged red

and hairy, so they named him Esau, and his brother emerged holding Esau's heel, so they named him Jacob. ([Genesis 25:24–26](#)) Isaac was 60 years old when they were born. ([Genesis 25:26](#))



Esau Selling His Birthright (painting circa 1627 by [Hendrick ter Brugghen](#))

Esau became a skillful [hunter](#) and outdoorsman, but Jacob remained a mild man and camp-bound. ([Genesis 25:27](#)) Isaac favored Esau for his game, but Rebekah favored Jacob. ([Genesis 25:28](#)) Once when Jacob was cooking, Esau returned to the camp famished and demanded some of Jacob's red stew. ([Genesis 25:29–30](#)) Jacob demanded that Esau first sell him his birthright, and Esau did so with an oath, spurning his birthright. ([Genesis 25:31–34](#))

Wife as sister

Another [famine](#) struck the land, and Isaac went to the house of the [Philistine](#) King [Abimelech](#) in [Gerar](#). ([Genesis 26:1](#)) God told

Isaac not to go down to [Egypt](#), but to stay in [the land](#) that God would show him, for God would remain with him, [bless](#) him, and assign the land to him and his numerous heirs, as God had sworn to [Abraham](#), who had obeyed God and kept God's commandments. ([Genesis 26:2–5](#))



Isaac, A Lover of Peace (illustration from a Bible card published 1906 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

When the men of Gerar asked Isaac about his beautiful wife, he [said that she was his sister](#) out of fear that the men might kill him on account of her. ([Genesis 26:7](#)) But looking out of the window, Abimelech saw Isaac fondling Rebekah, and Abimelech summoned Isaac to complain that Isaac had called her his sister. ([Genesis 26:8–9](#)) Isaac explained that he had done so to save his life. ([Genesis 26:9](#)) Abimelech complained that one of the people

might have lain with her, and Isaac would have brought guilt upon the Philistines, and Abimelech charged the people not to molest Isaac or Rebekah, on pain of death. ([Genesis 26:10–11](#))



Isaac and Abimelech Swear an Oath of Friendship to Each Other
(illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

God blessed Isaac, who reaped bountiful harvests and grew very wealthy, to the envy of the Philistines. ([Genesis 26:12–14](#)) The Philistines stopped up all the wells that Abraham's servants had dug, and Abimelech sent Isaac away, for his household had become too big. ([Genesis 26:15–16](#)) So Isaac left to settle in the wadi of Gerar, where he dug anew the wells that Abraham's

servants had dug and called them by the same names that his father had. ([Genesis 26:17–18](#)) But when Isaac's servants dug two new wells, the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen and claimed them for their own, so Isaac named those wells Esek and Sitnah. ([Genesis 26:19–21](#)) Isaac moved on and dug a third well, and they did not quarrel over it, so he named it [Rehoboth](#). ([Genesis 26:22](#))

Isaac went to [Beersheba](#), and that night God appeared to Isaac, telling Isaac not to fear, for God was with him, and would bless him and increase his offspring for Abraham's sake. ([Genesis 26:23–24](#)) So Isaac built an altar and invoked the Lord by name. ([Genesis 26:25](#)) And Isaac pitched his tent there and his servants began digging a well. ([Genesis 26:25](#))

Then Abimelech, Ahuzzath his councilor, and [Phicol](#) his general came to Isaac, and Isaac asked them why they had come, since they had driven Isaac away. ([Genesis 26:26–27](#)) They answered that they now recognized that God had been with Isaac, and sought a treaty that neither would harm the other. ([Genesis 26:28–29](#)) Isaac threw a feast for the Philistines, and the next morning, they exchanged oaths and the Philistines departed from him in peace. ([Genesis 26:30–31](#)) Later in the day, Isaac's servants told him that they had found water, and Isaac named the well Shibah, so that place became known as Beersheba. ([Genesis 26:32–33](#))

When Esau was 40 years old, he married two Hittite women, [Judith](#) and [Basemath](#), causing bitterness for Isaac and Rebekah. ([Genesis 26:34–35](#))



Esau Going for Venison (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

Isaac's blessing

When Isaac was old and his sight had dimmed, he called Esau and asked him to hunt some game and prepare a dish, so that Isaac might give him his innermost blessing before he died.

([Genesis 27:1–4](#)) Rebekah had been listening, and when Esau departed, she instructed Jacob to fetch her two choice kids so that she might prepare a dish that Jacob could take to Isaac and receive his blessing. ([Genesis 27:5–10](#)) Jacob complained to Rebekah that since Esau was hairy, Isaac might touch him, discover him to be a trickster, and curse him. ([Genesis 27:11–12](#)) But Rebekah called the curse upon herself, insisting that Jacob do as she directed. ([Genesis 27:13](#)) So Jacob got the kids, and Rebekah prepared a dish, had Jacob put on Esau's best clothes,

and covered Jacob's hands and neck with the kid's skins. ([Genesis 27:14–17](#))



Isaac Blessing Jacob (engraving by [Gustave Doré](#) from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

When Jacob went to Isaac, he asked which of his sons had arrived, and Jacob said that he was Esau and asked for Isaac's blessing. ([Genesis 27:18–19](#)) Isaac asked him how he had succeeded so quickly, and he said that God had granted him good fortune. ([Genesis 27:20](#)) Isaac asked Jacob to come closer that Isaac might feel him to determine whether he was really Esau. ([Genesis 27:21](#)) Isaac felt him and wondered that the voice was

Jacob's, but the hands were Esau's. ([Genesis 27:22](#)) Isaac questioned if it was really Esau, and when Jacob assured him, Isaac asked for the game and Jacob served him the kids and wine. ([Genesis 27:24–25](#)) Isaac bade his son to come close and kiss him, and Isaac smelled his clothes, remarking that he smelled like the fields. ([Genesis 27:26–27](#)) Isaac blessed Jacob, asking God to give him abundance, make peoples serve him, make him master over his brothers, curse those who cursed him, and bless those who blessed him. ([Genesis 27:27–29](#))



Isaac upon Esau's Return (fresco circa 1292–1294 by [Giotto di Bondone](#))

Just as Jacob left, Esau returned from the hunt, prepared a dish for Isaac, and asked Isaac for his blessing. ([Genesis 27:30–31](#)) Isaac asked who he was, and Esau said that it was he. ([Genesis 27:32](#)) Isaac trembled and asked who it was then who had served him, received his blessing, and now must remain blessed. ([Genesis 27:33](#)) Esau burst into sobbing, and asked Isaac to bless

him too, but Isaac answered that Jacob had taken Esau's blessing with guile. ([Genesis 27:34–35](#)) Esau asked whether Jacob had been so named that he might supplant Esau twice, first taking his birthright and now his blessing. ([Genesis 27:36](#)) Esau asked Isaac whether he had not reserved a blessing for Esau, but Isaac answered that he had made Jacob master over him and sustained him with grain and wine, and asked what, then, he could still do for Esau. ([Genesis 27:37](#)) Esau wept and pressed Isaac to bless him, too, so Isaac blessed him to enjoy the fat of the earth and the dew of heaven, to live by his sword and to serve his brother, but also to break his yoke. ([Genesis 27:38–40](#))

Esau harbored a grudge against Jacob, and told himself that he would kill Jacob upon Isaac's death. ([Genesis 27:41](#)) When Esau's words reached Rebekah, she told Jacob to flee to [Haran](#) and her brother [Laban](#) and remain there until Esau's fury subsided and Rebekah fetched him from there, so that Rebekah would not lose both sons in one day. ([Genesis 27:42–45](#)) Rebekah told Isaac her disgust with the idea that Jacob might marry a Hittite woman, so Isaac sent for Jacob, blessed him, and instructed him not to take a [Canaanite](#) wife, but to go to [Padan-aram](#) and the house of [Bethuel](#) to take a wife from among Laban's daughters. ([Genesis 27:46–28:2](#)) And Isaac blessed Jacob with fertility and the blessing of Abraham, that he might possess the land that God had assigned to Abraham. ([Genesis 28:3–4](#))

When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and charged him not to take a Canaanite wife, Esau realized that the Canaanite

women displeased Isaac, and Esau married [Ishmael](#)'s daughter [Mahalath](#). ([Genesis 28:5–9](#))



Birth of Esau and Jacob (illumination circa 1475–1480 by François Maitre from [Augustine's *La Cité de Dieu*](#), at the [Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum](#))



The Birth of Esau and Jacob (illumination by Master of Jean de Mandeville, Paris, from a [Bible Historiale](#) circa 1360–1370, at the [J. Paul Getty Museum](#))

In classical rabbinic interpretation

Genesis chapter 25

[Rava](#) argued that one may deduce from Isaac's example that a man may remain for 20 years with an infertile wife. For of Isaac, [Genesis 25:20](#) says, "And Isaac was 40 years old when he took Rebecca . . . to be his wife," and [Genesis 25:26](#) says, "And Isaac was 60 years old when she bore them" (which shows that Isaac waited 20 years). [Rav Nachman](#) replied that Isaac was infertile (and he knew that the couple was childless because of him). Rabbi Isaac deduced that Isaac was infertile from [Genesis 25:21](#), which says, "And Isaac entreated the Lord opposite his wife." Rabbi Isaac taught that [Genesis 25:21](#) does not say "*for* his wife" but "*opposite* his wife." Rabbi Isaac deduced from this that both were barren (as he had to pray for himself as well as her). The Gemara countered that if this were so, then [Genesis 25:21](#) should not read, "And the Lord let Himself be entreated *by him*," but rather should read, "And the Lord let Himself be entreated *by them*" (as Isaac's prayer was on behalf of them both). But the Gemara explained that [Genesis 25:21](#) reads, "And the Lord let Himself be entreated *by him*," because the prayer of a righteous person who is the child of a righteous person (Isaac son of Abraham) is even more effective than the prayer of a righteous person who is the child of a wicked person (Rebekah daughter of Bethuel). Rabbi Isaac taught that the [Patriarchs](#) and Matriarchs were infertile because God longs to hear the prayer of the righteous. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 64a.](#))



The Mess of Pottage (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

Noting that the three-letter root עתר used in [Genesis 25:21](#) can mean either “entreat” or “pitchfork,” [Rabbi Eleazar](#) (or others say Rabbi Isaac) taught that the prayers of the righteous are like a pitchfork. Just as the pitchfork turns the grain from place to place in the barn, so the prayers of the righteous turn the mind of God from the attribute of harshness to that of mercy. ([Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 14a](#) (Rabbi Eleazar), [Yevamot 64a](#) (Rabbi Isaac).)

Reading the words, “and she went to inquire of the Lord,” in [Genesis 25:22](#), a [midrash](#) wondered how Rebekah asked God about her pregnancy, and whether there were synagogues and houses of study in those days. The midrash concluded that Rebekah went to the school of [Shem](#) and [Eber](#) to inquire. The midrash deduced that this teaches that to visit a [Sage](#) is like visiting the Divine Presence. ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 63:6.)



Selling the Birthright (1640 painting by [Matthias Stom](#))

The Rabbis of the Talmud read Edom to stand for [Rome](#). Thus, [Rav Nahman bar Isaac](#) interpreted the words, “and the one people shall be stronger than the other people,” in [Genesis 25:23](#) to teach that at any one time, one of Israel and Rome will be ascendant, and the other will be subjugated. ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 6a.](#))

Rabbi Haninah taught that Esau paid great attention to his parent (*boro*), his father, whom he supplied with meals, as [Genesis 25:28](#) reports, “Isaac loved Esau, because he ate of his venison.” Rabbi Samuel the son of Rabbi Gedaliah concluded that God decided to reward Esau for this. When Jacob offered Esau gifts, Esau answered Jacob in [Genesis 33:9](#), “I have enough (רַב, *rav*); do not trouble yourself.” So God declared that with the same expression that Esau thus paid respect to Jacob, God would command Jacob’s descendants not to trouble Esau’s descendants, and thus God told the Israelites in [Deuteronomy 2:3](#), “You have circled

this mountain (הַר, *har*) long enough (רַב, *rav*).” ([Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 1:17.)



Esau Sells His Birthright for Pottage of Lentils (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

A [Tanna](#) taught in a [Baraita](#) that the day recounted in [Genesis 25:29–34](#) on which Esau spurned his birthright was also the day on which Abraham died, and Jacob was cooking lentils to comfort Isaac. In the Land of Israel they taught in the name of Rabbah bar Mari that it was appropriate to cook lentils because just as the lentil has no mouth (no groove like other legumes), so the mourner has no mouth to talk but sits silently. Others

explained that just as the lentil is round, so mourning comes round to all people. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 16b.](#))



Jacob Offers a Dish of Lentels to Esau for the Birthright (17th Century painting after [Gioacchino Assereto](#))

[Rabbi Johanan](#) taught that Esau committed five sins on the day recounted in [Genesis 25:29–34](#). Rabbi Johanan deduced from the similar use of the words “the field” in [Genesis 25:29](#) and in connection with the betrothed maiden in [Deuteronomy 22:27](#) that Esau dishonored a betrothed maiden. Rabbi Johanan deduced from the similar use of the word “faint” in [Genesis 25:29](#) and in connection with murderers in [Jeremiah 4:31](#) that Esau committed a murder. Rabbi Johanan deduced from the similar use of the word “this” in [Genesis 25:32](#) and in the words “This is my God” in [Exodus 15:2](#) that Esau denied belief in God. Rabbi Johanan deduced from Esau’s words, “Behold, I am on the way to die,” in [Genesis 25:32](#) that Esau denied the resurrection of the dead. And for Esau’s fifth sin, Rabbi Johanan cited the report

of [Genesis 25:34](#) that “Esau despised his birthright.” ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 16b.](#))

Genesis chapter 26

A midrash cited [Genesis 26:1](#) to show that there is double rejoicing in the case of a righteous one who is the child of a righteous one. (Genesis Rabbah 63:1.) The [Mishnah](#) and [Tosefta](#) deduced from [Genesis 26:5](#) that Abraham kept the entire Torah even before it was revealed. ([Mishnah Kiddushin 4:14](#); Tosefta Kiddushin 5:21; [Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 82a.](#))

The Tosefta deduced from the contrast between the plenty indicated in [Genesis 24:1](#) and the famine indicated in [Genesis 26:1](#) that God gave the people food and drink and a glimpse of the world to come while the righteous Abraham was alive, so that the people might understand what they had lost when he was gone. (Tosefta Sotah 10:5.) The Tosefta reported that when Abraham was alive, the wells gushed forth water, but the Philistines filled the wells with earth (as reported in [Genesis 26:15](#)), for after Abraham died the wells no longer gushed forth water, and the Philistines filled them so that they would not pose a hazard to travelers. But when Isaac came along, the wells gushed water again (as indicated in [Genesis 26:18–19](#)) and there was plenty again (as indicated in [Genesis 26:12](#)) (Tosefta Sotah 10:6.)

Interpreting God’s command to Isaac in [Genesis 26:2](#) not to go to Egypt, Rabbi Hoshaya taught that God told Isaac that he was (by virtue of his near sacrifice in [Genesis 22](#)) a burnt-offering

without blemish, and as a burnt offering became unfit if it was taken outside of the Temple grounds, so would Isaac become unfit if he went outside of the Promised Land. (Genesis Rabbah 64:3.)

Rabbi [Dosetai](#) ben Yannai said in the name of [Rabbi Meir](#) that when God told Isaac that God would bless him for Abraham's sake ([Genesis 26:24](#)), Isaac interpreted that one earns a blessing only through one's actions, and he arose and sowed, as reported in [Genesis 26:12](#). (Tosefta Berakhot 6:8.)



Jacob and Rebekah (illustration from a Bible card published 1906 by the Providence Lithograph Company)



Jacob Deceives Isaac (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Genesis chapter 27

Rabbi Eleazar taught that Isaac’s blindness, reported in [Genesis 27:1](#), was caused by his looking at the wicked Esau. But Rabbi Isaac taught that Abimelech’s curse of Sarah caused her son Isaac’s blindness. Rabbi Isaac read the words, “it is for you a covering (*kesut*) of the eyes,” in [Genesis 20:16](#) not as *kesut*, “covering,” but as *kesiyat*, “blinding.” Rabbi Isaac concluded that one should not consider a small matter the curse of even an ordinary person. ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 28a](#); see also [Babylonian Talmud Bava Kamma 93a](#).) Alternatively, a midrash interpreted the words “his eyes were dim from seeing” in [Genesis 27:1](#) to teach that Isaac’s eyesight dimmed as a result of his near sacrifice in [Genesis 22](#), for when Abraham bound Isaac, the ministering angels wept, as [Isaiah 33:7](#) says, “Behold, their valiant

ones cry without, the angels of peace weep bitterly,” and tears dropped from the angels’ eyes into Isaac’s, leaving their mark and causing Isaac’s eyes to dim when he became old. (Genesis Rabbah 65:10.)

Rabbi Eleazar taught that deceptive speech is like idolatry. Rabbi Eleazar deduced the similarity from the common use of the word “deceiver” to describe Jacob’s deception his father in [Genesis 27:12](#), where Jacob says, “I shall seem to him as a deceiver,” and to describe idols in [Jeremiah 10:15](#), where idols are described as “the work of deceivers.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 92a.](#))

But the Gemara cited Jacob as the exemplar of one who, in the words of [Psalm 15:3](#), “has no slander on his tongue,” as Jacob’s protest to Rebekah in [Genesis 27:12](#), “I shall seem to him as a deceiver,” demonstrated that Jacob did not take readily to deception. ([Babylonian Talmud Makkot 24a.](#))



Isaac Is Deceived by Jacob (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

Rabbi Johanan taught that when Jacob explained his rapid success in obtaining the meat by saying in [Genesis 27:20](#) that it was “because the Lord your God sent me good speed,” he was like a raven bringing fire to his nest, courting disaster. For when Jacob said “the Lord your God sent me good speed,” Isaac thought to himself that he knew that Esau did not customarily mention the name of God, and if the person before him did so, he must not have been Esau but Jacob. Consequently, Isaac told him in [Genesis 27:21](#), “Come near, I pray, that I may feel you, my son.” (Genesis Rabbah 65:19.)



Isaac Blessing Jacob (1638 painting by [Govert Flinck](#))

Reading Isaac’s observation in [Genesis 27:27](#), “See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed,” Rav Judah the son of Rav Samuel bar Shilat said in the name of [Rav](#)

that Jacob smelled like an apple orchard. ([Babylonian Talmud Taanit 29b.](#))

Rabbi Judah ben Pazi interpreted Isaac's blessing of Jacob with dew in [Genesis 27:28](#) merely to pass along to his son what God had deeded to his father Abraham for all time. ([Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 55b.](#)) And [Rabbi Ishmael](#) deduced from Isaac's curse of those who cursed Jacob and blessing of those who blessed Jacob in [Genesis 27:29](#) that Jews need not respond to those who curse or bless them, for the Torah has already decreed the response. (Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 85b.)

Interpreting why in [Genesis 27:33](#) "Isaac trembled very exceedingly," Rabbi Johanan observed that it was surely unusual for a man who has two sons to tremble when one goes out and the other comes in. Rabbi Johanan taught that Isaac trembled because when Esau came in, [Gehenna](#) came in with him. Rabbi Aha said that the walls of the house began to seethe from the heat of Gehenna. Hence [Genesis 27:33](#) asks, "who then (אִפֹּא, *eifo*)?" for Isaac asked who would be roast (*leafot*) in Gehenna, him or Jacob? (Genesis Rabbah 77:2.)

Rabbi Hama ben Hanina interpreted the question "who then?" in [Genesis 27:33](#) to ask who then intervened between Isaac and God that Jacob should receive the blessings. Rabbi Hama ben Hanina taught that Isaac thereby hinted at Rebekah's intervention. (Genesis Rabbah 77:2.)

Reading [Genesis 27:41](#), Rabbi Eleazar contrasted Esau's jealousy with [Reuben's](#) magnanimity. As [Genesis 25:33](#) reports, Esau

voluntarily sold his birthright, but as [Genesis 27:41](#) says, “Esau hated Jacob,” and as [Genesis 27:36](#) says, “And he said, ‘Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he has supplanted me these two times.’” In Reuben’s case, [Joseph](#) took Reuben’s birthright from him against his will, as [1 Chronicles 5:1](#) reports, “for as much as he defiled his father’s couch, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph.” Nonetheless, Reuben was not jealous of Joseph, as [Genesis 37:21](#) reports, “And Reuben heard it, and delivered him out of their hand.” ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 7b.](#))

Genesis chapter 28

A [Tanna](#) taught in a Baraita that the exalted position of a groom atones for his sins. The Gemara cited [Genesis 28:9](#) as a proof text. The Gemara noted that [Genesis 28:9](#) reports that “Esau went to Ishmael, and took Machalat the daughter of Ishmael, as a wife,” but [Genesis 36:3](#) identifies Esau’s wife as “Basemat, Ishmael's daughter.” The Gemara explained that the name Machalat is cognate with the Hebrew word for forgiveness, *mechilah*, and thus deduced that [Genesis 28:9](#) teaches that Esau’s sins were forgiven upon his marriage. (Jerusalem Talmud Bikkurim 23b.)

Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are no [commandments](#) in the parshah. (Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#). [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by

Charles B. Chavel, 2 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*.

Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:87. 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9](#).)



[Malachi](#) (Greek Orthodox icon)

Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is:

- for [Ashkenazi Jews](#) and [Sephardi Jews](#): [Malachi 1:1–2:7](#)
- for [Karaite Jews](#): [Isaiah 65:23–66:18](#)

In the liturgy

In the Blessing after Meals ([Birkat Hamazon](#)), at the close of the fourth blessing (of thanks for God's goodness), Jews allude to God's blessing of the Patriarchs described in [Genesis 24:1](#), [27:33](#), and [33:11](#). (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for the*

Sabbath and Festivals with an Interlinear Translation, 172. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-697-3](#). Reuven Hammer. *Or Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 342. New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#).)

The Weekly Maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), Sephardi Jews each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parsha. For Parsha Toledot, Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Mahour, the maqam that portrays emotional instability and anger. This maqam is similar to Maqam Rast in tone. It is appropriate, because in this parsha, Esau portrays these character traits as he loses out on the major blessings.

Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

Biblical

- [Genesis 15:5](#) (numerous as stars); [22:17](#) (numerous as stars).
- [Deuteronomy 1:10](#) (numerous as stars); [17:16](#) (not to go to Egypt).
- [Joshua 24:4](#).
- [Jeremiah 42:13-22](#) (not to go to Egypt).

- [Malachi 1:2–3](#).



Josephus

Early nonrabbinic

- [Josephus](#). *Antiquities of the Jews* [1:18:1–2](#), [4–8](#), [19:1](#); [2:1:1](#).
- [Romans](#) [9:6–13](#).
- [Hebrews](#) [11:20](#); [12:16–17](#).

Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): [Mishnah Kiddushin 4:14](#). Land of Israel, circa 200 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 499. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Tosefta](#): Berakhot 6:8; Sotah 10:5–6; Kiddushin 5:21. Land of Israel, circa 300 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:39, 876, 947. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).

- [Sifre](#) to Deuteronomy 2:3. Land of Israel, circa 250–350 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Sifre to Deuteronomy: An Analytical Translation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:26. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987. [ISBN 1-55540-145-7](#).



Talmud

- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Berakhot 55b, 85b; Bikkurim 23b; Sukkah 21a. Land of Israel, circa 400 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 2, 12, 22. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006–2008.
- [Genesis Rabbah](#) 63:1–67:13. Land of Israel, 5th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 5b, 56b, 57b](#); [Eruvin 104b](#); [Pesachim 5a, 42b](#); [Yoma 28b](#); [Sukkah 5b, 14a](#); [Taanit 29b](#); [Megillah 6a, 28a](#); [Moed Katan 2a](#); [Yevamot 64a](#); [Ketubot 112a](#); [Nedarim 32a](#); [Sotah 11a, 12b, 13a, 41b](#); [Gittin 57b](#); [Bava Kamma 92b–93a](#); [Bava Batra 15a, 16b, 123a](#); [Sanhedrin 12a, 37a, 69a, 92a, 105a](#); [Makkot 10a, 24a](#); [Avodah Zarah 2b, 11a](#). Babylonia, 6th Century.

Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.



Rashi

Medieval

- [Rashi](#). *Commentary*. [Genesis 25–28](#). [Troyes](#), France, late 11th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 1:271–307. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1995. [ISBN 0-89906-026-9](#).
- [Judah Halevi](#). *Kuzari*. [2:80](#). [Toledo](#), Spain, 1130–1140. Reprinted in, e.g., Jehuda Halevi. *Kuzari: An Argument for the Faith of Israel*. Intro. by Henry Slonimsky, 128. New York: Schocken, 1964. [ISBN 0-8052-0075-4](#).
- [Zohar 1:134a–46b](#). Spain, late 13th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Zohar*. Translated by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon. 5 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1934.



Hobbes

Modern

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Vayetze

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

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Vayetze, **Vayeitzei**, or **Vayetzei** (וַיֵּצֵא — [Hebrew](#) for “and he left,” the [first word](#) in the parshah) is the seventh [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#). It constitutes [Genesis 28:10–32:3](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it the seventh [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in November or December.

The parshah tells of [Jacob](#)’s travels to, life in, and return from [Haran](#). The parshah recounts Jacob’s dream of a [ladder to heaven](#), Jacob’s meeting of [Rachel](#) at the well, Jacob’s time working for [Laban](#) and living with Rachel and [Leah](#), the birth of Jacob’s children, and the departure of Jacob’s family from Laban.



Jacob's Dream (painting circa 1691 by [Michael Willmann](#))

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



Jacob's Ladder (painting circa 1800 by [William Blake](#))

[\[edit\]](#) A ladder to heaven

When Jacob left [Beersheba](#) for Haran, he stopped at a place for the night, using a stone for a pillow. ([Genesis 28:10–11](#)) He dreamed that he saw a ladder to heaven on which [God's angels](#) ascended and descended. ([Genesis 28:12](#)) And God stood beside him and promised to give him and his numerous descendants [the land](#) on which he lay, said that through his descendants all the earth would be blessed, and promised to stay with him wherever he went and bring him back to the land. ([Genesis 28:13–15](#)) Jacob awoke afraid, remarked that surely the place was the house of God, the gate of heaven, and called the place [Bethel](#) (although the [Canaanites](#) had called the city [Luz](#)). ([Genesis 28:16–19](#)) Jacob took the stone from under his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on it. ([Genesis 28:18](#)) And Jacob vowed that if God would stay with him, give him bread and clothing, and return him to his father's house in peace, then God would be his god, the stone pillar would be God's house, and he would give God [a tenth](#) of what he received. ([Genesis 28:20–22](#))

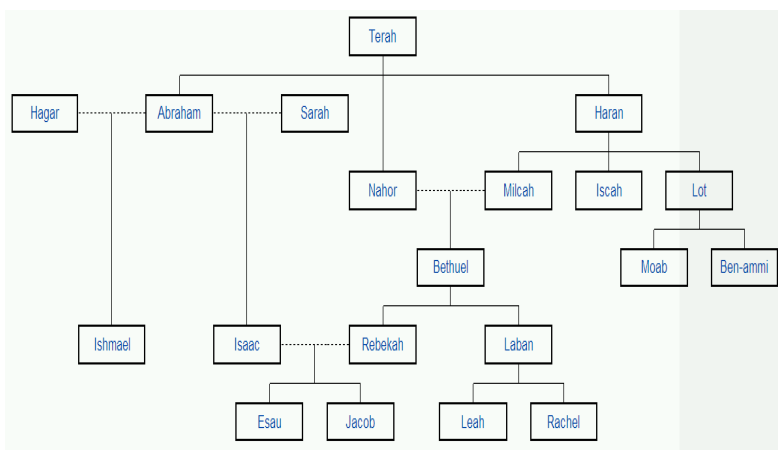




Jacob and Rachel (painting circa 1520–1525 by [Palma il Vecchio](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Rachel at the well

Jacob came to an eastern land where he saw a well with a great stone rolled upon it and three flocks of sheep lying by it. ([Genesis 29:1–3](#)) Jacob asked the men where they were from, and they said Haran. ([Genesis 29:4](#)) Jacob asked them if they knew Laban, and they said that they did. ([Genesis 29:5](#)) Jacob asked if Laban was well, and they said that it was, and that his daughter Rachel was coming with his sheep. ([Genesis 29:6](#)) Jacob told the men to water and feed the sheep, but they replied that they could not do so until all the flocks had arrived. ([Genesis 29:7–8](#)) When Jacob saw Rachel arrive with her father's sheep, he rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered Laban's sheep. ([Genesis 29:9–10](#)) Jacob kissed Rachel, wept, and told her that he was her kinsman, and she ran and told her father. ([Genesis 29:11–12](#))





Jacob Tells Laban that He Will Work for Rachel (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)



Jacob Talks with Laban (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)

[edit] Jacob and Laban

When Laban heard of Jacob's arrival, he ran to meet him, embraced and kissed him, and brought him to his house. ([Genesis 29:13](#)) Jacob told Laban all that had happened, and Laban welcomed Jacob as family. ([Genesis 29:13–14](#)) After Jacob had lived with Laban for a month, Laban asked Jacob what wages he wanted for his work. ([Genesis 29:14–15](#)) Laban had two daughters: The elder, Leah, had weak eyes, while the younger, Rachel, was beautiful. ([Genesis 29:16–17](#)) Jacob loved Rachel, and offered to serve Laban seven years for Rachel's hand, and Laban agreed. ([Genesis 29:18–19](#)) Jacob served the years, but his love for Rachel made them seem like just a few days. ([Genesis 29:20](#)) Jacob asked Laban for his wife, and Laban made a feast and invited all the men of the place. ([Genesis 29:21–22](#)) In the evening, Laban brought Leah to Jacob, and Jacob slept with her. ([Genesis 29:23](#)) Laban gave Leah [Zilpah](#) to be her handmaid. ([Genesis 29:24](#)) In the morning, Jacob discovered that it was Leah, and he complained to Laban that he had served for Rachel. ([Genesis 29:25](#)) Laban replied that in that place, they did not give the younger before the firstborn, but if Jacob fulfilled Leah's week, he would give Jacob both daughters in exchange for another seven years of service. ([Genesis 29:26–27](#)) Jacob did so, and Laban gave him Rachel to wife, and gave Rachel [Bilhah](#) to be her handmaid. ([Genesis 29:28–29](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Jacob's children

Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, so God allowed Leah to [conceive](#), but Rachel was [barren](#). ([Genesis 29:30–31](#)) Leah bore a son, and called him [Reuben](#), saying that God had looked upon her affliction. ([Genesis 29:32](#)) She bore a second son, and called him [Simeon](#), saying that God had heard that she was hated. ([Genesis 29:33](#)) She bore a third son, and called him [Levi](#), saying that this time her husband would be joined to her. ([Genesis 29:34](#)) She bore a fourth son, and called him [Judah](#), saying that this time, she would praise God. ([Genesis 29:35](#))

Rachel envied her sister, and demanded that Jacob give her children, but Jacob grew angry and asked her whether he was in God's stead, who had withheld children from her. ([Genesis 30:1–2](#)) Rachel told Jacob to sleep with her maid Bilhah, so that Bilhah might bear children upon Rachel's knees who might be credited to Rachel, and he did. ([Genesis 30:3–4](#)) Bilhah bore Jacob a son, and Rachel called him [Dan](#), saying that God had judged her and also heard her voice. ([Genesis 30:5–6](#)) And Bilhah bore Jacob a second son, and Rachel called him [Naphtali](#), saying that she had wrestled with her sister and prevailed. ([Genesis 30:7–8](#))



mandrake roots (illustration from a 7th Century manuscript of [Pedanius Dioscorides](#) *De Materia Medica*)

When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she gave Jacob her maid Zilpah to wife. ([Genesis 30:9](#)) Zilpah bore Jacob a son, and Leah called him [Gad](#), saying that fortune had come. ([Genesis 30:10–11](#)) And Zilpah bore Jacob a second son, and Leah called him [Asher](#), saying that she was happy, for the daughters would call her happy. ([Genesis 30:12–13](#))

Reuben found some [mandrakes](#) and brought them to Leah. ([Genesis 30:14](#)) Rachel asked Leah for the mandrakes, and when Leah resisted, Rachel agreed that Jacob would sleep with Leah that night in exchange for the mandrakes. ([Genesis 30:15](#)) When Jacob came home that evening, Leah told him that he had to sleep with her because she had hired him with the mandrakes, and he did. ([Genesis 30:16](#)) God heeded Leah and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son, and called him [Issachar](#), saying that

God had given her a reward. ([Genesis 30:17–18](#)) Leah bore Jacob a sixth son and called him [Zebulun](#), saying that God had endowed her with a good dowry. ([Genesis 30:19–20](#)) And afterwards Leah bore a daughter, and called her name [Dinah](#). ([Genesis 30:21](#))



A Shepherd (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)

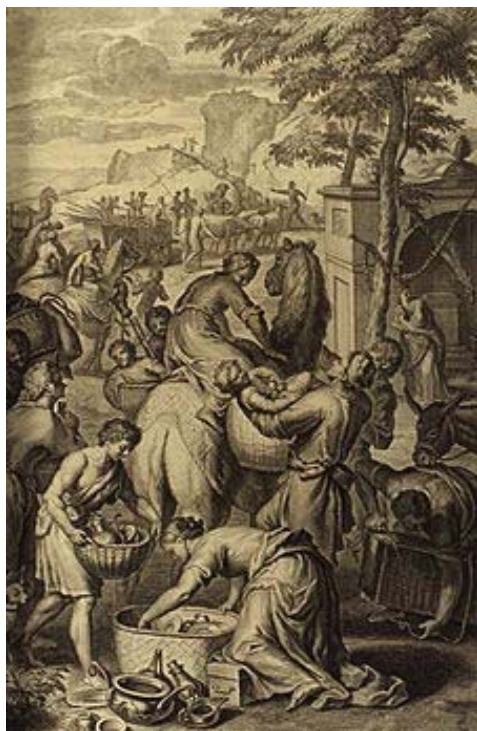
God heeded Rachel and she conceived and bore a son and called him [Joseph](#), invoking God to add another son. ([Genesis 30:22–24](#))

[[edit](#)] The speckled and spotted sheep

Further information: [Jacob \(sheep\)](#)

Then Jacob asked Laban to allow him, his wives, and his children to return to his own country. ([Genesis 30:25–26](#)) Laban conceded that God had blessed him for Jacob's sake, and asked Jacob to name how much he wanted to stay. ([Genesis 30:27–28](#)) Jacob recounted how he had served Laban and how Laban had benefited, and asked when he could provide for his own family. ([Genesis 30:29–30](#)) Laban pressed him again, so Jacob offered to keep Laban's flock in exchange for the speckled, spotted, and dark sheep and goats, and thus Laban could clearly tell Jacob's flock from his. ([Genesis 30:31–33](#)) Laban agreed, but that day he removed the speckled and spotted goats and dark sheep from his flock and gave them to his sons and put three day's distance between Jacob and himself. ([Genesis 30:34–36](#))

Jacob peeled white streaks in fresh rods of [poplar](#), [almond](#), and [plane](#) trees and set the rods where the flocks would see them when they mated, and the flocks brought forth streaked, speckled, and spotted young. ([Genesis 30:37–39](#)) Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the stronger sheep, but not before the feeble, so the feebler sheep became Laban's and the stronger Jacob's. ([Genesis 30:41–42](#)) Jacob's flocks and wealth thus increased. ([Genesis 30:43](#))



Jacob Flies Away from Laban (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) Jacob's departure

Jacob heard that Laban's sons thought that he had become wealthy at Laban's expense, and Jacob saw that Laban did not regard him as before. ([Genesis 31:1–2](#)) God told Jacob to return to the land of his fathers, and that God would be with him. ([Genesis 31:3](#)) Jacob called Rachel and Leah to the field and told them that Laban had changed his opinion of Jacob, but Jacob had served Laban wholeheartedly and God had remained with Jacob.

([Genesis 31:4–6](#)) Jacob noted that Laban had mocked him and changed his wages ten times, but God would not allow him to harm Jacob, but had rewarded Jacob, giving Laban's animals to Jacob. ([Genesis 31:7–9](#)) Jacob said that in a dream God told him to return to the land of his birth. ([Genesis 31:11–13](#)) Rachel and Leah answered that they no longer had any portion in Laban's house and all the riches that God had taken from Laban were theirs and their children's, so Jacob should do whatever God had told him to do. ([Genesis 31:14–16](#))



Jacob's Flight (1829 illustration by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld)

So Jacob set his sons and his wives on camels and headed out toward [Isaac](#) and Canaan with all the animals and wealth that he had collected in [Padan-aram](#). ([Genesis 31:17–18](#)) Jacob tricked Laban by fleeing secretly while Laban was out shearing his sheep, and Rachel stole her father's [idols](#). ([Genesis 31:19–20](#)) On the

third day, Laban heard that Jacob had fled and he and his kin pursued after Jacob seven days, overtaking him in the mountain of [Gilead](#). ([Genesis 31:22–23](#)) God came to Laban in a dream and told him not to speak to Jacob either good or bad. ([Genesis 31:24](#)) But when Laban caught up with Jacob, he asked Jacob what he meant by carrying away his daughters secretly, like captives, without letting him kiss his daughters and grandchildren goodbye. ([Genesis 31:25–28](#)) Laban said that while he had the power to harm Jacob, God had told him the previous night not to speak to Jacob either good or bad, and now Laban wanted to know why Jacob had stolen his gods. ([Genesis 31:29–30](#)) Jacob answered that he fled secretly out of fear that Laban might take his daughters by force, and not knowing Rachel stole the gods, he told Laban that whoever had his gods would die. ([Genesis 31:31–32](#)) Laban searched Jacob's tent, Leah's tent, and the two maid-servants' tent, finding nothing, and then he entered Rachel's tent. ([Genesis 31:33](#)) Rachel had hidden the idols in the camel's saddle and sat upon them, apologizing to her father for not rising, as she was having her period. ([Genesis 31:34–35](#)) Laban searched and felt about the tent, but did not find the idols. ([Genesis 31:34–35](#)) Angered, Jacob questioned Laban what he had done to deserve this hot pursuit and this searching. ([Genesis 31:36–37](#)) Jacob protested that he had worked for Laban for 20 years, through drought and frost, bearing the loss of animals torn by predators, and not eating Laban's rams, only to have his wages changed 10 times. ([Genesis 31:38–41](#)) Had not the God of Isaac been on Jacob's side, surely Laban would have sent Jacob away empty, Jacob said, and God had seen his affliction and awarded him

what he deserved. ([Genesis 31:42](#)) Laban answered Jacob that they were his daughters, his children, and his flocks, but asked what he could do about it now. ([Genesis 31:43](#))



The Heap of Witnesses (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

Instead, Laban proposed that they make a covenant, and Jacob set up a stone pillar and with his kin heaped stones, and they ate a meal by the heap. ([Genesis 31:44–46](#)) Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. ([Genesis 31:47](#)) Laban called the heap as a witness between him and Jacob, and invoked God to watch, when they were apart, if Jacob would afflict Laban's daughters and take other wives. ([Genesis 31:48–50](#)) And Laban designated the heap and the pillar as a boundary between him and Jacob; Laban would not pass over it to Jacob, and Jacob would not pass over it to Laban, to do harm. ([Genesis 31:51–52](#)) Laban invoked the God of [Abraham](#), the God of [Nahor](#), and the God of [Terah](#), and Jacob swore by the Fear of Isaac and offered a [sacrifice](#). ([Genesis 31:53–54](#))

Early in the morning, Laban kissed his sons and his daughters, blessed them, and departed for his home. ([Genesis 32:1](#)) And when Jacob went on his way, the angels of God met him, and Jacob told them that this was God's camp, and he called the place [Mahanaim](#). ([Genesis 32:2–3](#))

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 28

In [Genesis 27–28](#), Jacob receives three blessings: (1) by Isaac when Jacob is disguised as [Esau](#) in [Genesis 27:28–29](#), (2) by Isaac when Jacob is departing for Haran in [Genesis 28:3–4](#), and (3) by God in Jacob’s dream at Bethel in [Genesis 28:13–15](#). Whereas the first blessing is one of material wellbeing and dominance, only the second and third blessings convey fertility and the Land of Israel. The first and the third blessings explicitly designate Jacob as the conveyer of blessing, although arguably the second blessing does that as well by giving Jacob “the blessing of Abraham.” (See [Genesis 12:2–3](#).) Only the third blessing vouchsafes God’s Presence with Jacob.

Genesis 27:28–29	Genesis 28:3–4	Genesis 28:13–15
Isaac Blessing the Disguised Jacob	Isaac Blessing Jacob on Departure	God Blessing Jacob at Bethel
<div>28 God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fat places of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine. 29 Let peoples</div>	<div>3 God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, that you may be a congregation of peoples; 4 and give</div>	<div>13 I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie, to you will I give</div>

<p>serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you.</p>	<p>you the blessing of Abraham, to you, and to your seed with you; that you may inherit the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham.</p>	<p>it, and to your seed. ¹⁴ And your seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. And in you and in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵ And, behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back into this land; for I will not leave you, until I have done that of which I have spoken to you.</p>
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In [Genesis 28:18](#), Jacob took the stone on which he had slept, set it up as a pillar (מִצְבֵּה, *matzeivah*), and poured oil on the top of it. [Exodus 23:24](#) would later direct the Israelites, when they entered the land of Canaan, to break in pieces their pillars (מִצְבֵּי בְּתִיָּהֶם, *matzeivoteihem*). [Leviticus 26:1](#) would direct the Israelites not to rear up a pillar (מִצְבֵּה, *matzeivah*). And [Deuteronomy 16:22](#) would prohibit them to set up a pillar (מִצְבֵּה, *matzeivah*), “which the Lord your God hates.”

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 29

Jacob’s meeting of Rachel at the well in [Genesis 29:1–12](#) is the Torah’s second of several meetings at watering holes that lead to

marriage. Also of the same type scene are [Abraham](#)'s servant's meeting (on behalf of [Isaac](#)) of [Rebekah](#) at the well in [Genesis 24:11–27](#) and [Moses](#)' meeting of [Zipporah](#) at the well in [Exodus 2:15–21](#).

[[edit](#)] In classical rabbinic interpretation

[[edit](#)] Genesis chapter 28

Rabbi Judan taught in Rabbi Aibu's name that the words, “the righteous comes out of trouble,” in [Proverbs 12:13](#) allude to Jacob, as [Genesis 28:10](#) reports, “And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba” (and away from Esau, who sought to kill him). ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 67:13.)

A midrash noted that [Genesis 24:10](#) reports that Abraham sent Eliezer to woo Rebekah with ten camels and “having all goodly things of his master's in his hand,” but Jacob traveled to Haran without a single ring or bracelet. Rabbi [Haninah](#) taught that Isaac sent Jacob away empty-handed. [Rabbi Joshua](#), however, taught that Isaac sent Jacob well provided, but Esau arose and stripped him of all he had. The midrash taught that Jacob then thought to himself that he would not lose confidence in God, for as [Psalm 121:2](#) teaches, his help would come from God. As [Psalm 121:3](#) teaches, God would not suffer his foot to be moved ([לֹא-מוֹת](#), *la-mot*), and the midrash taught that this meant that God would not allow Jacob to die (*la-mayt*). As [Psalm 121:7](#) teaches, God would keep him from all evil, and thus from the evil Esau and Laban. And [Psalm 121:8](#) teaches, God would guard his going out, and

thus as [Genesis 28:10](#) reports, "Jacob went out from Beer-sheba." (Genesis Rabbah 68:2.)

Hezekiah taught that Jacob was 63 years old when Isaac blessed him (as a [Baraita](#) taught in [Babylonian Talmud Megillah 17a](#)), and Jacob spent another 14 years secluded in the Land of Israel studying under [Eber](#) and a further 7 years working for the Patriarchs. Thus he married at the age of 84, whereas Esau married at the age of 40 (as [Genesis 26:34](#) reports). Thus we learn that God hastens the happiness of the wicked and delays that of the righteous. (Genesis Rabbah 68:5.)

Rabbi Hoshaya noted that [Genesis 28:7](#) already stated, "And Jacob hearkened to his father and his mother, and was gone to Paddan-aram," and thus Rabbi Hoshaya asked why [Genesis 28:10](#) says, "and Jacob went out from Beer-sheba." Rabbi Hoshaya taught that Jacob reasoned that when his father desired to emigrate from the Land of Israel, he first sought permission at Beer-sheba, so Jacob too went to Beer-sheba to seek God's permission. (Genesis Rabbah 68:5.)

Rabbi Judan and [Rav Huna](#) commented on why [Genesis 28:10](#) says, "and Jacob went out from Beer-sheba." Rabbi Judan taught that it means that Jacob sought to leave "out of the well of the oath." (*Be'er*, בְּעַר, means "well." And Rabbi Judan connected *Sheba*, שֶׁבַע, with *shevuah*, שְׁבוּעָה, which means "oath," as in the oath that [Genesis 21:31](#) reports Abraham and Abimelech swore to each other.) Rabbi Judan taught that Jacob reasoned that he did not want Abimelech to demand that Jacob swear to Abimelech (a commitment of nonaggression) as Jacob's

grandfather Abraham swore to him, and so delay Jacob's descendants from entering the Land of Israel for seven generations. (As a result of Abraham's oath to Abimelech, seven generations — from Abraham to Joshua — passed before the Israelites entered the Land of Israel. Thus to avoid another seven generations of delay, Jacob went "out of the well of the oath" to evade a further commitment of nonaggression.) Rav Huna taught that the words of [Genesis 28:10](#) mean "out of the well of the birthright." Rav Huna taught that Jacob reasoned that he did not wish to allow Esau to rise up against him and assert that Jacob had cheated him by taking his birthright, and thus lose the advantage of Esau's oath (when Esau conveyed his birthright in [Genesis 25:33](#)). [Rabbi Berekiah](#) taught that the words of [Genesis 28:10](#) mean "out of the well of the blessings." Rabbi Berekiah taught that Jacob reasoned that he did not want Esau to rise up against him and assert that Jacob had cheated Jacob by taking Esau's blessings, and so frustrate his mother Rebekah's labors on his behalf. (Genesis Rabbah 68:7.)

Our Rabbis taught that Jacob reached Haran on that same day as [Genesis 28:10](#) reports that he "went toward Haran." Rabbi Berekiah said in Rabbi Isaac's name, however, that [Genesis 28:10](#) merely speaks as people do colloquially when they say, "So-and-so has gone to Caesarea," when in fact So-and-so has not actually arrived in Caesarea. (Similarly, here [Genesis 28:10](#) does not mean that Jacob reached Haran on the same day that he set out.) (Genesis Rabbah 68:8.)

Once in the meat market of [Emmaus](#), [Rabbi Akiba](#) asked [Rabban Gamaliel](#) and Rabbi Joshua about the words of [Genesis 32:32](#), “And the sun rose on him,” inquiring whether the sun rose on only him and not on everyone. Rabbi Isaac said that it meant that the sun which had set early for his sake now rose early for him. Rabbi Isaac noted that [Genesis 28:10](#) reports that Jacob left Beersheba in the south of the Land of Israel and went toward Haran north of the Land, and [Genesis 28:11](#) reports that “he lighted upon the place” identified (in [Genesis 28:10–22](#)) as Bethel in the center of the Land. Rabbi Isaac explained that when he reached Haran, he asked himself how he could have passed through the place where his fathers had prayed and not have prayed there too. So Rabbi Isaac deduced that he immediately resolved to turn back, and as soon he did, the earth contracted and he immediately “lighted upon the place.” After he prayed, he sought to return to Haran, but God chose to give this righteous man a night’s rest and immediately (as [Genesis 28:11](#) reports) “the sun was set.” ([Babylonian Talmud Chullin 91b.](#))





Jacob's Dream (1639 painting by [Jusepe de Ribera](#))



Jacob's Dream (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

Reading the words, “And he lighted upon the place,” in [Genesis 28:11](#) to mean, “And he met the Divine Presence ([Shechinah](#)),”

Rav Huna asked in [Rabbi Ammi](#)'s name why [Genesis 28:11](#) assigns to God the name “the Place.” Rav Huna explained that it is because God is the Place of the world (the world is contained

in God, and not God in the world). Rabbi [Jose ben Halafta](#) taught that we do not know whether God is the place of God's world or whether God's world is God's place, but from [Exodus 33:21](#), which says, "Behold, there is a place with Me," it follows that God is the place of God's world, but God's world is not God's place. Rabbi Isaac taught that reading [Deuteronomy 33:27](#), "The eternal God is a dwelling place," one cannot know whether God is the dwelling-place of God's world or whether God's world is God's dwelling-place. But reading [Psalm 90:1](#), "Lord, You have been our dwelling-place," it follows that God is the dwelling-place of God's world, but God's world is not God's dwelling-place. And Rabbi Abba ben Judan taught that God is like a warrior riding a horse with the warrior's robes flowing over on both sides of the horse. The horse is subsidiary to the rider, but the rider is not subsidiary to the horse. Thus [Habakkuk 3:8](#) says, "You ride upon Your horses, upon Your chariots of victory." (Genesis Rabbah 68:9.)

The [Gemara](#) noted that [Genesis 28:11](#) reports that "he took of the stones of the place" (in the plural), but [Genesis 28:18](#) reports that "he took the stone" (in the singular). Rabbi Isaac deduced that all the stones gathered themselves together into the same place so as to be the stone upon which this righteous man would rest his head, and as a [Tanna](#) taught in a Baraita, all the stones merged into one. ([Babylonian Talmud Chullin 91b.](#))



Jacob's Ladder (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

Rabbi [Joshua ben Levi](#) (according to the [Jerusalem Talmud](#) and *Genesis Rabbah*) or a Baraita in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yose the son of Rabbi Haninah (according to the *Babylonian Talmud*) said that the three [daily prayers](#) derived from the [Patriarchs](#), and cited [Genesis 28:11](#) for the proposition that Jews derived the evening prayer from Jacob, arguing that within the meaning of [Genesis 28:11](#), “came upon” (עֲיַיְפָגָא, *vayifga*) meant “pray,” just as a similar word (עֲיַיְפָגָא, *yifge'u*) did in [Jeremiah 27:18](#) (according to the *Jerusalem Talmud*) or another similar word (עֲיַיְפָגָא, *tifga*) did in [Jeremiah 7:16](#) (according to the

Babylonian Talmud and Genesis Rabbah). (Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 43a; [Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 26b](#); Genesis Rabbah 68:9.)

[Bar Kappara](#) taught that every dream has its interpretation. The “ladder” in [Genesis 28:12](#) symbolizes the stairway leading up to the altar in the [Temple in Jerusalem](#). “Set upon the earth” implies the altar, as [Exodus 20:20](#) (20:21 in NJPS) says, “An altar of earth you shall make for Me.” “And the top of it reached to heaven” implies the sacrifices, the odor of which ascended to heaven. “The angels of God” symbolize the High Priests. “Ascending and descending on it” describes the priests ascending and descending the stairway of the altar. And the words “and, behold, the Lord stood beside him” in [Genesis 28:13](#) once again invoke the altar, as in [Amos 9:1](#), the prophet reports, “I saw the Lord standing beside the altar.” (Genesis Rabbah 68:12.)

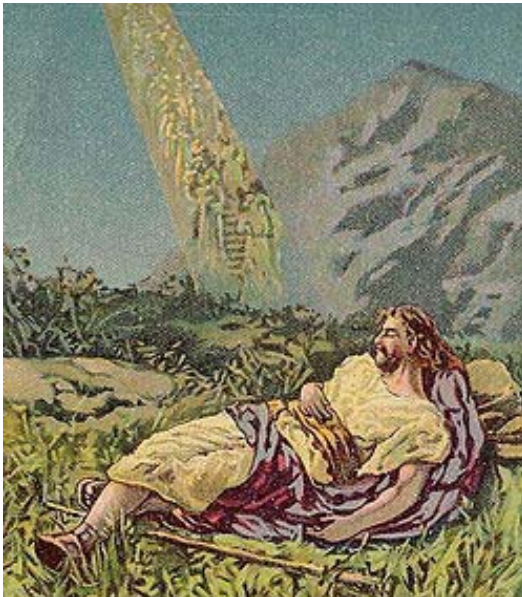


The Dream of Jacob (1835 painting by the school of [Francesco Solimena](#))

The Rabbis related Jacob's dream in [Genesis 28:12–13](#) to Sinai. The “ladder” symbolizes [Mount Sinai](#). That the ladder is “set upon (בִּצְטָו, *mutzav*) the earth” recalls [Exodus 19:17](#), which says, “And they stood (בִּצְטָוֵי הָאֵרֶץ, *vayityatzvu*) at the nether part of the mount.” The words of [Genesis 28:12](#), “and the top of it reached to heaven,” echo those of [Deuteronomy 4:11](#), “And the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven.” “And behold the angels of God” alludes to Moses and [Aaron](#). “Ascending” parallels [Exodus 19:3](#): “And Moses went up to God.” “And

descending” parallels [Exodus 19:14](#): “And Moses went down from the mount.” And the words “and, behold, the Lord stood beside him” in [Genesis 28:13](#) parallel the words of [Exodus 19:20](#): “And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai.” (Genesis Rabbah 68:12.)

Interpreting Jacob’s dream of a ladder in [Genesis 28:12](#), a Tanna taught that the width of the ladder was 8,000 [parasangs](#) (perhaps 24,000 miles). The Tanna noted that [Genesis 28:12](#) reports “the angels of God ascending and descending on it,” and thus deduced from the plural that at least two angels were ascending and two descending, and when they came to the same place on the ladder, there were four angels abreast. And [Daniel 10:6](#) reports of an angel that “His body was like the Tarshish,” and by tradition the sea of Tarshish is 2,000 parasangs long. ([Babylonian Talmud Chullin 91b](#).)





Jacob at Bethel (illustration from a Bible card published 1900 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

A midrash taught that those angels who escort a person in the Land of Israel do not escort that person outside of the Land. Thus “the angels of God ascending” in [Genesis 28:12](#) refers to those who had escorted Jacob in the Land of Israel (who were then returning to heaven), while “descending” refers to those who were to escort him outside of the Land. (Genesis Rabbah 68:12.)

A Tanna taught that the angels ascended to look at the sight of Jacob above and descended to look at the sight below, and they wished to hurt him, and thus immediately (as [Genesis 28:13](#) reports) “the Lord stood beside him.” [Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish](#) said that were it not expressly stated in the Scripture, we would not dare to say it, but God is made to appear like a man who fans his son to protect him from the heat. ([Babylonian Talmud Chullin 91b.](#))

The Gemara asked what the significance was of God’s promise in [Genesis 28:13](#) to give Jacob “the land on which you lie,” which would have been about 6 feet of land. Rabbi Isaac deduced that God rolled up the whole Land of Israel and put it under Jacob, thus indicating that his descendants would easily conquer it. ([Babylonian Talmud Chullin 91b.](#))

The Rabbis taught that God’s promise in [Genesis 28:15](#), “and, behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go,”

answered all of Jacob's requests, except that for sustenance. Jacob prayed in [Genesis 28:20](#), "If God will be with me," and God assured Jacob, "Behold, I am with you." Jacob prayed, "And will keep me," and God assured Jacob, "And I will keep you." Jacob prayed, "In this way that I go," and God assured Jacob, "wherever you go." Jacob prayed in [Genesis 28:21](#), "So that I come back to my father's house in peace," and God assured Jacob, "and will bring you back." But the Rabbis taught that God did not answer Jacob's request for sustenance. [Rabbi Assi](#), however, taught that God answered Jacob's request for sustenance, too, for in [Genesis 28:15](#), God says, "for I will not forsake you," and forsaking applies to sustenance, as in [Psalm 37:25](#), "Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." (Genesis Rabbah 69:6.)



Jacob's Vision and God's Promise (illustration from a Bible card published 1906 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

The [Tosefta](#) deduced from [Genesis 28:21](#) that Jacob spoke as if God was not Jacob's God when Jacob was not in the land of Canaan. (Tosefta Avodah Zarah 4:5.)

Rabbi Jacob bar Idi pointed out a contradiction between God's promise to protect Jacob in [Genesis 28:15](#) and Jacob's fear in [Genesis 32:8](#); Rabbi Jacob explained that Jacob feared that some sin might cause him to lose the protection of God's promise. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 4a](#), [Sanhedrin 98b](#).)

Reading the words “and Jacob vowed a vow” in [Genesis 28:20](#), a midrash taught that of four who made vows, two vowed and profited, and two vowed and lost. The [Israelites](#) vowed and profited in [Numbers 21:2–3](#), and [Hannah](#) vowed and profited in [1 Samuel 1:11–20](#). [Jephthah](#) vowed and lost in [Judges 11:30–40](#), and Jacob vowed in [Genesis 28:20](#) and lost (some say in the loss of Rachel in [Genesis 35:18](#) and some say in the disgrace of Dinah in [Genesis 34:2](#), for Jacob's vow in [Genesis 28:20](#) was superfluous, as Jacob had already received God's promise, and therefore Jacob lost because of it). (Genesis Rabbah 70:3.)

Rabbi Ilai taught that the Sages ordained at [Usha](#) that if a person wishes to give charity liberally, the person should not give away more than a fifth of the person's wealth. [Rav Nahman](#) (or some say Rav Aha bar Jacob) cited [Genesis 28:22](#) as proof for the proposition, as in the words “And of all that You shall give me, I will surely give a tenth to You,” repetition of the verb “to give a tenth” or “tithe” implies two tenths or one fifth. The Gemara did the math and questioned whether the second tenth would not be less than the first tenth, as it would be taken from the nine-tenths

that remained after the first tenth had been given away and thereby represented only $1/10 \times 9/10 = 9/100$ of the original capital. [Rav Ashi](#) replied that the words “I will . . . give a tenth *of it*” in [Genesis 28:22](#) implied that he would make the second like the first. ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 50a.](#))

Rabbi Berekiah and Rabbi Ahi taught in the name of Rabbi [Samuel bar Nahmani](#) that Jacob would not have told God, “of all that You shall give me, I will surely give a tenth to You,” in [Genesis 28:22](#) unless God had already offered Jacob, “Ask what I shall give you,” as God offered [Solomon](#) in [1 Kings 3:5](#). [Rabbi Jonathan](#) taught that God invited three people to ask what God could give them: Solomon in [1 Kings 3:5](#), [Ahaz](#) in [Isaiah 7:11](#), and the [Messiah](#) in [Psalm 2:8](#). Rabbi Berekiah and Rabbi Ahi in the name of Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani cited two more: Abraham in [Genesis 15:2](#) and Jacob in [Genesis 28:22](#), teaching that neither Patriarch would have asked God unless God had first offered to give them what they asked. ([Genesis Rabbah 44:8.](#))



Jacob and Rachel at the Well (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 29





Jacob Meets Rachel at the Well (early-mid 19th Century painting by [William Dyce](#))

The Gemara cited the words “And it came to pass” (וַיְהִי, *wa-yehi*) in [Genesis 29:10](#) as an exception to the general rule taught by Rabbi Levi, or some say Rabbi Jonathan, in a tradition handed down from the Men of the [Great Assembly](#), that wherever the Bible employs the term “and it was” or “and it came to pass” (וַיְהִי, *wa-yehi*), it indicates misfortune, as one can read *wa-yehi* as *wai, hi*, “woe, sorrow.” Thus the words, “And it came to pass when man began to multiply,” in [Genesis 6:1](#), are followed by the words, “God Saw that the wickedness of man was great,” in [Genesis 6:5](#). And the Gemara also cited the instances of [Genesis 11:2](#) followed by [Genesis 11:4](#); [Genesis 14:1](#) followed by [Genesis 14:2](#); [Joshua 5:13](#) followed by the rest of [Joshua 5:13](#); [Joshua 6:27](#) followed by [Joshua 7:1](#); [1 Samuel 1:1](#) followed by [1 Samuel 1:5](#); [1 Samuel 8:1](#) followed by [1 Samuel 8:3](#); [1 Samuel 18:14](#) close after [1 Samuel 18:9](#); [2 Samuel 7:1](#) followed by [1 Kings 8:19](#); [Ruth 1:1](#) followed by the rest of [Ruth 1:1](#); and [Esther 1:1](#) followed by [Haman](#). But the Gemara also cited as counterexamples the words, “And there was evening and there was morning one day,” in [Genesis 1:5](#), as well as [Genesis 29:10](#), and [1 Kings 6:1](#). So [Rav Ashi](#) replied that *wa-yehi* sometimes presages misfortune, and sometimes it does not, but the expression “and it came to pass in the days of” always presages misfortune. And for that proposition, the Gemara cited [Genesis 14:1](#), [Isaiah 7:1](#), [Jeremiah 1:3](#), [Ruth 1:1](#), and [Esther 1:1](#). (Babylonian Talmud Megillah 10b.)

The Gemara read [Genesis 7:8](#) to employ the euphemistic expression “not clean,” instead of the brief, but disparaging expression “unclean,” so as not to speak disparagingly of unclean animals. The Gemara reasoned that it was thus likely that Scripture would use euphemisms when speaking of the faults of righteous people, as with the words, “And the eyes of Leah were weak,” in [Genesis 29:17](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 123a](#).)



Jacob and Rachel at the Well (19th Century illustration by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld)

Rabbi Eleazar interpreted the words “He withdraws not his eyes from the righteous” in [Job 36:7](#) to teach that God rewards righteousness, even generations later. The Gemara taught that in reward for Rachel’s modesty as shown in her dealings with Jacob, God rewarded her with King [Saul](#) as a descendant. The Gemara taught that Jacob asked Rachel, “Will you marry me?” She

replied, “Yes, but my father is a trickster, and he will outwit you.” Jacob replied, “I am his brother in trickery.” She said to him, “Is it permitted to the righteous to indulge in trickery?” He replied, “Yes, with the pure you show yourself pure, and with the crooked you show yourself subtle.” ([2 Samuel 22:27](#)) He asked her, “What is his trickery?” She replied: “I have a sister older than I am, and he will not let me marry before her.” So Jacob gave her certain tokens through which he could identify her. When night came, she said to herself, “Now my sister will be put to shame,” so she gave Leah the tokens. Thus when [Genesis 29:25](#) reports, “And it came to pass in the morning that, behold, it was Leah,” we are not to infer that up until then she had not been Leah, but rather that on account of the tokens that Rachel had given Leah, Jacob did not know until then that it was Leah. Therefore God rewarded Rachel with having Saul among her descendants. ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 13a–b, Bava Batra 123a.](#))



Rachel and Leah (1899 illustration by [Dante Gabriel Rossetti](#))

[Rabbi Helbo](#) quoted [Rabbi Jonathan](#) to teach that the firstborn should have come from Rachel, as [Genesis 37:2](#) says, “These are the generations of Jacob, Joseph,” but Leah prayed for mercy before Rachel did. On account of Rachel’s modesty, however, God restored the rights of the firstborn to Rachel’s son Joseph from Leah’s son Reuben. To teach what caused Leah to anticipate Rachel with her prayer for mercy, [Rav](#) taught that Leah’s eyes were sore (as [Genesis 29:17](#) reports) from her crying about what she heard at the crossroads. There she heard people saying: “Rebecca has two sons, and Laban has two daughters; the elder daughter should marry the elder son, and the younger daughter should marry the younger son.” Leah inquired about the elder son, and the people said that he was a wicked man, a highway robber. And Leah asked about the younger son, and the people said that he was “a quiet man dwelling in tents.” ([Genesis 25:27](#)) So she cried about her fate until her eyelashes fell out. This accounts for the words of [Genesis 29:31](#), “And the Lord saw that Leah was hated, and He opened her womb,” which mean not that Leah was actually hated, but rather that God saw that Esau’s conduct was hateful to Leah, so he rewarded her prayer for mercy by opening her womb first. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 123a.](#))

The seven days of Jacob’s wedding feast in [Genesis 29:27–28](#) are reflected in the Sages’ ruling that if a groom developed symptoms of skin disease ([tzaraat](#)), they granted him a delay of inspection to

the end of the seven days of his marriage feast. ([Babylonian Talmud Moed Katan 7b.](#))

[Rabbi Johanan](#) said in the name of Rabbi [Shimon ben Yochai](#) that [Genesis 29:35](#) showed that from the day that God created the world, no man praised God until Leah did upon the birth of Judah. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 7b.](#))

[edit] Genesis chapter 30

Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani citing Rabbi Johanan taught that a woman who solicits her husband to have marital relations will bear children who have understanding. In support of that proposition, the Gemara noted that [Genesis 30:16](#) reports that Leah told Jacob, “You must come to me, for I have hired you,” leading to the conception and birth of Issachar, and [1 Chronicles 12:33](#) reports that “of the children of Issachar [were] men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.” ([Babylonian Talmud Eruvin 100b](#), [Nedarim 20b.](#))

Rabbi Johanan taught that the words “and he lay with her that night” in [Genesis 30:16](#), in which the word *hu* appears in an unusual locution, indicate that God assisted in causing Issachar’s conception. Rabbi Johanan found in the words “Issachar is a large-boned donkey” in [Genesis 49:14](#) an indication that Jacob’s donkey detoured to Leah’s tent, helping to cause Issachar’s birth. ([Babylonian Talmud Niddah 31a.](#))

[Rebbi](#) (or some say Rabbi Judah ben Pazi) said in the name of the academy of Yannai that Dinah was originally conceived as a boy, but when Rachel prayed for another son in [Genesis 30:24](#), God

transformed Dinah's fetus into a girl, and that is why the description of Dinah's birth in [Genesis 30:21](#) uses the word "afterward," showing that this happened after Rachel prayed. (Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 92a.) And [Rab](#) taught that the word "afterward" in [Genesis 30:21](#) signified that Leah bore Dinah "after" she passed judgment on herself, reasoning that twelve tribes were destined to issue from Jacob and six had already issued from her and four from the handmaids, and if the child of the current pregnancy were to be a boy, then Rachel would not have as many sons as one of the handmaids. Thereupon the child was turned into a girl, and Dinah was born. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 60a.](#))

A Baraita taught that on [Rosh Hashanah](#) God remembered each of Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah and decreed that they would bear children. Rabbi Eliezer found support for the Baraita from the parallel use of the word "remember" in [Genesis 30:22](#), which says about Rachel, "And God *remembered* Rachel," and in [Leviticus 23:24](#), which calls Rosh Hashanah "a *remembrance* of the blast of the trumpet." ([Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 11a.](#))

Rabbi Johanan taught that God holds three keys that God does not entrust to any messenger: the key of rain, the key of childbirth, and the key of the revival of the dead. The Gemara cited [Genesis 30:22](#) to support the proposition that God holds the key of childbirth, as the verse says, "And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb." ([Babylonian Talmud Taanit 2a–b.](#)) And the Gemara noted that Scripture uses the verb "bear" with regard to both childbirth, in

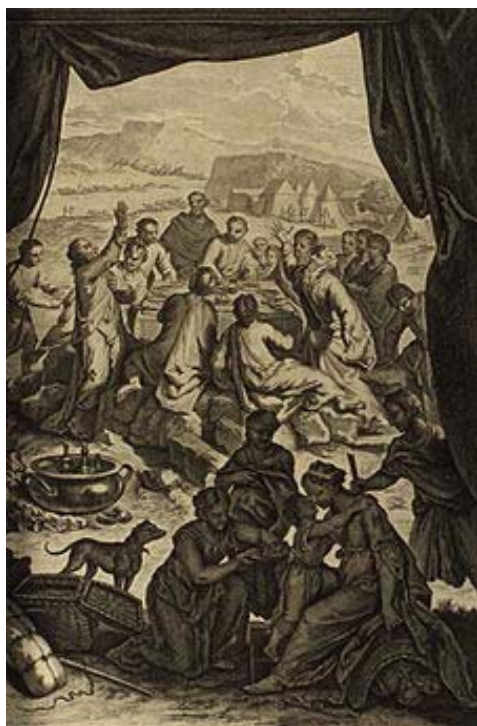
[Genesis 30:23](#), “she conceived, and bore a son,” and rain, in [Isaiah 55:10](#), “the rain comes down and the snow from heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bear and bud.” ([Babylonian Talmud Taanit 8b.](#)) Rabbi Akiba read the words “God . . . opened her womb” in [Genesis 30:22](#) to support the proposition that just as there is key to a house, there is a key to a woman’s fertility. ([Babylonian Talmud Bekhorot 45a.](#))

Rabbi Judah ben Pazi said in the name of the academy of Rabbi Yannai that Rachel showed that she was a prophetess when in [Genesis 30:24](#) she prophesied that she would bear another son, and by using the singular “son” she foretold that Jacob would have just one more son. (Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 92a.)

The Tosefta deduced from [Genesis 30:30](#) that before Jacob arrived, Laban’s house had not received a blessing, and deduced from [Genesis 30:27](#) that it was because of Jacob’s arrival that Laban was blessed thereafter. (Tosefta Sotah 10:7.)

[[edit](#)] Genesis chapter 31

It was taught in a Baraita that Rabbi Akiva said that one of three things that he liked about the [Medes](#) was that when they held counsel, they did so only in the field. Rav [Adda bar Ahabah](#) said that [Genesis 31:4](#), where Jacob called Rachel and Leah to the field, could be cited in support of the practice. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 8b.](#))



Laban and Jacob Make a Covenant Together (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

In [Genesis 31:20](#), the heart can be stolen. A midrash catalogued the wide range of additional capabilities of the heart reported in the Hebrew Bible. The heart speaks ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), sees ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), hears ([1 Kings 3:9](#)), walks ([2 Kings 5:26](#)), falls ([1 Samuel 17:32](#)), stands ([Ezekiel 22:14](#)), rejoices ([Psalm 16:9](#)), cries ([Lamentations 2:18](#)), is comforted ([Isaiah 40:2](#)), is troubled ([Deuteronomy 15:10](#)), becomes hardened ([Exodus 9:12](#)), grows faint ([Deuteronomy 20:3](#)), grieves ([Genesis 6:6](#)), fears ([Deuteronomy 28:67](#)), can be broken ([Psalm 51:19](#)), becomes

proud ([Deuteronomy 8:14](#)), rebels ([Jeremiah 5:23](#)), invents ([1 Kings 12:33](#)), cavils ([Deuteronomy 29:18](#)), overflows ([Psalm 45:2](#)), devises ([Proverbs 19:21](#)), desires ([Psalm 21:3](#)), goes astray ([Proverbs 7:25](#)), lusts ([Numbers 15:39](#)), is refreshed ([Genesis 18:5](#)), is humbled ([Leviticus 26:41](#)), is enticed ([Genesis 34:3](#)), errs ([Isaiah 21:4](#)), trembles ([1 Samuel 4:13](#)), is awakened ([Song of Songs 5:2](#)), loves ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#)), hates ([Leviticus 19:17](#)), envies ([Proverbs 23:17](#)), is searched ([Jeremiah 17:10](#)), is rent ([Joel 2:13](#)), meditates ([Psalm 49:4](#)), is like a fire ([Jeremiah 20:9](#)), is like a stone ([Ezekiel 36:26](#)), turns in repentance ([2 Kings 23:25](#)), becomes hot ([Deuteronomy 19:6](#)), dies ([1 Samuel 25:37](#)), melts ([Joshua 7:5](#)), takes in words ([Deuteronomy 6:6](#)), is susceptible to fear ([Jeremiah 32:40](#)), gives thanks ([Psalm 111:1](#)), covets ([Proverbs 6:25](#)), becomes hard ([Proverbs 28:14](#)), makes merry ([Judges 16:25](#)), acts deceitfully ([Proverbs 12:20](#)), speaks from out of itself ([1 Samuel 1:13](#)), loves bribes ([Jeremiah 22:17](#)), writes words ([Proverbs 3:3](#)), plans ([Proverbs 6:18](#)), receives commandments ([Proverbs 10:8](#)), acts with pride ([Obadiah 1:3](#)), makes arrangements ([Proverbs 16:1](#)), and aggrandizes itself ([2 Chronicles 25:19](#)). ([Ecclesiastes Rabbah](#) 1:36.)



The Reconciliation of Jacob and Laban (17th Century painting by [Ciro Ferri](#))

The Rabbis taught that God appears to non-Jews only in dreams, as God appeared to Laban the “in a dream of the night” in [Genesis 31:24](#), God appeared to [Abimelech](#) “in a dream of the night” in [Genesis 20:3](#), and God appeared to Balaam “at night” in [Numbers 22:20](#). The Rabbis taught that God thus appeared more openly to the prophets of Israel than to those of other nations. The Rabbis compared God’s action to those of a king who has both a wife and a [concubine](#); to his wife he goes openly, but to his concubine he goes stealthily. (Genesis Rabbah 52:5.) And a midrash taught that God’s appearance to Laban in [Genesis 31:24](#) and God’s appearance to Abimelech in [Genesis 20:3](#) were the

two instances where the Pure and Holy One allowed God's self to be associated with impure (idolatrous) people, on behalf of righteous ones. (Midrash [Tanhuma](#) Vayetztei 12.)

Rabbi Aibu taught that when Laban's grandchildren heard Laban ask in [Genesis 31:32](#), "Why have you stolen my gods?" they exclaimed that they were ashamed that in his old age their grandfather could say that these idols were his gods. (Genesis Rabbah 74:8.)

A [midrash](#) taught that Rachel's death ensued because Jacob told Laban in [Genesis 31:32](#), "With whomever you find your gods, he shall not live." The midrash thus taught that Jacob's words were (in the words of [Ecclesiastes 10:5](#)) "like an error that proceeds from a ruler." (Ecclesiastes Rabbah 10:6.)

The Gemara interpreted the words, "If you shall afflict my daughters, and if you shall take wives beside my daughters," in [Genesis 31:50](#) to mean that Jacob forswore two kinds of affliction. The Gemara read "if you shall afflict" to mean by denying conjugal duty, and the Gemara read "if you shall take" to refer to marrying rival wives. Thus the Gemara deduced that abstention from marital intercourse is considered an affliction. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 77a-b.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments



[Hosea](#) (painting circa 1308–1311 from [Siena](#)'s Duomo)

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are no [commandments](#) in the parshah. (Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#). [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 2 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:87. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is:

- for [Ashkenazi Jews](#): [Hosea 12:13–14:10](#)

- for [Sephardi Jews](#): [Hosea 11:7–12:12](#)
- for [Karaite Jews](#): [Hosea 11:7–13:5](#)

[\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy

The [Passover Haggadah](#), in the concluding *nirtzah* section of the [Seder](#), in a reference to [Genesis 31:24](#), recounts how God frightened the Aramean Laban in the night. (Menachem Davis. *The Interlinear Haggadah: The Passover Haggadah, with an Interlinear Translation, Instructions and Comments*, 108. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005. [ISBN 1-57819-064-9](#). Joseph Tabory. *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, 123. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. [ISBN 978-0-8276-0858-0](#).)

The doubling of the Hebrew word *nikhsaf* to express intense longing in [Genesis 31:30](#) also appears in the 16th Century [Safed](#) Rabbi Eliezer Azikri's [kabbalistic](#) poem *Yedid Nefesh* ("Soul's Beloved"), which many congregations chant just before the Kabbalat Shabbat [prayer service](#). (Reuven Hammer. *Or Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 14. New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2003. [ISBN 0916219208](#).)

Many Jews recite [Genesis 32:2–3](#) three times as part of the [Tefilat HaDerech](#) (Wayfarer's Prayer), said on setting out on a journey. (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for Weekdays with an Interlinear Translation*, 311–12. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-686-8](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) The Weekly Maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), [Sephardi Jews](#) each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parshah. For Parshah Vayetze, Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Ajam, the maqam that expresses happiness, commemorating the joy and happiness of the weddings of Jacob to Leah and Rachel.

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 24:10–28](#) (courtship at the well); [Genesis 44:9](#) (improvident oath).
- [Exodus 2:15–21](#) (courtship at the well); [22:12](#) (domestic animals lost to wild animals).
- [Judges 11:30–31](#) (improvident oath).

[\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic

- [Tosefta](#): Sotah 10:7–8; Avodah Zarah 4:5. Land of Israel, circa 300 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:877; 2:1275. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).
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Vayishlach

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Vayishlach or **Vayishlah** (וישלח — [Hebrew](#) for "he sent," the first word of the parshah) is the eighth [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#). It constitutes [Genesis 32:4–36:43](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it the eighth [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in late November or December.

In the parshah, [Jacob](#) reconciles with [Esau](#) after wrestling with a "man," the prince [Shechem](#) rapes [Dinah](#) and her brothers sack the city of [Shechem](#) in revenge, and in the family's subsequent flight [Rachel](#) gives birth to [Benjamin](#) and dies in childbirth.



Jacob Wrestling with the Angel (1855 illustration by [Gustave Doré](#))

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



Jacob Wrestling with the Angel (1865 painting by [Alexander Louis Leloir](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Jacob's reunion with Esau

Jacob sent a message to Esau in [Edom](#) that he had stayed with [Laban](#) until then, had oxen, donkeys, flocks, and servants, and hoped to find favor in Esau's sight. ([Genesis 32:4–6](#).) The

messengers returned and greatly frightened Jacob with the report that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men. ([Genesis 32:7–8](#).) Jacob divided his camp in two, reasoning that if Esau destroyed one of the two, then the other camp could escape. ([Genesis 32:8–9](#).) Jacob prayed to [God](#), recalling that God had promised to return him whole to his country, noting his unworthiness for God’s transformation of him from a poor man with just a staff to the leader of two camps, and prayed God to deliver him from Esau, as God had promised Jacob good and to make his descendants as numerous as the sand of the sea. ([Genesis 32:10–13](#).) Jacob assembled a present of hundreds of goats, sheep, camels, cattle, and donkeys to appease Esau, and instructed his servants to deliver them to Esau in successive droves with the message that they were a present from his servant Jacob, who followed behind. ([Genesis 32:14–21](#).)



Jacob Wrestling with the Angel (1659 painting by [Rembrandt](#))

As the presents went before him, Jacob took his wives, handmaids, children, and belongings over the [Jabbok](#) River, and then remained behind that night alone. ([Genesis 32:22–25](#).) Jacob wrestled with a "man" until dawn, and when the man saw that he was not prevailing, he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh and strained it. ([Genesis 32:25–26](#).) The man asked Jacob to let him go, for the day was breaking, but Jacob would not let him go without a blessing. ([Genesis 32:27](#).) The man asked Jacob his name, and when Jacob replied "Jacob," the man told him that his name would no more be Jacob, but [Israel](#), for he had striven with God and with men and prevailed. ([Genesis 32:28–29](#).) Jacob asked the man his name, but the man asked him why, and then blessed him. ([Genesis 32:30](#).) Jacob named the place [Peniel](#), saying that he had seen God face to face and lived. ([Genesis 32:31](#).) And at sunrise, Jacob limped from the injury to his thigh. ([Genesis 32:32](#).) Because of this, the [Israelites](#) do not eat the sinew of the vein that is the hollow of the thigh, because the man touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh. ([Genesis 32:33](#).)



The Reunion of Jacob and Esau (1844 painting by [Francesco Hayez](#))

When Jacob saw Esau coming with 400 men, he divided his family, putting the handmaids and their children foremost, [Leah](#) and her children next, and Rachel and [Joseph](#) at the back. ([Genesis 33:1–2](#).) Jacob went before them, and bowed to the ground seven times as he approached his brother. ([Genesis 33:3](#).) Esau ran to meet him, embraced him, and kissed him, and they wept. ([Genesis 33:4](#).) Esau asked who women and the children were, Jacob told him that they were his, and they all came to Esau and bowed down. ([Genesis 33:5–7](#).) Esau asked what Jacob meant by all the livestock, and Jacob told him that he sought Esau's favor. ([Genesis 33:8](#).) Esau said that he had enough, but

Jacob pressed him to accept his present saying that seeing Esau's face was like seeing the face of God, and Esau took the gifts.

([Genesis 33:9–11.](#)) Esau suggested that Jacob and he travel together, but Jacob asked that Esau allow Jacob's party to travel more slowly, so as not to tax the young children and the flocks, until they came to Esau in [Seir](#). ([Genesis 33:12–14.](#)) Esau offered to leave some of his men behind with Jacob, but Jacob declined. ([Genesis 33:15.](#)) So Esau left for Seir, and Jacob left for [Sukkot](#) (meaning “booths”), where he built a house and made booths for his cattle, thus explaining the place's name. ([Genesis 33:16–17.](#))



Dinah (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

[\[edit\]](#) The rape of Dinah

Jacob came to Shechem, where he bought a parcel of ground outside the city from the children of Hamor for a hundred pieces of money. ([Genesis 33:18–19.](#)) Jacob erected an [altar](#) there, and called the place El-elohe-Israel.

When Dinah went out to see the daughters of the land, the prince of the land, Shechem the son of Hamor the [Hivite](#), saw her and lay with her by force. ([Genesis 34:1–2.](#)) Shechem loved Dinah and asked Hamor to arrange that he might marry her. ([Genesis 34:3–4.](#)) Jacob heard that Shechem had defiled Dinah while Jacob's sons were in the field, and Jacob held his peace until they returned. ([Genesis 34:5.](#)) When Jacob's sons heard, they came in from the field, and were grieved and very angry. ([Genesis 34:7.](#))



Simeon and Levi Slay the Shechemites (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

Hamor went out to Jacob and told him that Shechem longed for Dinah, and asked Jacob to give her to him for a wife, and to agree that their two people might intermarry and live and trade together. ([Genesis 34:6–10.](#)) And Shechem offered to give Jacob and his sons whatever they wanted as a [bride price](#). ([Genesis 34:11–12.](#)) Jacob's sons answered with guile, saying that they could not give their sister to one not [circumcised](#), and said that they would consent only on the condition that every man of the

town became circumcised, and then the two people might intermarry and live together; otherwise they would leave. ([Genesis 34:13–17.](#)) Their words pleased Hamor and Shechem, and Shechem did so without delay, out of delight with Dinah. ([Genesis 34:18–19.](#))

Hamor and Shechem spoke to the men of the city in the city gate, saying that Jacob's family were peaceable, and advocated letting them dwell in the land, trade, and intermarry. ([Genesis 34:20–21.](#)) Hamor and Shechem reported that Jacob's people would only do so on the condition that every man of the town was circumcised, and they argued that the men do so, for Jacob's animals and wealth would add to the city's wealth. ([Genesis 34:22–23.](#)) And the men heeded Hamor and Shechem, and every man of the city underwent circumcision. ([Genesis 34:24.](#))

On the third day, when the men of the city were in pain, Jacob's sons [Simeon](#) and [Levi](#) each took his sword, came upon the city with stealth, and killed all the men, including Hamor and Shechem, and took Dinah out of the city. ([Genesis 34:25–26.](#)) Jacob's sons looted the city, taking as booty their animals, their wealth, their wives, and their children. ([Genesis 34:27–29.](#)) Jacob told Simeon and Levi that they had made him odious to the inhabitants of the land, who would gather together against him and destroyed their family. ([Genesis 34:30.](#)) Simeon and Levi asked whether they were to allow someone to treat their sister as a [prostitute](#). ([Genesis 34:31.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Jacob's flight

God told Jacob to move to [Bethel](#), and make an altar there to God, who had appeared to him there when he fled from Esau. ([Genesis 35:1.](#)) Jacob told his household to put away their idols, change their garments, and purify themselves for the trip to Bethel, and they gave Jacob all their idols and earrings and Jacob buried them under the [terebinth](#) by Shechem. ([Genesis 35:2–4.](#)) A terror of God fell upon the nearby cities so that the people did not pursue Jacob, and they journeyed to Luz, built an altar, and called the place El-beth-el. ([Genesis 35:5–7.](#))

Rebekah's nurse [Deborah](#) died, and they buried her below Beth-el under an oak they called Allon-bacuth. ([Genesis 35:8.](#))

And God appeared to Jacob again and blessed him, saying to him that his name would not be Jacob anymore, but Israel. ([Genesis 35:9–10.](#)) And God told him to be fruitful and multiply, for nations and [kings](#) would descend from him, and God would give Jacob and his descendants [the land](#) that God gave to [Abraham](#) and [Isaac](#). ([Genesis 35:11–12.](#)) And Jacob set up a pillar of stone in the place, poured a drink-offering and oil on it, and called the place Bethel. ([Genesis 35:14–15.](#))

They left Bethel, and before they had come to [Ephrath](#), Rachel went into a difficult labor. ([Genesis 35:16.](#)) The [midwife](#) told her not to fear not, for this child would also be a son for her. ([Genesis 35:17.](#)) And just before Rachel died, she named her son Ben-oni, but Jacob called him Benjamin. ([Genesis 35:18.](#)) They buried Rachel on the road to Ephrath at [Bethlehem](#), and Jacob

set up a pillar on her grave. ([Genesis 35:19–20.](#)) And Israel journeyed beyond Migdal-eder. ([Genesis 35:21.](#))

While Israel dwelt in that land, [Reuben](#) lay with Jacob's concubine [Bilhah](#), and Israel heard of it. ([Genesis 35:21.](#))

The text then recounts Jacob's children born to him in [Padan-aram](#). ([Genesis 35:22–26.](#))

Jacob came to Isaac at [Hebron](#), Isaac died at the old age of 180, and Esau and Jacob buried him. ([Genesis 35:27–29.](#))



Jacob Sees Esau Coming to Meet Him (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

The text then recounts Esau's children. ([Genesis 36:1–5.](#)) Esau took his household, animals, and all his possessions that he had

gathered in [Canaan](#) and went to a land apart from Jacob, in Edom, for their substance was too great for them to dwell together. ([Genesis 36:6–8](#).) The text then recounts Esau’s descendants, the Edomites, among whom were [Amalek](#). ([Genesis 36:9–43](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-Biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 32

The force of 400 men that Esau brought with him to meet Jacob in [Genesis 32:7](#) exceeded the 318 men with whom Abraham defeated four kings and rescued [Lot](#) in [Genesis 14:14–15](#).

[Hosea 12:4–5](#), part of the [haftarah](#) for the parshah, interpreted Jacob’s encounter with the angel. [Hosea 12:4](#) says that Jacob by his strength strove with a godlike being. [Hosea 12:5](#) says that Jacob strove with an angel and prevailed, and that the angel wept and made supplication to Jacob. And [Hosea 12:5](#) further says that at Bethel Jacob found the angel, and spoke with him there.

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 33

The 100 pieces of silver that Jacob paid the children of Hamor for the parcel of ground where he had spread his tent outside the city of Shechem in [Genesis 33:18–19](#) compares with the 400 shekels of silver that Abraham paid Ephron the [Hittite](#) to buy the [cave of Machpelah](#) and adjoining land in [Genesis 23:14–16](#); the 50 shekels of silver that King [David](#) paid [Araunah](#) the [Jebusite](#) for Araunah’s threshing floor, oxen, and wood in [2 Samuel](#)

[24:18–24](#) (but [1 Chronicles 21:24](#) reports cost 600 shekels of *gold*); and the 17 shekels of silver that [Jeremiah](#) paid his cousin Hanamel for his field in [Anathoth](#) in the land of [Benjamin](#) in [Jeremiah 23:7–9](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 35

The report of [Genesis 35:22](#) that Reuben lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it, is echoed in [Genesis 49:4](#), when Jacob recalled the incident and deprived Reuben of the blessing of the firstborn, because he went up on Jacob's bed and defiled it.



Jacob (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 32

The Rabbis of the [Midrash](#) questioned the wisdom of Jacob's decision to contact Esau in [Genesis 32:4](#). Nahman ben Samuel compared the decision to waking a robber sleeping on a path to tell him of danger. The Rabbis envisioned that God asked Jacob: "Esau was going his own way, yet you sent to him?" ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 75:1–3.)

The Rabbis of the Midrash deduced that the "messengers" of [Genesis 32:4](#) were angels. The Rabbis reasoned that if (as [Genesis Rabbah](#) 59:10 taught) an angel escorted [Eliezer](#), who was just a servant of the house, how much the more would angels have accompanied Jacob, who was the beloved of the house. Rabbi Hama ben Hanina reasoned that if five angels appeared to [Hagar](#), who was just [Sarah](#)'s handmaid, how much more would angels appear to Jacob. And [Rabbi Jannai](#) reasoned that if three angels met Joseph (counting the three uses of "man" in [Genesis 37:15–17](#)), and he was the youngest of the ancestors of the [12 tribes of Israel](#), how much more would angels meet Jacob, who was the father of all 12. ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 75:4.)

[Judah haNasi](#) once directed Rabbi Afes to write a letter in Judah's name to Emperor Antoninus. Rabbi Afes wrote: "From Judah the Prince to our Sovereign the Emperor Antoninus." Judah read the letter, tore it up, and wrote: "From your servant Judah to our Sovereign the Emperor Antoninus." Rabbi Afes remonstrated that Judah treated his honor too lightly. Judah replied that he was

not better than his ancestor, who in [Genesis 32:5](#) sent a message saying: “Thus says your servant Jacob.” (Genesis Rabbah 75:5.)



Jacob wrestles with an Angel (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

Rabbi Jacob bar Idi pointed out a contradiction between God's promise to protect Jacob in [Genesis 28:15](#) and Jacob's fear in [Genesis 32:8](#); Rabbi Jacob explained that Jacob feared that some sin might cause him to lose the protection of God's promise. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 4a](#), [Sanhedrin 98b](#).)

[Rabbi Eleazar](#) taught that [Obadiah](#) hid 50 of 100 prophets of God in a cave in [1 Kings 18:4](#) because he learned the lesson of dividing his camp from Jacob's actions in [Genesis 32:8–9](#). Rabbi [Abbahu](#), however, said that it was because the cave could hold only 50. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 39b](#), [Ta'anit 20b](#).)

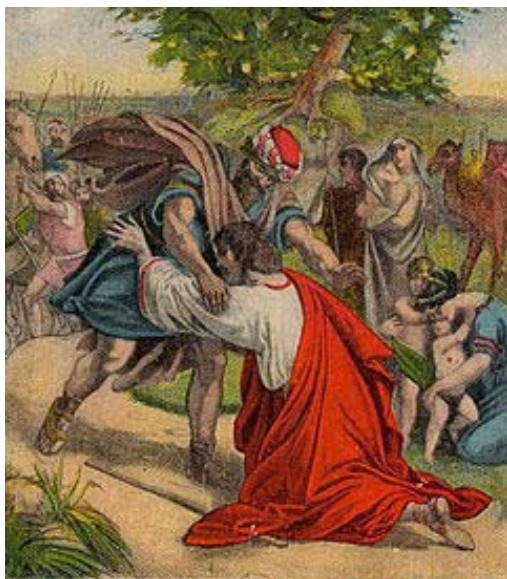


Jacob Wrestles with the Angel (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

Rabbi Yannai taught that when people expose themselves to danger and are saved by miracles, it is deducted from their merits and so they end up with less merit to their credit. Rabbi Hanin cited [Genesis 32:11](#) to prove this, reading Jacob to say to God: “I am become diminished [that is, I have less merit to my credit] by reason of all the deeds of kindness and all the truth that You have shown to your servant.” ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 32a](#).)

Rabbi Hama ben Hanina taught that the “man” who wrestled with Jacob in [Genesis 32:25](#) was Esau’s [guardian angel](#), and that Jacob alluded to this when he told Esau in [Genesis 33:10](#), “Forasmuch as I have seen your face, as one sees the face of Elohim, and you were pleased with me.” (Genesis Rabbah 78:3.)

Chapter 7 of Tractate [Chullin](#) in the [Mishnah](#), [Tosefta](#), and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the prohibition of the sinew of the hip (the [sciatic nerve](#), *gid ha-nashev*) in [Genesis 32:33](#). ([Mishnah Chullin 7:1–6](#); Tosefta Chullin 7:1–8; [Babylonian Talmud Chullin 89b–103b](#).) The Mishnah taught that the prohibition against eating the sciatic nerve in [Genesis 32:33](#) is in force both within the Land of Israel and outside it, both during the existence of the Temple and after it, and with respect to both consecrated and unconsecrated animals. It applies to both domesticated and wild animals, and to both the right and the left hip. But it does not apply to birds, because they have no spoon-shaped hip as the muscles upon the hip bone (femur) of a bird lie flat and are not raised and convex like those of cattle. It also applies to a live fetus found in a slaughtered animal, although Rabbi Judah said that it does not apply to a fetus. And the live fetus’ fat is permitted. Rabbi Meir taught that one should not trust butchers to remove the sciatic nerve, but the Sages taught that one may trust butchers to remove the sciatic nerve as well as the fat that [Leviticus 3:17](#) and [7:23](#) forbids. ([Mishnah Chullin 7:1](#); [Babylonian Talmud Chullin 89b](#).)



The Reconciliation of Jacob and Esau (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 33



The Meeting of Esau and Jacob (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

A midrash noted that dots appear above the word “and kissed him” (וַיִּשָּׂקֶיב, *vayishakeihu*) in [Genesis 33:4](#). Rabbi [Simeon ben Eleazar](#) taught that wherever one finds the plain writing exceeding the dotted letters, one must interpret the plain writing. But if the dotted letters exceed the plain writing, one must interpret the dotted letters. In [Genesis 33:4](#), the plain writing equals in number the dotted letters, so Rabbi Simeon ben Eleazar taught that [Genesis 33:4](#) conveys that Esau kissed Jacob with all his heart. Rabbi Jannai replied that if this were so, there would be no reason for dots to appear over the word. Rabbi Jannai taught that the dots mean that Esau wished to bite Jacob, but that Jacob's neck turned to marble and Esau's teeth were blunted and loosened. Hence the words “and they wept” in [Genesis 33:4](#) reflect that Jacob wept because of his neck and Esau wept because of his teeth. Rabbi [Abbahu](#) in [Rabbi Johanan's](#) name adduced support for that conclusion from [Song of Songs 7:5](#), which says: “Your neck is as a tower of ivory.” (Genesis Rabbah 78:9.)

Rabbi Haninah taught that Esau paid great attention to his parent (*boro*), his father, whom he supplied with meals, as [Genesis 25:28](#) reports, “Isaac loved Esau, because he ate of his venison.” Rabbi Samuel the son of Rabbi Gedaliah concluded that God decided to reward Esau for this. When Jacob offered Esau gifts, Esau answered Jacob in [Genesis 33:9](#), “I have enough (רַב, *rai*); do not trouble yourself.” So God declared that with the same expression

that Esau thus paid respect to Jacob, God would command Jacob's descendants not to trouble Esau's descendants, and thus God told the Israelites in [Deuteronomy 2:3](#), “You have circled this mountain (הָרַ, *har*) long enough (רַב, *raḥ*).” ([Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 1:17.)

A [Baraita](#) taught that if an idol worshiper asks a Jew where the Jew is going, the Jew should tell the idolater that the Jew is heading towards a place beyond the Jew's actual destination, as Jacob told the wicked Esau. For in [Genesis 33:14](#), Jacob told Esau, “Until I come to my lord to Seir,” while [Genesis 33:17](#) records, “And Jacob journeyed to Succot.” ([Babylonian Talmud Avodah Zarah 25b](#).) Reading the account in [Genesis 33:14](#), Rabbi Abbahu said that he searched the whole Scriptures and did not find that Jacob ever went to Esau at Seir. Rabbi Abbahu asked whether it was then possible that Jacob, the truthful, could have deceived Esau. Rabbi Abbahu concluded that Jacob would indeed come to Esau, in the [Messianic era](#), as [Obadiah 1:21](#) reports, “And saviors shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau.” ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 78:14.)

[\[edit\]](#) **Genesis chapter 34**

A [Tanna](#) taught in [Rabbi Jose's](#) name that Shechem was a place predestined for evil, for in Shechem Dinah was raped (as reported in [Genesis 34:2](#)), Joseph's brothers sold him (as reported in [Genesis 37:17](#), Dothan being near Shechem), and the [united kingdom of Israel and Judah](#) was divided (as reported in [1 Kings 12:1](#)). ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 102a](#).)



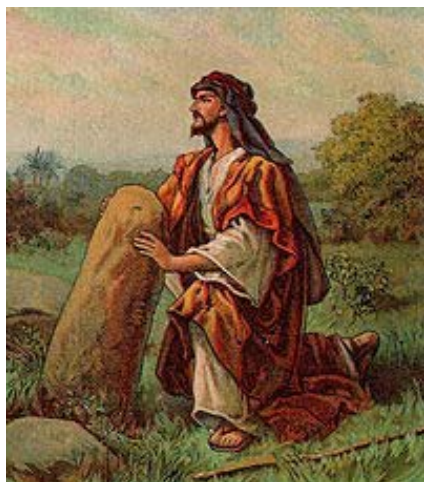
Job and his wife (painting circa 1500–1503 by [Albrecht Dürer](#))

In [Genesis 34:3](#), the heart is enticed. A midrash catalogued the wide range of additional capabilities of the heart reported in the Hebrew Bible. The heart speaks ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), sees ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), hears ([1 Kings 3:9](#)), walks ([2 Kings 5:26](#)), falls ([1 Samuel 17:32](#)), stands ([Ezekiel 22:14](#)), rejoices ([Psalm 16:9](#)), cries ([Lamentations 2:18](#)), is comforted ([Isaiah 40:2](#)), is troubled ([Deuteronomy 15:10](#)), becomes hardened ([Exodus 9:12](#)), grows faint ([Deuteronomy 20:3](#)), grieves ([Genesis 6:6](#)), fears ([Deuteronomy 28:67](#)), can be broken ([Psalm 51:19](#)), becomes proud ([Deuteronomy 8:14](#)), rebels ([Jeremiah 5:23](#)), invents ([1 Kings 12:33](#)), cavils ([Deuteronomy 29:18](#)), overflows ([Psalm 45:2](#)), devises ([Proverbs 19:21](#)), desires ([Psalm 21:3](#)), goes astray ([Proverbs 7:25](#)), lusts ([Numbers 15:39](#)), is refreshed ([Genesis 18:5](#)), can be stolen ([Genesis 31:20](#)), is humbled ([Leviticus 26:41](#)), errs ([Isaiah 21:4](#)), trembles ([1 Samuel 4:13](#)), is awakened ([Song](#)

5:2), loves ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#)), hates ([Leviticus 19:17](#)), envies ([Proverbs 23:17](#)), is searched ([Jeremiah 17:10](#)), is rent ([Joel 2:13](#)), meditates ([Psalm 49:4](#)), is like a fire ([Jeremiah 20:9](#)), is like a stone ([Ezekiel 36:26](#)), turns in repentance ([2 Kings 23:25](#)), becomes hot ([Deuteronomy 19:6](#)), dies ([1 Samuel 25:37](#)), melts ([Joshua 7:5](#)), takes in words ([Deuteronomy 6:6](#)), is susceptible to fear ([Jeremiah 32:40](#)), gives thanks ([Psalm 111:1](#)), covets ([Proverbs 6:25](#)), becomes hard ([Proverbs 28:14](#)), makes merry ([Judges 16:25](#)), acts deceitfully ([Proverbs 12:20](#)), speaks from out of itself ([1 Samuel 1:13](#)), loves bribes ([Jeremiah 22:17](#)), writes words ([Proverbs 3:3](#)), plans ([Proverbs 6:18](#)), receives commandments ([Proverbs 10:8](#)), acts with pride ([Obadiah 1:3](#)), makes arrangements ([Proverbs 16:1](#)), and aggrandizes itself ([2 Chronicles 25:19](#)). ([Ecclesiastes Rabbah](#) 1:36.)

A [Baraita](#) reported that some said that [Job](#) lived in the time of Jacob and married Dinah, finding the connection in the use of the same word with regard to Job's wife in [Job 2:10](#), "You speak as one of the impious women (נְבָלוֹת, *nebalot*) speaks," and with regard to Dinah in [Genesis 34:7](#), "Because he had committed a vile deed (נְבָלָה, *nebalah*) in Israel." ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 15b](#).)

The Mishnah deduced from [Genesis 34:25](#) that the wound from a circumcision is still serious enough on the third day that one bathes a circumcised baby on that day even if it is the Sabbath. ([Mishnah Shabbat 9:3](#), [19:3](#); [Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 86a](#), [134b](#).)



Jacob's Vision and God's Promise (illustration from a Bible card published 1906 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 35

[Resh Lakish](#) taught that the words "I am God Almighty" (אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהִים, *El Shaddai*) in [Genesis 35:11](#) mean, "I am He Who said to the world: 'Enough!'" (אֲנִי ה' דַּי, *Dai*). Resh Lakish taught that when God created the sea, it went on expanding, until God rebuked it and caused it to dry up, as [Nahum 1:4](#) says, "He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers." ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 12a.](#))



The Mess of Pottage (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

A midrash taught that of four who made vows, two vowed and profited, and two vowed and lost. The [Israelites](#) vowed and profited in [Numbers 21:2–3](#), and [Hannah](#) vowed and profited in [1 Samuel 1:11–20](#). [Jephthah](#) vowed and lost in [Judges 11:30–40](#), and Jacob vowed in [Genesis 28:20](#) and lost (some say in the loss of Rachel in [Genesis 35:18](#) and some say in the disgrace of Dinah in [Genesis 34:2](#), for Jacob’s vow in [Genesis 28:20](#) was superfluous, as Jacob had already received God's promise, and therefore Jacob lost because of it). (Genesis Rabbah 70:3.)

Considering the consequences of Reuben’s infidelity with Jacob’s concubine Bilhah in [Genesis 35:22](#), Rabbi Eleazar contrasted Reuben’s magnanimity with Esau’s jealousy. As [Genesis 25:33](#) reports, Esau voluntarily sold his birthright, but as [Genesis 27:41](#) says, “Esau hated Jacob,” and as [Genesis 27:36](#) says, “And he

said, ‘Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he has supplanted me these two times.’” In Reuben’s case, Joseph took Reuben’s birthright from him against his will, as [1 Chronicles 5:1](#) reports, “for as much as he defiled his father’s couch, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph.” Nonetheless, Reuben was not jealous of Joseph, as [Genesis 37:21](#) reports, “And Reuben heard it, and delivered him out of their hand.” ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 7b.](#))

The Mishnah taught that the story of Reuben’s infidelity with Jacob’s concubine Bilhah in [Genesis 35:22](#) is read in the synagogue but not translated. ([Mishnah Megillah 4:10](#); [Babylonian Talmud Megillah 25a.](#))

[edit] Genesis chapter 36

The Gemara taught that the use of the pronoun “he (*hu*)” in an introduction, as in the words “this is (*hu*) Esau” in [Genesis 36:43](#), signifies that he was the same in his wickedness from the beginning to the end. Similar uses appear in [Numbers 26:9](#) to teach [Dathan](#) and [Abiram](#)’s enduring wickedness, in [2 Chronicles 28:22](#) to teach [Ahaz](#)’s enduring wickedness, in [Esther 1:1](#) to teach [Ahasuerus](#)’s enduring wickedness, in [1 Chronicles 1:27](#) to teach [Abraham](#)’s enduring righteousness, in [Exodus 6:26](#) to teach [Moses](#) and [Aaron](#)’s enduring righteousness, and in [1 Samuel 17:14](#) to teach David’s enduring humility. ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 11a.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Commandment

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there is one negative [commandment](#) in the parshah:

- Not to eat the sinew of the thigh (*gid ha-nasheh*). ([Genesis 32:33](#).)

(Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#), [Negative Commandment 183](#). [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 2:180–81. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:89–90. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The haftarah for the parshah is:

- for [Ashkenazi Jews](#): [Hosea 11:7–12:12](#) or [Obadiah 1:1–21](#)
- for [Sephardi Jews](#): [Obadiah 1:1–21](#)



A page from a 14th century German Haggadah

[\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy

The [Passover Haggadah](#), in the concluding *nirtzah* section of the [Seder](#), in a reference to [Genesis 32:23–30](#), recounts how Israel struggled with an angel and overcame him at night. (Menachem Davis. *The Interlinear Haggadah: The Passover Haggadah, with an Interlinear Translation, Instructions and Comments*, 108. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005. [ISBN 1-57819-064-9](#). Joseph Tabory. *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, 123. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. [ISBN 978-0-8276-0858-0](#).)

In the Blessing after Meals (*Birkat Hamazon*), at the close of the fourth blessing (of thanks for God's goodness), Jews allude to God's blessing of the [Patriarchs](#) described in [Genesis 24:1](#), [27:33](#), and [33:11](#). (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals with an Interlinear Translation*, 172. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-697-3](#). [Reuven](#)

[Hammer](#). *Or Hadasb: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 342. New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#).)

In the morning blessings ([Birkot hashachar](#)), before the first recitation of the [Shema](#), Jews refer to God's changing of Jacob's name to Israel in [Genesis 35:10](#). (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 212. Hammer, at 66.)

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 1:28](#) (be fruitful and multiply); [9:1](#), [7](#); (be fruitful and multiply); [48:7](#) (Rachel's death).
- [Deuteronomy 2:4–5](#).
- [Jeremiah 31:14](#) (31:15 in NJPS) (site of Rachel's death).

[\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): [Shabbat 9:3](#), [19:3](#); [Megillah 4:10](#); [Chullin 7:1–6](#). Land of Israel, circa 200 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 190, 202, 323, 778–80. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Tosefta](#): Berakhot 1:10, 4:16; Bikkurim 2:2; Megillah 3:35; Avodah Zarah 3:4; Chullin 7:1–8. Land of Israel, circa 300 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated*

from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:6, 26, 348, 652; 2:1269, 1393–95. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).

- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Berakhot 17b, 83a, 84b; Sheviit 72a; Orlah 34a. Land of Israel, circa 400 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 1, 2, 6b, 12. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2005–2008.
- [Genesis Rabbah](#) 75:1–83:5. Land of Israel, 5th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).



Talmud

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 4a, 12b](#); [Shabbat 32a, 33b, 55b, 85a, 86a, 134b](#); [Eruvin 53a](#); [Pesachim 7b, 22a, 47b, 54a, 83b, 118b, 119b](#); [Yoma 77b](#); [Sukkah 5b, 39a](#); [Beitzah 12a](#); [Rosh Hashanah 26a](#); [Taanit 20b, 27b](#); [Megillah 11a, 17a, 18a, 21b, 25a–b](#); [Chagigah 5b](#); [Yevamot 65b](#); [Nedarim 31b](#); [Nazir 23a](#); [Sotah 22b, 36b, 41b](#); [Kiddushin 21b, 55a](#); [Bava Kamma 41a, 92a](#); [Bava Metzia 86b](#); [Bava](#)

[Batra 15b, 74b, 115b–16a, 123b; Sanhedrin 39b, 56a, 59a, 82b, 94a, 98b, 99b, 102a; Makkot 7b, 11a–b, 21b; Avodah Zarah 8b, 11b, 25b; Horayot 10b, 12a; Chullin 7b, 69a, 89b–103b, 134b, 137b; Keritot 21a; Niddah 63a.](#) Babylonia, 6th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

[[edit](#)] Medieval

- [Solomon ibn Gabirol](#). *A Crown for the King*, [36:488–89](#). Spain, 11th Century. Translated by David R. Slavitt, 66–67. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. [ISBN 0-19-511962-2](#).
- [Rashi](#). *Commentary*. [Genesis 32–36](#). [Troyes](#), France, late 11th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 1:359–407. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1995. [ISBN 0-89906-026-9](#).



Dickinson

- [Zohar 1:165b–79a](#). Spain, late 13th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Zohar*. Translated by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon. 5 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1934.

[[edit](#)] Modern

- [Johann Wolfgang von Goethe](#). Letter to Sara von Grothuss. 1812. Quoted in Solomon Goldman. *In the Beginning*, 634. Harper, 1949. (“This foolish Dinah who runs about in the land.”)
- [Rumpelstiltskin](#). (power of a [true name](#)). In [Jacob Grimm](#) & [Wilhelm Grimm](#). *Children's and Household Tales*. Germany, 1812. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Complete Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales*. Edited by Lily Owens, 203-06. New York: Gramercy Books, 2006. [ISBN 0-517-09293-X](#).
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- Irving Fineman. *Jacob, An Autobiographical Novel*. New York: Random House, 1941.



Mann

- [Thomas Mann](#). *Joseph and His Brothers*. Translated by [John E. Woods](#), 51–53, 64–65, 69–73, 77, 84–85, 100–03, 112–51, 155–56, 239, 294, 303–14, 326, 335, 399–400, 402–04, 426–27, 429, 432, 438, 446, 454, 491, 500–01, 507, 515, 563, 805, 917. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. [ISBN 1-4000-4001-9](#). Originally published as *Joseph und seine Brüder*. Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer Verlag, 1943.
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- [Pat Schneider](#) *Welcoming Angels*. In *Long Way Home: Poems*, 90. Amherst, Mass.: Amherst Writers and Artists Press, 1993. [ISBN 0-941895-11-4](#).
- [Aaron Wildavsky](#). *Assimilation versus Separation: Joseph the Administrator and the Politics of Religion in Biblical Israel*, 6, 27–28. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1993. [ISBN 1-56000-081-3](#).

- [Anita Diamant](#). *The Red Tent*. St. Martin's Press, 1997. [ISBN 0-312-16978-7](#).
- [Adele Reinhartz](#). “Why Ask My Name?” *Anonymity and Identity in Biblical Narrative*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. [ISBN 0-19-509970-2](#).
- Victor Hurowitz. “Whose Earrings Did Jacob Bury?” [Bible Review](#) 17 (4) (Aug. 2001): 31–33, 54.
- William H.C. Propp. “Exorcising Demons.” *Bible Review* 20 (5) (Oct. 2004): 14–21, 47.
- Suzanne A. Brody. “Deborah” and “Encountering Dinah.” In *Dancing in the White Spaces: The Yearly Torah Cycle and More Poems*, 69–70. Shelbyville, Kentucky: Wasteland Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-60047-112-9](#).
- [Esther Jungreis](#). *Life Is a Test*, 80–81. Brooklyn: Shaar Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-4226-0609-0](#).
- [Edward M. Kennedy](#). *True Compass*, 58. New York: Twelve, 2009. [ISBN 978-0-446-53925-8](#). (“Dad took precautions in booking several of us on two different ships, not wishing to lose all of us in a torpedo attack by one of the U-boats that now prowled the North Atlantic’s depths.”)

[[edit](#)] See also

- [Dinah in rabbinic literature](#)

Vayeshev

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Vayeshev, **Vayeishev**, or **Vayesheb** (וַיֵּשֶׁב — [Hebrew](#) for “and he lived,” the first word of the parshah) is the ninth [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#). It constitutes [Genesis 37:1–40:23](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it the ninth [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in December.



Joseph's Brothers Sell Him into Captivity (1855 painting by
[Konstantin Flavitsky](#))

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



Joseph Reveals His Dream to His Brethren (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Joseph the dreamer

[Jacob](#) lived in the land of [Canaan](#), and this is his family's story. ([Genesis 37:1–2.](#)) When [Joseph](#) was 17, he fed the flock with his brothers, and he brought Jacob an evil report about his brothers. ([Genesis 37:2.](#)) Because Joseph was the son of Jacob's old age, Jacob loved him more than his other children, and Jacob made him a coat of many colors, which caused Joseph's brothers to

hate him. ([Genesis 37:3–4.](#)) And Joseph made his brothers hate him more when he told them that he dreamed that they were binding sheaves in the field, and their sheaves bowed down to his sheaf. ([Genesis 37:5–7.](#)) He told his brothers another dream, in which the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed down to him, and when he told his father, Jacob rebuked him, asking whether he, Joseph’s mother, and his brothers would bow down to Joseph. ([Genesis 37:9–10.](#))



Jacob Sees Joseph’s Coat (painting circa 1816–1817 by [Friedrich Wilhelm Schadow](#))

When the brothers went to feed the flock in [Shechem](#), Jacob sent Joseph to see whether all was well with them. ([Genesis 37:12–14.](#)) A man found Joseph and asked him what he sought, and when he told the man that he sought his brothers, the man told him that they had departed for [Dothan](#). ([Genesis 37:15–17.](#)) When

Joseph's brothers saw him coming, they conspired to kill him, cast him into a pit, say that a beast had devoured him, and see what would become of his dreams then. ([Genesis 37:18–20.](#)) But [Reuben](#) persuaded them not to kill him but to cast him into a pit, hoping to restore him to Jacob later. ([Genesis 37:21–22.](#)) So Joseph's brothers stripped him of his coat of many colors and cast him into an empty pit. ([Genesis 37:23–24.](#)) They sat down to eat, and when they saw a caravan of [Ishmaelites](#) from [Gilead](#) bringing spices and balm to [Egypt](#), [Judah](#) persuaded the brothers to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites. ([Genesis 37:25–27.](#)) Passing [Midianite](#) merchants drew Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for 20 [shekels](#) of [silver](#), and they brought him to Egypt. ([Genesis 37:28.](#)) When Reuben returned to the pit and Joseph was gone, he rent his clothes and asked his brothers where he could go now. ([Genesis 37:29–30.](#))



Judah and Tamar (1840 painting by [Horace Vernet](#))

They took Joseph's coat of many colors, dipped it in goat's blood, and sent it to Jacob to identify. ([Genesis 37:31–32.](#)) Jacob concluded that a beast had devoured Joseph, and rent his garments, put on sackcloth, and mourned for his son. ([Genesis 37:33–34.](#)) All his sons and daughters tried in vain to comfort him. ([Genesis 37:35.](#)) And the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to [Potiphar](#), [Pharaoh](#)'s captain of the guard. ([Genesis 37:36.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Judah and Tamar

Judah left his brothers to live near an [Adullamite](#) named Hirah. ([Genesis 38:1.](#)) Judah married the daughter of a Canaanite named Shua and had three sons named [Er](#), [Onan](#), and [Shelah](#). ([Genesis 38:2–5.](#)) Judah arranged for Er to marry a woman named [Tamar](#), but Er was wicked and [God](#) killed him. ([Genesis 38:6–7.](#)) Judah directed Onan to perform a [brother's duty](#) and have children with Tamar in Er's name. ([Genesis 38:8.](#)) But Onan knew that the children would not be counted as his, so he spilled his seed, and God killed him as well. ([Genesis 38:9–10.](#)) Then Judah told Tamar to remain a widow in his house until Shelah could grown up, thinking that if Tamar wed Shelah, he might also die. ([Genesis 38:11.](#))



Judah and Tamar (painting circa 1650–1660 by the school of [Rembrandt](#))

Later, when Judah's wife died, he went with his friend Hirah to his sheep-shearers at [Timnah](#). ([Genesis 38:12.](#)) When Tamar

learned that Judah had gone to Timnah, she took off her widow's garments and put on a veil and sat on the road to Timnah, for she saw that Shelah had grown up and Judah had not given her to be his wife. ([Genesis 38:13–14.](#)) Judah took her for a harlot, offered her a young goat for her services, and gave her his signet and staff as a pledge for payment, and they cohabited and she conceived. ([Genesis 38:15–18.](#)) Judah sent Hirah to deliver the young goat and collect his pledge, but he asked about and did not find her. ([Genesis 38:20–21.](#)) When Hirah reported to Judah that the men of the place said that there had been no harlot there, Judah put the matter to rest so as not to be put to shame. ([Genesis 38:22–23.](#)) About three months later, Judah heard that Tamar had played the harlot and become pregnant, and he ordered her to be brought forth and burned. ([Genesis 38:24.](#)) When they seized her, she sent Judah the pledge to identify, saying that she was pregnant by the man whose things they were. ([Genesis 38:25.](#)) Judah acknowledged them and said that she was more righteous than he, inasmuch as he had failed to give her to Shelah. ([Genesis 38:26.](#))

When Tamar delivered, one twin — whom she would name [Zerah](#) — put out a hand and the midwife bound it with a scarlet thread, but then he drew it back and his brother — whom she would name [Perez](#) — came out. ([Genesis 38:27–30.](#))



Joseph and the Wife of Potiphar (painting circa 1816–1817 by [Philipp Veit](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Joseph and Potiphar

Meanwhile, Pharaoh’s captain of the guard Potiphar bought Joseph from the Ishmaelites. ([Genesis 39:1.](#)) When Potiphar saw that God was with Joseph and prospered all that he did, Potiphar appointed him overseer over his house and gave him charge of all that he had, and God blessed Pharaoh’s house for Joseph’s sake. ([Genesis 39:2–5.](#)) Joseph was handsome, and Potiphar’s wife repeatedly asked him to lie with her, but he declined, asking how he could sin so against Potiphar and God. ([Genesis 39:6–10.](#)) One day, when the men of the house were away, she caught him by his garment and asked him to lie with her, but he fled, leaving his garment behind. ([Genesis 39:11–12.](#)) When Potiphar came

home, she accused Joseph of trying to force himself on her, and Potiphar put Joseph in the prison where the king's prisoners were held. ([Genesis 39:16–20.](#))



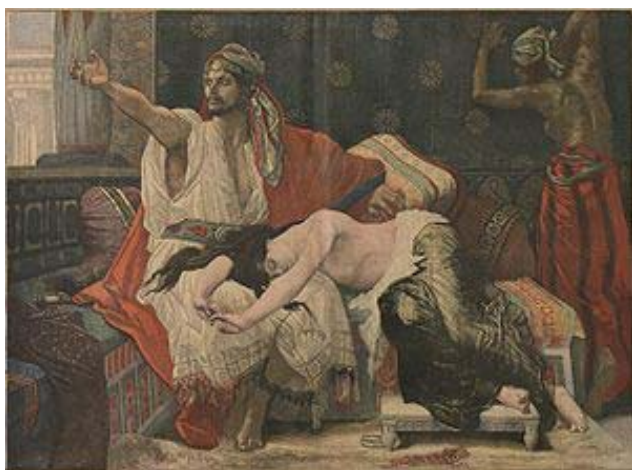
Joseph Interprets Dreams in Prison (painting circa 1816–1817 by Friedrich Wilhelm Schadow)

But God was with Joseph, and gave him favor in the sight of the warden, who committed all the prisoners to Joseph's charge.

([Genesis 39:21–23.](#)) When the Pharaoh's butler and baker offended him, the Pharaoh put them into the prison as well.

([Genesis 40:1–4.](#)) One night, the butler and the baker each dreamed a dream. ([Genesis 40:5.](#)) Finding them sad, Joseph asked the cause, and they told him that it was because no one could

interpret their dreams. ([Genesis 40:6–8.](#)) Acknowledging that interpretations belong to God, Joseph asked them to tell him their dreams. ([Genesis 40:8.](#)) The butler told Joseph that he dreamt that he saw a vine with three branches blossom and bring forth grapes, which he took and pressed into Pharaoh's cup, which he gave to Pharaoh. ([Genesis 40:9–11.](#)) Joseph interpreted that within three days, Pharaoh would lift up the butler's head and restore him to his office, where he would give Pharaoh his cup just as he used to do. ([Genesis 40:12–13.](#)) And Joseph asked the butler to remember him and mention him to Pharaoh, so that he might be brought out of the prison, for he had been stolen away from his land and had done nothing to warrant his imprisonment. ([Genesis 40:14–15.](#)) When the baker saw that the interpretation of the butler's dream was good, he told Joseph his dream: He saw three baskets of white bread on his head, and the birds ate them out of the basket. ([Genesis 40:16–17.](#)) Joseph interpreted that within three days Pharaoh would lift up the baker's head and hang him on a tree, and the birds would eat his flesh. ([Genesis 40:18–19.](#)) And on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, Pharaoh made a feast, restored the chief butler to his butlership, and hanged the baker, just as Joseph had predicted. ([Genesis 40:20–22.](#)) But the butler forgot about Joseph. ([Genesis 40:23.](#))



Amnon and Tamar (1892 painting by [Alexandre Cabanel](#))

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 37

[Genesis 37:3](#) reports that Jacob made Joseph “a coat of many colors” (כִּתְּנֵת פְּסִיִּם, *ketonet pasim*). Similarly, [2 Samuel 13:18](#) reports that [David](#)’s daughter [Tamar](#) had “a garment of many colors” (כִּתְּנֵת פְּסִיִּם, *ketonet pasim*). [2 Samuel 13:18](#) explains that “with such robes were the king's daughters that were virgins appareled.” As [Genesis 37:23–24](#) reports Joseph’s half-brothers assaulted him, [2 Samuel 13:14](#) recounts that Tamar’s half-brother [Amnon](#) assaulted her. And as [Genesis 37:31–33](#) reports that Joseph’s coat was marred to make it appear that Joseph was torn in pieces, [2 Samuel 13:19](#) reports that Tamar’s coat was torn.

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 37

[Rabbi Johanan](#) taught that wherever Scripture uses the term “And he abode” (*vayeshbev*), as it does in [Genesis 37:1](#), it presages trouble. Thus in [Numbers 25:1](#), “And Israel abode in Shittim” is followed by “and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.” In [Genesis 37:1](#), “And Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan,” is followed by [Genesis 37:3](#), “and Joseph brought to his father their evil report.” In [Genesis 47:27](#), “And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen,” is followed by [Genesis 47:29](#), “And the time drew near that Israel must die.” In [1 Kings 5:5](#), “And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree,” is followed by [1 Kings 11:14](#), “And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was the king’s seed in Edom.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 106a.](#))

[Rabbi Helbo](#) quoted [Rabbi Jonathan](#) to teach that the words of [Genesis 37:2](#), “These are the generations of Jacob, Joseph,” indicate that the firstborn should have come from Rachel, but Leah prayed for mercy before Rachel did. On account of Rachel’s modesty, however, God restored the rights of the firstborn to Rachel’s son Joseph from Leah’s son Reuben. To teach what caused Leah to anticipate Rachel with her prayer for mercy, [Rav](#) taught that Leah’s eyes were sore (as [Genesis 29:17](#) reports) from her crying about what she heard at the crossroads. There she

heard people saying: “Rebecca has two sons, and Laban has two daughters; the elder daughter should marry the elder son, and the younger daughter should marry the younger son.” Leah inquired about the elder son, and the people said that he was a wicked man, a highway robber. And Leah asked about the younger son, and the people said that he was “a quiet man dwelling in tents.” ([Genesis 25:27.](#)) So she cried about her fate until her eyelashes fell out. This accounts for the words of [Genesis 29:31](#), “And the Lord saw that Leah was hated, and He opened her womb,” which mean not that Leah was actually hated, but rather that God saw that Esau’s conduct was hateful to Leah, so he rewarded her prayer for mercy by opening her womb first. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 123a.](#))



Joseph Recounting His Dreams (drawing by Rembrandt)

After introducing “the line of Jacob,” [Genesis 37:2](#) cites only Joseph. The [Gemara](#) explained that the verse indicates that Joseph was worthy of having 12 tribes descend from him, as they did from his father Jacob. But Joseph diminished some of his procreative powers in order to resist Potiphar’s wife in [Genesis 39:7–12](#). Nevertheless ten sons (who, added to Joseph’s two, made the total of 12) issued from Joseph’s brother Benjamin and were given names on Joseph’s account (as [Genesis 46:21](#) reports). A son was called Bela, because Joseph was swallowed up (*nivla*) among the peoples. A son was called Becher, because Joseph was the firstborn (*bechor*) of his mother. A son was called Ashbel, because God sent Joseph into captivity (*shevao el*). A son was called Gera, because Joseph dwelt (*gar*) in a strange land. A son was called Naaman, because Joseph was especially beloved (*na’im*). Sons were called Ehi and Rosh, because Joseph was to Benjamin “my brother” (*achi*) and chief (*rosh*). Sons were called Muppin and Huppin, because Benjamin said that Joseph did not see Benjamin’s marriage-canopy (*chuppah*). A son was called Ard, because Joseph descended (*yarad*) among the peoples. Others explain that he was called Ard, because Joseph’s face was like a rose (*vered*). ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 36b.](#))

Rabbi Levi used [Genesis 37:2](#), [41:46](#), and [45:6](#) to calculate that Joseph’s dreams that his brothers would bow to him took 22 years to come true, and deduced that a person should thus wait for as much as 22 years for a positive dream’s fulfillment. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 55b.](#))



Joseph's Dream (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

Rava bar Mehasia said in the name of Rav Hama bar Gorias in Rav's name that a man should never single out one son among his other sons, for on account of the small weight of silk that Jacob gave Joseph more than he gave his other sons (as reported in [Genesis 37:3](#)), his brothers became jealous of Joseph and the matter resulted in the Israelites' descent into Egypt. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 10b](#); see also Genesis Rabbah 84:8.)

Noting that in [Genesis 37:10](#), Jacob asked Joseph, "Shall I and your mother . . . indeed come," when Joseph's mother Rachel was then dead, Rabbi Levi said in the name of Rabbi Hama ben [Haninah](#) that Jacob believed that resurrection would take place in his days. But Rabbi Levi taught that Jacob did not know that Joseph's dream in fact applied to Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid, who had brought Joseph up like a mother. ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 84:11.)

Noting that dots appear over the word *et* (אֵת, the direct object indicator) in [Genesis 37:12](#), which says, “And his brethren went to feed their father's flock,” a [midrash](#) reinterpreted the verse to intimate that Joseph’s brothers actually went to feed themselves. (Genesis Rabbah 84:13.)

Reading in [Genesis 37:15–17](#) the three parallel clauses, “And a certain man found him,” “And the man asked him,” “And the man said,” [Rabbi Yannai](#) deduced that three angels met Joseph. (Genesis Rabbah 84:14.)

Noting that [Genesis 37:21](#) reports, “And Reuben heard it,” a midrash asked where Reuben had been. [Rabbi Judah](#) taught that each one of the brothers attended to Jacob one day, and that day it was Reuben's turn. [Rabbi Nehemiah](#) taught that Reuben reasoned that he was the firstborn and he alone would be held responsible for the crime. The Rabbis taught that Reuben reasoned that Joseph had included Reuben with his brethren in Joseph’s dream of the sun and the moon and the eleven stars in [Genesis 37:9](#), when Reuben thought that he had been expelled from the company of his brothers on account of the incident of [Genesis 35:22](#). Because Joseph counted Reuben as a brother, Reuben felt motivated to rescue Joseph. And since Reuben was the first to engage in life saving, God decreed that the [Cities of Refuge](#) would be set up first within the borders of the [Tribe of Reuben](#) in [Deuteronomy 4:43](#). (Genesis Rabbah 84:15.)



Joseph's Brothers Raise Him from the Pit in Order To Sell Him
(watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)



Joseph Sold by His Brothers (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

Reading [Genesis 37:21](#), Rabbi Eleazar contrasted Reuben's magnanimity with Esau's jealousy. As [Genesis 25:33](#) reports, Esau voluntarily sold his birthright, but as [Genesis 27:41](#) says, "Esau hated Jacob," and as [Genesis 27:36](#) says, "And he said, 'Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he has supplanted me these two times.'" In Reuben's case, Joseph took Reuben's birthright from him against his will, as [1 Chronicles 5:1](#) reports, "for as much as he defiled his father's couch, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph." Nonetheless, Reuben was not jealous of Joseph, as [Genesis 37:21](#) reports, "And Reuben heard it, and delivered him out of their hand." ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 7b](#).)

Interpreting the detail of the phrase in [Genesis 37:23](#), "they stripped Joseph of his coat, the coat of many colors that was on him," a midrash taught that Joseph's brothers stripped him of his cloak, his shirt, his tunic, and his breeches. (Genesis Rabbah 84:16.)

A midrash asked who "took him, and cast him into the pit" in [Genesis 37:24](#), and replied that it was his brother [Simeon](#). And the midrash taught that Simeon was repaid when in [Genesis 42:24](#), Joseph took Simeon from among the brothers and had him bound before their eyes. (Genesis Rabbah 84:16.)

Interpreting the words, "the pit was empty, there was no water in it," in [Genesis 37:24](#), a midrash taught that there was indeed no water in it, but snakes and serpents were in it. And because the

word “pit” appears twice in [Genesis 37:24](#), the midrash deduced that there were two pits, one full of pebbles, and the other full of snakes and scorpions. [Rabbi Aha](#) interpreted the words “the pit was empty” to teach that Jacob’s pit was emptied — Jacob’s children were emptied of their compassion. The midrash interpreted the words “there was no water in it” to teach that there was no recognition of Torah in it, as Torah is likened to water, as [Isaiah 55:1](#) says, “everyone that thirsts, come for water.” For the Torah (in [Deuteronomy 24:7](#)) says, “If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel . . . and sell him, then that thief shall die,” and yet Joseph’s brothers sold their brother. (Genesis Rabbah 84:16.)



Joseph Sold into Egypt (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Rabbi Judah ben Simon taught that God required each of the Israelites to give a half-shekel (as reported in [Exodus 38:26](#)) because (as reported in [Genesis 37:28](#)) their ancestors had sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for 20 shekels. (Genesis Rabbah 84:18.)

Reading [Genesis 37:32](#), “and they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father; and said: ‘This have we found. Know now whether it is your son's coat or not,’” Rabbi Johanan taught that God ordained that since Judah said this to his father, he too would hear (from Tamar in [Genesis 38:25](#)) the challenge: Know now, whose are these? (Genesis Rabbah 84:19.)

Reading [Genesis 37:36](#), a midrash asked how many times Joseph was sold. Rabbi Judan and [Rav Huna](#) disagreed. Rabbi Judan maintained that Joseph was sold four times: His brothers sold him to the Ishmaelites, the Ishmaelites to the merchants, the merchants to the Midianites, and the Midianites into Egypt. Rav Huna said Joseph was sold five times, concluding with the Midianites selling him to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians to Potiphar. (Genesis Rabbah 84:22.)



Judah Gives his Signet, Bracelets and Staff in Pledge to Tamar
(illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 38

The [Mishnah](#) taught that notwithstanding its mature content, in the synagogue, Jews read and translated Tamar's story in [Genesis 38](#). ([Mishnah Megillah 4:10](#); [Babylonian Talmud Megillah 25a](#).)

The Gemara questioned why the Mishnah bothered to say so and proposed that one might think that Jews should forbear out of respect for Judah. But the Gemara deduced that the Mishnah instructed that Jews read and translate the chapter to show that the chapter actually redounds to Judah's credit, as it records in

[Genesis 38:26](#) that he confessed his wrongdoing. ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 25b.](#))



Tamar (2009 painting by and copyright Lidia Kozenitzky; for licensing information, double-click on the image)

Rav Zutra bar Tobiah said in the name of [Rav](#) (or according to others, Rav Hanah bar Bizna said it in the name of Rabbi Simeon the Pious, or according to others, Rabbi Johanan said in the name of Rabbi [Simeon ben Yohai](#)) that it is better for a person to choose to be executed in a fiery furnace than to shame another in public. For even to save herself from being burned, Tamar in [Genesis 38:25](#) did not implicate Judah publicly by name. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 43b.](#))

The Gemara derived from [Genesis 38:25](#) a lesson about how to give to the poor. The Gemara told a story. A poor man lived in Mar Ukba's neighborhood, and every day Mar Ukba would put

four [zuz](#) into the poor man's door socket. One day, the poor man thought that he would try to find out who did him this kindness. That day Mar Ukba came home from the house of study with his wife. When the poor man saw them moving the door to make their donation, the poor man went to greet them, but they fled and ran into a furnace from which the fire had just been swept. They did so because, as [Mar Zutra bar Tobiah](#) said in the name of [Rav](#) (or others say Rav Huna bar Bizna said in the name of [Rabbi Simeon the Pious](#), and still others say Rabbi Johanan said in the name of Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai), it is better for a person to go into a fiery furnace than to shame a neighbor publicly. One can derive this from [Genesis 38:25](#), where [Tamar](#), who was subject to being burned for the adultery with which [Judah](#) had charged her, rather than publicly shame Judah with the facts of his complicity, sent Judah's possessions to him with the message, "By the man whose these are am I with child." ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 67b.](#))

Rabbi Johanan noted a similarity between the Hebrew verb "to break" and the name "Perez" (פֶּרֶץ) in [Genesis 38:29](#) and deduced that the name presaged that kings would descend from him, for a king breaks for himself a way. Rabbi Johanan also noted that the name "Zerah" (זֶרַח) in [Genesis 38:30](#) is related to the Hebrew root meaning "to shine" and deduced that the name presaged that important men would descend from him. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 76b.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 39

The [Tosefta](#) deduced from [Genesis 39:5](#) that before Joseph arrived, Potiphar's house had not received a blessing, and that it was because of Joseph's arrival that Potiphar's house was blessed thereafter. (Tosefta Sotah 10:8.)



Joseph and Potiphar's Wife (1649 painting by [Guercino](#) at the [National Gallery of Art](#))



Joseph and Potiphar's Wife (1631 painting by [Guido Reni](#))

Rav Hana (or some say Hanin) bar Bizna said in the name of Rabbi [Simeon the Pious](#) that because Joseph sanctified God's Name in private when he resisted Potiphar's wife's advances, one letter from God's Name was added to Joseph's name. Rabbi Johanan interpreted the words, "And it came to pass about this time, that he went into the house to do his work," in [Genesis 39:11](#) to teach that both Joseph and Potiphar's wife had the intention to act immorally. Rav and Samuel differed in their interpretation of the words "he went into the house to do his work." One said that it really means that Joseph went to do his household work, but the other said that Joseph went to satisfy his desires. Interpreting the words, "And there was none of the men of the house there within," in [Genesis 39:11](#), the Gemara asked whether it was possible that no man was present in a huge house

like Potiphar's. A [Baraita](#) was taught in the School of [Rabbi Ishmael](#) that the day was Potiphar's household's feast-day, and they had all gone to their idolatrous temple, but Potiphar's wife had pretended to be ill, because she thought that she would not again have an opportunity like that day to associate with Joseph. The Gemara taught that just at the moment reported in [Genesis 39:12](#) when "she caught him by his garment, saying: 'Lie with me,' Jacob's image came and appeared to Joseph through the window. Jacob told Joseph that Joseph and his brothers were destined to have their names inscribed upon the stones of the [ephod](#), and Jacob asked whether it was Joseph's wish to have his name expunged from the ephod and be called an associate of harlots, as [Proverbs 29:3](#) says, "He that keeps company with harlots wastes his substance." Immediately, in the words of [Genesis 49:24](#), "his bow abode in strength." Rabbi Johanan said in the name of Rabbi Meir that this means that his passion subsided. And then, in the words of [Genesis 49:24](#), "the arms of his hands were made active," meaning that he stuck his hands in the ground and his lust went out from between his fingernails. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 36b.](#))



Joseph Faithful in Prison (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

Rabbi Johanan said that he would sit at the gate of the bathhouse ([*mikvah*](#)), and when Jewish women came out they would look at him and have children as handsome as he was. The Rabbis asked him whether he was not afraid of the [evil eye](#) for being so boastful. He replied that the evil eye has no power over the descendants of Joseph, citing the words of [Genesis 49:22](#),

“Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine above the eye [*alei ayin*].”

Rabbi [Abbahu](#) taught that one should not read *alei ayin* (“by a fountain”), but *olei ayin* (“rising over the eye”). Rabbi Judah (or some say Jose) son of Rabbi Haninah deduced from the words “And let them [the descendants of Joseph] multiply like fishes [*ve-yidgu*] in the midst of the earth” in [Genesis 48:16](#) that just as fish (*dagim*) in the sea are covered by water and thus the evil eye has no power over them, so the evil eye has no power over the descendants of Joseph. Alternatively, the evil eye has no power

over the descendants of Joseph because the evil eye has no power over the eye that refused to enjoy what did not belong to it — Potiphar’s wife — as reported in [Genesis 39:7–12](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 20a](#); see also [Berakhot 55b](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) **Genesis chapter 40**

Rabbi [Samuel ben Nahman](#) taught that the Sages instituted the tradition that Jews drink four cups of wine at the [Passover seder](#) in allusion to the four cups mentioned in [Genesis 40:11–13](#), which says: “‘Pharaoh’s *cup* was in my hand; and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh’s *cup*, and I gave the *cup* into Pharaoh’s hand.’ And Joseph said to him: ‘This is the interpretation of it: . . . within yet three days shall Pharaoh lift up your head, and restore you to your office; and you shall give Pharaoh’s *cup* into his hand, after the former manner when you were his butler.’” (Genesis Rabbah 88:5.)

Rabbi Eleazar deduced from the report of [Genesis 40:16](#) that “the chief baker saw that the interpretation was correct” that each of them was shown his own dream and the interpretation of the other one's dream. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 55b](#).)



[Amos](#) (illustration by [Gustave Doré](#) from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are no [commandments](#) in the parshah. (Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#). [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 2 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:91. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Amos 2:6–3:8](#).

[\[edit\]](#) On Shabbat Hanukkah I

When [Hanukkah](#) begins on Shabbat, there are two Shabatot that occur during Hanukkah. In this case, Parshah Vayeshev occurs on the first day of Hanukkah (as it did in 2009) and the haftarah is [Zechariah 2:14–4:7](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah is cited or discussed in these sources:

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[Homer](#)

- [Homer](#). *The Iliad* [Book 6](#) ([Bellerophon](#) accused of rape); [Book 9](#) ([Phoenix](#) and father's concubine). Greece, 8th–6th century BCE.
- [Euripides](#). *Hippolytus* Athens, 428 BCE. ([Phaedra's](#) false accusation of rape).

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Deuteronomy 25:5–10](#) ([levirate marriage](#)).
- [2 Samuel 11:2–12:13](#) (admission of sexual sin); [13:18](#) (garment of many colors).
- [Jeremiah 31:14](#) (31:15 in NJPS) (refusal to be comforted for lost son of Rachel); [39:6–13](#) (thrown into a pit).
- [Daniel 2:1–49; 4:1–5:31](#) (interpreting dreams).



[Philo](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic

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- [Qur'an: 12:4–42](#). Arabia, 7th century.

[\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic

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[Talmud](#)

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 7b, 34b, 43b, 55a](#); [Shabbat 22a, 49b](#); [Pesachim 50a](#); [Yoma 35b](#); [Megillah 10b, 22b](#); [Chagigah 3a](#); [Yevamot 34b, 59a](#); [Ketubot 67b](#); [Nazir 23a, 23b](#); [Sotah 3b, 7b, 9a, 10a–11a, 13b, 36b, 43a](#); [Baba Kama 92a](#); [Baba Metzia 59a, 117a](#); [Baba Batra 109b, 123a](#); [Sanhedrin 6b, 19b, 52b, 102a, 106a](#); [Shevuot 16b](#); [Makkot 9a, 10a, 23b](#); [Avodah Zarah 5a, 36b](#); [Horayot 10b](#); [Zevachim 88b](#); [Chullin 92a, 113a](#); [Arachin 15b, 16a](#); [Niddah 8b, 13a–b, 28a](#). Babylonia, 6th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

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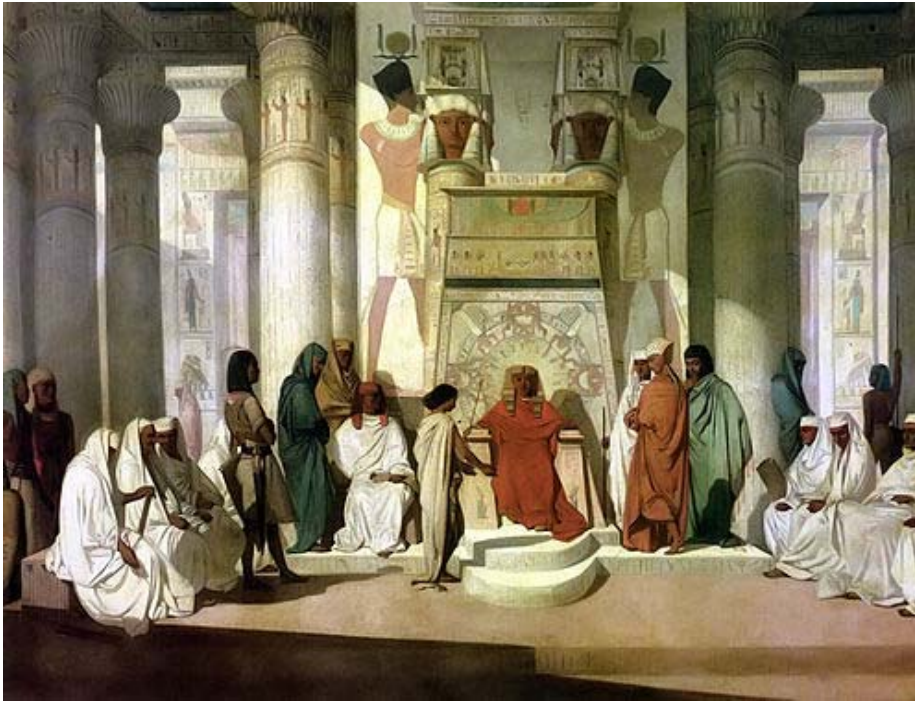
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Miketz or **Mikeitz** (מִקֵּץ — [Hebrew](#) for “at the end,” the second word — and first distinctive word — of the parshah) is the tenth [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#). It constitutes [Genesis 41:1–44:17](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it the tenth [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#). Generally, it is read on the Sabbath of [Chanukah](#). When Chanukah contains two Sabbaths, it is read on the second. In some years, however, Miketz is read on the Sabbath after Chanukah.



Joseph Interprets the Dream of Pharaoh (19th Century painting by Jean Adrien Guignet)

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dream (fresco circa 1816–1817 by [Peter von Cornelius](#))

[edit] Pharaoh's dream

[Pharaoh](#) dreamed that he stood by [the river](#), and out came seven fat cattle, who fed in the reed-grass. ([Genesis 41:1–2.](#)) And then seven lean cattle came up out of the river and ate the seven fat cattle, and Pharaoh awoke. ([Genesis 41:3–4.](#)) He went back to sleep and dreamed that seven good ears of corn came up on one stalk, and then seven thin ears sprung up after them and swallowed the good ears, and Pharaoh again awoke. ([Genesis 41:5–7.](#))

In the morning, Pharaoh was troubled and sent for all the [magicians](#) and wise men of [Egypt](#) and told them his dream, but none could interpret it. ([Genesis 41:8.](#)) Then the chief butler spoke up, confessing his faults and relating how Pharaoh had put him in prison with the baker, and a Hebrew there had interpreted their dreams, correctly predicting the future. ([Genesis 41:9–13.](#)) Pharaoh sent for [Joseph](#), who shaved, changed clothes, and came to Pharaoh. ([Genesis 41:14.](#)) Pharaoh told Joseph that he had had a dream that none could interpret and had heard that Joseph could interpret dreams, but Joseph said that [God](#) would give Pharaoh an answer of peace. ([Genesis 41:15–16.](#))

Pharaoh told Joseph his dreams, and Joseph told him that the two dreams were one, a prediction of what God was about to do. ([Genesis 41:17–25.](#)) The seven good cattle and the seven good ears symbolized seven years of plenty, and the seven lean cattle and the seven empty ears symbolized seven years of famine that would consume thereafter. ([Genesis 41:26–31.](#)) The dream was doubled because God had established the thing and would

shortly bring it to pass. ([Genesis 41:32.](#)) Joseph recommended that Pharaoh set over Egypt a man discreet and wise, that he appoint overseers to take up a fifth of the harvests during the years of plenty, and that he store that food for the years of famine. ([Genesis 41:33–36.](#)) Pharaoh told Joseph that inasmuch as God had shown him all this, there was none so discreet and wise as Joseph, and thus Pharaoh set Joseph over all the land of Egypt. ([Genesis 41:39–41.](#)) Pharaoh gave Joseph his [signet ring](#), fine linen, a gold chain about his neck, and his second chariot, and had people cry before him “Abrech.” ([Genesis 41:42–43.](#)) And Pharaoh renamed Joseph Zaphenath-paneah and gave him [Asenath](#) the daughter of [Potipherah](#) priest of [On](#) to be his wife. ([Genesis 41:44–45.](#))



Joseph in Egypt (painting circa 1517–1518 by [Pontormo](#))

[[edit](#)] Joseph the provider

Joseph was 30 years old when he stood before Pharaoh, and in the seven years of plenty he gathered up grain as plentiful as the sand of the sea. ([Genesis 41:46–49](#).) Joseph and Asenath had two sons, the first of whom Joseph called [Manasseh](#), for God had made him forget all his toil and all his father's house, and the second of whom he called [Ephraim](#), for God had made him fruitful in the land of his affliction. ([Genesis 41:50–52](#).) The

seven years of plenty ended and famine struck, and when Egypt was famished, Joseph opened the storehouses, and sold food to the Egyptians. ([Genesis 41:53–56](#).) People from all countries came to Egypt to buy grain, because the famine struck all the earth. ([Genesis 41:57](#).)

[edit] Joseph's brothers journey to Egypt

[Jacob](#) saw that there was grain in Egypt, asked his sons why they sat around looking at each other, and sent them down to Egypt to buy some. ([Genesis 42:1–2](#).) Ten of Joseph's brothers went down to Egypt, but Jacob kept [Benjamin](#) behind, so that no harm might befall him. ([Genesis 42:3–4](#).) Joseph's brothers came to buy grain from Joseph and bowed down to him with their faces to the earth. ([Genesis 42:5–6](#).) Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him, for he made himself strange to them and spoke roughly with them. ([Genesis 42:7–8](#).)

Joseph remembered his dreams, and accused them of being spies. ([Genesis 42:9](#).) But they protested that they were not spies, but upright men come to buy food, ten sons of a man who had twelve sons, lost one, and kept one behind. ([Genesis 42:10–13](#).) Joseph told them that to prove their story, they would have to send one of them to fetch their brother, and he imprisoned them for three days. ([Genesis 42:15–17](#).) On the third day, Joseph told them that because he feared God, he would allow them to prove themselves by letting one of them be bound in prison while the others carried grain to their houses and brought their youngest brother to Egypt. ([Genesis 42:18–20](#).) They said to one another

that surely they were guilty concerning their brother, and so now this distress had come upon them. ([Genesis 42:21.](#)) [Reuben](#) said that he had told them not to sin against their brother, but they had not listened. ([Genesis 42:22.](#)) They did not realize that Joseph understood them, for he used an interpreter, and Joseph turned aside and wept. ([Genesis 42:23–24.](#)) When Joseph returned, he bound [Simeon](#) before their eyes, and commanded that their vessels be filled with grain and that their money be restored to their sacks. ([Genesis 42:24–25.](#))



Jacob Refusing To Let Benjamin Go to Egypt (1829 painting by Adolphe Rogers)

They loaded their donkeys and departed. ([Genesis 42:26.](#)) When they came to a lodging-place, one of them opened his sack and found his money, and their spirits fell, wondering what God had done to them. ([Genesis 42:27–28.](#)) They went home and told Jacob all that had happened, and Jacob accused them of

bereaving him of his children, first Joseph and now Simeon, and told them that they would not take Benjamin away. ([Genesis 42:29–36.](#)) Reuben answered that Jacob could kill Reuben's two sons if Reuben failed to bring Benjamin back, but Jacob insisted that his son would not go down with them, for Joseph was dead and only he was left, and if harm befall Benjamin then it would be the death of Jacob. ([Genesis 42:37–38.](#))

The famine continued, and Jacob told the brothers to buy more grain. ([Genesis 43:1–2.](#)) But [Judah](#) reminded Jacob that the man had warned them that they could not see his face unless their brother came with them, so if Jacob sent their brother they could buy food, but if Jacob did not send him they could not go. ([Genesis 43:3–5.](#)) Jacob asked them why they had treated him so ill as to tell the man that they had a brother. ([Genesis 43:6.](#)) They explained that the man asked them directly about their kindred, whether their father was alive, and whether they had another brother, and they answered him; how were they to know that he would ask them to bring their brother down? ([Genesis 43:7.](#)) Judah then asked Jacob to send the lad with him, so that they could go and the family could live, and Judah would serve as surety for him, for they could have been to Egypt and back by then if they had not lingered. ([Genesis 43:8–10.](#)) Relenting, Jacob directed them to take a present for the man, double money in case the return of their payment was an oversight, and also their brother, and Jacob prayed that God might show them mercy before the man and that he might release Simeon and Benjamin to them. ([Genesis 43:11–14.](#))

[edit] The brothers return to Egypt

The brothers went to Joseph, and when he saw Benjamin with them, he directed his steward to bring the men into the house and prepare a meal for him to eat with them at noon. ([Genesis 43:15–16.](#)) When the brothers were conducted into Joseph's house, they grew afraid that Joseph was going to hold them as bondmen because they had taken the money that they found in their sacks. ([Genesis 43:17–18.](#)) So they explained to Joseph's steward how they had discovered their money returned to them and had brought it back with them, plus more money to buy grain. ([Genesis 43:19–22.](#)) But the steward told them not to fear, for their God had given them treasure in their sacks; he had their money. ([Genesis 43:23.](#)) The steward brought Simeon out to them, brought them into Joseph's house, gave them water, and fed their donkeys. ([Genesis 43:23–24.](#)) When Joseph came home, they brought their present and bowed down to him. ([Genesis 43:25–26.](#)) Joseph asked after their welfare and that of their father. ([Genesis 43:27.](#)) They said that Joseph's servant their father was well, and they bowed their heads. ([Genesis 43:28.](#)) Joseph looked upon Benjamin and asked them whether this was their youngest brother of whom they had spoken, and he prayed that God would be gracious to Benjamin. ([Genesis 43:29.](#)) Joseph left hastily for his chamber and wept, washed his face, returned, and called for the servants to serve the meal. ([Genesis 43:30–31.](#))



Joseph's Steward Finds the Cup in Benjamin's Sack (1627 painting by [Claes Corneliszoon Moeyaert](#))

Joseph sat by himself, the brothers sat by themselves, and the Egyptians sat by themselves, because it was an abomination to the Egyptians to eat with the Hebrews. ([Genesis 43:32.](#)) The brothers marveled that the servants had seated them according to their age. ([Genesis 43:33.](#)) And Benjamin's portion was five times so much as any of his brothers'. ([Genesis 43:34.](#))

Joseph directed the steward to fill the men's sacks with as much food as they could carry, put every man's money in his sack, and put Joseph's silver goblet in the youngest one's sack. ([Genesis 44:1-2.](#)) At dawn, the brothers were sent away, but when they

had not yet gone far from the city, Joseph directed his steward to overtake them and ask them why they had rewarded evil for good and taken the goblet with which Joseph drank and [divined](#). ([Genesis 44:3–6](#).) They asked the steward why he accused them, as they had brought back the money that they had found in their sacks, and they volunteered that the one with whom the goblet was found would die, and the brothers would become bondmen. ([Genesis 44:7–9](#).) The steward agreed, with the amendment that the one with whom it was found would be a bondman and the others would go free. ([Genesis 44:10](#).) Hastily, every man opened his sack, starting with the eldest, and they found the goblet in Benjamin's sack. ([Genesis 44:11–12](#).) They rent their clothes, loaded their donkeys, and returned to the city. ([Genesis 44:13](#).) Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house and fell before him on the ground. ([Genesis 44:14](#).) Joseph asked them what they had done, did they not know that a man such as he would divine? ([Genesis 44:15](#).) Judah asked how they could clear themselves when God had found out their iniquity; they were all Joseph's bondmen. ([Genesis 44:16](#).) But Joseph insisted that only the man in whose hand the goblet was found would be his bondman, and the others could go in peace to their father. ([Genesis 44:17](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-Biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 41

In [Genesis 41:15](#), Pharaoh told Joseph that Pharaoh had heard that Joseph could interpret dreams, and in [Genesis 41:16](#), Joseph replied: “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.” Similarly, in [Daniel 2:26](#), King [Nebuchadnezzar](#) asked [Daniel](#) whether Daniel could interpret dreams, and in [Daniel 2:27–28](#), Daniel replied: “The secret which the king has asked can neither wise men, enchanters, magicians, nor astrologers, declare to the king; but there is a God in heaven Who reveals secrets, and He has made known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the end of days.”

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 42

In [Genesis 44:19–23](#), Judah retells the events first told in [Genesis 42:7–20](#).

The Narrator in [Genesis 42](#)

Judah in [Genesis 44](#)

⁷And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange to them, and spoke roughly with them; and he said to them:

“From where do you come?” And

they said: “From the land of Canaan to buy food.” ⁸And Joseph

knew his brethren, but they did not know him. ⁹And Joseph

remembered the dreams that he dreamed of them, and said to them: “You are spies; to see the nakedness of the land you are

¹⁹My lord asked his servants, saying: “Have you a father, or a brother?”

come.” ¹⁰And they said to him: “No, my lord, but to buy food are your servants come. ¹¹We are all one man's sons; we are upright men; your servants are no spies.”

¹²And he said to them: “No, but to see the nakedness of the land you are come.”

¹³And they said: “We your servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.”

¹⁴And Joseph said to them: “That is it that I spoke to you, saying: You are spies. ¹⁵Hereby you shall be proved, as Pharaoh lives, you shall not go there, unless your youngest brother comes here.

¹⁶Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and you shall be bound, that your words may be proved, whether there be truth in you; or else, as Pharaoh lives, surely you are spies.” ¹⁷And he put them all together into ward three days. ¹⁸And Joseph said to them the third day. “This do, and live; for I fear God: ¹⁹if you are upright men, let one of your brethren be bound in your prison-house; but go, carry corn for the famine of your houses; ²⁰and bring your youngest brother to me; so shall your words be verified, and you shall not die.” And they did so.

²⁰And we said to my lord: “We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loves him.”

²¹And you said to your servants: “Bring him down to me, that I may set mine eyes upon him.” ²²And we said to my lord: “The lad cannot leave his father; for if he should leave his father, his father would die.” ²³And you said to your servants: “Except your youngest brother come down with you, you shall see my face no more.”

[\[edit\]](#) In early nonrabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 44

[Philo](#) observed that having attained authority and presented with the opportunity for revenge for the ill-treatment that he had received, Joseph nonetheless bore what happened with self-restraint and governed himself. ([On Joseph 28:166.](#))



Pharaoh's Dreams (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 41

The [Gemara](#) noted that the words “two years of days (שְׁנֵי יָמִים, *yamim*)” in [Genesis 41:1](#) means two years. ([Babylonian Talmud Nazir 5a.](#))

[Rabbi Johanan](#) taught that the wicked stand over their gods, as [Genesis 41:1](#) says, “And Pharaoh dreamed, and, behold, he stood over the river.” (The Egyptians worshiped the Nile as a god.) But

God stands over them, as [Genesis 28:13](#) says, “and, behold, the Lord stood over him.” (Thus, idolaters must stand over and protect their idols, but God protects God’s people.) ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 69:3.)



Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dream (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Reading in [Genesis 41:8](#) that Pharaoh “sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt . . . but there was none that could interpret them for Pharaoh, Rabbi Joshua of Siknin taught in Rabbi Levi's name that there were indeed interpreters of the dream, but their interpretations were unacceptable to Pharaoh (and thus “there were none . . . for Pharaoh”). For example, the magicians said that the seven good cows meant that Pharaoh would have seven daughters and the seven ill-favored cows meant that Pharaoh would bury seven daughters. They told Pharaoh that the seven full ears of corn meant that Pharaoh would conquer seven provinces and the seven thin ears meant that seven provinces

would revolt against him. Thus Rabbi Joshua concluded that the words of [Proverbs 14:6](#), “A scorner seeks wisdom, and finds it not,” applied to Pharaoh’s magicians, while the continuation of the verse, “But knowledge is easy for him who has discernment,” applied to Joseph. (Genesis Rabbah 89:6.)



Joseph Interprets Pharaoh’s Dream (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

[Rabbi Hiyya](#) bar Abba said in the name of Rabbi Johanan that God intervened to cause Pharaoh to be angry with his servants, the chief cupbearer and the baker, in order to fulfill the fate of a righteous man, Joseph, in [Genesis 41:12](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 13b](#).)

Rabbi Bana’ah argued that the import — and potential prophetic nature — of a dream on the waking world follows its interpretation. Rabbi Eleazar found Biblical support for the

proposition in the chief cupbearer's words about Joseph in [Genesis 41:13](#), "As he interpreted for us, so it came to pass." [Rava](#) added a qualification, concluding that a dream follows its interpretation only if the interpretation corresponds to the content of the dream, for the chief cupbearer said in [Genesis 41:12](#), "To each man according to his dream he did interpret." ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 55b](#).)

Rabbi [Joshua ben Levi](#) taught that those who dream of shaving should rise early and say the words of [Genesis 41:14](#), "And Joseph shaved himself and changed his clothes," to prevent thinking of Samson's less favorable encounter with the razor in [Judges 16:17](#), "If I am shaven, then my strength will go from me." ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 56b](#).)

Rabbi Levi used [Genesis 37:2](#), [41:46](#), and [45:6](#) to calculate that Joseph's dreams that his brothers would bow to him took 22 years to come true, and deduced that a person should thus wait for as much as 22 years for a positive dream's fulfillment. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 55b](#).)

[Resh Lakish](#) deduced from the words, "And to Joseph were born two sons before the year of famine came," in [Genesis 41:50](#) that Joseph did not have marital relations during the famine, and generalized that no man should. The Gemara qualified the injunction, however, teaching that childless people may have marital relations in years of famine. ([Babylonian Talmud Taanit 11a](#).) Similarly, reading [Genesis 41:50](#), "And unto Joseph were born two sons," Rabbi Muna and [Rav Huna](#) taught that this occurred before the famine came. ([Genesis Rabbah 31:12](#); [34:7](#).)



Joseph Is Ruler Over All Egypt (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

[Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba](#) taught in the name of Rabbi Johanan that when in [Genesis 41:44](#) Pharaoh conferred power on Joseph, Pharaoh's astrologers questioned whether Pharaoh would set in power over them a slave whom his master bought for 20 pieces of silver. Pharaoh replied to them that he discerned royal characteristics in Joseph. Pharaoh's astrologers said to Pharaoh that in that case, Joseph must be able to speak the 70 languages of the world. That night, the angel [Gabriel](#) came to teach Joseph the 70 languages, but Joseph could not learn them. Thereupon Gabriel added a letter from God's Name to Joseph's name, and Joseph was able to learn the languages, as [Psalm 81:6](#) reports, "He appointed it in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out over the land of Egypt, where I (Joseph) heard a language that I knew not." The next day, in whatever language Pharaoh spoke to

Joseph, Joseph was able to reply to Pharaoh. But when Joseph spoke to Pharaoh in Hebrew, Pharaoh did not understand what he said. So Pharaoh asked Joseph to teach it to him. Joseph tried to teach Pharaoh Hebrew, but Pharaoh could not learn it. Pharaoh asked Joseph to swear that he would not reveal his failing, and Joseph swore. Later, in [Genesis 50:5](#), when Joseph related to Pharaoh that Jacob had made Joseph swear to bury him in the Land of Israel, Pharaoh asked Joseph to seek to be released from the oath. But Joseph replied that in that case, he would also ask to be released from his oath to Pharaoh concerning Pharaoh's ignorance of languages. As a consequence, even though it was displeasing to Pharaoh, Pharaoh told Joseph in [Genesis 50:6](#), "Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear." ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 36b.](#))



The Glory of Joseph (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[Rav Judah](#) in the name of [Samuel](#) deduced from [Genesis 47:14](#) that Joseph gathered in and brought to Egypt all the gold and silver in the world. The Gemara noted that [Genesis 47:14](#) says: “And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan,” and thus spoke about the wealth of only Egypt and Canaan. The Gemara found support for the proposition that Joseph collected the wealth of other countries from [Genesis 41:57](#), which states: “And all the countries came to Egypt to Joseph to buy corn.” The Gemara deduced from the words “and they despoiled the Egyptians” in [Exodus 12:36](#) that when the Israelites left Egypt, they carried that wealth away with them. The Gemara then taught that the wealth lay in Israel until the time of King [Rehoboam](#), when King [Shishak](#) of Egypt seized it from Rehoboam, as [1 Kings 14:25–26](#) reports: “And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem; and he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house.” ([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 119a](#); see also [Avot of Rabbi Natan](#) 41.)

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 43

Rav Huna deduced from Judah’s commitment to Jacob with regard to Benjamin in [Genesis 43:9](#), “I will be surety for him; of my hand shall you require him,” that a guarantor becomes responsible for the debt that he has guaranteed. [Rav Hisda](#),

however, demurred, saying that Judah assumed an unconditional obligation to return Benjamin, for in [Genesis 42:37](#), Reuben promised, “Deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him back to you,” and Judah surely promised no less than Reuben.

([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 173b.](#))

Reading Judah’s contingent vow in [Genesis 43:8–9](#), “Send the lad with me . . . ; if I do not bring him to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever,” Rav Judah in the name of [Rav](#) deduced that a conditional exclusion, even if self-imposed, requires formal annulment. The Gemara told that all through the 40 years that the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, Judah’s bones were jolted about in their coffin until Moses asked God for mercy on Judah’s behalf and to annul Judah’s vow. ([Babylonian Talmud Makkot 11b.](#))

Rabbi [Samuel ben Nahman](#) taught that when Joseph saw Benjamin, his mind was immediately set at rest and he exclaimed in the words of [Genesis 43:29](#), “God be gracious to you, my son,” and ordered that they bring him near. Joseph then asked Benjamin whether he had a brother. Benjamin replied that he had a brother, but did not know where he had gone. Joseph asked Benjamin whether he had wife. Benjamin replied that he had a wife and ten sons. Joseph asked what their names were. Benjamin replied with their names, as listed in [Genesis 46:21](#), explaining that their names reflected Benjamin’s loss of Joseph. The name Bela signified that Benjamin’s brother was swallowed up (*nit-bala*) from him; Becher signified that he was a firstborn (*bechor*); Ashbel signified that he was taken away captive (*nishbab*); Gera signified

that he became a stranger (*ger*) in a strange country; Naaman signified that his actions were seemly (*na'im*) and pleasant (*ne'im-im*); Ehi signified that he indeed was “my brother” (*ahi*); Rosh signified that he was Benjamin’s superior (*rosh*); Muppim signified that he was exceedingly attractive (*yafeh ‘ad me’od*) in all matters; and Huppim signified that Benjamin did not see his marriage-canopy (*huppah*) and he did not see Benjamin’s; and Ard signified that he was like a rose-bloom (*ward*). (Genesis Rabbah 93:7.)

Rabbi Melai taught in the name of Rabbi Isaac of [Magdala](#) that from the day that Joseph departed from his brothers he abstained from wine, reading [Genesis 49:26](#) to report, “The blessings of your father . . . shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was a [nazirite](#) (since his departure) from his brethren.” Rabbi Jose ben [Haninah](#) taught that the brothers also abstained from wine after they departed from him, for [Genesis 43:34](#) reports, “And they drank, and were merry with him,” implying that they broke their abstention “with him.” But Rabbi Melai taught that the brothers did drink wine in moderation since their separation from Joseph, and only when reunited with Joseph did they drink to intoxication “with him.” ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 139a.](#))



The Cup Found (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[[edit](#)] [Genesis chapter 44](#)

A [midrash](#) told that when in [Genesis 44:12](#) the steward found Joseph's cup in Benjamin's belongings, his brothers beat Benjamin on his shoulders, calling him a thief and the son of a thief, and saying that he had shamed them as [Rachel](#) had shamed Jacob when she stole [Laban's](#) idols in [Genesis 31:19](#). And by virtue of receiving those unwarranted blows between his shoulders, Benjamin's descendants merited having the Divine Presence rest between his shoulders and the [Temple](#) rest in Jerusalem, as [Deuteronomy 33:12](#) reports, "He dwells between his shoulders" (Midrash [Tanhuma](#) Mikeitz 10.)



Joseph Converses with Judah, His Brother (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

A midrash asked who “took him, and cast him into the pit” in [Genesis 37:24](#), and replied that it was his brother [Simeon](#). And the midrash taught that Simeon was repaid when in [Genesis 42:24](#), Joseph took Simeon from among the brothers and had him bound before their eyes. (Genesis Rabbah 84:16.)

A [Tanna](#) taught that in [Genesis 45:24](#) Joseph told his brethren not to take big strides and bring the sun into the city. For a Master taught that big strides rob a person of one five-hundredth part of that person’s eyesight. And on bringing the sun into the city, Rav Judah said in the name of Rav that one should always leave a city by daylight and enter a city by daylight, as [Genesis 44:3](#) reports that Joseph delayed until daylight to send his brothers away. ([Babylonian Talmud Taanit 10b.](#))

[Rav Nahman bar Isaac](#) quoted Judah's words, "What shall we speak or how shall we clear ourselves (נִזְטָדָק, *niztadak*)," in [Genesis 44:16](#) as an example of where the Torah used an abbreviation. Rav Nahman bar Isaac read *niztadak* as an abbreviation for "We are honest (*nekonim*), righteous (*zaddikim*), pure (*tehorim*), submissive (*dakim*), and holy (*kedoshim*)."
([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 105a.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are no [commandments](#) in the parshah. (Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#). [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 2 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:91. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0873061799](#).)



Solomon and the Two Women (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)



The *Judgement of Solomon* (late 18th century painting by [Giuseppe Cades](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

[\[edit\]](#) Generally

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [1 Kings 3:15–4:1](#). It is the story of [King Solomon](#) and the two women, one with a dead baby and one with a live baby. Joseph's rule of Egypt "becomes a precursor to wise Solomon's reign." (Gregory Goswell. "The Hermeneutics of the Haftarat." *Tyndale Bulletin* 58 (2007), 89.) Goswell argues that "in both cases it is wisdom that equips a man to exercise authority."

[\[edit\]](#) On Shabbat Chanukah

When Parshah Miketz coincides with the first Sabbath of Chanukah (as it does in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016), the haftarah is [Zechariah 2:14–4:7](#). When Parshah Miketz coincides with the second Sabbath of Chanukah (as it did in 2009), the haftarah is [1 Kings 7:40–50](#). Additionally, when Parshah Miketz occurs on [Rosh Chodesh](#) (as it does in 2015), some congregations read additional verses in honor of the new month. (The month of [Tevet](#) always begins during Chanukah.)

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:



Gilgamesh Tablet

[\[edit\]](#) Ancient

- [Epic of Gilgamesh 6:92-113](#) Mesopotamia, 14th–11th century BCE. In, e.g., [James B. Pritchard](#), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 84-85. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. [ISBN 0691035032](#). (Bull of Heaven and seven years of famine).

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 31:32](#) (improvident oath).
- [Judges 11:30–31](#) (improvident oath).
- [Daniel 2:1–49; 4:1–5:31](#) (interpreting dreams).

[\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic



Josephus

- Philo the Epic Poet. *On Jerusalem*. Fragment 3. 3rd–2nd century BCE. Quoted in [Eusebius](#). [Preparation for the Gospel. 9:24:1](#). Translated by H. Attridge. In *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume 2: Expansions of the “Old Testament” and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic works*. Edited by [James H. Charlesworth](#), 783–84. New York: [Anchor Bible](#), 1985. [ISBN 0-385-18813-7](#). (Joseph in Egypt).
- [Josephus](#). [Antiquities 2:5:4–6:8](#). Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#). Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).

- [Joseph and Aseneth](#) 1st century BCE.–2nd century CE.
In, e.g., [James H. Charlesworth](#), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:177–247. New York: Doubleday, 1985.
[ISBN 0-385-18813-7](#).
- [Qur'an 12:43–79](#). Arabia, 7th century.

[edit] Classical rabbinic

- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Berakhot 4b, 60a, 75b; Kilayim 72b; Maaser Sheni 45a. Land of Israel, circa 400 CE.
Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 1–2, 5, 10. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2005–2009.
- [Genesis Rabbah](#) 89:1–92:9. Land of Israel, 5th century.
Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).



Talmud

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 55b, 56b](#); [Shabbat 105a, 139a](#); [Pesachim 2a, 7b](#); [Ta'anit 9a, 10b, 11a](#); [Megillah 13b](#);

[Yevamot 17b, 22a, 88a; Ketubot 27b, 30a; Nazir 5a; Sotah 13b; Bava Metzia 39a, 53b; Bava Batra 4a, 15a, 173b; Sanhedrin 63b, 92a, 112b; Makkot 11a, 11b, 19b; Chullin 85a, 91a, 95b.](#) Babylonia, 6th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

[[edit](#)] Medieval

- [Rashi](#). *Commentary*. [Genesis 41–44](#). [Troyes](#), France, late 11th century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 1:447–91. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1995. [ISBN 0-89906-026-9](#).
- [Judah Halevi](#). [Kuzari](#). [4:15](#). [Toledo](#), Spain, 1130–1140. Reprinted in, e.g., Jehuda Halevi. *Kuzari: An Argument for the Faith of Israel*. Intro. by Henry Slonimsky, 221. New York: Schocken, 1964. [ISBN 0-8052-0075-4](#).



Hobbes

- [Zohar](#) 1:25a, 145a, 175a, 183a, [193a–205a](#), 206a; 2:198a; 3:22b, 62b, 268a. Spain, late 13th century.

[\[edit\]](#) Modern

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Mann

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Vayigash

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Vayigash or **Vaigash** (וַיָּגַשׁ — [Hebrew](#) for “and he drew near” or “then he drew near,” the [first word](#) of the [parshah](#)) is the eleventh [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#). It constitutes [Genesis 44:18–47:27](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it the eleventh [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in December or January.

In the parshah, [Judah](#) makes a persuasive plea on behalf of his brother [Benjamin](#), [Joseph](#) reveals himself to his brothers, [Jacob](#) comes down to [Egypt](#), and Joseph’s administration of Egypt saves lives but transforms all the Egyptians into bondmen.



Joseph Recognized by His Brothers (1863 painting by Léon
Pierre Urbain Bourgeois)

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary

[\[edit\]](#) Judah's plea to Joseph

Judah approached Joseph, whom he likened to [Pharaoh](#), and recounted how Joseph had asked the brothers whether they had a father or brother, and they had told him that they had a father who was an old man, and a child of his old age who was a little one, whose brother was dead, who alone was left of his mother, and whose father loved him. ([Genesis 44:18–20.](#)) Judah recalled how Joseph had told the brothers to bring their younger brother down to [Egypt](#), they had told Joseph that the lad's leaving would kill his father, but Joseph had insisted. ([Genesis 44:21–23.](#)) Judah recalled how the brothers had told their father Joseph's words, and when their father had told them to go again to buy a little food, they had reminded him that they could not go down

without their youngest brother. ([Genesis 44:24–26.](#)) Judah recounted how their father had told them that his wife had born him two sons, one had gone out and was torn in pieces, and if they took the youngest and harm befell him, it would bring down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. ([Genesis 44:27–29.](#)) Judah explained to Joseph that if Judah were to come to his father without the lad, seeing that his father's soul was bound up with the lad's, then his father would die in sorrow. ([Genesis 44:30–31.](#)) And Judah told how he had become surety for the lad, and thus asked Joseph to allow him to remain a bondman to Joseph instead of the lad, for how could he go up to his father if the lad was not with him? ([Genesis 44:32–34.](#))



Joseph identified by his brothers (1789 painting by [Charles Thévenin](#))



Joseph Forgives His Brothers (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

[[edit](#)] Joseph reveals himself

Joseph could no longer control his emotions and ordered everyone but his brothers to leave the room. ([Genesis 45:1.](#)) He wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. ([Genesis 45:2.](#)) Joseph told his brothers that he was Joseph, and asked them whether his father was still alive, but his brothers were too frightened to answer him. ([Genesis 45:3.](#)) Joseph asked them to come near, told them that he was Joseph their brother whom they had sold into Egypt, but that they should not be grieved, for [God](#) had sent Joseph before them to preserve life.

([Genesis 45:4–5](#).) Joseph recounted how for two years there had been famine in the land, but there would be five more years without harvests. ([Genesis 45:6](#).) But God had sent him before them to save them alive for a great deliverance, so it was not they who sent him to Egypt, but God, who had made him ruler over all Egypt. ([Genesis 45:7–8](#).) Joseph thus directed them to go quickly to his father and convey that God had made him lord of all Egypt and his father should come down to live in the [land of Goshen](#) and Joseph would sustain him for the five years of famine. ([Genesis 45:9–11](#).) And Joseph and his brother Benjamin wept on each other's necks, Joseph kissed all his brothers and wept upon them, and after that, his brothers talked with him. ([Genesis 45:14–15](#).)

The report went through Pharaoh's house that Joseph's brothers had come, and it pleased Pharaoh. ([Genesis 45:16](#).) Pharaoh directed Joseph to tell his brothers to go to [Canaan](#) and bring their father and their households back to Egypt. ([Genesis 45:17–18](#).) Joseph gave his brothers wagons and provisions for the way, and to each man he gave a change of clothes, but to Benjamin he gave 300 [shekels](#) of silver and five changes of clothes. ([Genesis 45:21–22](#).) And Joseph sent his father ten donkeys laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten donkeys laden with food. ([Genesis 45:23](#).) So Joseph sent his brothers away, enjoining them not to fall out on the way. ([Genesis 45:24](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Jacob goes to Egypt

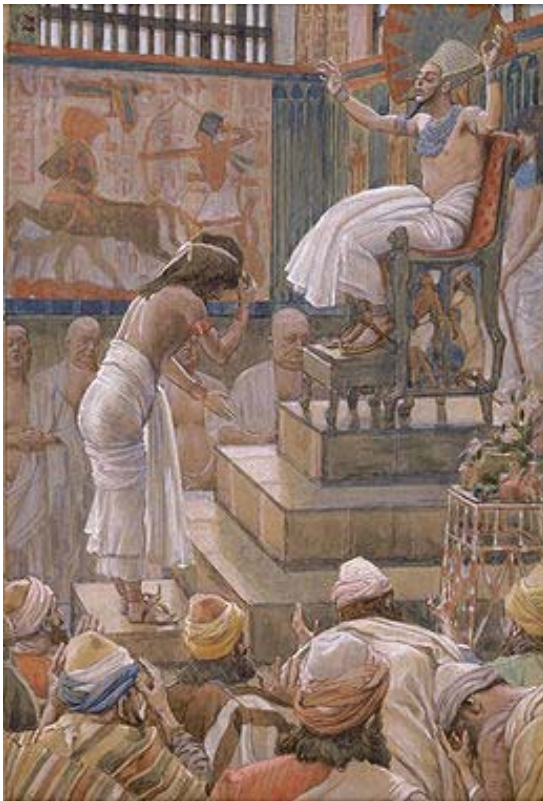


Jacob Comes Into Egypt (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

The brothers went to their father Jacob in Canaan and told him that Joseph was still alive and ruled over Egypt, but he did not believe them. ([Genesis 45:25–26.](#)) They told him what Joseph had said, and when Jacob saw the wagons that Joseph had sent, Jacob revived and said that he would go to see Joseph before he died. ([Genesis 45:27–28.](#))

Jacob journeyed to [Beersheba](#) with all that he had and offered [sacrifices](#) to God. ([Genesis 46:1.](#)) God spoke to Jacob in a dream, saying that Jacob should not fear to go to Egypt, for God would go with him, make a great nation of him, and also surely bring him back. ([Genesis 46:2–4.](#)) Jacob's sons carried him, their little

ones, and their wives in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent. ([Genesis 46:5.](#)) They took their [cattle](#) and their goods and came to Egypt, Jacob's entire family, 70 men in all, including Joseph and his two children. ([Genesis 46:6–27.](#)) Jacob sent Judah before him to show the way to Goshen. ([Genesis 46:28.](#)) Joseph went up to Goshen in his [chariot](#) to meet Jacob, and fell on his neck and wept. ([Genesis 46:29.](#)) Jacob told Joseph that now he could die, since he had seen Joseph's face. ([Genesis 46:30.](#))



Joseph and His Brethren Welcomed by Pharaoh (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

Joseph told his brothers that he would go tell Pharaoh that his brothers had come, that they kept cattle, and that they had brought their flocks, herds, and all their possessions. ([Genesis 46:31–32.](#)) Joseph instructed them that when Pharaoh asked them their occupation, they should say that they were keepers of cattle, for [shepherds](#) were an abomination to the Egyptians. ([Genesis 46:33–34.](#))

Joseph told Pharaoh that his family had arrived in the land of Goshen, and presented five of his brothers to Pharaoh. ([Genesis 47:1–2.](#)) Pharaoh asked the brothers what their occupation was, and they told Pharaoh that they were shepherds and asked to live in the land of Goshen. ([Genesis 47:3–4.](#)) Pharaoh told Joseph that his family could live in the best of the land, in Goshen, and if he knew any able men among them, then he could appoint them to watch over Pharaoh's cattle. ([Genesis 47:5–6.](#)) Joseph set Jacob before Pharaoh, and Jacob [blessed](#) Pharaoh. ([Genesis 47:7.](#)) Pharaoh asked Jacob how old he was, and Jacob answered that he was 130 years old and that few and evil had been the years of his life. ([Genesis 47:8–9.](#)) Jacob blessed Pharaoh and left. ([Genesis 47:10.](#))



Joseph Overseer of the Pharaoh's Granaries (1874 painting by [Lawrence Alma-Tadema](#))

Joseph placed his father and brothers in the [land of Rameses](#), as Pharaoh had commanded, and sustained them with bread while the famine became sore in the land. ([Genesis 47:11–13.](#))

Joseph gathered all the money in Egypt and Canaan selling grain and brought the money into Pharaoh's house. ([Genesis 47:14.](#))

When the Egyptians exhausted their money and asked Joseph for bread, Joseph sold them bread in exchange for all their animals.

([Genesis 47:15–17.](#)) When they had no more animals, they offered to sell their land to Joseph and become bondmen in exchange for bread. ([Genesis 47:18–19.](#)) So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh — except for that of the priests, who had a portion from Pharaoh — and in exchange for seed, Joseph made all the Egyptians bondmen. ([Genesis 47:20–23.](#)) At harvest time, Joseph collected for Pharaoh a fifth part of all the people harvested, and it continued as a statute in Egypt that Pharaoh

should have a fifth of all produced outside of the priests' land. ([Genesis 47:24–26](#).) And Israel lived in Egypt, in the land of Goshen, accumulated possessions, and was fruitful and multiplied. ([Genesis 47:27](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-Biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 44

In [Genesis 44:19–23](#), Judah retells the events first told in [Genesis 42:7–20](#).

The Narator in [Genesis 42](#)

⁷And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange to them, and spoke roughly with them; and he said to them: “From where do you come?” And they said: “From the land of Canaan to buy food.” ⁸And Joseph knew his brethren, but they did not know him. ⁹And Joseph remembered the dreams that he dreamed of them, and said to them: “You are spies; to see the nakedness of the land you are come.” ¹⁰And they said to him: “No, my lord, but to buy food are your servants come. ¹¹We are all one man's sons; we are upright men; your servants are no spies.” ¹²And he said to them: “No, but to see the nakedness of the land you are come.”

¹³And they said: “We your servants are twelve brethren, the sons of

Judah in [Genesis 44](#)

¹⁹My lord asked his servants, saying: “Have you a father, or a brother?”

²⁰And we said to my lord: “We have a father, an old

one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.”

man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loves him.”

¹⁴And Joseph said to them: “That is it that I spoke to you, saying: You are spies. ¹⁵Hereby you shall be proved, as Pharaoh lives, you shall not go there, unless your youngest brother comes here.

¹⁶Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and you shall be bound, that your words may be proved, whether there be truth in you; or else, as Pharaoh lives, surely you are spies.” ¹⁷And he put them all together into ward three days. ¹⁸And Joseph said to them the third day. “This do, and live; for I fear God: ¹⁹if you are upright men, let one of your brethren be bound in your prison-house; but go, carry corn for the famine of your houses; ²⁰and bring your youngest brother to me; so shall your words be verified, and you shall not die.” And they did so.

²¹And you said to your servants: “Bring him down to me, that I may set mine eyes upon him.” ²²And we said to my lord: “The lad cannot leave his father; for if he should leave his father, his father would die.” ²³And you said to your servants: “Except your youngest brother come down with you, you shall see my face no more.”

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 45

Joseph’s explanation in [Genesis 45:5](#) that God sent him to Egypt before his brothers to preserve life finds an echo in [Genesis 50:20](#), where Joseph told his brothers that they meant evil against him, but God meant it for good to save the lives of many people. Similarly, [Psalm 105:16–17](#) reports that God called a famine upon the land and sent Joseph before the children of Israel.

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 47

Jacob's blessing of Pharaoh in [Genesis 47:7](#) enacts the promise of [Genesis 12:3](#), [22:18](#), [26:4](#), and [28:14](#) that through Abraham's descendants would other families of the earth be blessed.

The report of [Genesis 47:27](#) that the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied finds an echo in [Exodus 1:7](#).

[\[edit\]](#) In early nonrabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 44

[Philo](#) observed that having attained authority and presented with the opportunity to avenge his brothers' ill-treatment of him, Joseph nonetheless bore what happened with self-restraint and governed himself. (*On Joseph* 28:166.)



Joseph Converses with Judah, His Brother (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

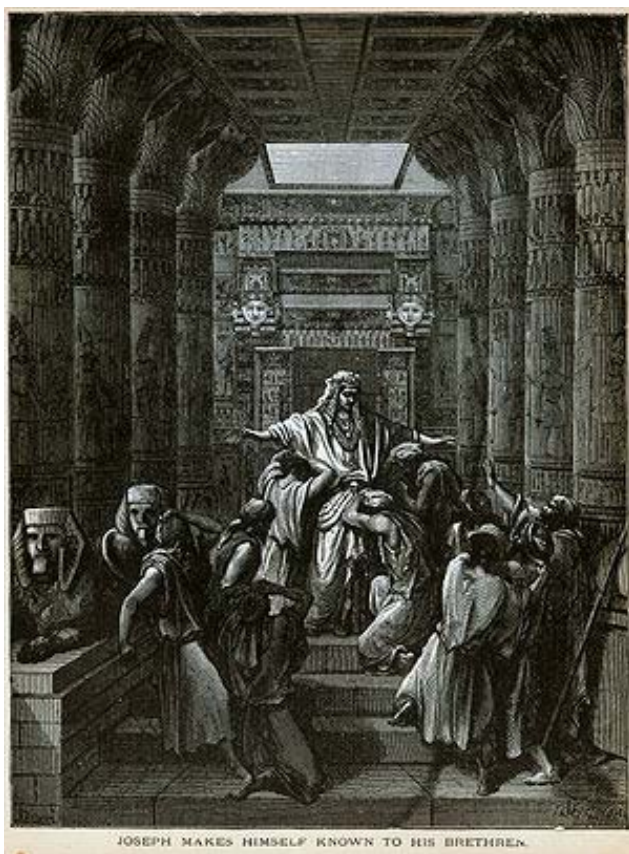
[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 44

Rabbi [Judah ben Ilai](#) taught that Scripture speaks in praise of Judah. Rabbi Judah noted that on three occasions, Scripture records that Judah spoke before his brethren, and they made him king over them (bowing to his authority): (1) in [Genesis 37:26](#), which reports, “Judah said to his brethren: ‘What profit is it if we slay our brother’”; (2) in [Genesis 44:14](#), which reports, “Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house”; and (3) in [Genesis 44:18](#), which reports, “Then Judah came near” to Joseph to argue for Benjamin. ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 84:17.)

A [midrash](#) taught that, as reported in the words “Judah came near to him” in [Genesis 44:18](#), Judah did not cease from answering Joseph word for word until he penetrated to his very heart. (Genesis Rabbah 93:4.) [Rabbi Judah](#) taught that in the words of [Genesis 44:18](#), “Judah came near” for battle, as in [2 Samuel 10:13](#), where it says: “So Joab and the people that were with him drew near to battle.” [Rabbi Nehemiah](#) said that “Judah came near” for conciliation, as in [Joshua 14:6](#), where it says that “the children of Judah drew near to [Joshua](#)” to conciliate him. The Rabbis said that coming near implies prayer, as in [1 Kings 18:36](#), where it says that “[Elijah](#) the prophet came near” to pray to God. Rabbi Leazar combined all these views, teaching that “Judah

came near to him” ready for battle, conciliation, or prayer. (Genesis Rabbah 93:6.) Rabbi Jeremiah ben Shemaiah taught that Judah exclaimed that he would only need to utter one word (*dabar*) and bring a plague (*deber*) upon the Egyptians. And Rav Hanan taught that Judah became angry, and the hairs of his chest pierced through his clothes and forced their way out, and he put iron bars into his mouth and ground them to powder. (Genesis Rabbah 93:6.)

[Rav Judah](#) asked in the name of [Rav](#) why Joseph referred to himself as “bones” during his lifetime (in [Genesis 50:25](#)), and explained that it was because he did not protect his father’s honor when in [Genesis 44:31](#) his brothers called Jacob “your servant our father” and Joseph failed to protest. And Rav Judah also said in the name of Rav (and others say that it was Rabbi Hama bar Hanina who said) that Joseph died before his brothers because he put on superior airs. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 13b.](#)) Similarly, a midrash taught that Joseph was referred to as “bones” during his lifetime (in [Genesis 50:25](#)) because when his brothers referred to his father as “your servant our father” in [Genesis 44:24](#), Joseph kept silent. And thus the midrash taught that the words of [Proverbs 29:23](#), “A man’s pride shall bring him low,” apply to Joseph, who in this encounter ostentatiously displayed his authority. ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 13:3.)



Joseph Makes Himself Known to His Brethren (engraving by [Gustave Doré](#) from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

Eliezer ben Matiah, Hananiah ben Kinai, [Simeon ben Azzai](#), and Simeon the Yemenite deduced from Judah's offer to remain instead of Benjamin in [Genesis 44:33](#) that Judah merited the kingship because of his humility. ([Tosefta](#) Berakhot 4:18.)



Joseph Reveals His Identity (painting circa 1816–1817 by [Peter von Cornelius](#))

[[edit](#)] Genesis chapter 45

Rabbi Hama bar Hanina and Rabbi [Samuel ben Nahmani](#) differed about how prudent it was for Joseph to clear the room in [Genesis 45:1](#). Rabbi Hama thought that Joseph acted imprudently, for one of them could have kicked him and killed him on the spot. But Rabbi Samuel said that Joseph acted rightly and prudently, for he knew the righteousness of his brethren and reasoned that it would not be right to suspect that they might commit bloodshed. (Genesis Rabbah 93:9.)

Rabbi Elazar wept whenever he read [Genesis 45:3](#), for if men became too frightened to answer a wronged brother, how much

more frightening will they find God's rebuke. ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 4b](#); Genesis Rabbah 93:10.)

A midrash taught that "Joseph said to his brethren: 'Come near to me'" in [Genesis 45:4](#) so that he might show them his circumcision to prove that he was their brother. (Genesis Rabbah 93:10.)

The Tosefta deduced from [Genesis 45:6](#) that before Jacob went down to Egypt there was famine there, but after he arrived, as [Genesis 47:23](#) reports, they sowed the land with seed. (Tosefta Sotah 10:9.)

Rabbi Levi used [Genesis 37:2](#), [41:46](#), and [45:6](#) to calculate that Joseph's dreams that his brothers would bow to him took 22 years to come true, and deduced that a person should thus wait for as much as 22 years for a positive dream's fulfillment.

([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 55b](#).) [Rav Huna](#) in the name of Rabbi Joshua used [Genesis 45:6](#) as a mnemonic for calculating what year it was in the Sabbatical cycle of seven years.

([Babylonian Talmud Avodah Zarah 9b](#).) The [Gemara](#) used [Genesis 45:6](#) to help calculate (among other things) that Jacob should have been 116 years old when he came to Egypt, but since [Genesis 47:8–9](#) indicated that Jacob was then 130 years old, the Gemara deduced that the text did not count 14 years that Jacob spent studying in the Academy of [Eber](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Megilah 16b–17a](#).)



Joseph Makes Himself Known to His Brethren (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

Rabbi Elazar interpreted Joseph's reference to Benjamin in [Genesis 45:12](#) to mean that just as Joseph bore no malice against his brother Benjamin (who had no part in selling Joseph to Egypt), so Joseph had no malice against his other brothers. And Rabbi Elazar interpreted Joseph's reference to his mouth in [Genesis 45:12](#) to mean that Joseph's words reflected what was in his heart. ([Babylonian Talmud Megilah 16b.](#)) A midrash

interpreted Joseph's reference to his mouth in [Genesis 45:12](#) to mean that Joseph asked them to note that he spoke in Hebrew. (Genesis Rabbah 93:10.)



Joseph Reveals Himself to His Brothers (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

Rabbi Elazar noted that [Genesis 45:14](#) uses the plural form of the word “necks” and asked how many necks Benjamin had. Rabbi Elazar deduced that Joseph wept on Benjamin’s neck for the two [Temples](#) that were destined to be in the territory of the [tribe of Benjamin](#) and be destroyed. And Rabbi Elazar deduced that Benjamin wept on Joseph’s neck for the tabernacle of [Shiloh](#) that was destined to be in the territory of the [tribe of Joseph](#) and be destroyed. ([Babylonian Talmud Megilah 16b](#); see also Genesis Rabbah 93:10.)

Examining [Genesis 45:22](#), the Gemara asked whether Joseph repeated his father’s mistake of favoring one sibling over the

others. ([Babylonian Talmud Megilah 16a–b.](#)) Rabbi Benjamin bar Japhet said that Joseph was hinting to Benjamin that one of his descendants, [Mordecai](#), would appear before a king in five royal garments, as [Esther 8:15](#) reports. ([Babylonian Talmud Megilah 16b.](#))

Rabbi Benjamin bar Japhet in the name of Rabbi Elazar deduced from [Genesis 45:23](#) that Joseph sent Jacob aged wine, which the Rabbi reported pleases the elderly. ([Babylonian Talmud Megilah 16b.](#)) But a midrash taught that the words “the good of the land of Egypt” in [Genesis 45:18](#) referred to split beans (which were highly prized). (Genesis Rabbah 94:2.)

A midrash told that when Joseph was young, he used to study Torah with Jacob. When Joseph’s brothers told Jacob in [Genesis 45:26](#) that Joseph was still alive, Jacob did not believe them, but he recalled the subject that Jacob and Joseph had been studying when they last studied together: the passage on the beheaded heifer (עֵגְלָה עֶרְוִפָּה, *egla arufa*) in [Deuteronomy 21:1–8](#). Jacob told the brothers that if Joseph gave them a sign of which subject Joseph and Jacob had last studied together, then Jacob would believe them. Joseph too had remembered what subject they had been studying, so (as [Genesis 45:21](#) reports) he sent Jacob wagons (עֵגְלוֹת, *agalot*) so that Jacob might know that the gift came from him. The midrash thus concluded that wherever Joseph went he studied the Torah, just as his forbears did, even though the Torah had not yet been given. (Genesis Rabbah 95:3.)

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 46

[Rav Nachman](#) taught that when Jacob “took his journey with all that he had, and came to [Beersheba](#)” in [Genesis 46:1](#), he went to cut down the cedars that [Genesis 21:33](#) reports his grandfather [Abraham](#) had planted there. (Genesis Rabbah 94:4.)

The [Sifra](#) cited [Genesis 22:11](#), [Genesis 46:2](#), [Exodus 3:4](#), and [1 Samuel 3:10](#) for the proposition that when God called the name of a prophet twice, God expressed affection and sought to provoke a response. (Sifra 1:4.)

Rabbi Hama bar Hanina cited [Genesis 46:4](#) to prove that one who sees a camel in a dream has been delivered from a death decreed by heaven. In Hebrew, the words in the verse *gam aloh* resemble the word for camel, *gamal*. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 56b.](#))

Rabbi Zadok noted that [Genesis 46:15](#) attributed sons to Leah but attributed the daughter Dinah to Jacob, and deduced that the verse thus supported the proposition that if the woman emits her egg first she will bear a son and if the man emits his semen first she will bear a girl. ([Babylonian Talmud Nidah 31a.](#))

Rabbi [Samuel ben Nahman](#) taught that Benjamin’s son’s names, as listed in [Genesis 46:21](#), reflected Benjamin’s loss of Joseph. The name Bela signified that Benjamin’s brother was swallowed up (*nit-bala*) from him; Becher signified that he was a firstborn (*bechor*); Ashbel signified that he was taken away captive (*nishbab*); Gera signified that he became a stranger (*ger*) in a strange country; Naaman signified that his actions were seemly (*na'im*) and

pleasant (*ne'im-im*); Ehi signified that he indeed was “my brother” (*ahi*); Rosh signified that he was Benjamin’s superior (*rosh*); Muppim signified that he was exceedingly attractive (*yafeh ‘ad me’od*) in all matters; and Huppim signified that Benjamin did not see his marriage-canopy (*huppah*) and he did not see Benjamin’s; and Ard signified that he was like a rose-bloom (*ward*). (Genesis Rabbah 93:7.)



Joseph Kisses Jacob (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)

[Abaye](#) cited the listing for Dan in [Genesis 46:23](#) to demonstrate that sometimes texts refer to “sons” in the plural when they mean a single son. But [Rava](#) suggested perhaps the word “Hushim” in [Genesis 46:23](#) was not a name but, as taught by the Academy of Hezekiah, the word “clusters” or “leaves,” thus signifying that Dan’s sons were as numerous as the leaves of a reed. Rava found, however, support in [Numbers 26:8](#) and [1 Chronicles 2:8](#) for the

proposition that sometimes texts refer to “sons” when they mean a single son. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 143b.](#))

Abba Halifa of Keruya asked Rabbi [Hiyya bar Abba](#) why [Genesis 46:27](#) reported that 70 people from Jacob’s household came to Egypt, while [Genesis 46:8–27](#) enumerated only 69 individuals. Rabbi Hiyya first argued that the Hebrew word *et* preceding Dinah in [Genesis 46:15](#) indicated that Dinah had a twin sister, and the twin brought the total to 70. But Abba Halifa responded that if that were so, then the parallel language of [Genesis 43:29](#) would indicate that Benjamin also had a twin sister. Rabbi Hiyya then revealed his real explanation, which he called “a precious pearl”: Rabbi Hama bar Hanina taught that the seventieth person was [Moses’](#) mother [Jochebed](#), who was conceived on the way from Canaan to Egypt and born as Jacob’s family passed between the city walls as they entered Egypt, for [Numbers 26:59](#) reported that Jochebed “was born to [Levi](#) in Egypt,” implying that her conception was not in Egypt. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 123b–24a](#); see also [119b–120a.](#))

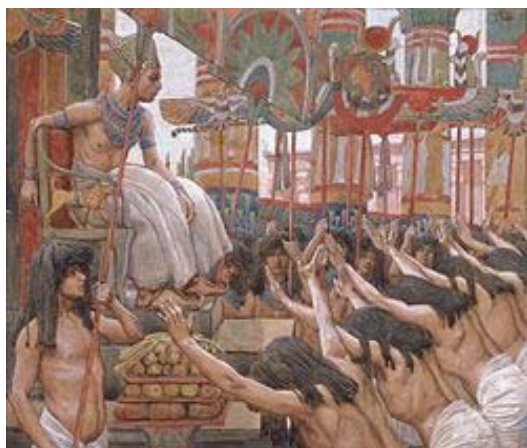
Rabbi Nehemiah read the words “to show” in [Genesis 46:28](#) as “to teach,” and thus inferred that Jacob sent Judah to prepare an academy for him in Egypt where he would teach Torah and where the brothers would read Torah. (Genesis Rabbah 95:3.)



Joseph Presents His Father and Brothers to the Pharaoh (1515 painting by [Francesco Granacci](#))

[[edit](#)] Genesis chapter 47

[Rabbi Jose](#) deduced from [Genesis 47:6](#) that the Egyptians befriended the Israelites only for their own benefit. Rabbi Jose noted, however, that the law of [Deuteronomy 23:8](#) nonetheless rewarded the Egyptians for their hospitality. Rabbi Jose concluded that if Providence thus rewarded one with mixed motives, Providence will reward even more one who selflessly shows hospitality to a scholar. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 63b.](#))



Joseph Dwells in Egypt (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Rav Judah in the name of [Samuel](#) deduced from [Genesis 47:14](#) that Joseph gathered in and brought to Egypt all the gold and silver in the world. The Gemara noted that [Genesis 47:14](#) says: “And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan,” and thus spoke about the wealth of only Egypt and Canaan. The Gemara found support for the proposition that Joseph collected the wealth of other countries from [Genesis 41:57](#), which states: “And all the countries came to Egypt to Joseph to buy corn.” The Gemara deduced from the words “and they despoiled the Egyptians” in [Exodus 12:36](#) that when the Israelites left Egypt, they carried that wealth away with them. The Gemara then taught that the wealth lay in Israel until the time of King [Rehoboam](#), when King [Shishak](#) of Egypt seized it from Rehoboam, as [1 Kings 14:25–26](#) reports: “And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam,

that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem; and he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house.” ([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 119a](#); see also [Avot of Rabbi Natan 41.](#))

The [Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael](#), the [Mekhilta of Rabbi Simeon](#), and the [Tanna Devei Eliyahu](#) praised Joseph, as [Genesis 47:14](#) reports that he “brought the money into Pharaoh's house” and did not steal any of it. (Mekhilta Beshallah 1; Mekhilta of Rabbi Simeon Beshallah 20:3; Tanna Devei Eliyahu Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah 24.)

[Resh Lakish](#) deduced from the words “and as for the [Egyptian] people, he [Joseph] removed them city by city” in [Genesis 47:21](#) that Joseph exiled the Egyptians from their home cities so that they could not later berate the Hebrews for being exiles. ([Babylonian Talmud Chullin 60b.](#))

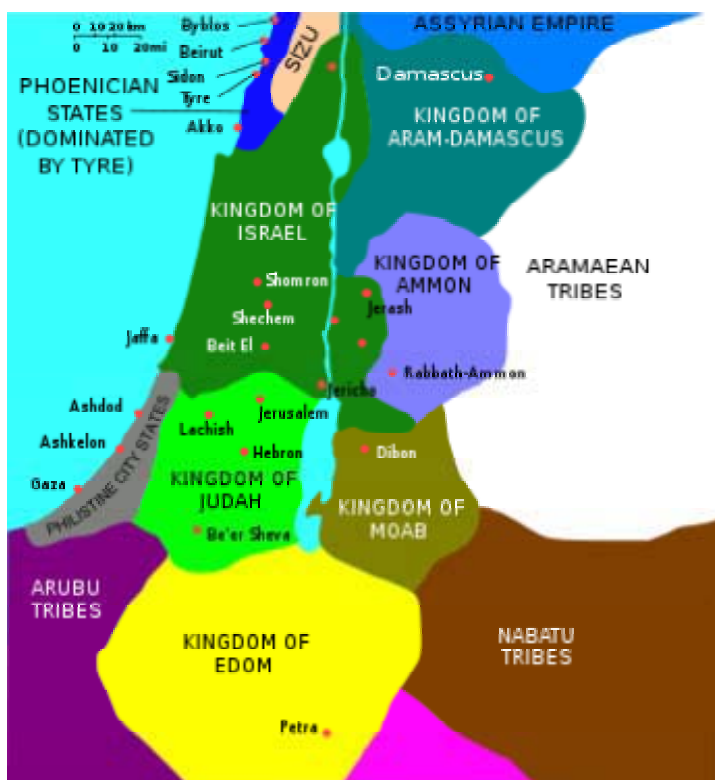
Rabbi Abba ben Kahana taught that Joseph inspired the Egyptians with a longing to be circumcised and convert to Judaism. Rabbi Samuel read the words “You have saved our lives” in [Genesis 47:26](#) to mean that Joseph had given them life both in this world and in the World to Come, through acceptance of Judaism. (Genesis Rabbah 90:6.)

[Rabbi Johanan](#) taught that wherever Scripture uses the term “And he abode” (וַיֵּשֶׁב, *vayeshhev*), as it does in [Genesis 47:27](#), it presages trouble. Thus in [Numbers 25:1](#), “And Israel abode in Shittim” is followed by “and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.” In [Genesis 37:1](#), “And

Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan,” is followed by [Genesis 37:3](#), “and Joseph brought to his father their evil report.” In [Genesis 47:27](#), “And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen,” is followed by [Genesis 47:29](#), “And the time drew near that Israel must die.” In [1 Kings 5:5](#), “And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree,” is followed by [1 Kings 11:14](#), “And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was the king’s seed in Edom.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 106a.](#))

[[edit](#)] Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are no [commandments](#) in the parshah. (Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#). [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 2 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:91. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9](#).)



[Kingdom of Judah](#) (light green) and [Kingdom of Israel](#) (dark green) circa 830 B.C.E.

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Ezekiel 37:15–28](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Summary

God’s word came to [Ezekiel](#), telling him to write on one stick “For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions,” to write on a second stick “For Joseph, the stick of [Ephraim](#), and of

all the house of Israel his companions,” and to join the two sticks together into one stick to hold in his hand. ([Ezekiel 37:15–17.](#)) When people would ask him what he meant by these sticks, he was to tell them that God said that God would take the stick of Joseph, which was in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his companions, and put them together with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick in God’s hand. ([Ezekiel 37:18–19.](#)) Ezekiel was to hold the sticks in his hand for people to see, telling them that God said that God would gather the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they had gone, bring them into their own land, and make them one nation with one king, no longer two nations with two kings. ([Ezekiel 37:20–22.](#)) No longer would they defile themselves with idols or transgressions, but God would save them and cleanse them, so that they would be God’s people, and God would be their God. ([Ezekiel 37:23.](#)) [David](#) would be king over them, and they would have one shepherd and observe God’s statutes. ([Ezekiel 37:24.](#)) They and their children, and their children’s children forever, would dwell in the land that God had given Jacob, where their fathers had dwelt, and David would be their prince forever. ([Ezekiel 37:25.](#)) God would make an everlasting covenant of peace with them, multiply them, and set God’s sanctuary in the midst of them forever. ([Ezekiel 37:26.](#)) God’s dwelling-place would be over them, God would be their God, and they would be God’s people. ([Ezekiel 37:27.](#)) And the nations would know that God sanctified Israel, when God’s sanctuary would be in their midst forever. ([Ezekiel 37:28.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Connection to the Parshah

The parshah and the haftarah both tell stories of the reconciliation of Jacob's progeny. The parshah and the haftarah both tell of the relationship of Judah and Joseph, in the parshah as individuals, and in the haftarah as representatives for the [Kingdom of Judah](#) and the [Kingdom of Israel](#).



A page from a 14th century German Haggadah

[\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy

The [Passover Haggadah](#), in the *magid* section of the [Seder](#), reports that Israel “went down to Egypt — forced to do so by the word [of God],” and some commentators explain that this statement refers to God’s reassurance to Jacob in [Genesis 46:3–4](#) to “fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of you a great nation. I will go down with you into Egypt.” (Joseph Tabory. *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and*

Commentary, 90. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. [ISBN 978-0-8276-0858-0](#).) Shortly thereafter, the Haggadah quotes [Genesis 47:4](#) for the proposition that Israel did not go down to Egypt to settle, but only to stay temporarily. (Tabory, at 90. Menachem Davis. *The Interlinear Haggadah: The Passover Haggadah, with an Interlinear Translation, Instructions and Comments*, 43. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005. [ISBN 1-57819-064-9](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Ancient

- [Inscription of Ameni](#). Egypt. 20th century BCE.
(response to famine).

[\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic



Philo

- [Ezekiel the Tragedian](#). *Exagōgē*. 2nd century BCE.
Translated by R.G. Robertson. In *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume 2: Expansions of the "Old Testament" and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers,*

Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic works.

Edited by [James H. Charlesworth](#), 808. New York:

[Anchor Bible](#), 1985. [ISBN 0-385-18813-7](#).

- [Philo](#). [Allegorical Interpretation](#) 3:62:177; [On the Birth of Abel and the Sacrifices Offered by Him and by His Brother Cain](#) 11:48; 12:51; [On the Posterity of Cain and His Exile](#) 9:29; [On Husbandry](#) 13:57; [On the Confusion of Tongues](#) 17:80; [On the Migration of Abraham](#) 5:21–22; 36:199; 37:203–04; [Who Is the Heir of Divine Things?](#) 51:251; [On the Change of Names](#) 31:171; 32:173–74; [On Dreams, That They Are God-Sent](#) 1:17:172; [On Joseph](#) 38–43. [Alexandria](#), Egypt, early 1st century CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [Charles Duke Yonge](#), 70, 100, 134, 179, 241, 255, 272–73, 298, 355–56, 380, 435–58. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1993. [ISBN 0-943575-93-1](#).



Josephus

- [Josephus](#). [Antiquities](#), [2:6:9–2:7:7](#). Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 63–65.

Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).

- [Qur'an 12:80–101](#). Arabia, 7th century.

[[edit](#)] Classical rabbinic

- [Tosefta](#) Berakhot 4:18; Sotah 10:9. Land of Israel, circa 300 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 27, 877. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).
- [Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael](#) Beshallah 1–2. Land of Israel, late 4th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Mekhilta According to Rabbi Ishmael*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:130, 136. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988. [ISBN 1-55540-237-2](#). And *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*. Translated by Jacob Z. Lauterbach, 1:122, 128. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1933, reissued 2004. [ISBN 0-8276-0678-8](#).
- [Mekhilta of Rabbi Simeon](#) Beshallah 20:3, 21:1. Land of Israel, 5th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai*. Translated by W. David Nelson, 83, 87. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2006. [ISBN 0-8276-0799-7](#).
- [Genesis Rabbah 39:12; 40:6; 55:8](#); 63:3; 79:1; 80:11; 82:4; 84:20; 89:9; 90:1, 6; 93:1–96. Land of Israel, 5th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis*. Translated by

H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).



Talmud

- [Leviticus Rabbah](#) 32:5. Land of Israel, 5th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 56b](#), [63b](#); [Pesachim 119a](#); [Beitzah 16a](#); [Megillah 16a–b](#); [Chagigah 4b](#); [Nazir 3a](#); [Baba Kama 92a](#) [Baba Batra 120a](#), [123a](#), [143b](#); [Avodah Zarah 9b](#); [Chullin 60b](#); [Nidah 31a](#). Babylonia, 6th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.
- [Esther Rabbah](#) 7:20.
- [Song of Songs Rabbah](#) 1:56; 4:25; 6:20.
- [Ruth Rabbah](#) 4:1.
- [Ecclesiastes Rabbah](#) 7:6, 33; 9:12.

[\[edit\]](#) Medieval

- [Avot of Rabbi Natan](#), 41. Circa 700–900 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*. Translated by Judah Goldin, 172. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1955. [ISBN 0-300-00497-4](#). *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan: An Analytical Translation and Explanation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 256. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986. [ISBN 1-55540-073-6](#).
- [Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 1:13. Land of Israel, 9th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Deuteronomy*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Exodus Rabbah](#) 3:3, 4, 8; 15:16; 18:8; 40:4. 10th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Deuteronomy*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).



Rashi

- [Tanna Devei Eliyahu](#). Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah 24. 10th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Tanna Debe Eliyyahu: The Lore of the School of Elijah*. Translated by William G. Braude and

Israel J. Kapstein, 285. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1981. [ISBN 0-8276-0634-6](#).

- [Rashi](#). *Commentary*. [Genesis 44–47](#). Troyes, France, late 11th century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 1:493–520. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1995. [ISBN 0-89906-026-9](#).
- [Numbers Rabbah](#) 3:8; 8:4; 12:2; 13:3, 20; 14:7, 8, 12; 19:3; 22:8. 12th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Numbers*. Translated by Judah J. Slotki. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Zohar](#) 1:93b, 119a, 149b, 153b, 180b, 197a, [205a–211b](#), 216b, 222a, 226a; 2:4b, 16b, 53a, 85a; 3:206a. Spain, late 13th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Zohar*. Translated by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon. 5 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1934.



Mann

[\[edit\]](#) Modern

- Irving Fineman. *Jacob, An Autobiographical Novel*. New York: Random House, 1941.
- [Thomas Mann](#). *Joseph and His Brothers*. Translated by [John E. Woods](#), 257, 274–75, 464, 541–42, 547, 568–69, 663, 668, 672, 717–18, 722, 758, 788, 792–94, 796–97, 803–04, 852–53, 859, 878, 881, 886, 923, 1373–447. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. [ISBN 1-4000-4001-9](#). Originally published as *Joseph und seine Brüder*. Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer Verlag, 1943.
- [Anne Frank](#). *The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition*. Edited by Otto H. Frank and Mirjam Pressler; translated by Susan Massotty, 107. New York: Doubleday, 1995. [ISBN 0-385-47378-8](#). Originally published as *Het Achterhuis*. The Netherlands, 1947. (“As the Benjamin of the Annex, I got more than I deserved.”)
- Donald A. Seybold. “Paradox and Symmetry in the Joseph Narrative.” In *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*. Edited by Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis, with James S. Ackerman & Thayer S. Warshaw, 59–73. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974. [ISBN 0-687-22131-5](#).



Kass

- [Aaron Wildavsky](#). *Assimilation versus Separation: Joseph the Administrator and the Politics of Religion in Biblical Israel*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1993. [ISBN 1-56000-081-3](#).
- [Leon R. Kass](#). *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis*, 593–615. New York: Free Press, 2003. [ISBN 0-7432-4299-8](#).
- Suzanne A. Brody. “Intense spotlight.” In *Dancing in the White Spaces: The Yearly Torah Cycle and More Poems*, 73. Shelbyville, Kentucky: Wasteland Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-60047-112-9](#).
- [Esther Jungreis](#). *Life Is a Test*, 247–51. Brooklyn: Shaar Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-4226-0609-0](#).
- Naomi Graetz. “From Joseph to Joseph.” [The Jerusalem Report](#). 20 (19) (Jan. 4, 2009): 45.

Vayechi

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

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Vayechi, **Vayehi**, or **Vayhi** (וַיְחִי — [Hebrew](#) for “and he lived,” the [first word](#) of the parshah) is the twelfth [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the last in the [Book of Genesis](#). It constitutes [Genesis 47:28–50:26](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it the twelfth [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in December or January.



Jacob, Ephraim, and Manasseh (17th century painting by
[Guercino](#))

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary

[\[edit\]](#) Burial in Canaan

[Jacob](#) lived in [Egypt](#) 17 years, and lived to be 147 years old. ([Genesis 47:28.](#)) When Jacob's death drew near, he called his son [Joseph](#) and asked him to put his hand under Jacob's thigh and swear not to bury him in Egypt, but to bury him with his father and grandfather. ([Genesis 47:29–30.](#)) Joseph agreed, but Jacob insisted that he swear to, and so he did, and Jacob bowed. ([Genesis 47:30–31.](#))



Jacob Blessing the Sons of Joseph (1656 painting by [Rembrandt](#))

[[edit](#)] The blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh

Later, when one told Joseph that his father was sick, Joseph took his sons [Manasseh](#) and [Ephraim](#) to see him. ([Genesis 48:1.](#)) Jacob sat up and told Joseph that [God](#) appeared to him at [Luz](#), blessed him, and told him that God would multiply his descendants and give them [that land](#) forever. ([Genesis 48:2–4.](#)) Jacob adopted Joseph's sons as his own and granted them inheritance with his own sons. ([Genesis 48:5–6.](#)) Jacob recalled how when he came from [Paddan](#), [Rachel](#) died on the way, and he buried her on the way to [Ephrath](#), near [Bethlehem](#). ([Genesis 48:7.](#)) Jacob saw Joseph's sons and asked who they were, and Joseph told him that they were the sons whom God had given him in Egypt, so Jacob asked Joseph to bring them near so that he might [bless](#) them. ([Genesis 48:8–9.](#))



Jacob Blessing Joseph's Sons (painting circa 1635 by Jan Victors)

Jacob's sight had dimmed with age, so Joseph brought his sons near, and Jacob kissed them and embraced them. ([Genesis 48:10.](#))

Jacob told Joseph that he had not thought to see his face, and now God had let him see his children, as well. ([Genesis 48:11.](#))

Joseph took them from between his knees, bowed deeply, and brought them to Jacob, with Ephraim in his right hand toward Jacob's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Jacob's right hand. ([Genesis 48:12–13.](#)) But Jacob laid his right hand on Ephraim, the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh, the firstborn, and prayed that God bless the lads, let Jacob's name be named in them, and let them grow into a multitude. ([Genesis 48:14–16.](#)) It displeased Joseph that Jacob laid his right hand on Ephraim, and he lifted Jacob's right hand to move it to Manasseh the firstborn, but Jacob refused, saying that Manasseh would also

become a great people, but his younger brother would be greater. ([Genesis 48:17–19.](#)) Jacob blessed them, saying [Israel](#) would bless by invoking God to make one like Ephraim and as Manasseh. ([Genesis 48:20.](#)) Jacob told Joseph that he was dying, but God would be with him and bring him back to the land of his fathers, and Jacob had given him a portion (*shechem*) above his brothers, which he took from the [Amorites](#) with his sword and bow. ([Genesis 48:21–22.](#))



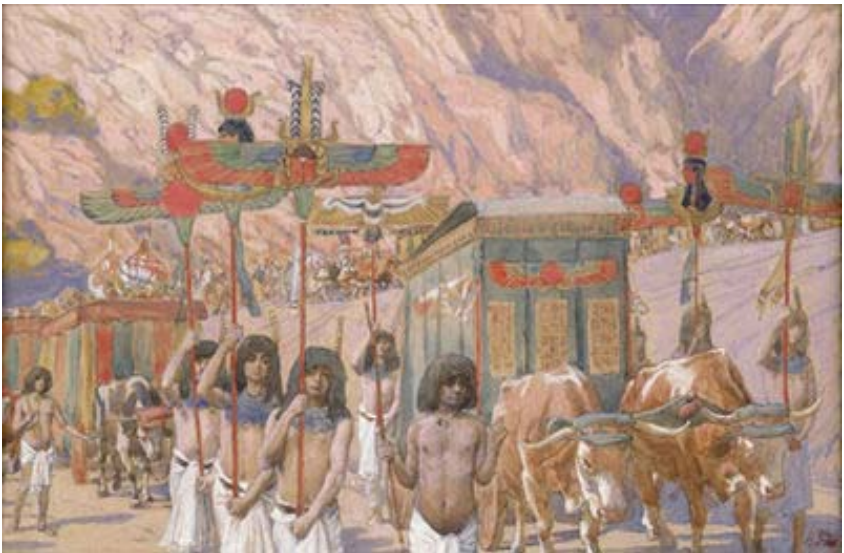
Jacob Blesses His Sons (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) Jacob's blessing

Jacob gathered his sons and asked them to listen to what would befall them in time. ([Genesis 49:1–2.](#)) Jacob called [Reuben](#) his firstborn, his might, and the first-fruits of his strength; unstable as water, he would not have the best because he defiled his father's bed. ([Genesis 49:3–4.](#)) Jacob called [Simeon](#) and [Levi](#) brothers in violence, prayed that his soul not come into their council — for in their anger they slew men and beasts — and cursed their descendants to be scattered throughout Israel. ([Genesis 49:5–7.](#)) Jacob called [Judah](#) a lion's whelp and told him that he would dominate his enemies, his brothers would bow before him, and his descendants would rule as long as men came to [Shiloh](#). ([Genesis 49:8–10.](#)) [Zebulun](#)'s descendants would dwell at the shore near [Sidon](#), and would work the ships. ([Genesis 49:13.](#)) Jacob called [Issachar](#) a large-boned donkey couching between the sheep-folds, he bowed his shoulder to work, and his descendants would dwell in a pleasant land. ([Genesis 49:14–15.](#)) Jacob called [Dan](#) a serpent in the road that bites the horse's heels, and he would judge his people. ([Genesis 49:16–17.](#)) Raiders would raid [Gad](#), but he would raid on their heels. ([Genesis 49:19.](#)) [Asher](#)'s bread would be the richest, and he would yield royal dainties. ([Genesis 49:20.](#)) Jacob called [Naphtali](#) a hind let loose, and he would give good words. ([Genesis 49:21.](#)) Jacob called Joseph a fruitful vine by a fountain whose branches ran over the

wall, archers shot at him, but his bow remained firm; Jacob blessed him with blessings of heaven above and the deep below, blessings of the breasts and womb, and mighty blessings on the head of the prince among his brethren. ([Genesis 49:22–26](#).) Jacob called [Benjamin](#) a ravenous wolf that devours its prey. ([Genesis 49:27](#).)

And Jacob charged his sons to bury him with his fathers in the [cave of Machpelah](#) that [Abraham](#) bought and where they buried Abraham and [Sarah](#), [Isaac](#) and [Rebekah](#), and where he buried [Leah](#). ([Genesis 49:29–32](#).) And then Jacob gathered his feet into his bed and died. ([Genesis 49:33](#).)



Jacob's Body Is Taken to Canaan (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

[\[edit\]](#) The burial of Jacob

Joseph kissed his father's face and wept. ([Genesis 50:1.](#)) Joseph commanded the physicians to [embalm](#) Jacob, and they did so over the next 40 days, and the Egyptians wept for Jacob 70 days. ([Genesis 50:2–3.](#)) Thereafter, Joseph asked Pharaoh's courtiers to tell Pharaoh that Jacob had made Joseph swear to bury him in the land of [Canaan](#) and ask that he might go up, bury his father, and return. ([Genesis 50:4–5.](#)) Pharaoh consented, and Joseph went up with all Pharaoh's court, Egypt's elders, [chariots](#), horsemen, and all Joseph's relatives, leaving only the little ones and the flocks and herds behind in the [land of Goshen](#). ([Genesis 50:6–9.](#)) At the threshing-floor of Atad, beyond the [Jordan River](#), they mourned for his father seven days, and the Canaanites remarked at how grievous the mourning was for the Egyptians, and thus the place was named [Abel-mizraim](#). ([Genesis 50:10–11.](#)) Jacob's sons carried out his command and buried him in the cave of Machpelah, and the funeral party returned to Egypt. ([Genesis 50:12–14.](#))





Burying the Body of Joseph (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

With Jacob's death, Joseph's brothers grew concerned that Joseph would repay them for the evil that they had done, and they sent Joseph a message that Jacob had commanded him to forgive them. ([Genesis 50:15–17.](#)) When the brothers spoke to Joseph, he wept, and his brothers fell down before him and declared that they were his bondmen. ([Genesis 50:17–18.](#)) Joseph told them not to fear, for he was not God, and even though they had intended him evil, God meant it for good, to save many people. ([Genesis 50:19–20.](#)) Joseph spoke kindly to them, comforted them, and committed to sustain them and their little ones. ([Genesis 50:21.](#))

[edit] The death of Joseph

Joseph lived 110 years, saw Ephraim's children of the third generation, and grandchildren of Manasseh were born on Joseph's knees. ([Genesis 50:22–23.](#)) Joseph told his brothers that he was dying, but God would surely remember them and bring them out of Egypt to the land that God had sworn to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ([Genesis 50:24.](#)) Joseph made the children of Israel swear to carry his bones to that land. ([Genesis 50:25.](#)) So Joseph died, and they embalmed him, and put him in a coffin in Egypt. ([Genesis 50:26.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis chapter 49

[Genesis 49:3–27](#), [Deuteronomy 33:6–25](#), and [Judges 5:14–18](#)

present parallel listings of the twelve tribes, presenting contrasting characterizations of their relative strengths:

Tribe	Genesis 49	Deuteronomy 33	Judges 5
Reuben	Jacob’s first-born, Jacob’s might, the first-fruits of Jacob’s strength, the excellency of dignity, the excellency of power; unstable as water, he would not have the excellency because he mounted his father's bed and defiled it	let him live and not die and become few in number	among their divisions were great resolves of heart; they sat among the sheepfolds to hear the piping for the flocks, and did not contribute; at their divisions was great soul-searching
Simeon	brother of Levi, weapons of violence were their kinship; let Jacob’s soul not come into their council, to their assembly, for in their anger they slew men, in their self-will they hewed	not mentioned	not mentioned

oxen; cursed was
their fierce anger
and their cruel
wrath, Jacob
would divide and
scatter them in
Israel

[Levi](#)

brother of
Simeon,
weapons of
violence were
their kinship; let
Jacob's soul not
come into their
council, to their
assembly, for in
their anger they
slew men, in
their self-will
they hewed
oxen; cursed was
their fierce anger
and their cruel
wrath, Jacob
would divide and
scatter them in
Israel

his [Thummim and Urim](#) would be with
God; God proved
him at [Massah](#), with
whom God strove at
the waters of
[Meribah](#); he did not
acknowledge his
father, mother,
brothers, or children;
observed God's
word, and would
keep God's covenant;
would teach Israel
God's law; would put
incense before God,
and whole burnt-
offerings on God's
altar; God bless his
substance, and accept
the work of his
hands; smite the loins
of his enemies

not mentioned

[Judah](#)

his brothers
would praise
him, his hand
would be on the
neck of his
enemies, his
father's sons
would bow
down before

God hear his voice,
and bring him in to
his people; his hands
would contend for
him, and God would
help against his
adversaries

not mentioned

him; a lion's
whelp, from the
prey he is gone
up, he stooped
down, he
couched as a lion
and a lioness,
who would
rouse him? the
scepter would
not depart from
him, nor the
ruler's staff from
between his feet,
as long as men
come to [Shiloh](#),
to him would
the obedience of
the peoples be;
binding his foal
to the vine and
his ass's colt to
the choice vine,
he washes his
garments in
wine, his eyes
would be red
with wine, and
his teeth white
with milk

[Zebulun](#)

would dwell at
the shore of the
sea, would be a
shore for ships,
his flank would
be upon [Zidon](#)

he would rejoice in
his going out, with
Issachar he would call
peoples to the
mountain; there they
would offer sacrifices
of righteousness, for
they would suck the
abundance of the

they that
handle the
marshal's staff;
jeopardized
their lives for
Israel

seas, and the hidden
treasures of the sand

[Issachar](#) a large-boned
ass, couching
down between
the sheep-folds,
he saw a good
resting-place and
the pleasant
land, he bowed
his shoulder to
bear and became
a servant under
task-work

he would rejoice in
his tents, with
Zebulun he would
call peoples to the
mountain; there they
would offer sacrifices
of righteousness, for
they would suck the
abundance of the
seas, and the hidden
treasures of the sand

their princes
were with
[Deborah](#)

[Dan](#) would judge his
people, would be
a serpent in the
way, a horned
snake in the
path, that bites
the horse's heels,
so that his rider
falls backward

a lion's whelp, that
leaps forth from
[Bashan](#)

sojourned by
the ships, and
did not
contribute

[Gad](#) a troop would
troop upon him,
but he would
troop upon their
heel

blessed be God Who
enlarges him; he
dwells as a lioness,
and tears the arm and
the crown of the
head; he chose a first
part for himself, for
there a portion of a
ruler was reserved;
and there came the
heads of the people,
he executed God's
righteousness and
ordinances with Israel

[Gilead](#) stayed
beyond the
[Jordan](#) and did
not contribute

[Asher](#) his bread would be fat, he would yield royal dainties

blessed above sons;
 let him be the favored dwelt at the
 of his brothers, and shore of the
 let him dip his foot in sea, abided by
 oil; iron and brass its bays, and
 would be his bars; did not
 and as his days, so contribute
 would his strength be

[Naphtali](#) a hind let loose, he gave goodly words

satisfied with favor,
 full with God's
 blessing, would
 possess the sea and
 the south

were upon the
 high places of
 the field of
 battle

[Joseph](#) a fruitful vine by a fountain, its branches run over the wall, the archers have dealt bitterly with him, shot at him, and hated him; his bow abode firm, and the arms of his hands were made supple by God, who would help and bless him with blessings of heaven above, the deep beneath, the breast and the womb; Jacob's blessings, mighty beyond the blessings of his ancestors, would

blessed of God was his land; for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep beneath, and for the precious things of the fruits of the sun, and for the precious things of the yield of the moons, for the tops of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the everlasting hills, and for the precious things of the earth and the fullness thereof, and the good will of God; the blessing would come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the crown of the head of him that is prince among his brothers;

out of
 Ephraim came
 they whose
 root is in
[Amalek](#)

be on his head,	his firstling bullock,
and on the	majesty was his; and
crown of the	his horns were the
head of the	horns of the wild-ox;
prince among his	with them he would
brothers	gore all the peoples to
	the ends of the earth;
	they were the ten
	thousands of
	Ephraim and the
	thousands of
	Manasseh

	a ravenous wolf,	God's beloved would	
	in the morning	dwell in safety by	
Benjamin	he devoured the	God; God covered	came after
	prey, at evening	him all the day, and	Ephraim
	he divided the	dwelt between his	
	spoil	shoulders	

Jacob's blessing of Reuben in [Genesis 49:4](#), depriving Reuben of the blessing of the firstborn, because he went up on Jacob's bed and defiled it, recalls the report of [Genesis 35:22](#) that Reuben lay with [Bilhah](#), Jacob's concubine, and Jacob heard of it.

[\[edit\]](#) **Genesis chapter 50**

When Joseph in [Genesis 50:20](#) told his brothers that they meant evil against him, but God meant it for good to save the lives of many people, he echoed his explanation in [Genesis 45:5](#) that God sent him to Egypt before his brothers to preserve life. Similarly, [Psalm 105:16–17](#) reports that God called a famine upon the land and sent Joseph before the children of Israel.

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis Chapter 47

[Rabbi Johanan](#) taught that trouble follows whenever Scripture employs the word *vayeishev*, meaning “and he settled.” Thus “Israel settled” in [Genesis 47:27](#) presaged trouble in the report of [Genesis 47:29](#) that Israel’s death drew near. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 106a.](#))

Karna deduced from [Genesis 47:30](#) that Jacob sought burial in Israel to ensure his resurrection. Karna reasoned that Jacob knew that he was an entirely righteous man, and that the dead outside Israel will also be resurrected, so Jacob must have troubled his sons to carry him to Canaan because he feared that he might be unworthy to travel through subterranean tunnels to the site of resurrection in Israel. Similarly, Rabbi Hanina explained that the same reason prompted Joseph to seek burial in Israel in [Genesis 50:25](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 111a](#); see also [Jerusalem Talmud Kilayim 81a.](#))

[Rav Judah](#) cited [Genesis 47:30](#) to support the proposition that gravediggers must remove surrounding earth when they rebury a body. Rav Judah interpreted the verse to mean “carry with me [earth] of Egypt.” ([Babylonian Talmud Nazir 65a.](#))

Rabbi Elazar read [Genesis 47:31](#) to report that Jacob bowed to Joseph because Joseph was in power. The [Gemara](#) read Jacob’s action to illustrate a saying then popular: “When the fox has its hour, bow down to it.” That is, even though one would ordinarily expect the lion to be the king of beasts, when the fox has its turn

to rule, one should bow to it as well. The Gemara thus viewed Joseph as the fox, to whom, in his day, even the senior Jacob bowed down. ([Babylonian Talmud Megilah 16b.](#))

A [midrash](#) read [Genesis 47:31](#) to teach that Jacob gave thanks for Leah, for [Genesis 47:31](#) says, “And Israel bowed down [in thanksgiving] for the bed's head,” and the midrash read Leah (as the first who bore Jacob children) to be the head of Jacob's bed. ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 71:2.)



Jacob Blesses Joseph's Sons (engraving by [Gerard Jollain](#) from the 1670 *La Sainte Bible*)



Jacob Is Blessing Joseph and His Sons (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis Chapter 48

Interpreting [Genesis 48:5–6](#), the Gemara examined the consequences of Jacob’s blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh. Rav Aha bar Jacob taught that a tribe that had an inheritance of land was called a “congregation,” but a tribe that had no possession was not a “congregation.” Thus Rav Aha bar Jacob taught that the [tribe of Levi](#) was not called a “congregation.” The Gemara questioned Rav Aha’s teaching, asking whether there would then be fewer than 12 tribes. [Abaye](#) replied quoting Jacob’s words in [Genesis 48:5](#): “Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, shall be mine.” But [Rava](#) interpreted the words “They shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance” in [Genesis 48:6](#) to show that Ephraim and Manasseh

were thereafter regarded as comparable to other tribes only in regard to their inheritance of the land, not in any other respect. The Gemara challenged Rava's interpretation, noting that [Numbers 2:18–21](#) mentions Ephraim and Manasseh separately as tribes in connection with their assembling around the camp by their banners. The Gemara replied to its own challenge by positing that their campings were like their possessions, in order to show respect to their banners. The Gemara persisted in arguing that Ephraim and Manasseh were treated separately by noting that they were also separated with regard to their princes. The Gemara responded that this was done in order to show honor to the princes and to avoid having to choose the prince of one tribe to rule over the other. [1 Kings 8:65](#) indicates that Solomon celebrated seven days of dedication of the [Temple in Jerusalem](#), and Moses celebrated twelve days of dedication of the [Tabernacle](#) instead of seven in order to show honor to the princes and to avoid having to choose the prince of one tribe over the other. ([Babylonian Talmud Horayot 6b.](#))

Rav Judah said in the name of Samuel that [Genesis 48:5](#), where grandchildren are equated with children, serves to remind the reader that cursing a husband's parents in the presence of the husband's children is just as bad as cursing them in the husband's presence. Rabbah said that an example of such a curse would be where a woman told her husband's son, "May a lion devour your grandfather." ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 72b.](#))

[Rav Papa](#) cited [Genesis 48:5](#) to demonstrate that the word "*noladim*," meaning "born," applies to lives already in being, not

just to children to be born in the future, as “*nolad*” appears to refer in [1 Kings 13:2](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 30b](#).)

A [Baraita](#) used [Genesis 48:6](#) to illustrate the effect of the law of [levirate marriage](#), where a brother marries his dead brother’s wife and raises a child in the dead brother’s name. Just as in [Genesis 48:6](#) Ephraim and Manasseh were to inherit from Jacob, so in levirate marriage the brother who marries his dead brother’s wife and their children thereafter were to inherit from the dead brother. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 24a](#).)

The Gemara noted that in [Genesis 48:7](#), Jacob exclaimed about Rachel’s death as a loss *to him*, supporting the proposition stated by a baraita that the death of a woman is felt by none so much as by her husband. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 22b](#).)



Jacob Blessing Ephraim and Manasseh (miniature on vellum from the early 14th century Golden [Haggadah](#), Catalonia)

Rabbi Johanan deduced from [Genesis 48:15–16](#) that sustenance is more difficult to achieve than redemption. Rabbi Johanan noted that in [Genesis 48:16](#) a mere angel sufficed to bring about redemption, whereas [Genesis 48:16](#) reported that God provided sustenance. ([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 118a.](#))

Rabbi Jose son of Rabbi Hanina deduced from [Genesis 48:16](#) that the descendants of Joseph did not have to fear the [evil eye](#). In [Genesis 48:16](#), Jacob blessed Joseph’s descendants to grow like fishes. Rabbi Jose son of Rabbi Hanina interpreted that just the eye cannot see fish in the sea that are covered by water, so the evil eye would have no power to reach Joseph’s descendants. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 118b.](#))

The Gemara read the reference in [Genesis 48:22](#) to “one portion above your brothers” to mean that like a firstborn son, Joseph received a double portion. Rav Papa asked Abaye whether perhaps Jacob merely gave Joseph an extra palm tree. Abaye answered that [Genesis 48:5](#) demonstrated that Jacob intended that Joseph would get two full portions “even as Reuben and Simeon.” [Rabbi Helbo](#) asked Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani why Jacob took the firstborn’s birthright from Reuben and gave it to Joseph. The Gemara answered by citing [Genesis 49:4](#) to show that Reuben lost the birthright when he defiled Jacob’s bed. The Gemara asked why Joseph benefited from Reuben’s disqualification. Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani responded with a parable of an orphan who was brought up by an adoptive father,

and when he became rich he chose to give to his adoptive father from his wealth. Similarly, because Joseph cared for Jacob, Jacob chose to give to Joseph. Rabbi Helbo challenged that reason, arguing instead that Rabbi Jonathan said that Rachel should have born the firstborn, as indicated by the naming of Joseph in [Genesis 37:2](#), and God restored the right of the firstborn to Rachel because of her modesty. And a baraita read the reference in [Genesis 48:22](#) to “my sword and . . . my bow” to mean Jacob’s spiritual weapons, interpreting “my sword” to mean prayer and “my bow” to mean supplication. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 123a](#).)

Rabbi Johanan said that he would sit at the gate of the bathhouse (*mikvah*), and when Jewish women came out they would look at him and have children as handsome as he was. The Rabbis asked him whether he was not afraid of the evil eye for being so boastful. He replied that the evil eye has no power over the descendants of Joseph, citing the words of [Genesis 49:22](#), “Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine above the eye (*alei ayin*).” Rabbi [Abbahu](#) taught that one should not read *alei ayin* (“by a fountain”), but *olei ayin* (“rising over the eye”). Rabbi Judah (or some say Jose) son of Rabbi [Hanina](#) deduced from the words “And let them (the descendants of Joseph) multiply like fishes (*ve-yidgu*) in the midst of the earth” in [Genesis 48:16](#) that just as fish (*dagim*) in the sea are covered by water and thus the evil eye has no power over them, so the evil eye has no power over the descendants of Joseph. Alternatively, the evil eye has no power over the descendants of Joseph because the evil eye has no power

over the eye that refused to enjoy what did not belong to it — [Potiphar](#)’s wife — as reported in [Genesis 39:7–12](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 20a](#); see also [Berakhot 55b](#).)



Jacob Blessing His Sons (miniature circa 1475–1480 by François Maitre from Augustine's *La Cité de Dieu*)

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis Chapter 49

The Gemara explained that when Jews recite the [Shema](#), they recite the words, “blessed be the name of God’s glorious Kingdom forever and ever,” quietly between the words, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one,” from [Deuteronomy](#)

[6:4](#), and the words, “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might,” from [Deuteronomy 6:5](#), for the reason that Rabbi [Simeon ben Lakish](#) expounded when he explained what happened in [Genesis 49:1](#). That verse reports, “And Jacob called to his sons, and said: ‘Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what will befall you in the end of days.’” According to Rabbi Simeon, Jacob wished to reveal to his sons what would happen in the end of the days, but just then, the [Shechinah](#) departed from him. So Jacob said that perhaps, Heaven forfend, he had fathered a son who was unworthy to hear the prophecy, just as [Abraham](#) had fathered [Ishmael](#) or [Isaac](#) had fathered [Esau](#). But his sons answered him (in the words of [Deuteronomy 6:4](#)), “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One,” explaining that just as there was only One in Jacob’s heart, so there was only One in their hearts. And Jacob replied, “Blessed be the name of God’s glorious Kingdom for ever and ever.” The Rabbis considered that Jews might recite “Blessed be the name of God’s glorious Kingdom for ever and ever” aloud, but rejected that option, as Moses did not say those words in [Deuteronomy 6:4–5](#). The Rabbis considered that Jews might not recite those words at all, but rejected that option, as Jacob did say the words. So the Rabbis ruled that Jews should recite the words quietly. Rabbi Isaac taught that the School of Rabbi Ammi said that one can compare this practice to that of a princess who smelled a spicy pudding. If she revealed her desire for the pudding, she would suffer disgrace; but if she concealed her desire, she would suffer deprivation. So her servants brought her pudding secretly. Rabbi

[Abbahu](#) taught that the Sages ruled that Jews should recite the words aloud, so as not to allow heretics to claim that Jews were adding improper words to the Shema. But in [Nehardea](#), where there were no heretics so far, they recited the words quietly. ([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 56a.](#))

The Gemara asked why [Numbers 16:1](#) did not trace [Korah's](#) genealogy back to Jacob, and Rabbi Samuel bar Isaac answered that Jacob had prayed not to be listed amongst Korah's ancestors in [Genesis 49:6](#), where it is written, “Let my soul not come into their council; unto their assembly let my glory not be united.” “Let my soul not come into their council” referred to the spies, and “unto their assembly let my glory not be united” referred to Korah’s assembly. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 109b.](#))



Jacob Blesses His Sons (engraving by Gerard Jollain from the 1670 *La Sainte Bible*)

Rabbi Levi considered the words “Zebulun[’s] . . . boundary shall be upon Zidon” in [Genesis 49:13](#) but since Sidon is in Asher’s territory, Rabbi Levi concluded that the verse alludes to Zebulun’s most distinguished descendent, [Jonah](#), and deduced that Jonah’s mother must have been from Sidon and the tribe of Asher. (Jerusalem Talmud Sukkah 28a.)

Rabbi Johanan taught that the words “and he lay with her that night” in [Genesis 30:16](#), in which the word *bu* appears in an

unusual locution, indicate that God assisted in causing Issachar's conception. Rabbi Johanan found in the words "Issachar is a large-boned donkey" in [Genesis 49:14](#) an indication that Jacob's donkey detoured to Leah's tent, helping to cause Issachar's birth. ([Babylonian Talmud Niddah 31a.](#))

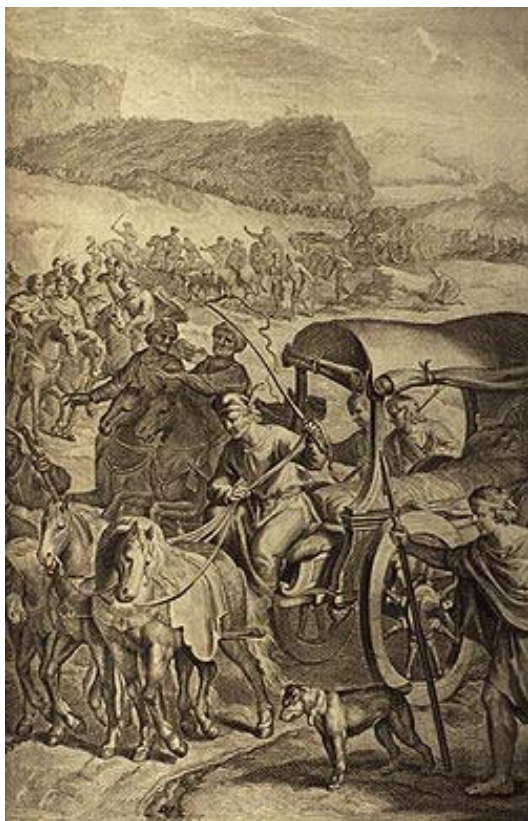
Rabbi Melai taught in the name of Rabbi Isaac of [Magdala](#) that from the day that Joseph departed from his brothers he abstained from wine, reading [Genesis 49:26](#) to report, "The blessings of your father . . . shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was a [nazirite](#) (since his departure) from his brethren." Rabbi Jose ben [Haninah](#) taught that the brothers also abstained from wine after they departed from him, for [Genesis 43:34](#) reports, "And they drank, and were merry with him," implying that they broke their abstention "with him." But Rabbi Melai taught that the brothers did drink wine in moderation since their separation from Joseph, and only when reunited with Joseph did they drink to intoxication "with him." ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 139a.](#))

The [Tosefta](#) interpreted [Genesis 49:27](#) to allude to produce yields of [Bethel](#) and [Jericho](#). The Tosefta interpreted "Benjamin is a wolf that pounces" to mean that the land of Benjamin, the area of Bethel, jumped to produce crops early in the growing season. The Tosefta interpreted "in the morning he devours the prey" to mean that in Jericho produce was gone from the fields early in the seventh year. And the Tosefta interpreted "and in the evening he divides the spoil" to mean that in Bethel produce remained in the fields until late in the seventh year. (Tosefta Sheviit 7:12.)

A Baraita taught that in all of Israel, there was no more rocky ground than that at Hebron, which is why the Patriarchs buried their dead there, as reported in [Genesis 49:31](#). Even so, the Baraita interpreted the words “and Hebron was built seven years before [Zoan](#) in [Egypt](#)” in [Numbers 13:22](#) to mean that Hebron was seven times as fertile as Zoan. The Baraita rejected the plain meaning of “built,” reasoning that [Ham](#) would not build a house for his younger son [Canaan](#) (in whose land was Hebron) before he built one for his elder son [Mizraim](#) (in whose land was Zoan, and [Genesis 10:6](#) lists (presumably in order of birth) “the sons of Ham: [Cush](#), and Mizraim, and [Put](#), and Canaan.” The Baraita also taught that among all the nations, there was none more fertile than Egypt, for [Genesis 13:10](#) says, “Like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt.” And there was no more fertile spot in Egypt than Zoan, where kings lived, for [Isaiah 30:4](#) says of [Pharaoh](#), “his princes are at Zoan.” But rocky Hebron was still seven times as fertile as lush Zoan. ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 112a](#).)

Rabbi Isaac taught in the name of Rabbi Johanan that Jacob did not die. ([Genesis 49:33](#) reports only that “he gathered up his feet into the bed, and expired, and was gathered unto his people.”) [Rav Nahman](#) objected that he must have died, for he was bewailed (as [Genesis 50:10](#) reports) and embalmed (as [Genesis 50:2](#) reports) and buried (as [Genesis 50:13](#) reports)! Rabbi Isaac replied that Rabbi Johanan derived his position that Jacob still lives from [Jeremiah 30:10](#), which says, “Therefore fear not, O Jacob, My servant, says the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel,

for, lo, I will save you from afar and your seed from the land of their captivity.” Rabbi Isaac explained that since [Jeremiah 30:10](#) likens Jacob to his descendants, then just as Jacobs descendants still live, so too must Jacob. ([Babylonian Talmud Taanit 5b.](#))



Jacob's Body Carried into Canaan To Be Buried (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) Genesis Chapter 50

[Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba](#) taught in the name of Rabbi Johanan that when in [Genesis 41:44](#) Pharaoh conferred power on Joseph, Pharaoh's astrologers questioned whether Pharaoh would set in power over them a slave whom his master bought for 20 pieces of silver. Pharaoh replied to them that he discerned royal characteristics in Joseph. Pharaoh's astrologers said to Pharaoh that in that case, Joseph must be able to speak the 70 languages of the world. That night, the angel [Gabriel](#) came to teach Joseph the 70 languages, but Joseph could not learn them. Thereupon Gabriel added a letter from God's Name to Joseph's name, and Joseph was able to learn the languages, as [Psalm 81:6](#) reports, "He appointed it in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out over the land of Egypt, where I (Joseph) heard a language that I knew not." The next day, in whatever language Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, Joseph was able to reply to Pharaoh. But when Joseph spoke to Pharaoh in Hebrew, Pharaoh did not understand what he said. So Pharaoh asked Joseph to teach it to him. Joseph tried to teach Pharaoh Hebrew, but Pharaoh could not learn it. Pharaoh asked Joseph to swear that he would not reveal his failing, and Joseph swore. Later, in [Genesis 50:5](#), when Joseph related to Pharaoh that Jacob had made Joseph swear to bury him in the Land of Israel, Pharaoh asked Joseph to seek to be released from the oath. But Joseph replied that in that case, he would also ask to be released from his oath to Pharaoh concerning Pharaoh's ignorance of languages. As a consequence, even though it was displeasing to Pharaoh, Pharaoh told Joseph in [Genesis 50:6](#), "Go

up and bury your father, as he made you swear.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 36b.](#))

The [Mishnah](#) cited [Genesis 50:7–9](#) for the proposition that Providence treats a person measure for measure as that person treats others. And so because, as [Genesis 50:7–9](#) relates, Joseph had the merit to bury his father and none of his brothers were greater than he was, so Joseph merited the greatest of Jews, [Moses](#), to attend to his bones, as reported in [Exodus 13:19](#). ([Mishnah Sotah 1:7–9.](#))



Joseph and His Brothers Carry Jacob Back into the Land of Canaan To Be Buried in the Cave where Abraham and Sarah Were Buried (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)

[Rav Hisda](#) deduced from the words “and he made a mourning for his father seven days” in [Genesis 50:10](#) that Biblical “mourning” means seven days. And thus Rav Hisda deduced from the words “And his soul mourns for itself” in [Job 14:22](#) that a person’s soul mourns for that person for seven whole days after death. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 152a.](#))

Rabbi Levi and Rabbi Isaac disagreed about how to interpret the words of [Genesis 50:15](#), “And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said: ‘It may be that Joseph will hate us.’” Rabbi Levi taught that the brothers feared this because he did not invite them to dine with him. [Rabbi Tanhuma](#) observed that Joseph’s motive was noble, for Joseph reasoned that formerly Jacob had placed Joseph above Judah, who was a king, and above Reuben, who was the firstborn, but after Jacob’s death, it would not be right for Joseph to sit above them. The brothers, however, did not understand it that way, but worried that Joseph hated them. Rabbi Isaac said that the brothers feared because he had gone and looked into the pit into which they had thrown him. (Genesis Rabbah 100:8.)

Rabban [Shimon ben Gamliel](#) read [Genesis 50:15–17](#) to report that Joseph’s brothers fabricated Jacob’s request that Joseph forgive them in order to preserve peace in the family. (Jerusalem Talmud Peah 8b.)

Rabbi Benjamin bar Japhet said in the name of Rabbi Elazar that [Genesis 50:18](#) bore out the popular saying: “When the fox has its hour, bow down to it.” But the Gemara questioned how Joseph was, like the fox relative to the lion, somehow inferior to his

brothers. Rather, the Gemara applied the saying to [Genesis 47:31](#), as discussed above. ([Babylonian Talmud Megilah 16b.](#))

[Rabbi Jose](#) deduced from Joseph's talk of providing in [Genesis 50:21](#) that when Jacob died, the famine returned. (Tosefta Sotah 10:9.)

Rav Judah asked in the name of [Rav](#) why Joseph referred to himself as “bones” during his lifetime (in [Genesis 50:25](#)), and explained that it was because he did not protect his father's honor when in [Genesis 44:31](#) his brothers called Jacob “your servant our father” and Joseph failed to protest. And Rav Judah also said in the name of Rav (and others say that it was Rabbi Hama bar Hanina who said) that Joseph died before his brothers because he put on superior airs. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 13b.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are no [commandments](#) in the parshAH (Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#). [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 2 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:91. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9](#).)



David's Dying Charge to Solomon (1643 painting by [Ferdinand Bol](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [1 Kings 2:1–12](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Connection to the Parshah

The parshah and haftarah both report the testaments of seminal leaders of Israel to their sons, the parshah of Jacob (in [Genesis 49](#)) and the haftarah of [David](#). Both the parshah and the haftarah precede the testament with the phrase “the time drew near that [the leader] must die.” ([Genesis 47:29](#); [1 Kings 2:1](#).) Both the parshah and the haftarah employ the word “*va-yetzav*,” “he instructed.” ([Genesis 47:29](#); [1 Kings 2:1](#).) A midrash notes that both the parshah and the haftarah use language reflecting the leader’s diminution of authority: the parshah reports Jacob

entreating his son, “If now I have found favor in your sight . . . I [pray thee](#)” ([Genesis 47:29](#)); the haftarah describes David simply as “David” (in [1 Kings 2:1](#)) instead of the title of honor “King David” used a chapter before (in [1 Kings 1:1](#)). (Midrash Tanchuma Vayechi 2.) In both the parshah and the haftarah, the leaders brought up unpleasant slights that haunted them to their last days: Jacob brought up that his son Rueben defiled Jacob’s bed ([Genesis 49:4](#)) and that his sons Simeon and Levi slew men and beast in their anger ([Genesis 49:5–6](#)); David brought up that his nephew [Joab](#) killed [Abner](#) and [Amasa](#) ([1 Kings 2:5](#)) and that Shemei insulted David on the way to [Mahanaim](#). ([1 Kings 2:8](#).) In so doing, both leaders complained of subordinate family members who acted too zealously on what others might have viewed as the leader’s behalf: Jacob with regard to Simeon and Levi ([Genesis 49:5–6](#)) and David with regard to Joab. ([1 Kings 2:5](#).)

[[edit](#)] In the liturgy

Many Jews recite [Genesis 48:16](#) and [49:18](#) three times as part of the [Tefilat HaDerech](#) (Wayfarer’s Prayer), said on setting out on a journey. (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for Weekdays with an Interlinear Translation*, 311–13. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-686-8](#).)

[[edit](#)] The Weekly Maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), [Sephardi Jews](#) each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week’s parshah. For

Parshah Vayechi, Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Hijaz, the maqam that expresses mourning and sadness. This maqam is appropriate in this parshah because it is the parshah that contains the death of the patriarch Jacob.

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Deuteronomy 33:1–29](#) ([Moses](#)'s blessing).



Homer

- [Judges 5:1–31](#) ([Deborah](#)'s song).
- [1 Kings 2:1–12](#) (David's testament).
- [Jeremiah 31:8](#) (31:9 in NJPS) (Ephraim as firstborn).

[\[edit\]](#) Ancient

- [Homer](#). *The Iliad* [Book 9](#). Greece, 8th–6th century BCE. ([Phoenix](#)'s father curses Phoenix for sleeping with his concubine).



Philo

[[edit](#)] Early nonrabbinic

- [Philo](#). [Allegorical Interpretation, I](#) 26:80; [Allegorical Interpretation, II](#) 24:94, 26:103; [Allegorical Interpretation, III](#) 8:26, 30:90–93, 62:177–81; [On the Birth of Abel and the Sacrifices Offered by Him and by His Brother Cain](#) 2:5; [On the Migration of Abraham](#) 5:22, 29:159–161; [On Dreams](#) 2:15:107–108; [On Joseph](#) 42:255–44:270. Alexandria, Egypt, early 1st century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [Charles Duke Yonge](#), 34, 48–49, 53, 60, 70–71, 94, 171, 182, 185, 228–29, 233, 250, 254–55, 268–69, 273, 275, 299, 327, 344, 349, 395, 456–58. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1993. [ISBN 0-943575-93-1](#).
- [Hebrews 11:21-22](#). Late 1st century.



Josephus

- [Josephus. *Antiquities* 2:7:5–2:8:2.](#) Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 64–66. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).
- [Qur'an 2:133](#) (Jacob's parting words); [12:94–101](#) (Jacob, Joseph, and his brothers). Arabia, 7th century.

[edit] Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah Sotah 1:7–9.](#) Land of Israel, circa 200 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 449. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Tosefta](#): Sheviit 7:12; Sotah 10:9. Land of Israel, circa 300 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 242, 877. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).
- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Peah 8b; Kilayim 80a, 81a; Sukkah 28a. Land of Israel, circa 400 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 3, 5, 13. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006–2009.
- [Genesis Rabbah 6:4, 9; 12:2; 20:9; 30:10; 37:7; 39:12; 40:6; 47:5;](#) 65:9; 66:4; 70:7; 71:2, 7; 72:5; 75:12; 78:10;

80:6, 10; 82:4–5, 10; 87:7; 90:4, 6; 93:7; 95:1; 96:1–100:13;
 105. Land of Israel, 5th century. Reprinted in, e.g.,
Midrash Rabbah: Genesis. Translated by H. Freedman and
 Maurice Simon, Vol. 1: 44, 48, 89, 168, 238, 300, 402;
 vol. 2: 585, 603, 640, 653, 658, 665, 698, 722, 739, 743,
 754–56, 777, 812, 830–31, 863, 866, 881, 885–1003.
 London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).

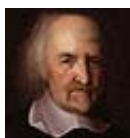


Talmud

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 20a, 55b, 57a](#); [Shabbat 55b, 139a, 152a](#); [Eruvin 53a](#); [Pesachim 4a, 56a, 118a](#); [Yoma 52b, 87a](#); [Sukkah 25a](#); [Rosh Hashanah 26a](#); [Megilah 16b](#); [Chagigah 3b](#); [Yevamot 24a, 65b, 76a](#); [Ketubot 72b, 111a–12a](#); [Nedarim 20b, 30b](#); [Nazir 65a](#); [Sotah 9b–10a, 11b, 13a–b, 36b](#); [Kiddushin 2a](#); [Bava Kamma 17a, 92a, 113b](#); [Bava Metzia 84a](#); [Bava Batra 118a–b, 123a](#); [Sanhedrin 5a, 22a, 95a, 98b, 105a, 106a, 109b](#); [Avodah Zarah 11b, 25a](#); [Horayot 5b, 6b, 11b](#); [Zevachim 53b, 54b, 118b](#); [Menachot 37a, 93b](#); [Chullin 92a](#); [Niddah 36b](#). Babylonia, 6th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

[\[edit\]](#) Medieval

- [Rashi](#). *Commentary*. [Genesis 47–50](#). [Troyes](#), France, late 11th century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 1:521–70. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1995. [ISBN 0-89906-026-9](#).
- [Nahmanides](#). *The Disputation at Barcelona*, 11-18. Spain, 1263. Reprinted in, e.g., Nahmanides. *The Disputation at Barcelona*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 6–10. New York: Shilo Publishing, 1983. [ISBN 088328-025-6](#).



Hobbes

- [Zohar 1:216a–51a](#). Spain, late 13th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Zohar*. Translated by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon. 5 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1934.

[\[edit\]](#) Modern

- [Thomas Hobbes](#). *Leviathan*, [3:42](#). England, 1651. Reprint edited by [C. B. Macpherson](#), 572. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1982. [ISBN 0140431950](#).
*[Abraham Isaac Kook](#). *The Lights of Penitence*, 16:1. 1925.

Reprinted in *Abraham Isaac Kook: the Lights of Penitence, the Moral Principles, Lights of Holiness, Essays, Letters, and Poems*.

Translated by [Ben Zion Bokser](#), 119. Mahwah, N.J.:

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Mann

- [Thomas Mann](#). *Joseph and His Brothers*. Translated by [John E. Woods](#), 53, 102–03, 257, 306, 314, 396, 401, 407, 448–49, 456, 458, 463, 485, 493, 503, 541–42, 547, 568–69, 663, 668, 672, 717–18, 722, 758, 788, 792–94, 796–97, 803–04, 852–53, 859, 878, 881, 886, 923, 1447–92. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. [ISBN 1-4000-4001-9](#). Originally published as *Joseph und seine Brüder*. Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer Verlag, 1943.
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- R. David Freedman. “‘Put Your Hand Under My Thigh’—The Patriarchal Oath.” [*Biblical Archaeology Review*](#) 2 (2) (June 1976).
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- Suzanne A. Brody. “Children’s Blessing.” In *Dancing in the White Spaces: The Yearly Torah Cycle and More Poems*, 74. Shelbyville, Kentucky: Wasteland Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-60047-112-9](#).
- [Esther Jungreis](#). *Life Is a Test*, 85–86, 197–99, 204–05, 250–51. Brooklyn: Shaar Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-4226-0609-0](#).

[\[edit\]](#) External links

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- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
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