

Chapter Eighteen

Vs. 1: And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day.

Compare with 17.1, "...the Lord *appeared* to Abram:" two uses of the verb *ra'ah*, also 12.7. Note the phrasing; God does not simply "appear" but appears "to him" which intimates a mysterious connection between the two.

"Oaks ('elon) of Mamre:" cf. 12.6 and 13.18. In the first reference, God promises to give the land of Canaan to Abram; in the second, he builds an altar to the Lord. I.e., Abraham was familiar with this location, so God's appearance may have taken place in the context of a sacrifice or the altar he had built at Mamre.

Note the connection between this appearance and Abraham's sitting at the entrance to his tent, possibly to cool himself. This appearance is unusual by reason of not occurring at night, morning nor during the evening; it happens at the least inauspicious time or during the hottest time of day.

Vs. 2: Abraham makes three gestures perhaps due to the heat of the day: lifts up his eyes, *looks* (*ra'ah*) and *beholds* (*hineh*). Often *hineh* is used to get one's attention (cf. 16.11) followed by a seeing or some kind of communication. Again, the unexpected arrival of visitors can be viewed as arousing Abraham from a slumber at this time of day. Abraham's immediate response is to greet these visitors and bow down. Compare his spontaneous greeting during the hottest time of day with that of Adam and Eve during the "cool of the day" or when they hid from God walking in the garden (cf. 3.8). Also, compare the verse at hand with 19.1: "The two angels came to Sodom in the evening; and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth." Both verses are intimated in the following: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" [Heb 13.1].

Vs. 3: "My *lord*" ('adony): This term is first used in 15.2 with respect to God, "O *Lord* God..." In the verse at hand Abraham applies the singular 'adony to the plural or the three visitors. This plurality becomes a single person in vss. 10 and 13. Apart from any theological interpretation, note that the visitors arrived at the heat of the day when the sun can distort the perception of objects.

-"Found *favor*" (*chen*): First used in 6.8, "But Noah found *favor* in the eyes of the Lord." Immediately Abraham puts himself in the role of a servant with respect to these visitors, a common practice among desert peoples which is spelled out in vss. 4-5.

Vs. 5: The purpose of Abraham's hospitality is for the three men to *refresh themselves*. The verb *sahad* is used which connotes a propping up: "and bread to *strengthen* man's heart" [Ps 104.15]. The noun *lev* (*heart*) is used for *themselves* which can signify not simply the regaining of physical strength during the day's heat but a more comprehensive refreshment.

-A play on words: *pass on* (*havar*) and *servant* (*haved*). Certainly Abraham acted like a servant or slave in showing hospitality to the three men.

Vs. 8: After both Abraham and his wife Sarah had gone through fairly involved preparations for a meal, Abraham stood by the three men while they ate. Abraham embodies the sentiment of Lk 17.10, "So when you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"

Vss. 9-15 pertain to the promise made by the three visitors concerning Sarah giving birth to Isaac in her old age. Some elements may be outlined as follows:

-9: Sarah remains in the tent all the time while Abraham is dealing with his mysterious guests; parallel this with the sentiment of Mary in Jn 11.20: "When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him while Mary sat in the house."

-10: Compare the announcement of Sarah bearing a child with the Virgin Mary in Lk 1.31: "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus."

-11: "after the *manner* ('orach) of women:" fundamentally, "path," "manner of life."

-12: *laughed* (tschaq): the verbal root of Sarah's future son, Isaac. For another use, cf. Ex 32.6: "And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to *play*."

-*Pleasure* (hednah): the only use of this word in a sexual context. For another use, cf. Ps 36.9: "And you give them drink from the river of your *delights*."

-14: *hard* (pele'): more accurately, "wonderful." "Who is like you, O Lord...terrible in glorious deeds, doing *wonders*" [Ex 15.11]?

-*Appointed time* (mohed): can also refer to a festival as in 2 Chron 30.22: "So the people ate the food of the *festival* for seven days, sacrificing peace offerings and giving thanks to the Lord the God of their fathers." Note that mohad (*assembly*) is derived from the same verbal root; both nouns intimate a collective recognition of a special time and event.

Vs. 16: The three visitors *set out* (qum) from Abraham, that is, they "arose" which is more significant than a simple departure. I.e., they got up from sitting with Abraham and Sarah and headed towards Sodom, more specifically, they *looked* (shaqaph) in that direction. This verb connotes looking down from a window or a superior height which connects with the sense of qum. "The Lord *looked down* from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who act wisely, who seek after God" [Ps 14.2].

Vs. 17: Here the Lord muses within himself over whether or not to reveal his intention in the guise of the three visitors concerning Sodom and Gomorrah. Such pondering in the form of an interior question centers around *hiding* (kasah) this intention. This verb was encountered in 7.19: "And the waters prevailed so mightily upon the earth that...all the high mountains under the whole heaven were *covered*."

Vs. 18: Here God continues to muse or think aloud, keeping in mind his promise to Abraham earlier in Chapter 17 with regard to his becoming a great nation. Note the Hebrew text: "in him all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." Although the divine promise is made for the future, action seems to shift towards Abraham and the source of this blessing. "All (future) nations" are thereby

inserted into him.

Vs. 19: “For I have chosen him:” The Hebrew text has *known* (yadah) for “chosen.” Such knowledge (it implies intimate familiarity) is in the past tense indicating that this familiarity had been established.

Yadah has a special purpose with the intent of passing it to Abraham’s “children and household:” to *keep* (shamar; cf. 17.9) the *way* (derek) of the Lord. Compare this use of derek with that of 6.12: “For all flesh had corrupted their *way* upon the earth.” Such keeping is effected through *righteousness* and *justice*, tsadaqeh and mishpat.

-*Promised* (davar): i.e., the verb “to speak.” This second half of vs. 19 indicates the sameness of time; if Abraham’s future generations maintain righteousness and justice, they will reflect to him. I.e., both Abraham and these generations seem to lack any temporal and spacial dimensions.

Vs. 20: Here the Lord changes the subject to Sodom and Gomorrah; the verse reads “The Lord said” which is the same as in vs. 17. At the same time the three visitors to Abraham are inserted into this dialogue.

-*Outcry* (zahaqah): several forms exist in the Hebrew, the only other one similar to this being Neh 5.1: “Now there arose a great *outcry* of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brethren.” The outcry is against the two cities, source not explicit, but may intimate surrounding areas. It is equivalent with sin which is “very *grave*,” the verbal root being kavad (*to be heavy*) in that sin causes a weighing down.

Vs. 21: The Lord says that he will go down to inspect the situation regarding Sodom and Gomorrah. He continues to muse within himself and shares his thoughts with Abraham. His *knowledge* (yadah, verb) is uncertain and depends upon his going there. Perhaps this descending is associated with that of the three visitors who “looked toward Sodom” [vs. 16].

Vs. 22: The three visitors first turned and then headed towards Sodom; compare with vs. 16 when they “set out from there, and they looked toward Sodom.” They did this only after the Lord stated in the previous verse that he would go down to Sodom; note that vs. 22 includes the city of Gomorrah.

-The mysterious interplay between Abraham, the Lord and the three men are enhanced by the words, “but Abraham still stood before the Lord.” I.e., he continued in this attentive position while the men departed. From here until the conclusion of Chapter 18 we have the story of Abraham bargaining with the Lord to spare the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.

-Vs. 23: Abraham *drew near* (nagash), that is, to the Lord, in order to commence this bargaining process. Compare with the previous verse, “still stood before the Lord,” which was perhaps some distance. Abraham’s desire is that the Lord does not *destroy* (saphah) the righteous along with the wicked. This verbal root connotes a taking away in the sense of accumulating and then destroying. “But if you still do wickedly, you shall be *swept away*, both you and your king” [1 Sam 12.25]. The righteous are the only ones found in the city of Sodom, rather, they are qarav, at the city’s very

center. Compare with *place* or *maqom* as in vs. 26: “I will spare the whole place for their sake” or for those who are *qarav*.

In this dialogue the *righteous* (*tsadyq*) are contrasted with the *wicked* (*rashah*). “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the *wicked*” [Ps 1.1].

-Vs. 27: Part way through the bargaining process Abraham realizes his mortality before the Lord and claims himself to be *dust* and *ashes* (*haphar* and *‘epher*), words with a similar sound. *Haphar*: “Then the Lord God formed man of *dust* from the ground” [2.7]. *‘Epher*: “Your remembrances are like *ashes*” [Job 13.12].

Abraham haggles with the Lord and gets down to ten persons who are *tsadyq* in vs. 32. The way God responds “For the sake of ten I will not destroy it” [vs. 32] as following the pattern from the beginning of this dialogue with Abraham shows a kind of indifference, of waiting to see if Abraham will go as low as one *tsadyq* which he does not.

Vs. 33: After Abraham concludes his dialogue and dares not go below five righteous persons, the Lord went *his way* (*ka’asher*), literally, “according to which” or according to his divine nature which here means that he disappeared from Abraham’s sight. The situation with Abraham is different: he “returned to his *place* (*maqom*);” the word here obviously means his dwelling yet can apply to his proper mode of life after having spoken with the Lord which is outside any *maqom*.

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Chapter Nineteen

Vs. 1: The two angels came to Sodom in the evening; and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth,

-“In the evening:” implication is that the two angels left Abraham (“from there,” 18.22) and arrived at Sodom the same day. In the meanwhile, Abraham was engaged in a bargaining process with God to save the city (vss. 23-32) beginning with “fifty righteous” and ending with ten. Actually, Chapter 18 concludes without a resolution; God does not say what he will do but “went his way” [vs.33].

Sitting (*yashav*): cf. 2 Sam 19.8: “Behold, the king (David) is *sitting* in the gate;’ and all the people came before the king.” In the verse at hand, Lot was probably killing time while watching people coming into the city before the gate was shut for the night.

Lot makes a twofold gesture upon seeing the two angels: “rose” and “bowed,” which are typical of hospitality for that culture. At the same time he probably perceived their divine origin, that they were different from the usual crowd of people at the gate.

Vs. 2: Lot addresses the two angels as *lords* (*‘adony*), a word of respect which fundamentally means “owner” and frequently applied to God: “Shemer, the *owner* of the hill.” It is in contrast to Lot calling himself a servant where he wants them to spend the night. Compare his gesture of hospitality (in a city) with that of Abraham (in a tent, 18.1).

-*Street* (rechov): can apply to an open place as in Ezra 10.9, “And all the people sat in the *open square* before the house of God.”

Vs. 3: *Urged* (patsar): the basic meaning is “to beat,” “to make blunt.” It can also apply to *stubbornness*: “For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and *stubbornness* is as iniquity and idolatry” [1 Sam 15.23]. The intensity of Lot’s entreaty is re-enforced by *me’od* (*strongly*) and the preposition *b-* (“*in* them”).

Lot made unleavened bread, indicating that he was in haste; compare with the Israelites doing the same prior to their departure from Egypt (cf. Ex 12.39). By way of contrast, Sarah made cakes (cf. 18.6) which required more time. Lot also made a *feast* or *mishteh* which suggests drinking. “If it please the king, let the king and Haman come this day to a *dinner* that I have prepared” [Est 5.4]. In contrast to the haste implied by leavened bread, “feast” insinuates a leisurely pace.

Vs. 4: The entire population (males, implied from the context) surround Lot’s house; most likely they saw him sitting in the city gate receiving the two angels but had no idea as to their identity.

Vs. 5: “that we may *know* (*yadah*) them” pertains to sexual intimacy, here obviously homosexual. “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination” [Lev 20.13].

Vs. 6: Lot exits his house (“shuts the door behind him”) to address the men surrounding him and perhaps to conceal the identity of his two angelic visitors.

Vs. 7: *act wickedly* (*raha*): Lot instinctively realizes the intent of the men to “know” his visitors. “He will hide his face from them at that time, because they have *made* their deeds *evil*” [Mic 3.4].

Vs. 8: *known* (*yadah*) as applied to Lot’s two daughters, in contrast to the *yadah* of vs. 5.
-*Shelter* (*tsel*): as applied to Lot’s house; its proper meaning is “shadow” as Is 16.3: “Make your *shade* like night at the height of noon.”

Vs. 9: *will do evil* (*raha*), as in vs. v.7.

Vs. 11: *blindness* (*sanor*): an unused Chaldean verb, the only other instance being 2 Kg 6.18: “Elisha prayed to the Lord and said, ‘Strike this people, I pray you, with *blindness*.’”

Vs. 13: *outcry* (*tsahaqah*): usually as applied to a cry for help as in Ex 3.9: “And now, behold, the *cry* of the people of Israel has come to me.” In both instances this cry entered the Lord’s presence.

Vs. 14: *jesting* (*tsachaq*): literally, “to laugh.” Apparently Lot’s two sons-in-law did not realize the divine nature of his visitors in the case of Sodom’s inhabitants. For another use of this verb, cf. 39.14: “See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to *insult* us.”

Vs. 15: mention of dawn throws into sharp contrast the inhabitants of Sodom outside Lot’s house who were struck blind as well as the impending destruction which occurs during the day. The two angels told Lot to escape with his two daughters; no mention is given here of his sons-in-law nor his wife.

-*Punishment* (haon): alternately, “depravity” as in 4.13: “My *punishment* is greater than I can bear.”

Vs. 16: *lingered* (mahah): for another use of this verb, cf. Is 29.9: “*Stupefy* yourselves and *be in a stupor*, blind yourselves and be blind!” In the verse at hand, Lot was probably horrified at the blindness of the city’s inhabitants and wished to show compassion by offering them his two daughters.

-*Merciful* (chamal): shown towards Lot by the Lord through the mediation of the two angels. “She (Pharaoh’s daughter) *took pity* on him (Moses)” [Ex 2.6].

-*Set* (nuach): the second of two actions done to Lot by the angels, the first when they brought him from the city. Implied here is almost a physical picking up and putting Lot down outside Sodom. Nuach also means a putting to rest, of leaving behind.

Vs. 17: the angels (plural, three) bring out Lot and his family followed by a singular person (“he”) telling them to abandon the city.

-“Flee for your life:” literally in Hebrew, “escape on your *soul* (nephesh, singular).” The word for *escape* is malat which means “to be slippery,” that is, something like slipping away undetected.

Vs 18: Lot objects to the (plural) angels about fleeing, claiming that they had shown him favor and kindness. The reason for this objection seems unclear, perhaps due to his age or compassion for the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. Compare with the earlier intercession of Abraham (18.23-32) for the same cities. The three angels concede to spare the town of Zoar in vs. 22 which means “Little” in Hebrew.

Vs. 23: this verse sets the stage for the impending disaster by a certain dramatic flair, “The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar.”

Vs. 24: *brimstone* (gaphryth): related to gopher (*pitch*). “For the Lord has a day of vengeance...And the streams of Edom shall be turned into *pitch* and her soil into *brimstone*” [Is 34.8-9]. In the verse at hand, there are two “*froms* (min):” “*from* the Lord” and “*out of* heaven.”

Vs. 25: Divine use of fire and brimstone cause Sodom and Gomorrah to be *overthrown* or haphak, a verb which connotes a turning upside down. “I *overthrew* some of you, as when God *overthrew* Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a brand plucked out of the burning; yet you did not return to me” [Am 4.7].

Vs. 26: Lot’s wife *looked back* (navat); this verb does not necessarily apply to the act of turning around and then looking; it involves more a beholding or a comprehensive gaze. Note her position “behind him (Lot).”

-*Pillar* (natsyv): can also refer to a statue or a military *garrison*. “And he (David) put *garrisons* in Edom” [2 Sam 8.14].

Vs. 27: The narrative quickly shifts back to Abraham, “where he stood before the Lord,” that is, as recounted in 18.16, the place he had first encountered the three visitors. Contrast how they “set out from there” with the destroyed cities. This *place* (maqom) is also where Abraham had bargained with the Lord to spare Sodom.

Vs. 28: Abraham *looked down* (shaqaph) towards Sodom and Gomorrah. Compare its use in 18.16 where “the men...*looked* toward Sodom.” What Abraham saw was the result of divine fire and brimstone.

-*Smoke* (qytor): from a verbal root which applies to the burning of incense. “Fire and hail, snow and *frost*, stormy wind fulfilling his command” [Ps 148.8]! “Frost” here can suggest a mist or vapor-like condition which pervades the atmosphere. In the verse at hand, it is associated with a *furnace* or *kivshan*, more specifically, used for melting metal. “Take handfuls of ashes from the *kiln* and let Moses throw them toward heaven in the sight of Pharaoh” [Ex 9.8].

Vs. 29: *Remembered* (zakar). Such remembrance assumes greater significance in light of the destroyed cities and is reminiscent of 8.1: “But God *remembered* Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark.” The deliverance of both men and their families stands out in light of pervasive destruction. The same *zakar* applies to Lot and assumes a more dramatic air: “and sent Lot *out of the midst* (mitok, i.e., the very center) of the overthrow.”

Vs. 30: Lot went up from Zoar, that is, he exited the valley in which the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were located; parallel this ascent with the (supposed) high ground from which Abraham viewed the destruction.

Vss. 30-8 or to the end of Chapter Twenty presents a story explaining the origin of the Moabites and Ammonites, Israel’s neighbors, with which it engaged in frequent conflict. Perhaps the offspring resulting from the incestuous union of Lot and his two daughters are a way of putting down these two tribes. Compare this with the prohibition against such illicit action in Lev 18.6-18 or in terms of the “uncovering of nakedness.”

Vs. 38: “He (Ben-ammi) is the father of the Ammonites to this day.” A way of stating that the incestuous relationship of the two daughters with their father Lot persists from that time until the present.

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Chapter Twenty

This chapter recounts the sojourn of Abraham and Sarah in Gerar which parallels that of 12.10-20 when both were in Egypt.

Vs. 1: *sojourn* (gur): used in 12.10, “So Abram went down to Egypt to *sojourn* there, for the famine was severe in the land.” This verb connotes a turning aside in the sense of diverting from one’s path. The author of Hebrews has this in mind when speaking of Abraham: “By faith he *sojourned* in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.”

Vs. 2: God appeared (i.e., “came”) to Abimelech, the king of Gerar, in a *dream* or *chalom*. This is the first mention of such a divine communication which perhaps signifies even further distance from God’s immediate presence in the Garden of Eden. Note that this dream which occurs “at night comes to a non-Hebrew.

Vs. 4: *approach* (qarav): Abimelech to Sarah, i.e., to have sexual relations. The same verb but in another context is found in 19.23: "Then Abraham *drew near* and said, 'Will you indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked?'"

Vs. 4: Abimelech is innocent because he mistook Sarah for Abraham's sister which was what Abraham claimed her to be. When addressing the Lord Abimelech associates his mistaken transgression with "an *innocent* (tsadeyq) people," an adjective which also means "just, right." "Acquitting the *innocent* and condemning the guilty" [Dt 25.1]. Note the close association of Abimelech with "people" which he wishes the Lord to spare. This verse is reminiscent of Abram's plea with God in 18.23-32, perhaps wishing to avoid the same fate as Sodom and Gomorrah.

Vs. 5: Abimelech states his innocence: "*integrity* (tam) of heart" and "*innocence* (niqayon) of my heart." The former connotes wholeness and moral integrity. Cf. another implication: "Jacob was an *upright* man, dwelling in tents" [25.27]. The latter derives from the verbal root naqah, *to be clean*. "I wash my hands in *innocence* and go about your altar, O Lord" [Ps 26.6].

Vs. 6: God continues to speak in this dream-dialogue to say that he realized Abimelech's integrity and innocence and therefore protected him. God gives a more complete or definitive response than in the bargaining process with Abraham over Sodom and Gomorrah.

Vs. 7: *prophet* (navey'): the first mention of this term (pertaining to Abraham). It seems to be of the same genre, if you will, as the nature of a dream in vs. 1. That is, prophet/dream are means of communication from God to humanity which intimates distance or some alienation by reason of their considerable narrowing down of this communication to one or several persons.

-*Pray* (palal): along with dream and prophet, the first mention of this term in the Bible. I.e., it in another indication of that more distant relationship between God and humanity. The notion of this verbal root is "to judge," "to supplicate" which again parallels Abraham's bargaining with God. "And I *prayed* for Aaron at the same time" [Dt. 9.20].

-*"You and all that are yours:"* God says these words to Abimelech, threatening him with death if he doesn't restore Sarah to Abraham. Compare this social connection between the individual and community as in vs. 4.

Vs. 8: *rose early* (shakam): a verb often employed in the context of Abimelech's dream or to indicate that a significant event is about to occur. "And he (Moses) *rose early* in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain" [Ex 24.4].

-*Spoke* (davar)/*things* (devarym): the latter derives from same verbal root which denotes a close connection between speaker and spoken. The Hebrew adds to the vividness: "in their ears." The servants to whom Abimelech spoke were "very much afraid," that is, they intimated the same fate recounted in vss. 4 & 7.

Vs. 10: *thinking of* (ra'ah): the verb is "to see," here applied to Abraham's misleading of Abimelech. For another use of this verb in the same context, cf. 2 Sam 18.27: "I *think* the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok."

Vs. 11: "*fear* (yire'ah) of God:" along with dream, prophet and pray, the first biblical association of

fear with God which better means reverence. “The *fear* of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” [Prov 1.7]. Abraham associates such fear with a specific location, “in this *place* (maqom),” namely, Abimelech’s kingdom of Gerar.

Vs. 13: *caused to wander* (tahah). The verb is in the hiphil indicating that an agent other than Abraham effected this; i.e., an indirect action by God which is more subtle than effecting it outrightly. Reference goes back to 12.1, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house” to which Sarah was an accomplice, if you will. This is the first time Abraham associated his divine call with wandering.

-*Kindness* (chesed): attributed to Sarah and often connected with divine mercy. Cf. 19.19: “Behold, your servant has found *favor* in your sight.”

Vs. 16: *vindication* (kesuth): the only use of this term in the Old Testament; most likely it means “veil” or “covering.” Reference is to the thousand pieces of silver in addition to Abimelech’s land of Gerar (vs. 15). Note that both the kesuth and his land are lipeney: “*before you*” as in the preceding verse and lipeney with respect everyone in Abraham’s company.

-*Righted* (yakach): the only use of this verb within such a context; it has the fundamental meaning of “to argue,” “to judge.” “But with righteousness he shall *judge* (shaphat) the poor and *decide* with equity for the meek of the earth” [Is 11.4].

Vs. 17: *prayed* (palal): cf. vs. 7 where this verb was used for the first time, that is, in a Abimelech’s dream with reference to Abraham doing the palal. Here the immediate consequence of palal is *healing* or rapha’, the first mention of a divine cure. “And understand with their hearts and turn and be *healed*” [Is 6.10].

Vs. 18: *shut* (hatsar): used twice, the second verb being infinite absolute, to show the complete cessation of propagation in Abimelech’s household and therefore his descendants. Cf. 16.2: “The Lord has *prevented* me (Sarai) from bearing children.”

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Chapter Twenty-One

Vs. 1: *visited* (paqad): the first time this verb is used, later frequently employed, when the Lord makes contact with people. In the verse at hand, paqad is used in the context of Sarah becoming pregnant. “And the Lord *visited* Hannah, and she conceived” [1 Sam 2.21].

-*Promised* (davar): the fundamental meaning of this verb is “to speak.” The context is 18.14: “At the appointed time I will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall have a son.” For another verse with this meaning of davar, cf. Ex 12.25: “When you come to the land which the Lord will give you, as he has *promised*, you shall keep this service.”

Vs. 2: *time* (mohed): as in 18.14 as noted in the previous verse, “At the *appointed time*.”

-*Spoken* (davar): compare with its use as “promise” in vs. 1.

Vs. 3: Note the wording: “who was born to him” and “whom Sarah bore him (Isaac).” The first can apply to that indirect operation of the Lord and the second to the more immediate act of giving

birth.

Vs. 4: *circumcised* (mul): This verse hearkens back to 17.10, “Every male among you shall be *circumcised*.”

-“Eight days old:” again, cf. 17.12. Most likely this time between birth and circumcision was added later. Also, keep in mind the six days of creation and the seventh day of rest.

Vs. 6: *laughter* (tsechoq). The only use of this noun in the Old Testament (it forms the root of the proper name Isaac) which hearkens back to 18.12, i.e., the same verbal root: “Sarah *laughed* to herself.” There it was as a result of the three visitors; here God is the agent (“made”). The laughter of which Sarah speaks is not derisive but one of joy.

Vs. 8: “grew and weaned.” Cf. Lk 2.52, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.”

Vs. 9: *playing* (tsachaq). The Hebrew text lacks “with her (Hagar) son Isaac.” Note the use of the same verbal root regarding tsechoq in vs. 6.

Vs. 10: *cast out* (garash). The same verb as in 3.24, almost as though Sarah wished that the same fate done to Adam be imposed upon Hagar and her son: “He *drove out* the man.”

Vs. 11: *displeasing* (yarah). Alternately, “to be evil, injurious.” “But God was *displeased* with this thing, and he smote Israel” [1 Chron 21.7].

Vs. 12: God bids Abraham not to be yarah but to obey Sarah instead because he has in mind Isaac as the source of Abraham’s descendants. The Hebrew text literally reads, “in Isaac will be called to you *descendant* (zereh).” This divine promise has its roots in 12.7: “To your *descendants* I will give this land.”

Vs. 13: *nation* (goy). As in imitation of 12.2, “And I will make of you a great *nation*.” There God speaks to Abraham as he sends him forth from his native land, not unlike Abraham’s dismissal of Hagar and her son only with different consequences. Still, Ishmael is of Abraham’s *seed* (zereh; cf. previous verse).

Vs. 15: *wandered* (tahah). Compare with Abraham’s tahah in 13, i.e., “When God *caused* me to *wander*.”

-Beer-sheba: the place where Hagar and her child wandered; it receives this proper name later in vss. 30-1. Compare Hagar’s wandering with Elijah’s flight from Jezebel: “Then he was afraid, and he arose and went for his life and came to Beer-sheba” [1 Kg 19.4].

Vs. 16: Compare Hagar’s position (“she sat over against him”) with that of Jonah awaiting the destruction of Nineveh, “Then Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade until he should see what would become of the city” [Jon 4.5]. That is to say, both Hagar and Jonah await a dreaded end which turns out otherwise. -The Hebrew text has “she lifted up her voice” as opposed to the English, “the child lifted up his

voice.”

Vs. 17: God hears the “voice of the *lad* (nahar),” i.e., not Hagar’s voice as in the preceding verse. Nahar is used both of a new-born child as well as up to around the age of twenty. Compare with *child* in vs. 14 or *yeled* which can apply to someone recently born.

-Note that God heard the lad’s voice but his angel called to Hagar from heaven.

-“What troubles you” in Hebrew literally reads, “What to you.”

-“The voice of the lad where he is:” that is, “under one of the bushes” of vs. 15. Compare with Ex 3.4: “God called to him (Moses) out of the bush.” Also compare “where he is” with God’s angel in heaven or the two different locales.

Vs. 18: “I will make him a great *nation* (goy)” or to counter 12.2 as noted under vs. 13. Here the “I” is the angel speaking God’s voice, as it were.

Vs. 19: After the angel spoke to Hagar, God himself *opened* (paqach) her eyes to behold a well of water, the same verb used in 3.7, “Then the eyes of both were *opened*, and they knew that they were naked.” Another use is Is 42.7: “to *open* the eyes that are blind.” In the verse at hand, Hagar saw the well which apparently was close by without her realizing it.

Vs. 20: “And God was with the lad.” Not only this but when “he *grew up*” (gadal), a verb also meaning “to become great.” Compare with vs. 8, “And the child (Isaac) *grew*” which, along with the verse at hand, has a parallel to Lk 2.52.

-Ishmael “*became an expert* (ravah) with the bow,” a verb matching the sense of gadal.

-Hagar obtains a wife for Ishmael from Egypt; compare with Abraham sending his servant to “my kindred” [24.4] to obtain a wife for his son Isaac, that is, from Ur of the Chaldeans, 11.31.

Vss. 21-34 describe Abraham’s dispute with Abimelech and offers two explanations for the proper name Beer-sheba. The first is “well of the oath” based upon Abraham’s words, “I will *swear* (shavah).”

Vs. 23: Abimelech asks Abraham to make a three-fold oath (“swear”): to himself, his *offspring* (nyn) and his *posterity* (neked). Nyn has only two other references, Job 18.19 and Is 14.22. Neced is found one other time in conjunction with Is 14.22.

-*Loyally* (chesed). Literally, “according to mercy.” Abimelech wishes Abraham to act thus not only towards himself but towards the *land* (ertz) of his sojourning, thereby showing the close relationship between it and the inhabitants.

Vs. 27: *took* (yatsav). That is, with respect to seven ewe lambs. This verb connotes a placing or standing, so these animals are not simply taken but *set apart* (cf. vs. 28).

-*Covenant* (beryth). The third one thus far, the first being with Noah and the second being with Abram. On the other hand, this covenant is the first one made between two human beings instead of between a person and God.

Vs. 30: *witness* (hedah). “My soul keeps your *testimonies*” [Ps 119.167]. In the verse at hand, Abraham claims to have dug the well. Cf. vs. 19 where Hagar beholds the same well already dug.

Vs. 31: the second explanation of the proper name Beer-sheba, “Well of the Oath” which in the following verse is ratified by a covenant.

Vs. 33: *tamarisk tree* (‘eshel) or a small shrub with tiny scale-like leaves. Two other references, both concerning King Saul. The first (1 Sam 22.6) has him sitting under a tamarisk prior to the massacre of the priests of Nob. The second is in 31.13 where his body and that his sons were buried (in Jabesh).

-After having planted the tamarisk tree, Abraham calls on the Lord’s name, literally, “in the name of the Lord” who is also identified as the *Everlasting God* or ‘El Holam. “The Lord is the *everlasting God*, the Creator of the ends of the earth” [Is 40.28].

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Chapter Twenty-Two

Vs. 1: “After these things:” in references to the events of the preceding chapter. Now God *tests* (nasah) Abraham, as though what he had experienced was not enough. “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you...that I may *prove* them, whether they will walk in my law or not” [Ex 16.4]. Abraham’s immediate response to God calling his name is “*Here* (hineh) am I,” this word suggesting a beholding or immediate awareness of the situation at hand.

Vs. 2: God not only calls Isaac, Abraham’s, son but adds the two following: 1) his *only son* or yachyd, which impends the sacrifice to follow. 2) “whom you *love* (‘ahav).” “When I was a son with my father, tender, the *only one* in the sight of my mother” [Prov 4.3].

-Moriah: unknown but identified with Jerusalem. “Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah where the Lord had appeared to David his father” [2 Chron 3.1]. The beginning of this “test” of Abraham has him yet going into a second exile, as it were, after God bade him to leave his native land.

-*Offer* (halah) and *burnt offering* (holah), the same verb, here with reference to Isaac. For a previous use of this pair, cf. 8.20, “Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and *offered burnt offerings* on the altar.”

-God tells Abraham to go to “one of the mountains” in Moriah, i.e., not designated yet vs. 9 speaks of a specific *place* (maqom), thereby intimating that Abraham realized the appropriate place when he arrived there: “of which I shall tell you.”

Vs. 3: “Abraham rose early in the morning.” As used in 20.8 and 21.14, a mode of expression which sets the stage for a momentous action that will happen in the course of the day. Abraham also takes “two young men” yet leaves them behind as he and Isaac ascend the mountain. Perhaps they were unaware of the precise mountain in Moriah God revealed to father and son; also they are not mentioned after the aborted sacrifice of Isaac. “Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death” [Ex 19.12].

-*Place* (maqom) or the particular mountain in Moriah again mentioned in vs. 9. A parallel may be drawn between this place and the mountain of Sinai which God revealed to Moses. In the former, a sacrifice was intended to be offered on the summit. The latter has no sacrifice, but God gave Moses instructions as to its performance.

Vs. 4: the *place/maqom* is made all the more dramatic by “lifted up his eyes” as well as “afar off.” Thus God seemed to reveal to Abraham the spot en route or during his three days’ journey. These words “lifted up his eyes” can signify that Abraham had his head bowed down to the ground either in weariness or concern or in following the trail before his feet.

Vs. 5: “stay with the ass:” reminiscent again of Mt. Sinai, the quote of Ex 19.12 under vs. 3 to which may be added vs. 4, “No hand shall touch it, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live.”

-*Worship* (shachah): the first mention of this gesture in the Bible; it is a common one accompanied by prostrating oneself. “Since he is your lord, *bow* to him” [Ps 45.11]. Such worship is done “yonder” or again keeping in mind the Sinai image, apart from the common people.

-“and come again to you:” signifying a certain tension or expectation among the two young men as they await the outcome of the sacrifice.

Vs. 7: Abraham lays the wood for the sacrificial fire on Isaac which he had already cut in vs. 3. Perhaps the mountain on which the sacrifice was to take place lacked wood.

-“So they went both of them together:” words which heighten the drama and made more tense by allowing the reader to intimate what was going through the mind of Isaac.

Vs. 8: “My father!” Words addressed to Abraham not unlike God saying in vs. 1, “Abraham!” Abraham responds like he did to God’s words in that verse, “*Here* (hineh, a variation of this word) I am!” which parallels the hineh in vs. 1. Isaac uses hineh with respect to the sacrificial fire and wood.

-*Lamb* (seh): first mention of this animal, that is, for a sacrifice. “They shall take a *lamb* according to their fathers’ house, a lamb for a household” [Ex 12.3].

-*Will provide* (ra’ah): literally, “will see;” cf. vs. 14 below. The drama of this providing in the future is intensified by “they went both of them together.” This dialogue occurs while Abraham and Isaac were ascending the mountain.

Vs. 9: *Came* (bo’): in the sense of coming to a place, not necessarily ascending (the mountain) which can signify that Abraham and Isaac were already at the summit and needed “to enter” or be more fully within the *place* or maqom “which God told him.”

This verse has four actions:

1) “built an *altar* (mizbeach).” The first one was constructed by Noah after the flood (cf. 8.20). Perhaps Abraham was thinking of the altar he built in 12.7, “So he built there an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him.” This one was in response to God’s words, “To your descendants I will give this land,” words which may have struck Abraham at Moriah as having a certain irony.

2) “*laid* the wood *in order* (harak).” “And *lay* wood *in order* upon the fire” [Lev 1.7].

3) “*bound* (haqad) Isaac.” The only use of this verb in the Old Testament.

4) laid Isaac not only upon the altar but upon the wood.

Vs. 10: First Abraham “puts forth his hand” which signifies preparation and allows the reader to guess what was going on in his mind. Next he takes the *knife* or ma’akalath “to slay (shachat) his son,” this verb having the sense of bringing about destruction or ruin as opposed to readying a sacrificial victim. “They *slew* the sons of Zedekaih before his eyes” [2 Kg 26.7]. The Hebrew word for “knife” as used here and in vs. 6 is an instrument used for eating. “There are those whose teeth

are swords, whose teeth are *knives*, to devour the poor from off the earth” [Prov 30.14].

Vs. 11: Here the “angel of the Lord” calls to Abraham from heaven which parallels his response to God in vs. 1. He continues to speak through vs. 12 for the first of two times, the second being vs. 15-18. There the proper name “Abraham” was used once whereas here it is used twice. That is, in the latter to make him refrain from slaying Isaac. Perhaps the angel is employed to signify a more direct intervention, to restrain Abraham’s hand which held the knife. Abraham responded with yet another *hineh*, “*Here am I!*”

Vs. 12: “Do not *lay* your hand on the lad:” the same verb (*shalak*) as used in vs. 10, “Abraham *put forth* his hand.”

-“*Fear* (*yare’*) God.” The first mention of this phrase which later becomes important in biblical theology as in Dt 10.20, “You shall *fear* the Lord your God; you shall serve him and cleave to him, and by his name you shall swear.” In the verse at hand, such fear is bound up with Abraham’s readiness which hearkens back to his “*Here am I!*” of vs. 1.

-*Withhold* (*chasak*). Compare with the opposite or refraining gesture of *shalak* in the preceding verse. Abraham’s willingness not to withhold the sacrifice of his son is again heightened by *yachyd* (*only son*) as in vs. 2.

-“From me.” Obviously with respect to the Lord but communicated through the angel almost as if he were speaking as the Lord.

Vs. 13: “*lifted his eyes.*” Compare this preoccupation with the event unfolding with the same in vs. 4 where Abraham was en route to the mountain in Moriah.

-*Ram* (*ayl*). This animal was among several other types which Abram offered in 15.9 when the Lord promised to give him the land to possess. Similarly but in more dramatic fashion, Abraham “*possesses*” in a new way his son Isaac.

-The ram is *offered* (*halah*) as a *burnt offering* (*holah*); cf. vs. 2.

Vs. 14: another mention of the mountain as “that *place*” or *maqom*, better, one of the unidentified mountains of the region which tradition later calls Jerusalem.

-Abraham names the *maqom* *The Lord will provide* or YHWH *yire’eh* or “The Lord will see.” I.e., the verb is in the future which can apply to the Lord not only looking out for Isaac’s safety on the mountain but for that of future generations.

-“To this day:” continuation of what transpired with Abraham into the present.

-“On the mount of the Lord:” first part of the newly named *maqom* where YHWH takes possession of it.

-“It shall be provided” or “He will be seen.” Note the different forms of the same verb *yare’* (*to see*): future where the Lord will do the seeing and future passive where he will be seen which can infer through indirect means.

Vs. 15: the second of two times when the angel speaks to Abraham, the first being in conjunction with his preventing Abraham from offering Isaac. As in both cases, he speaks “from heaven” to show the transcendence of God vis-a-vis even a holy *maqom* as the mountain in Moriah.

Vs. 16: The angel speaks “as if” he were the Lord (“*says the Lord*”), namely, “*by myself I have sworn.*”

Vs. 17: Two future promises by the angel/Lord: *bless* (barak) and *multiply* (ravah) which are reminiscent of 15.5, “Look toward heaven and number the stars, if you are able to number them...so shall your descendants be.” Here God does the speaking compared with the angel in the verse at hand.

-“Obeyed my voice.” Abraham carried out the divine command to sacrifice Isaac through *hearing*, but it was effected on the mountains where “He will be *seen*.”

Vs. 18: Abraham returns to the two young men who accompanied him but were not present on the mountain, again, similar to Moses. Note that the text does not mention Isaac.

Vss. 19-20 conclude this chapter by presenting an Aramean genealogy of Rebekah’s father, Bethuel, future wife of Isaac (cf. chapter 24). Vs. 19 begins the genealogy by “It was told to Abraham;” no mention of whether such telling was human or divine.

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Notes on the Book of Genesis, Part III (Chapters 23-50)

This is the third and final Part to the **Notes** which goes to the conclusion of the Book of Genesis.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Vs. 1: This chapter begins with the death of Abraham’s wife, Sarah, and the purchase of a family burial place. The story is important in that it shows Abraham as a foreigner who was able to establish a secure residence in an alien land.

-Sarah lived 127 years; the second half of this verse expresses this almost by way of emphasis, “these were the years of the life of Sarah.”

Vs. 2: Kiriath-arba: “that is, Hebron” or the older name, “City of the Arba.” This place was promised to Caleb by Moses which Joshua gives him as noted in Jos 14.15.

Vs. 3: After mourning for Sarah, Abraham seeks to purchase a burial plot. The Hebrew is vivid: “And Abraham rose from on the face his dead.” It was as though Abraham had his face on that of Sarah to show their intimacy both in life and death.

Vs. 4: Abraham says to the Hittites or inhabitants of Canaan that he is both a *stranger* (ger) and *sojourner* (toshav) among them. Ger was first encountered in 15.13 where God applies this term to the future dwelling of the Israelites in Egypt until their departure.

-Toshav: first use of this term, from the verbal root yashav, *to dwell*, and intimates a more permanent residence. “For I am your passing guest, a *sojourner*, like all my father” [Ps 39.12].

-*Property* (‘achuzah): in the sense of “possession” as related to the verbal root. Note that this property is “among you” just like Abraham being a stranger and sojourner “among you.” Cf. 40.30 in reference to the burial place of Jacob.

-“Out of my sight:” perhaps that Abraham might not be reminded of Sarah since he is among an alien people, and the sight of this tomb would cause him further grief.

Vs. 6: Two titles the Hittites attribute to Abraham: *my lord* ('adony) and *mighty prince* (nesy' 'elohym). The first was used with respect to the two angels who came to Sodom (12.2) and is a common address to God instead of YHWH. In Hebrew, the second reads "prince of God." Refer to 17.20 where nesy' is applied to Ishmael as "father of twelve *princes*." Perhaps the Hittites use the second term of address from having heard about his attempted sacrifice of Isaac recounted towards the end of in the previous chapter.

-“Among us:” that is, being a lord and mighty prince; the third use of this preposition, the first two being noted in vs. 4.

Vs. 7: “People of the *land* ('eretzt):” a term later used to show the identity between Israel and the physical land which here intimates a similar bond between the land and the native Hittites.

Abraham bids them or in the Hebrew, “your *souls*” (nephesh), to entreat Ephron for a burial place. -Abraham has his eyes set on the cave of Machpelah in possession of Ephron, again, the place where Jacob will be buried (cf. 50.13). Further mention of 'achuzah (*possession*) can represent that this is a stable place in an alien land, almost like a monument, which Israel will later possess.

Vs. 10: Ephron “was sitting *among* (betok; also, ‘in the midst of’) the Hittites” which can indicate his relative importance as well as creating a certain drama when Abraham approaches him with his request to purchase the cave. The transaction occurs at the city gate where all such business was handled. “And Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the next of kin, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by” [Rt 4.1].

Vs. 11: Ephron immediately grants Abraham’s request. Perhaps he realized that Abraham was a “lord” and “mighty prince” (vs. 6) and thus favored by God after the incident when he attempted to sacrifice his son Isaac.

Vs. 12: “People of the *land*’ ('eretzt), as in vs. 7, to whom Abraham shows respect.

Vs. 17: After Abraham paid full price for the field of Ephron in Machpelah, it *was made over* or qum. This verb fundamentally means “to rise” but can apply to the establishment of anything as well as its endurance, its capacity to “rise,” as it were, well into the future.

Vs. 18: *Possession* (miqneh): from a verbal root meaning “to acquire” with the connotation of wealth. Compare with 'achuzah of vss. 4 & 7.

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Chapter Twenty-Four

This lengthy chapter (67 verses) tells the story of Abraham obtaining a wife (Rebekah) for his son Isaac. Isaac was about to be offered as a sacrifice to God, yet Abraham “received him back” [Heb 11.17]. With this “return” it is interesting to consider the role of Rebekah as his wife who, in a sense, participated in this “receiving.”

Vs. 1: “Well advanced in years:” in the Hebrew text it literally reads, “he came in years.”

Vs. 2: *Oldest* (zeqan): in reference to Abraham's senior servant, presumably Eliezar of Damascus, to whom Abraham could have bestowed his inheritance as recounted in 15.2. Compare zeqan with Abraham being *old* (zeqan) in vs. 1.

-*Had charge* (mashal): a word signifying dominion and full authority. Mashal also means "to be like," the connection perhaps suggestive of assimilation between the person in charge and those over whom he exerts authority. Thus Eliezar presumably had considerable power over Abraham's possessions. He places his hand under the thigh of Abraham, symbolic of reproduction, thereby enhancing the mashal already in his control. Israel/Jacob does the same with his son Joseph in 47.29, that is, with respect to the promise not to bury him in Egypt.

Vs. 3: Abraham bids his servant not to obtain a Canaanite woman to be a wife for his son Isaac. Compare this sense of alienation, of being a stranger and exile (cf. 23.4) with Israel/Jacob not wishing to be buried in Egypt despite the kind disposition by residents towards him and his family. The oath is by "the Lord, the God of heaven and of the earth" which includes not only the land of the Canaanites ('among whom I dwell') but all peoples.

Vs. 4: The servant, not Abraham, returns to his "country and kindred" to get a wife for Isaac. I.e., the exile of Abraham cannot be violated. Still another parallel can be made here between Israel/Jacob and Joseph in Egypt.

Vss. 5-6 apply this sense of a one-way exile—with no prospect of no return—to Isaac as well.

Vs. 7: In vs. 3 Abraham makes his servant swear by the "Lord, the God of heaven and of the earth." Here he speaks of "the Lord, the God of heaven," i.e., not of earth, as having brought him into Canaan. The Lord swore this promise to Abraham which was probably in his mind when he made the servant swear an oath to him in vs. 3.

-*His angel* (mal'ak). Two references: 1) "the *angel* of the Lord" in 16.7 who did not interact with Abraham but saved Hagar and her son in the desert after Abraham's wife Sarah cast them out. 2) also in 22.11, the angel who restrained Abraham from sacrificing Isaac.

Vs.10: "City of Nahor:" first mentioned in 11.22 when listing the descendants of Shem after the flood and grandfather of Abraham (cf. 11.25-6); also listed in Christ's genealogy, Lk 3.34.

Vs. 11: "Time of evening" is here equivalent to when "women go out to draw water." Refer back to 3.8 when God was walking in the garden at the "cool of the day." Also Ex 2.16 has Moses by a well after he fled to Midian, a place used by local shepherds. It was an occasion for Moses to marry Zipporah, Jethro's daughter.

Vs. 12: Upon seeing the women at the well the servant instinctively knows that it is the opportunity ('today' or better, the evening) to make his move. Before this he beseeches God with a two-fold request: 1) *success* or qarrah lephaney which literally reads in Hebrew, "call (I beseech) before me." 2) *steadfast love* or chesed as in 21.23, "but as I have dealt *loyally* with you."

Vs. 14: The servant asks God that the destined wife for Isaac be the woman who offers water to him and his camels. That is, this woman will be the one *appointed* or yakach, alternately as "to argue,"

“reprove.” This verse is the only one with such a meaning. In the verse at hand *yakach* is related to the divine *chesed* (also mentioned here) towards Abraham. Thus the same *chesed* applies through Abraham to his son Abraham and through Rebekah.

Vs. 15: “Before he had done speaking:” that is, speaking with God. As a consequence, Rebekah immediately comes to the servant. The image of a woman approaching with a water jar on her shoulder at evening is highly suggestive of her beauty which the evening twilight tended to obscure, making it all the more mysterious.

Vs. 16: Rebekah is a *virgin* or *betulah* which can also apply to a newly married woman as in J1 1.8: “Lament like a *virgin* girded with sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth.” Since it was evening, the servant could still see that she was “very *fair*” (*tov*) which also means “good.”
-*Known* (*yadah*): that is, not having had sexual intercourse.

Vs. 18: Rebekah now places the jar which had been on her shoulder on her hand in order that the servant may take a drink of water, a fact which further enhances her beauty during this time of evening twilight.

Vs. 21: The servant *gazes* (*sha’ah*) at Rebekah, the only use of this word which fundamentally means “to lay waste.” He does this *in silence* or *charash*, a verb alternately meaning “to plow,” “to cut.” “The Lord will fight for you, and you shall *keep quiet*” [Ex 14.14].
-The servant maintained his quiet gaze at Rebekah in order to *learn* (*yadah*) “whether the Lord had *prospered* (*tsalach*) his journey or not.” “Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over him who *prosper* in his way” [Ps 37.7].

Vs. 23: Although the servant recognized the woman intended to be Isaac’s bride (vs. 15), he did not know her name. In the verse at hand he asks her for room (‘for us’) to spend the night. The first person plural could refer to the servant and his camels or perhaps to those who accompanied him; they are not mentioned until vs. 32 (‘the feet of the men who were with him’).

Vs. 24: The maiden does not disclose her name (Rebekah) but presents it in terms of her being “daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah” which for the servant is the indication that she is the one whom he had been looking for. That is, Rebekah identifies herself as belonging to the same family as Abraham.

Vs. 27: The servant acknowledges God’s favor towards Abraham: he showed *chesed* and *’emeth* (*faithfulness*).

Vs. 30: Rebekah’s brother Laban saw the ring and bracelets on her and instinctively knew that the servant was sent by God: “Come in, O blessed of the Lord” [vs. 31].

Vs. 33: The servant tells Laban and Bethuel about his mission which in Hebrew literally reads, “I will not eat until I have *told my words*,” *davar* being used for both.

Vss. 34-49: The servant recounts to Laban and Bethuel the details of his mission from Abraham and how he had encountered Rebekah at the well. The response is in vs. 50: “The *thing* (*daver*) comes

from the Lord.” Recognition of this “speaking” (cf. verbal root, *davar*) leads the two men not to *speak* or *davar*; they immediately consent to let Rebekah be Isaac’s bride “as the Lord has *spoken* (*davar*, vs. 51).”

Vs. 56: In the previous verse Rebekah’s family requested that she remain with them for ten days, but the servant responds, “Do not delay me.” Reason: the Lord *prospered* (*tsalach*) his *way* or *derek* which can refer not only to his journey but the mission. Cf. vs. 21 for the context of this *tsalach*: “The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether the Lord has *prospered* his *journey* (*derek*) or not.”

Vs. 60: Laban and Bethuel bestow their blessing upon Rebekah by wishing her to be the “mother of thousands of ten thousands” as well as her descendants “to possess the gates of those who hate them.” This blessing parallels that in 22.17: “I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore. And your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.”

Vs. 62: Isaac was away at Beer-lachai-roi, “well of the one who sees and lives” noted in 16.14, the place where Hagar and her son Ishmael were saved after Sarah had sent them away. In a sense, Isaac’s presence there may be taken as a preparation for meeting Rebekah.

Vs. 63: Upon his return, Isaac was *meditating* (*suach*) in the field, the only use of this verb. He does this “in the evening;” cf. vs. 12 when the servant first meets Rebekah. Such meditating intimates a kind of sauntering, of musing perhaps upon his visit at Beer-lachai-roi—that place of seeing—for Isaac raises his eyes and sees the servant and his entourage coming towards him.

Vs. 64: In the previous verse Isaac lifted his eyes; the same applies to Rebekah who immediately gets off the camel to meet him although she remains uncertain as to his identity.

Vs. 65: Rebekah covers herself with a *veil* or *tsahyph*; the only other mention of this word is in 38.14: “(Tamar) put off her widow’s garments and put on a *veil*.”

Vs. 66: The Hebrew text says that not only does Isaac take Rebekah to his tent but “Sarah his mother.” There is no record of any conversation between Rebekah and Isaac, for the mysterious setting of these verses suffices to convey their interaction.

Vs. 67: Chapter 24 concludes with “So Isaac was *comforted* (*nacham*) after his mother’s death.” This verb alternately means “to lament,” “to take vengeance.” The fundamental sense is “to groan.” “Do not labor to *comfort* me for the destruction of the daughter of my people” [Is 22.4]. It is interesting that these words are inserted because the previous verse has “Sarah his mother” accompanying Isaac with Rebekah into his tent.

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Chapter Twenty-Five

Vs. 1: This chapter begins with Abraham taking another wife, Keturah. Note that the last chapter

concluded with Sarah entering the tent with Isaac and Rebekah; it is as though once she did, Sarah disappeared from the scene. Vss. 2-5 list the ancestry of Arabic tribes which trace their roots to Abraham through Keturah.

Vs. 6: Abraham sends his concubines away from Isaac, that is, eastwards, so that they will not interfere with the newly contracted marriage with Rebekah.

Vs. 8: Abraham *breathed his last* or *gawah*, that is exhaled his life. “Man dies and is laid low; man *breathes his last*, and where is he” [Job 14.10]?

-After his death, Abraham was “gathered to his people” as opposed to those aliens among whom he had dwelt as a sojourner for so many years. “And die on the mountain which you (Moses) ascend and be gathered to your people” [Ex 32.50].

Vs. 9: Both Isaac and Ishmael bury Abraham “in the cave of Machpelah” which he had purchased to bury Sarah (cf. 23.19). This is the first appearance of Ishmael after Sarah had banished him and his mother Hagar. Cf. Beer-lachai-roi in 16.14 to which Isaac, not Ishmael returns because he had been there prior to meeting Rebekah (cf. 24.62).

Vss. 12-21 present the descendants of Ishmael and Isaac.

Vs. 21: Isaac *prays* (*hatar*) to God for his barren wife Rebekah to conceive. “Then man *prays* to God, and he accepts him, he comes into his presence with joy” [Job 33.26]. Compare this with Hannah: “Go in peace and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have made to him” [1 Sam 1.17].

The rest of Chapter 25 recounts the birth of Jacob and Esau.

Vs. 22: *Struggled* (*ratsats*): this verb heralds the impending conflict between the two brothers and their descendants. It implies a breaking down or violent oppression: “...who oppress the poor, who *crush* the needy” [Amos 4.1].

-The rest of this verse is obscure, something like, “Why this I?”

-Due to this *ratsats* within her, Rebekah *inquires* (*darash*) of the Lord. Cf. 9.5 for another use of this verb: “For your lifeblood I will surely *require* a reckoning.” Coupled with this inquiring Rebekah “goes,” that is, although the twins are struggling violently within her, she escapes it.

Vs. 23: “two *nations*” (*goy*) and “two peoples.” Both will be *divided* (*parad*). “And from these the nations *spread abroad* on the earth after the flood” [10.32]. Compare this two-ness, symbolic of future division, with the concord between the two babes in the wombs of Elizabeth and the Virgin Mary: “For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy” [Lk 1.44].

-Rom 9.12 quotes the second half of this verse, “The elder will serve the younger,” that is, the younger representing the Church and the elder, Israel.

-*Twins* (*to'am*): the only other references are Sg 4.6 and 7.3 concerning the bride's breasts.

Vs. 25: *Esau* (*Hesau*): a play on *Seir*, the region of the Edomites (cf. vs. 30). Esau came from the womb *red* or ‘*admuny* which bears similarity to the proper name “Edom.” Perhaps his being the first born resembles the creation of the original first born man or Adam (“Red”), from the soil in

2.7. In this second instance, attention is shifted from the prerogative of birth to divine election. -“Hairy *mantle*” (‘adereth): in the sense of a wide or ample outer garment. “On that day every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; he will not put on a hairy *mantle* in order to deceive” [Zech 13.4].

Vs. 26: Jacob is born immediately after Esau and is therefore subject to him by reason of such a brief temporal sequence. This verse explains the name by reason of Jacob having grasped Esau’s *heel* or haqev. “In the womb he took his brother by the *heel*, and in his manhood he strove with God” [Hos 12.3]. For another use of this term, cf. Sg 1.8: “If you do not know, O fairest among women, follow in the *tracks* of the flock.”

Vs. 27: Esau was a “skilled hunter” or in Hebrew, “*knowing* (yadah as in 24.16, that is, having intimate knowledge) *hunting* or tsayd. “He was a mighty *hunter* before the Lord; therefore it is said, ‘Like Nimrod a mighty *hunter* before the Lord’” [10.9].

-Esau was also a “man of the *field*” (sade), a play on tsayd just noted.

-Jacob was a “*quiet* man” or tam. This word has an expanded sense of being full, innocent. “He who walks in *integrity* walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will be found out” [Prov 10.9]. Also cf. 20.5: “In the *integrity* of my heart” with reference Abraham’s deception of Abimelech.

-Jacob also *dwelt* (yashav) in tents as opposed to being out in the wilderness like Esau.

-Compare Esau and Jacob with Cain and Abel. The former was a “tiller of the ground” [4.2] and the latter, “a keeper of sheep” (same verse).

Vs. 28: Isaac *loved* (‘ahav) Esau, and Rebekah loved Jacob which reflects the divided condition already present among the two babes in Rebekah’s womb.

Vs. 29: *Pottage* (nazyd): something boiled, the verb also being used in this verse. “Set on the great pot and boil *pottage* for the sons of the prophets” [2 Kg 4.38].

Vs. 30: *Red pottage* or in the Hebrew text, ha’adom ha’adom. Perhaps the redness of this food reflected the “red” character of Esau/Edom, a sense conveyed by vs. 31: “Therefore his name was called Edom.”

Vs. 31: “First” or in the Hebrew text literally as “as day.”

-Jacob demands Esau’s *birthright* or bekorath. “That no one be immoral or irreligious like Esau, who sold his *birthright* for a single meal” [Heb 12.16]. Keep in mind that Jacob escaped having this birthright only by a fraction of a second by reason of his immediate birth after his brother.

Vs. 33: Another use of “as day” for “first” in the Hebrew text.

Vs. 34: In vs. 32 Esau was so hungry that his birthright seemed as nothing to him. In this verse he *despised* (bazah) it. “He who keeps the commandment keeps his life; he who *despises* the word will die” [Prov 19.16]. Such contempt is emphasized by the words preceding it, “and rose and went his way.”

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Chapter Twenty-Six

Vs. 1: *Famine* (rahav): The first mention of such a famine is in 12.10 which is noted as the “former” one. Also cf. 44.55 where the verb of this noun is used: “When all the land of Egypt was *famished*, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread.” This crisis forces Isaac to return to Gerar, first mentioned in 20.1, that is, after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Vs. 2: The Lord *appeared* (ra’ah) to Jacob, the first instance being 12.7 when the Lord promised the land of Canaan to his descendants. Apparently Isaac intended to go to Egypt much like Joseph’s brothers later in 40.2 but was prevented from so doing by the Lord.

Vs. 3: *Sojourn* (gur): as in Gerar, 20.1. In the verse at hand, such gur is “in this land” whereas in vs. 2 it was one which “I shall tell you.” Despite this uprooting after the example of his grandfather Abraham, the Lord repeats that he will be with Isaac, bless him and give both him and his descendants not only the land in which he is in, but he will be in “all these lands.”

Vs. 4: The same promise given to Jacob as to his grandfather Abraham in 12.2-3.7.

Vs. 5: “Because:” an important word in this context which shows the pre-eminence of Abraham in God’s eyes. Here God says that he will extend the same blessings to Isaac “because” Abraham did the following: obeyed his voice, kept his charge, commandments, statutes and laws. This can be seen as an anticipation of the keeping of the Torah revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai as often noted in the Book of Deuteronomy.

Vs. 6: “So Isaac dwelt in Gerar.” The word “so” (‘and’ in Hebrew) indirectly shows Jacob’s obedience to the divine promise just noted.

Vss. 7-11 tell the incident when Isaac protected the identity of his wife Rebekah, that is, by calling her his sister. These verses echo the same story with Abraham and Sarah in Egypt (12.11-20) as well as in Gerar, the same place in which Jakob is dwelling (20.2-7). In both the latter and current situation, Abimelech is involved.

Vs. 12: “In that land” or Gerar where Isaac sows and *reaps* (matsa’, alternately as ‘to find’) a hundred-fold. Such agricultural abundance indicates a more settled way of life compared with Abraham.

Vs. 13: “The man” refers to Isaac which shows a certain distance after the previous verse has the Lord blessing him.

-Three uses of the verb gadal: *become rich, gained* more and more (used with halak, *to go*) *became* (very) *wealthy*.

Vs. 14: Although vs. 12 says that Isaac sowed and reaped, the verse at hand reverts to the nomadic standard of wealth, flocks and herds. Note the similarity of words: had *possessions* (qanah being the verbal root) and *envy* (qana’) by the Philistines.

Vs. 16: “Much *mightier* than we:” hatsam from which is derived the noun “bone.” “Those who are my foes without cause are *mighty*.” The verse at hand is uttered by Abimelech as a result of his

possessions and household noted in vs. 14.

Vs. 17: Despite having been dismissed by Abimelech, Isaac pitched camp in the valley of Gerar where Abimelech was king (cf. 20.2).

Vs. 18: The first of many wells which Isaac digs ('again'), that is, in reference to his father Abraham (cf. 21.25-34). Not only this but just as important, Isaac gave these wells the same names Abraham bestowed upon them, that is, Beer-sheba (cf. 21.31), "Well of seven" or "Well of the oath." This well contained "springing water" or more accurately, "*living* (chayiyim) water," vs. 19.

Vs. 20: Isaac names this well (rather, re-names it) Esek or "Contention" because his herdsmen and those of Gerar contended over it. A similar situation occurs in vs. 21 where the well is named Sitnah or "Enmity."

22: Rehoboth: the second well which Isaac digs or "Broad Places:" "for the Lord has *made room* (rachav) for us." "Relieve the trouble of my heart and *bring* me out of my distresses" [Ps 25.17] or literally, "The troubles of my heart are *enlarged*."

Vs. 23: Beer-sheba: Isaac "goes up" there, that is, to the well of "living water" noted in vs. 18.

Vs. 24: The Lord *appeared* (yare') to Isaac that "same night" or the very day he arrived at Beer-sheba promising to bless him "for Abraham's sake" (i.e., not for Isaac's sake).

Vs. 25: This verse has a fourfold sequence: built an altar, called upon the Lord's name, pitched tent, dug (another or third) well. Note the three uses of *there* (sham) to emphasize the importance of this place.

Vs. 28: *Plainly* (yare'): a double use of this verb to stress clarity of insight by Abimelech along with his adviser and military commander, that is, because "the Lord is with you." This reflects the covenant Abimelech made with Isaac's father, Abraham, again with respect to Beer-sheba (cf. 21.32).

Vs. 29: "Now blessed by the Lord:" emphasis is upon "now" which means that Abimelech at last realized the special role of Isaac.

Vs. 33: Shibah: another name for Beer-sheba and closely related to it in response to Isaac's servants having found water after the covenant made with Abimelech.

Vs. 35: This verse forebodes the incident between Isaac and his brother Esau by saying that he and his wife "made life bitter" or literally, "bitter *spirit*" (ruach).

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Chapter Twenty-Seven

Vs. 1: "Eyes were *dim*" (kahah): in the sense of failing in strength, that is, concerning Isaac. An alternative meaning may be found in Is 42.4: "He will not *fail* or be discouraged until he has

established justice in the earth.”

Vs. 3: Four words with similar sounds applied to Isaac’s older son, Esau: *go out* (tse’ or yatsa’), *field* (sadeh), *hunt* (tsod), *game* (tsedah); the last two are derived from the same verbal root. Compare this story of Esau and Jacob with that of Cain and Abel (4.2-16). Esau was a hunter which parallels Abel as a “keeper of sheep;” Jacob was a “quiet man, dwelling in tents” [25.27] which parallels Cain, a “tiller of the ground.”

Vs. 4: “Bless *you*.” the Hebrew text has *nephesh* or *soul*...“that my *soul* may bless you.”

Vs. 8: “Obey my *word*” (qol) or *voice*, that is, Jacob with respect to obeying his mother Rebekah.

Vs. 11: *Hairy* (sahir) as applied to Esau. “In that day the Lord will shave with a razor which is hired beyond the River—with the king of Assyria—the head and the *hair* of the feet” [Is 7.20].

-*Smooth* (chalaq) as applied to Jacob. “To preserve you from the evil woman, from the *smooth* tongue of the adventuress” [Prov 6 24]. The noun can mean a “lot,” “portion:” “The Lord is my chosen *portion* and my cup” [Ps 16.5]. Note the connection between Jacob’s smoothness of skin with his proper name, “He takes by the heel” or “he supplants” (cf. 25.26). I.e., both allude to his craftiness...slipperiness...which borders on deviousness.

Vs. 12: “I shall seem:” the Hebrew text literally reads, “and I shall be in his eyes.” Although Isaac was blind and thus unable to see, this expression is figurative.

-*Curse* (qelalah): as opposed to a blessing. This word derives from a verb meaning “to be diminished” and implies a lessening of the favors already in one’s possession as well as those lying in the future. “All these *curse*s shall come upon you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed” [Dt 28.45].

Vs. 13: *Curse* (qelalah): as in the previous verse. The first curse was on the serpent (3.14) who deceived Adam and Eve; the second was upon the land (3.17), i.e., upon which the serpent had its native habitat. Another noun derived from this verbal root is *qalal*, *smooth* in the sense of polished and is interesting to consider in light of Jacob’s smoothness. “And they sparkled like *burnished* bronze” [Ezk 1.7].

-Two words which are similar in sound to *qelalah*: *my word* (beqoly) and *fetch* (qach).

Vs. 15: “*Best* garment:” from the verbal root *chamad*, *to desire*, *to delight*. I.e., the garment in which Esau took the most delight but perhaps rarely wore since he was fond of hunting.

-Note the word “garment” which is derived from a verbal root (*bagad*), *to act fraudulently*. In the case at hand, it relates well with Rebekah’s deceit. Usually a father is depicted as handing on his personal traits and characteristics as well as inheritance to his sons. Here the mother is handing on to her son Jacob the ability to trick and to deceive which he will make use of later on. Consider this in view of Eve when she tricked Adam to eat the fruit in Eden whose antecedent is of course the serpent. “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be *desired* (*chamad*) to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; she also gave some to her husband” [3.7]. This taking/receiving is also echoed when Rebekah took and received the savory food from her son Jacob. Frequent reference to “savory food” heightens the sense of deception.

Vs. 16: *Kids* (gedayey hahozym): literally, “kids of she-goats,” in reference to the skins Rebekah places upon her son’s neck and hands to imitate Esau’s hair. The first word can mean a kid per se as in Dt 14.21: “You shall not boil a *kid* in its mother’s milk.” The second word or she-goat proper is first used in 15.9: “Bring me a heifer three years old, a *she-goat* three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove and a young pigeon.”

Vs. 18: Isaac is lying in bed unable to see and uses the common *Here I am* or hineny (alternately, ‘behold’). This act of making his presence known and what is about to occur is intimated in the giving and taking of the food, Esau’s garment and kid-skins.

Vs. 20: “Granted me success:” the Hebrew text literally reads, “called before me.” It is not Jacob’s “Lord God” but his father’s (‘your’) which may intimate that Jacob is in the process of deceiving his father.

Vs. 21: *Feel* (mashash). Perhaps the most graphic instance is Ex 10.21: “...that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be *felt*.” For another sense of this verb, cf. Dt 28.29: “And you shall grope at noonday as the blind *grope* in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways.” In the verse at hand, Isaac uses the sense of feeling to know (lacking in the Hebrew text) or to discern whether he is speaking with Esau or someone else. In the next verse Isaac feels the kid skin and knows that it is Esau yet hears the voice of Jacob.

Vs. 23: *Recognize* (nakar). This verb has two different uses: “to be ignorant of,” “to recognize.” It fundamentally means “to be foreign.” The idea seems to be looking at something about which you know little yet is identified later. A good instance which relates to the situation at hand is 42.7: “Joseph saw his brothers and *knew* them, but he *treated* them *like strangers* and spoke roughly to them.” Here nakar is used in the two different sense just noted.

-Despite the conflict between the two senses (feeling and hearing) and what seems his preference for the former, Isaac trusted in the latter and blessed Jacob.

-In this verse Isaac blessed Jacob. In vs. 25 he wants Isaac (perceived as Esau) to bring him food and them impart his blessing.

Vs. 26: *Kiss* (nashaq): basically as “to arrange,” “to put in order” and alternately as “to arm oneself.” “It was the sound of the wings of the living creatures as they *touched* one another” [Ezk 3.13]. Compare this use of nashaq with mashash, vs. 21.

Vs. 27: *Smelled* (ruach): used with the noun of this same verbal root (*smell* or *reyach*); from it is derived *spirit*. The scent of smell is less tangible than feeling yet offered sufficient evidence to Isaac that Esau was present, not Jacob. “And when the Lord *smelled* the pleasing *odor*” [8.21], a verse with the same two words. In the verse at hand, Isaac smelled not so much Jacob but his garments. As noted in vs. 15, the verbal root for this noun is “to deceive.” I.e., it can be said that Isaac smelled the deception of his younger son but failed to trust in his initial reliance upon the sense of hearing (Jacob’s voice as opposed to Esau’s).

-To Isaac, the *reyach* of Jacob equals that of a field; not simply a field but one “blessed by the Lord.” I.e., Isaac trusts the sense of smell over hearing.

Vs. 28: Isaac beseeches God to impart to Esau (Jacob) nine blessings listed here through vs. 29:

1) “*Dew* (tal) of heaven:” first mention of this word in the Bible. In vs. 39 Isaac wishes Esau to be distant from this dew. I.e., dew is not rain but that very light moisture on grass which the sun evaporates. Most likely the rough character of Esau would not appreciate it.

2) “*Fatness* (shemen) of earth:” i.e., the opposite of dew, fat being heavy compared with dew. This term can also apply to the earth’s fruitfulness: “Woe to...the fading flower of its glorious beauty which is on the head of the *rich* valley of those overcome by wine” [Is 28.1]!

3) “Plenty of *grain* (dagen) and *wine* (tyrosh):” two elements associated with harvest as opposed to a hunting society; the other two (dew and fatness) may also apply in this case. Keep in mind that Isaac thinks he is blessing Esau with them, not Jacob; Esau as hunter would not be familiar with them.

4) “Peoples *serve* (havad) you:” not necessarily be slaves, although this can apply.

5) “Nations *bow down* (shachah):” as in 22.5, “I and the lad will go yonder and *worship*.” Also cf. 23.12 where it connotes the giving of respect: “Then Abraham *bowed down* before the people of the land.”

6) “*Be lord* (gevyr):” that is to say, with respect to Esau’s (Jacob’s) brothers. The only other instance of this noun is in vs. 37 with respect to the real Esau. The verb connotes prevailing as well as strength.

7) “Mother’s sons *bow down* (shachah; cf. #5 above) to you.” Unknown to Isaac, his wife Rebekah instigated the plot to deceive him as described in these verses.

8) “*Cursed* (‘arar) be everyone who *curses* you.” First used in 3.14 with respect to the serpent, “*cursed* are you above all cattle, above all wild animals.”

9) “*Blessed* (barak) be everyone who *blesses* you.”

Vs. 30: *Scarcely gone out* (yatsa’ yatsa’): the same verb used twice to emphasize the departure of Jacob from Isaac after receiving his blessing through deception. More precisely, it depicts the coming of Esau. Jacob leaves Isaac’s “presence” whereas Esau does not enter his presence.

Vs. 31: “That you may bless me.” The Hebrew text has “your *soul* (nephesh; cf. vs. 4).”

Vs. 32: “Who are you?” or Isaac’s query to Esau as in vs. 18 where “my son” is added. Perhaps the lack of this phrase intimates Jacob’s preference over Esau.

Vs. 33: “Isaac *trembled violently*” (charad): the same verb used twice to indicate the intensity of his emotion. “*Ramah trembles*, Gibeah of Saul has fled” [Is 10.28]. Although Esau is the rightful first-born, Isaac’s trembling—NB: recognizing Esau through hearing as opposed to feeling him—can intimate that Isaac prefers Jacob over him.

—Isaac persists in keeping Jacob blessed despite the deception; in fact, “he shall be blessed.”

Vs. 34: “*Exceedingly* (had-me’od) great and bitter cry.” The preposition had connotes duration and intensity on Esau’s part.

Vs. 35: Isaac was uncertain as to Jacob’s identity (“The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau,” vs. 22); he came to his father with *guile* (mirmah). “Shall I acquit the man with wicked scales and with a bag of *deceitful* weights” [Mic 6.11]?

Vs. 36: Esau notes the connection between his brother Jacob's name and its verbal root, *haqav* (*supplanted*); cf. 25.26: "Afterward his brother came forth, and his hand had taken hold of Esau's *heel* (*haqev*) so his name was called Jacob." Esau says that Jacob did this twice, i.e., referring to his birth with Jacob. "In the womb he *took* his brother *by the heel*, and in his manhood he strove with God" [Hos 12.3].

-*Blessing* and *birthright* (*berakah* and *bekorah*): a play on words.

-*Reserved* (*'atsal*): fundamentally, "to connect." For another sense, cf. Num 11.17: "And I *will* take some of the spirit which is upon you and put it upon them."

Vs. 37: *Lord* (*gevyr*): as noted in vs. 29, the only other time when this word occurs in the Bible. This preference for Jacob over Esau is not unlike that for Jacob for Joseph which arouses jealousy among his brothers, a story to follow not long after the one at hand (cf. 37.3-11).

Vs. 38: *Grain* and *wine* (*dagen* and *tyrosh*): as in vs. 28 above.

-"What can I then do for you, my son?" Words to Esau after he had complained to his father about Jacob; they are almost an insult to him as the first-born. The "one blessing" of this verse may be seen as a further insult to Esau, again, being the first-born.

Vs. 39: This verse does not contain a blessing by Isaac who simply "answered" Esau with two "away froms:" earth's fatness and heaven's dew.

Vs. 40: "By your sword you shall live." Possibly connected with Edom (which means red, like Esau) as in 2 Sam 8.12-14 and 1 Kg 11.14-22, 25.

-*Break loose* (*rod*): a verb used with respect to beasts and connotes wandering. For another sense: "Why then do my people say, 'We are *free*, we will come no more to you'" [Jer 2.31]?

-*Yoke* (*hol*): as with beasts of burden and connected with the act of breaking loose just noted. Such a yoke is *broken* (*paraq*); for another use: "So all the people *took off* the rings of gold which were in their ears" [Ex 32.3].

Vs. 41: *Hated* (*satem*): more specifically, "to lay snares." Cf. 50.15, Job 16.9 & 30.21, the only other uses of this verb.

-"To himself:" in the Hebrew text, "in his heart."

-*Kill* (*harag*): as in 4.8 or when Cain killed his brother Abel. This verb can be used with respect to enemies in war as well as animals for food. In a sense, the Esau/Jacob story is intermediate between that of Cain and Abel (in the past) and Joseph and his brothers (in the future).

Vs. 42: Rebekah discovers Esau's intent to slay Jacob but only indirectly, "the words...were told."

-"*Comforts* (*nacham*) himself:" first used in 5.29; also can mean "to take vengeance" as in Is 1.24: "I will vent my wrath on my enemies and *avenge* myself on my foes."

-the word "planning" is absent in the Hebrew text.

Vs. 43: "Hear my voice:" directed to Jacob by his mother, Rebekah. Use of "voice" may signify closer attention than to Rebekah herself, i.e., this word being put at the service of God. Here she wishes Jacob to reside with her brother Laban in Haran.

Vs. 44: *Stay* (*yashav*): in the sense of dwelling, of remaining for an indefinite period of time. "And as

men migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and *settled* there” [11.2]. The verb *shuv* (*turns away*) used with respect to Esau’s *fury* (*chamah*) parallels this dwelling. The latter derives from a verb associated with warmth; also can mean *venom*: “And I will send the teeth of beasts against them, with *venom* of crawling things of the dust” [Dt 32.24].

Vs. 45: *Bereft* (*shakal*): with respect to the potential loss of Esau and Jacob. This verb can apply to being childless: “As your sword has *made* women *childless*, so shall your mother *be childless* among women” [1 Sam 15.33].

Vs. 46: Chapter 28 concludes with a kind of rhetorical statement by Rebekah concerning Hittite (i.e., Canaanite) women and the danger of her son Jacob marrying one of them. I.e., she is *weary* (*quts*), a verb which alternately means “to be aroused, “to cut off.” A noun derived from it means “thorn.” “For there is no food and no water, and we *loathe* this worthless food” [Num 21.5].

-The Hebrew text puts Rebekah’s complaint as “Why to me life?”

-For reference to the Hittite or Canaanites, cf. 23.3-4: “And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites, ‘I am a stranger and a sojourner among you.’” Thus Rebekah wishes Jacob to be faithful to Abraham. The same applies to Abraham not wishing a wife for his son Isaac (cf. 24.3) who is Jacob’s father.

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Chapter Twenty-Eight

Vs. 1: Isaac bids Jacob not to marry a Canaanite (Hittite) woman just like Rebekah’s admonition at the conclusion of the last chapter, again, reminiscent of 24.4 concerning Abraham and his son, Isaac.

Vs. 2: Isaac tells Jacob to go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel (cf. 22.22), his mother’s father, and take a wife from a daughter of Laban who is his mother’s brother. I.e., another parallel to Abraham sending his servant to “take a wife for my son Isaac” [24.5] from “my country” [vs. 4]. In both cases this awareness of being a sojourner in a foreign land, Canaan, was tantamount; it is contrasted by this vision backward to the ancestral homeland, so to speak, despite the displacement in Canaan.

Vs. 3: *God Almighty* (*El Shaddai*): first used in 17.1: “I am *God Almighty*; walk before me, and be blameless.” Here Isaac invokes a divine blessing after he blesses Jacob in vs. 1 along with being fruitful, multiplying and becoming a “*company* (*qahal*) of people.” This important noun (and verb) in Hebrew connotes gathering together, often with a religious sense. “Then I will thank you in the great *congregation*; in the mighty throng I will praise you” [Ps 35.18].

Vs. 4: The divine blessing continues into this verse and has its roots in Abraham’s blessing first mentioned in 12.2: “And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great so that you will be a blessing.” The blessing at hand Isaac imparts is given both to Jacob (‘to you’) and his descendants (‘with you’); almost as though both Jacob and they are contemporaneous. -*descendants* (*zerah*): alternately as “seed” or “planting.” “Your revenue was the *grain* of Shihor” [Is 23.3].

-The land Jacob is to possess is that of his *sojournings* or *magor* as in 17.8 (with respect to

Abraham). I.e., there has been and will be a constant contrast or tension between such magor and the land of Canaan as well as later on with respect to Israel going into Egypt.

Vss. 6-9: Esau witnesses the blessing of Jacob by Isaac and takes a wife (in addition to the two he already had) from Ishmael which can be traced to 16.11, the son of Hagar whom Abraham drove out into the wilderness...“a wild ass of a man” [vs. 12], keeping with the character of Esau. Contrast with Jacob who “obeyed his father and his mother” [vs. 7].

Vs. 11: En route to Haran Jacob “*came* to a certain *place* (maqom).” The verb pagah implies “striking upon” or “rushing;” i.e., a sudden arrival. “But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to *fall upon* the priests of the Lord” [1 Sam 22.17]. As for maqom, cf. 12.6: “Abram passed through the land to the *place* at Shechem.”

-“*Stayed* (lun) there” or lodged for the night. “My lords, turn aside, I pray you, to your servant’s house and *spend the night*” [12.2].

-“Taking one of the stones:” in the Hebrew text, “from the stones.” Note that it was of the *place* (maqom); mentioned again: “and lay down in that *place*” as if to emphasize the importance of the dream Jacob was about to have.

-*To sleep* (shakav): also can apply to death as in 1Kg 2.10: “So David *slept* with his fathers.”

Vs. 12: *Dreamed* (chalom): The second mention of a dream in Genesis, the first being with respect to Abimelech, 20.3 & 6. Chalom fundamentally means “to be fat;” the idea seems to be that physical fatness disposes one to dream. Jacob’s dream can foreshadow that of his son, Joseph (37.5, etc.) which may be why he preferred him over his other eleven sons (‘Now Israel...Jacob...loved Joseph more than any other of his children,’ vs. 3).

-“That there was a ladder:” the Hebrew text has hineh or *behold* which may related to Jacob *having come* (pagah, the suddenness of his arrival in vs. 11) to that “certain place.”

-*Ladder* (sulam): the only occurrence of this word in the Bible; from the verbal root salal, *to lift up, exalt*. It is reminiscent of Jn 1.51: “You will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” Note that this ladder is “set up.” No mention of a person(s) putting it in place which adds the mysterious character of Jacob’s dream.

-*Top* (ro’sh), that is, the ladder. This word is used with respect to the mountaintops visible as the flood was receding: “the *tops* of the mountains were seen” [8.5]; also means “head.”

-The top of this ladder *reached* (nagah) heaven. Cf. 3.3 where it alternately means to touch: “Neither shall you *touch* it, lest you die.” Note that the ladder does not reach heaven but “to heaven.”

-*Behold* (hineh): cf. the beginning of this verse, to introduce the second half as well as to complement the first half.

-*Angels* (mala’k): reminiscent of 24.7, “he will send his *angel* before you” with respect to Abraham’s servant to fetch a wife for Isaac, Jacob’s father. In the verse at hand, we have a generic mention of such angels (‘of God’) engaged in the process of ascending and descending. Note that the former comes first which may parallel with the (passive) setting up of the ladder.

-“*On* it:” i.e., the ladder. The preposition b- is used, literally, “in.”

Vs. 13: This verse begins with hineh, *behold*.

-“The Lord *stood* (natsav) *above* (hal) it.” The verb intimates a firm, unmoving position; for another use, cf. Ps 39.6: “Surely man goes about as a shadow!” The Hebrew literally reads, “firmly *standing*

as vanity.” The preposition *hal* means both *on* as well as *beside*.

-From this “firm” position—on top of the ladder or beside it/Jacob—the Lord addresses Jacob saying that he is the “God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac.” Note that technically Abraham is Jacob’s grandfather; perhaps the Lord wishes to show the superiority of Abraham not just for him but for future generations. “Was not Abraham our father justified by works” [Jms 2.21]? Also cf. 26.24 which posits Abraham as “your father”...right so according to physical lineage with respect to Isaac.

-*Land* (‘ertz): not just the soil but land as a kind of expanded maqom noted in vs. 11 (‘he came to a certain *place*’), freighted with religious significance. Jacob is *laying* (*shakav*) on this land: cf. vs. 11 where this verb means “to sleep.”

-The Lord does not give the ‘ertz only to Jacob but to his *descendants* (*zerah*, as in vs. 4).

Vs. 14: Jacob’s future descendants are to be as *dust* (*haphar*) not as from physical soil but again, as of the ‘ertz. As for the significance of this dust, cf. 13.15 in relationship to Abraham. Also note under 18.27 which gives other references to this term.

-*Spread abroad* (*parats*): basically as “to break,” “to destroy.” For a parallel use: “But the more they were oppressed, multiplied and *spread abroad*” [Ex 1.12].

-This spreading (‘breaking’) of ‘ertz-dust goes to the four cardinal points of north, south, east, west...as if to say that this special material expands outwards to cover the entire earth.

-“Bless themselves:” the Hebrew text reads, “be blessed” as opposed to God blessing them. Perhaps the ‘ertz-dust acted as a kind of incense or holy material which imparted this divine blessing.

Vs. 15: This verse begins with yet another *hineh* (*behold*) which seems to indicate the special importance of what God is saying. Note the sequence of this verse with different tenses and the movement into and from different places:

-“With you:” present tense concerning Jacob as an individual person.

-“*Will keep* (*shamar*) you” or future tense with respect to wherever Jacob goes. Cf. 18.19: “to *keep* the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice.”

-“Will bring you back” or future tense with respect to Jacob as an individual person concerning “this *land*” or ‘*adamah*, that is, not the ‘ertz, which signifies the land of sojourning in which he finds himself.

-“*Will not leave* (*hazav*) you.” This verb in the future tense can apply to a sense of abandonment.

-“Until I have done:” past tense intended with respect to a future action. It seems that once the Lord accomplishes this through that “of which I have spoken (past tense),” he will “leave” Jacob.

Vs. 16: *awoke* (from sleep) or *yaqats* as concerning Noah (9.24) and Pharaoh (41.4), which brings to and end Jacob’s dream and begins his response to it through the end of this chapter.

-*Place* (*maqom*): with respect to the Lord being there without Jacob realizing...*knowing* (*yadah*) it.

Vs. 17: *Afraid/awesome*: from the same verb *yare’*. The former is with respect to Jacob and the latter with respect to “this *place*” or *maqom*.

-“*House* (*beyth*) of God” and “*gate* (*shahar*) of heaven.” The two seem to be different yet have the same *maqom*.

Vs. 18: *Rose early in the morning* (*shakam*): as in 20.8, 21.14, 22.3. “Let us *go out early* to the vineyards” [Sg 7.13].

-The *stone* (oven) becomes a *pillar* (matsevah), signifying the transformation of this inanimate object into a divine symbol. Note that matsevah is derived from the verbal root natsav mentioned in vs. 13 (*stand above*) or the Lord's position concerning the ladder of Jacob's dream. It is as though such divine standing becomes incarnate in this pillar. "And he (Moses) built an altar...and twelve *pillars* according to the twelve tribes of Israel" [Ex 24.14].

-*Poured* (yatsaq): compared with 31.13 where in another dream God reminds Jacob that he had "anointed" this pillar.

-*Head* (ro'sh): as used in vs. 12, "top of the ladder" and Jacob's own head. Pouring oil upon it may indicate that the pillar was no higher than Jacob.

Vs. 19: Jacob calls this maqom Bethel or House of God, apparently preferring the "house" over the "gate," both of which were just noted in vs. 17.

-*Luz*: the former name of "that *place*" (maqom); from the verbal root luts, *to stammer, deride*, and may have an echo with the tower of Babel where the one language of the world became divided.

Vs. 20: Jacob now *makes a vow* (nadar; both verb and noun), the first one recorded in the Bible. This verb fundamentally means "to drop down" as grain from a winnowing instrument. Cf. 31.13 which refers to this verse in another dream of Jacob: "I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and *made a vow* to me."

-Jacob spells out his vow which seems to have a condition based on the following: "If God will be with me" (etc.) and "then the Lord shall be my God" [vs. 21].

-Another element of this vow which appears tentative upon God protecting Jacob is *keeping* (shamar) him. It is as though Jacob reminds God of his words in vs. 15: "I am with you and will *keep* you wherever you go."

Vs. 21: "Return in *peace* (shalom):" that is, to the house of his father Isaac. Only upon completion of the elements laid out in the previous and current verses will Jacob allow the Lord to "be my God."

Vs. 22: Jacob then will allow (so to speak) God to have his house as that pillar noted in vs. 18. That is, the divine beyth will equal the matsevah.

-*Tenth* (heser): the noun and verb (from which the noun is derived) are used together. "And Abram gave him (Melchizedek) a *tenth* of everything" [14.20].

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Chapter Twenty-Nine

Vs. 1: "Jacob went on his journey." The Hebrew text literally reads, "raised his feet and went."

-*"People of the east"* or the Arameans. "And as men migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there" [11.2], that is, after the flood and before the story of the tower of Babel when "the whole earth had one language and few words" [11.1].

Vs. 2: *Saw* (hineh): in the sense of "behold" and coupled with "as he looked" to stress the suddenness of the well's appearance. It is used a second time (*lo*) when Jacob saw the flocks of sheep there. This incident of the well is suggestive of his father Isaac's experience in chapter 26.

-*Lying* (ravats): the sheep by the well. Cf. 4.7 for another use of this verb: "Sin is *couching* at the

door.”

Vs. 4: In vs. 2 Jacob sees three flocks of sheep, not their shepherds, whom he addresses here as “my brothers.”

Vs. 5: “Is it *well* (shalom) with him (Laban)?”

Vs. 6: “*High* (gadol) day:” literally, “great” or when the sun is at its peak. The shepherds were gathered at this hottest time of day waiting for all the flocks to be gathered so that there might be enough men present to roll back the stone over the well. Although the context is different, these idle shepherds are reminiscent of the laborers in the vineyard: “About the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing; and he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day [Mt 20.6]?’”

Vs. 9: “She (Rachel) *kept* (raha) them:” that is to say, she shepherded the flocks.

Vs. 10: Jacob first sees Rachel and then the sheep in her charge, that is, those of Laban. Next Jacob rolls away the stone over well as though beholding Rachel’s beauty gave him sufficient strength for a task requiring many shepherds.

Vs. 11: Jacob *kissed* (nashaq) Rachel as in 27.26, “Come near and *kiss* me, my son.” In the verse at hand, nashaq is used with the preposition l- (*to, towards*) to signify a direct response.
-*Wept* (baka’): “The child lifted up his voice and *wept*” [21.16]. In both instances this lifting of one’s voice emphasizes the emotion. The English of verse at hand has for this lifting of voice, “wept aloud.”

Vs. 13: The previous verse has Rachel running to her father, Laban, followed in this verse by Laban running to meet Jacob.

-*Heard/tidings*: shamah/shemah.

-*Embraced* (chavaq): as in 33.4, “Esau ran to meet him, to *embrace* him.” For another use, cf. Eccl 4.5: “The fool *folds* his hands and eats his own flesh.”

Vs. 14: Compare Laban’s words, “Surely you are my bone and my flesh!” with Adam’s words, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” [2.23].

Vss. 15 through 35 or the end of this chapter relate Jacob’s long service with Laban in order to marry his daughter Rachel whom he first encountered at the well.

-*Serve* (havad): as in 27.28; can mean both servile work or done willingly as in the two following verses from Exodus: 1) “You shall *serve* God upon this mountain” [3.12]. 2) “Go now and *work*; for no straw shall be given you” [5.18].

-*Wages* (maskoreth): from the verbal root sakar, *to hire* as well as *to bribe*. For another sense, “...and a full *reward* be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel” [Rt 2.12].

Vs. 17: Leah’s eyes were *weak* or rakoth (rak). It also can apply to having an infirmity: “And I am this day *weak*, though anointed king” [2 Sam 3.39]. For another sense, “The most *tender* and delicately bred woman among you” [Dt 28.56].

-Rachel was both “*beautiful* and *lovely*.” The Hebrew text reads, “beautiful form and beautiful

appearance” with the same adjective applied, *yaphah*. “When Abram entered Egypt the Egyptians saw that the woman was very *beautiful*” [12.14]. Also, “God made all things *beautiful*” [Eccl 3.11].
-As for *form* in the Hebrew text: *to’ar*, from a verbal root meaning “to delineate.” “He had no *form* or comeliness that we should look at him” [Is 53.2].
-As for *sight* in the Hebrew text: *mar’eh*, from the common verbal root “to see.” For another sense, “And I, Daniel, alone saw the *vision*” [Dan 10.7].

Vs. 18: “*For* your younger daughter Rachel.” The Hebrew text has the preposition *b-* (*in*) prefixed to Rachel.

Vs. 19: “*Stay* with me.” *Shavah* is the verb; compare with *seven* (*shevah*) in the previous verse, a play on words.

Vs. 20: “Seemed:” in the Hebrew text, “were in his eyes.”
-“A *few* (‘*echad*) days:” from the verbal root meaning “to unite” from which is derived “one.” Reason: because Jacob loved Rachel which tends “to unite” two people.

Vs. 21: At the end of seven years (i.e., those “few days”) Jacob approaches Laban and calls Rachel his wife. Note that his “time is complete,” “time” being “days” which in the last verse were seen as few.” Jacob wishes “to *go into* her” or the common verb *bo’*.

Vs. 22: “Men of the *place* (*maqom*):” possibly referring to “the land of the people of the east” [vs. 1].
-*Feast* (*mishtah*): intimates something akin to a drinking bout. “And on the second day as they were *drinking* (noun) wine” [Est 7.2].

Vs. 23: “He *went into* her (Leah):” *bo’* as with Jacob’s request concerning Rachel, vs. 21.

Vs. 24: *Maid* (*shiphchah*): i.e., Zilpah, who belonged to Leah; also mentioned in 30.9. “She (Sarai, Abraham’s wife) had an Egyptian *maid* whose name was Hagar” [16.1].

Vs. 25: *Deceive* (*ramah*): a verb whose fundamental meaning is “to throw,” “to cast.” “...but if to *betray* me to my adversaries” [1 Chron 12.17]. Compare with Jacob’s deception of his father Isaac through Rebekah’s instigation, although Isaac does not seem to claim that deceit was involved.

Vs. 26: *Country* (*maqom*): “place” as noted several times earlier.

Vs. 27: *Complete* (*mala’*): the same verb used in vs. 21, “for my time is *completed*.”
-Note the play on words: *week* (*shavuah*) and *seven* (*shevah*), from the same verbal root.

Vs. 30: After Laban relented and gave Rachel to Jacob as a wife, Jacob served him for another seven years. No mention of this time being “but a few days” [vs. 20] or the years in anticipation of this marriage.

Vs. 31: An “active” verb (“The Lord saw”) used with respect to a “passive” one (‘that Leah was hated’) which sets the stage for divine intervention.
-A play on words: *racham*/Rachel or *womb*/Rachel. Again, parallel with Sarai and Hagar.

-*Barren* (haqar): “Now Sarai was *barren*; she had no child” [11.30].

Vss. 32-35 or to the end of this chapter we have a list of the four sons borne by Leah to Jacob, each of whom have a play on the Hebrew names:

-Reuben or “See, a Son:” “the Lord has *looked* (yare’) upon my *affliction* (hony).” Compare with 16.11: “Because the Lord has given heed to your *affliction*.”

-Simeon or “The Lord has *heard* (shamah) that I am hated.”

-Levi or “my husband will be *joined* (lawah) to me.” “...for this will *go with* him in his toil through the days of life which God gives him under the sun” [Eccl 8.15].

-Judah or “this time I will *praise* (yadah) the Lord.” This verb fundamentally means “to profess, “to cast.” I will *give* to the Lord the *thanks* due to his righteousness” [Ps 7.18].

-This chapter concludes with Leah who “*ceased* (hamad) bearing.” The verb implies a stopping, a standing still.

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Chapter Thirty

Vs. 1: Because Leah was fruitful and her sister Rachel bore no children, she *envied* (qana’) her. Cf. 26.14: “...so that the Philistines *envied* him.” Compare with Hagar looking at Sarai with contempt when she became pregnant with Ishmael, 16.4.

-Rachel’s demand to her husband Jacob for children shows that a lack of them is equivalent to death (‘Give me children or I shall die!’). Compare with Hannah: “...but will give to your maid servant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life” [1 Sam 1.11].

Vs. 2: *Kindled* (charah): that is, Jacob’s response to Rachel in the previous verse. “And my wrath will *burn*, and I will kill you with the sword” [Ex 22.24].

-“In the place of God.” In the Hebrew text it literally reads, “under (or beneath) God.”

Vs. 3: Rachel gives Jacob her *maid* (‘amah) Bilah to have sons, Dan and Naphtali. ‘Amah is infrequently used and applies to a female slave. Cf. 1 Sam 1.11 cited in vs. 1, that is, Hannah.

-“That she may bear upon my knees.” Compare with 16.2: “Go in to my maid; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.” The verse at hand signifies transference of Leah’s child to Rachel while Rachel imitates the birth.

Vs. 4: *Maid* (shiphchatah): referring to Bilah and applying to Hagar (16.1) and applying more to someone who has become part of a household. Note that in the previous verse Bilah is called an ‘amah.

-“as a wife:” referring again to Bilah. This “as” may be paralleled with Bilah to bear upon the knees of Rachel in vs. 3.

-“*Through* her:” in Hebrew the preposition m- (min) is used, “*from* her.”

Vs. 6: Although Bilah bore Dan (“He judged”), Rachel claims him as her own son. That is, Rachel says that God *judged* (dyn) her. Note the play on words, 49.16: “Dan shall *judge* his people as one of the tribes of Israel.” Presumably Dan as well as Naphtali were borne through Bilah upon Rachel’s knees (vs. 3).

Vs. 8: Naphtali: from the verbal root *patal*. “With mighty *wrestlings* I have *wrestled* with my sister.” The fundamental meaning of *patal* is “to twist” and connotes deceit. “He takes the wise in their own craftiness; and the schemes of the *wily* are brought to a quick end” [Job 5.13]. Compare with 25.26: “so his name was called Jacob” or “he takes by the heel” or “he supplants.”

Vs. 9: In this verse attention is shifted from Bilah back to Leah who “ceased bearing children.” Following the pattern of Rachel, Leah offered her *maid* (*shiphchatah*, vs. 4) Zilpah two sons, Gad and Asher.

Vs. 11: Gad or “Fortune” named not by Zilpah but by Leah. “But you who forsake the Lord, who forget my holy mountain, who set a table for *Fortune*” [Is 65.11].

Vs. 13: Asher or “Happy” again named by Leah, not Zilpah; from the verbal root ‘asar, *to be happy*: “*Blessed* is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked” [Ps 1.1].

Vs. 14: Reuben, the first-born of Leah (29.32) found *mandrakes* and gave them to his mother, Leah: duday, supposedly endowed with aphrodisiac properties. “The *mandrakes* give forth fragrance, and over our doors are all choice fruits” [Sg 7.13].

-Rachel beseeches Leah for these mandrakes in an attempt to become pregnant. Her desperation parallels that of Jacob’s mother, Rebekah in Chapter 27.

Vs. 18: The fifth son born (i.e., through Leah) Jacob is Issachar or “God has given me my *hire*” or *sakar* as in 15.1: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your *reward* shall be very great.” Leah says that she gave her maid to her husband, implying Zilpah.

Vs. 20: *Endowed/dowry*: *zavad/zeved*, the only use of these two terms in the Bible. It shows the origin of sixth son, Zebulun.

-“Now my husband will *honor* (*zaval*) me.” The Hebrew verb fundamentally means “to inhabit,” the only use of this term in the Bible.

Vs. 21: Dinah or the only daughter born by Leah to Jacob whom Shechem violates as recounted in 34.1-34.

Vs. 22: “God *remembered* (*zakar*) Rachel.” As noted under 8.1 (‘But God *remembered* Noah and all the beasts’), this verb suggests remembering in the sense of making a male heir, “male” being derived from it. This takes on special importance within the context of Leah’s fertility and Rachel’s barrenness. Such divine remembering implies that God had her in mind from the beginning and is now about to effect a change. Also, parallel this with Hannah: “And Elkanah *knew* Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her” [1 Sam 1.19].

-After remembering Rachel, God then *hears* (*shamah*) her just like he *hearkened* to Leah in vs. 17.

Vs. 23: “God has taken away my *reproach* (*cherpah*).” This noun can also mean “scorn,” “contempt” in the sense of a stigma: “This day I have rolled away the *reproach* of Egypt from you” [Jos 5.9].

Vs. 24: The name of Rachel’s only-begotten son—compared with those by Leah, Bilah and Zilpah—is

Joseph who will figure significantly. The meaning of this name is given as “May the Lord *add* (yasaph) to me another son!”

-The sequence of the previous and current verses may be outlined as follows: remembered, hearkened, opened womb, conceived, bore, taken away reproach.

Vs. 25: Both here and the next verse Jacob bids Laban to take leave of him, that is, after a period of fourteen years and after Rachel bore Joseph.

-“To my own *home* and *country*.” maqom and ‘ertz, where the two are synonymous and pertain to Beer-sheba (28.10), just prior to his dream of the ladder.

Vs. 26: Jacob asks Laban to have his two wives (Rachel and Leah) as well as his children.

Vs. 27: Laban learns through *divinization* that the Lord has blessed him because of Jacob. Nachash is the term used here; cf. notes under 3.1 where the term also means “serpent.” Given Laban’s behavior towards Jacob, he is not unlike a serpent in tricking him to work for him for so many years.

-“*Because of you*.” biglal, which intimates a cause or circumstance.

Vs. 28: *Name* (naqav): fundamentally, “to bore,” “to hollow out.” It implies making a distinction, specification: “And you shall be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord *will give*” [Is 62.2] or has specified. In the verse at hand, this verb concerns Jacob’s *wages* or sakar (cf. 29.15).

Vs. 29: *Cattle* (miqneh): more specifically, “wealth,” “possessions” and later in 34.23. “...to Abraham as a *possession* (referring to a field) in the presence of the Hittites” [23.18].

Vs. 30: “*Increased* (parats) abundantly.” As in 28.14 with reference to Jacob’s dream: “...and you shall *spread abroad* to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south.”

-“Wherever I turned.” In the Hebrew text, literally as “to my feet” or most likely to wherever Jacob had set foot which corresponds to the Lord’s blessing of Laban.

Vs. 31: Here “flock” (of sheep) is mentioned, that is, belong to Laban, which Jacob offers to both feed and *keep* (shamar). Compare with Jacob’s words to Laban concerning cattle. As for the verb, cf. 28.20: “If God will be with me, and *will keep* me in this way that I go.”

Vs. 32: Jacob *passes through* (havar) Laban’s flock “today.” Compare with the Lord *passing over* (pasach) the Hebrews in Ex 12.13. Jacob does this passing through to obtain sheep which are *speckled* (noqed: marked with points or spots) and *spotted* (tala’: “You took some of your garments and made for yourself *gaily decked* shrines,” Ezk 16.16) as well as *black* (chum, the only use of this word in the Bible) lambs. The same applies to Laban’s goats, minus those which are black or not mentioned.

Vs. 33: *Honesty* or tsedaqah in the sense of righteousness. “And he believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as *righteousness*” [15.6].

-“When you come to look into my wages with you” or in Hebrew, “when you will come on my wages before you.”

-“Stolen:” Jacob’ way of saying that the livestock in his possession will be thus reckoned which may be paralleled with the deception of his father Isaac to get Esau’s birthright. In vss. 34-6 Laban

agrees to this arrangement yet in vs. 35 back-tracks; nevertheless, Jacob continues to feed the rest of Laban's flocks.

Vss. 37-40 recount the manner by which Jacob obtained "stronger flock" as opposed to a "weaker flock" (Laban). The RSV has a footnote which sums this up: "Ancient cattle-breeders believed that the female, at the time of conception, was influenced by visual impressions which affect the color of the offspring. Jacob produced striped animals by putting striped sticks before the females' eyes while they were breeding." Note that the text deals with "flocks" (of sheep) as opposed to cattle.

Vs. 42: *Stronger* (qashar): this verb fundamentally means "to bind" and can also mean "to conspire." This deception of Laban may be paralleled with Jacob's the deception of his father Isaac, that is, with the help of his mother Rebekah to get the birthright over Esau.

- *Weaker* (hataph): this verb fundamentally means "to cover." For a parallel use to the verse at hand but a different form of the verb, cf. Ps 77.4: "I think of God, and I moan; I meditate, and my spirit faints."

Vs. 43: "Man" is unspecified, most likely referring to Jacob who "grew exceedingly rich" or parats as in vs. 30 and 28.14, the latter referring to Jacob's descendants.

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Chapter Thirty-One

Vs. 1: Here Jacob hears the sons of Laban saying that he had stolen the flocks of the their father. I.e., it is the sons who are speaking, not Laban himself. This verse reads in Hebrew, "Jacob heard the words..."

- *Wealth* (kavod): from the verbal root fundamentally meaning "to be heavy." The noun can also apply to "splendor" and more commonly, "glory." "To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your *wealth*" [Is 10.3]? For reference to this wealth, cf. the last verse of the last chapter: large flocks, maid servants, men servants, camels and asses.

Vs. 2: Jacob observes that Laban (who apparently received word of Jacob's deception through his sons, vs. 1) "did not regard him with favor as before" or literally, "behold, there was not with him as before."

Vs. 3: Despite the apparent deception of Laban, God is allied with Jacob and bids him to return to "the *land* ('erts) of your fathers and your *kindred* (moledeth)." For this land, cf. 28.10, "Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran." The latter was noted in 12.1 which through Abraham set in motion the departure to a land appointed by God: "Go from your country and your *kindred* and your father's house to the *land* that I will show you." In this verse, 'erts is used with respect to one not yet possessed. In this land God says that he will be with Jacob as opposed to "not being with him" at present.

Vs. 4: Jacob invites Rachel and Leah to the field where his deceptively gained flock is located in order to inform him of his plan to flee Laban.

Vs. 5: In contrast to vs. 3 where God says that he will be with Jacob in the land of his fathers and kindred, Jacob says that God had been with him or in the land where Laban dwelt or “the land of the people of the east” [29.1].

Vs. 6: *Strength* (koach): referring to Jacob’s devoted duty to Laban. Compare with another use in 4.12: “When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its *strength*.”

Vs. 7: *Cheated* (hatal): can also connote mocking as in Judg 16.10: “And Delilah said to Samson, ‘Behold, you have *mocked* me.’”

-The second half of this verse literally reads in the Hebrew text, “and God did not give to evil with me.”

Vs. 9: Jacob claims that God had *taken away* (natsal) Laban’s cattle and gave them to him. Cf. 30.29 where these cattle “fared well with me.” Again, despite mention of cattle, Jacob is more involved with sheep. The Hebrew word is miqneh which can apply to “possession.” The verb natsal can also mean “to deliver:” “You did *deliver* me from men of violence” [Ps 18.49].

Vs. 10: “*Mating* (yacham) season” or literally, “in the time of heat” as in 30.41 where it applies to breeding.

-*Dream* (chalom), which continues through vs. 13. The last mention of a dream with respect to Jacob is 28.12, the ladder reaching to heaven upon which angels were ascending and descending. There is no previous mention of the *he-goats* (hatud) mating with the flock (striped, spotted, mottled: cf. 30.39). This verse and vs. 12 contain the only mention of hatud in the Book of Genesis. Compare Jacob’s dream with that of Pharaoh which Joseph interpreted in Chapter Forty, i.e., sleek and gaunt cattle.

Vs. 11: In this dream God does not speak but the “angel of God” to whom Jacob responds Here I am!,” a response not mentioned in the one at Bethel.

Vs. 12: The angel bids Jacob, “Lift up your eyes” which corresponds to “I lifted up my eyes” of vs. 10 which is in reference to the same dream.

-*See* (ra’ah). This verb is mentioned twice: “Lift up your eyes and *see*” and “I (the angel) have *seen* all that Laban is doing to you.”

Vs. 13: “I am the God of Bethel.” That is, there is a switch to God speaking here compared with the angel in vs. 11. There does not seem to be a clear-cut distinction between the two; reference is of course to Jacob’s dream. It is as though the two dreams—Bethel and the current one in which Jacob is experiencing—are one and the same.

-*Anointed* (mashach): first use of this term in the Bible. Compare with Jacob having “*poured* (yatsaq) oil on top of it” or the pillar in 28.18. Use of yatsaq can signify a more solemn dedication, this verb often being used with respect to the installation of a king. “The Lord sent me to *anoint* you king over his people Israel” [1 Sam 15.1].

-God/the angel now bids Jacob to do three things: 1) *arise* (qum), 2) “*go forth* (yatsa’) from this *land* (‘erets),” 3) “*return* (shuv) to the *land* (‘erets) of your *birth* (moledeth: cf. vs. 3 as *kindred*).”

Vs. 14: After Jacob’s second dream both Rachel and Leah speak to Jacob. Note the contrast from this

verse through vs. 16, that is, between the content of dream and the two women who speak of themselves as having been alienated from their father, Laban.

- *Portion* (cheleq): also as “smoothness” as Is 57.6 with two uses: “Among the *smooth stones* of the valley is your *portion*.”

- *Inheritance* (nachalah): as in Num 18.20 which also mentions “portion:” “I am your portion and your *inheritance* among the people of Israel.”

Vs. 15: *Foreigners* (nakry): as opposed to a lawful heir. “Yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a *stranger* enjoys them” [Eccl 6.2].

- *Using up* (‘akal): basically, as “to eat,” “to devour.” Here with respect to the money belonging to Rachel and Leah.

Vs. 16: *Property* (hosher): alternately as “riches.” “Wealth and *riches* are in his house” [Ps 112.3]. Here the two women say that God himself has *taken it away* (natsal) from Laban. Cf. 31.9 for another use of this verb.

- Rachel and Leah ask Jacob, “whatever God has said to you, *do* (hasah).” Note the play on words, hosher/hasah.

17: “Jacob *arose* (qum):” cf. vs. 13 when God/the angel bade him to return to the land of his birth which is recounted in vs. 19, “the land of Canaan to his father Isaac.”

Vs. 19: Rachel stole the *household gods* of her father Laban, symbolic of leadership over one’s property and family. Teraphym is the word used as in Zech 10.2: “For the *teraphym* utter nonsense, and the diviners see lies.” Also, 1 Sam 19.13: “Michal took an *image* and laid it on the bed and put a pillow of goats’ hair at its head and covered it with the clothes.”

Vs. 20: *Outwitted* (ganav): alternately, “to steal” and used in the previous verse where Rachel *stole* Laban’s household gods. Thus women both played a dirty trick on Laban. The verse at hand calls Laban an Aramean, almost as an insult and to re-enforce the double ganav. “Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean” [25.20].

Vs. 21: “Jacob *arose* (qum):” yet another mention of this verb as already noted in vss. 13 & 17, this time when he flees Laban.

- “Set his face:” to show determination resulting from this qum and to reach “the hill country of Gilead,” the place from which a caravan of Ishmaelites came (cf. 37.25) and to which Jacob’s brothers sold Joseph.

Vs. 25: *Overtook* (nasag): by Laban which was possibly easy to do because Jacob was “exceedingly rich and had large flocks” [30.43]. “...(Pharaoh) *overtook* them encamped at the sea” [Ex 14.9].

- Two types of “hill country:” one where Jacob pitched his tent and the other of Gilead in reference to Laban.

Vs. 26: “Have *cheated* (ganav; cf. vs. 20 as ‘outwitted’) me:” literally in the Hebrew text, “have cheated my heart.” In the previous verse Jacob and Laban were situated in two different areas. This verse immediately follows where both speak with each other; perhaps they were not distant or came together in a neutral spot for this purpose.

Vs. 27: “Flee *secretly*” (chava’): literally, “hide yourself to flee.” “I heard your sound in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I *hid myself*” [3.10].

-Another use of ganav: “that you have *cheated* me.”

Vs. 28: “You have done *foolishly* (sakal).” “O Lord, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into *foolishness*” [2 Sam 15.31].

Vs. 29: “God of your father:” that is, Isaac. Compare with Jacob’s dream at Bethel: “I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac” [28.13]. There Abraham is mentioned as Jacob’s father over Isaac, his biological father.

-*Yesterday* (‘emesh): in the sense of the latter part of the previous day. “Behold, I lay *last night* with my father” [19.34].

- *Take heed* (shamar) as in 28.15; in this verse with respect to speaking “neither good nor bad” to Jacob which sets the tone of the ensuing dialogue between Laban and Jacob.

Vs. 30: *Longed greatly* (kasaph): double use of this verb to show the intensity of Jacob’s sentiment. The fundamental meaning of kasaph is “to become pale” and from which is derived the noun “silver” by reason of its pale color. “You would *long* for the work of your hands” [Job 14.15].

-*Gods* (‘elohey): in reference to the teraphym (*household gods*) of vs. 19 which Rachel, not Jacob, had stolen.

Vs. 31: *Would take* (gazal): connotes a sense of violence and fundamentally means “to pluck away.” “Benaiah...*snatched* the spear out of the Egyptian’s hand” [2 Sam 23.21].

Vs. 32: “Our kinsmen” or those who accompanied both Jacob and Laban. Compare their corporate witness with that in Rt 4.4: “Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.”

-Ganav (*stole*): yet another mention of this verb, here with respect to Jacob not realizing that Rachel had stolen the gods.

Vs. 33: Laban searches the tents of Jacob, Leah, the maid servants and finally Rachel’s, as if the first three were primary suspects. This sense is conveyed by the words, “And he went out of Leah’s tent and entered Rachel’s.”

Vs. 34: Teraphym as opposed to Laban calling them ‘elohey (cf. vs. 30).

-*Felt* (mush): as in 27.21, “Come near that I may *feel* you.” Use of this verb suggests that the tent was either dark or so full with object that the only way to identify the teraphym (presumably with a distinct shape) was to feel their presence.

Vs. 35: “Way of women.” Compare with supposed uncleanness noted in Lev 15.19: “When a woman has a discharge of blood which is her regular discharge from her body, she shall be in her impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening.” Also compare the sense of this “touching” with that of Laban’s “feeling” in the previous verse.

-*Searched* (chaphas): a shift from the mush within Rachel’s tent of vs. 34 to presumably outside it. “And he (Joseph) *searched*, beginning with the eldest and ending with the youngest” [44.12].

Vs. 36: “Jacob became angry...upbraided Laban.” Note the use of two prepositions in the Hebrew text: “*to* (l-) Jacob” and “*in* (b-) Laban” which reveals the intensity of the situation.

-*Offense* (peshah): in the sense of a fault or trespass. “Say to Joseph, ‘Forgive, I pray you, the *transgression* of your brothers and their sin” [50.16].

-*Hotly pursued* (dalaq): compare with “Jacob *became angry* or charah.” For the latter, cf. Sg 1.6: “Do not gaze at me because I am swarthy, because the sun has *scorched* me.”

Vs. 37: *Goods*, “household *goods* (kely):” essentially meaning a tool or utensil. In 27.3 it means *weapon*: “Now then, take your *weapons*, your quiver and your bow.”

-Jacob continues to address Laban through vs. 42, that is, proclaiming his appropriate behavior while serving him. This is reminiscent of David when he and his troop of men guarded the possessions of Nabal as recounted in 1 Sam 25.14.17.

Vs. 42: “*Fear* (pachad) of Isaac:” from a verbal root meaning “to tremble.” Note that this fear belongs to Jacob’s father. Compare with Isaac who said in his dream concerning the ladder, “How *awesome* is this place” [28.17]; it is derived from the verb yare’. In this verse Jacob also mentions the “God of my father, the God of Abraham.” Obviously “my father” refers to Isaac as well.

-“*On my side*:” the preposition l- is used, “*to me*.”

-*Rebuked* (yakach): as 20.16 as a noun, “It is your *vindication* in the eyes of all who are with you.” Reference is to Laban by God in his dream ‘emesh or *last night*. “But the God of your father spoke to me *last night*.”

Vs. 44: *Covenant* (beryth): or literally, “let us *cut* (karath).” The last mention of such an agreement was between Abraham and Abimelech: “and the two men made a *covenant*” [21.27]; the verb karath is also used here.

-Two “*betweens*:” with respect to “you” or Jacob and “me” or Laban.

-*Witness* (hed): as in 1 Sam 12.5, “The Lord is *witness* against you, and his anointed is *witness* this day.” In the verse at hand, such a hed/beryth assumes an identity independent of Jacob and Laban.

Vs. 45: *Stone* (oven): cf. 28.18, “So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the *stone* which he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar.” Jacob also removed a very large stone from the well (cf. 29.10).

-As in the ladder dream, he sets this stone as a *pillar* or matsevah as in 28.18.

Vs. 46: As distinct from the stone/pillar of the previous verse, Jacob bids his kinsmen to “gather stones” in order to make a *heap* or gal. “And they raised over him a great *heap* of stones that remains to this day” [Jos 7.26]. Jacob, Laban and the rest ate there, a kind of covenant meal as in vs. 54.

Vs. 47: Two names for this heap (as opposed to the pillar): 1) Jegar-sahadutha or Aramaic for The Heap of Witness, a name given by Laban. 2) Galeed or Hebrew for The Heap of Witness. Then Laban names this heap Galeed which concurs with the one Jacob gave it.

Vs. 48: *Pillar* (gal): Laban applies this term to the matsevah of vs. 45 which is a hed (*witness*) he speaks about in vs. 44.

-As in vs. 44, the one at hand has two “betweens:” with respect to “you” or Jacob and “me” or Laban.
-Laban also calls this gal Galed as noted in the previous verse or the name bestowed by Jacob.

Vs. 49: In line with the previous verses, Laban now calls the pillar (missing in the Hebrew text) Mizpah or Watchpost. “So they assembled and went to Mizpah, opposite Jerusalem, because Israel formerly had a place of prayer in Mizpah” [1 Mac 3.46].

-*Watch* (tsaphah): related to Mizpah. This verb fundamentally means “to shine” and can apply to a prophet as watchman, “I set *watchmen* over you saying, ‘Give heed to the sound of the trumpet’” [Jer 6.17]!

-Such watching is in line with the earlier two “betweens.”

-This watching which assumes the form of Mizpah is only when Laban and Jacob are “*absent* one from the other” or satar which was used in another sense in 4.14: “and from your face I shall be *hidden*.”

Vs. 50: *Remember* (ra’ah): literally, “to see” or God sees as a witness with respect to two additional “betweens.”

Vs. 51: “Which I have *set* (yarah):” in conjunction with two “betweens.” This verb applies to the laying of a foundation and has the notion of casting. “On what were its bases sunk, or who *laid* its cornerstone” [Job 38.6]? Another variation of this verbal root applies to sprinkling: “He has *poured down* for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before” [Jl 2.23]. Compare yarah with yasam in 28.18: “He took the stone...and *set* it *up* for a pillar.” The latter suggests a placing compared with the establishment connoted by yarah.

Vs. 52: *Witness* (hed): as first noted in vs. 44 and again in vs. 47 with respect to the heap of stones. In the verse at hand, hed applies not only to this heap but to the pillar.

-*Pass over* (havar): in the sense of committing a trespass. Here such a passing over can mean going by it. Still, there is a sense that one can literally pass over the heap. Note that Laban does apply havar or over the heap of stones to Jacob. Laban also says that Jacob will not pass over both the heap and pillar to him. The pillar is singled out as one of *harm* or rahah.

Vs. 53: Laban invokes the “God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father.” Nahor is first mentioned in 11.22 as part of the generations after the fall of the tower of Babel, i.e., the descendants of Shem. “Their father” refer to the common ancestry of Abraham and Nahor: “And Abram and Nahor took wives” [11.29]. Compare this reference to a singular God mentioned by Laban with his attachment to household gods in vs. 19.

-*Fear* (pachad): an oath made by Jacob with respect to his father Isaac, vs. 42.

Vs. 54: “On the mountain:” a place where Jacob offered a sacrifice. It is not clearly determined but cf. vs. 25, the “hill country of Gilead.”

-On this mountains Jacob summons his kinsmen to “eat bread.” In vs. 46 Jacob and his kinsmen “ate there by the heap.” The former takes place after both Jacob and Laban agree not to pass over the heap of stones and after Jacob’s sacrifice.

-“*Tarried* (lun) all night:” i.e., upon the mountain in the hill country of Gilead. “My lords, turn aside, I pray you, to your servant’s house and *spend the night*” [19.2].

Vs. 55 (32.1 in the Hebrew text): The last mention of Laban before his departure from Jacob. Apparently both men maintained that separation noted in vs. 52, not to pass over the heap and pillar.

-The sequence of Laban's departure: arose, kissed (grandchildren and daughters), blessed them, departed, returned home.

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Chapter Thirty-Two

Vs. 1. As noted in 31.55, the Hebrew text of this chapter is one verse ahead of the English translation. -"Met him (pagah):" as in 28.11, "And he *came* to a certain place" which is in reference to where Jacob had his dream; "came" in the sense of suddenly having hit upon that maqom (*place*). For another sense of this verb, cf. Rt 1.16: "*Entreat* me not to leave you or to return from following you."

-The "angels of God" can be the same ones in 28.12 or those ascending and descending the ladder of Jacob's dream.

Vs. 2: "God's *army* (machaneh)." This term can alternately mean *camp* whether of soldiers or people who are wandering: "In the evening quails came up and covered the *camp*." Ps 27.3 shows the relationship between this noun and the verb (chanah) from which it is derived: "Though a *host encamp* against me, my heart shall not fear."

-Jacob calls the *place* (maqom) Mahanaim or Two Armies. For other references, cf. 2 Sam 2.8-9; 17.24-9; 1 Kg 4.14. One army is obviously God's and the other is not so clear, possibly referring to Jacob's retinue or later to Esau with his "four hundred men" [vs. 6].

Vs. 3: *Messengers* (mal'ak, singular): the same word for "angels" in the previous verse. Then again, perhaps Jacob took some of the "angels of God" and send them as messengers to Esau. "Therefore Saul sent *messengers* to Jesse" [1 Sam 16.19].

-Note the play on words, Esau (hairy), Seir (also Hairy) and Edom (red), all which were connected with his birth, 25.25.

Vs. 4: Note the contrast: "My *lord* ('adony) Esau" and "your *servant* (heved) Jacob." Such words were put into the mouths of Jacob's messengers to Esau.

-*Sojourned* (gur): Jacob with respect to Laban and as Abraham: "and he *sojourned* in Gerar" [20.1].

Vs. 5: Jacob tells his messengers—speaking in the first person singular to Esau—about his possessions and wishes to find *favor* (chen) with him. "But Noah found *favor* in the eyes of the Lord" [6.8].

Vs. 6: As soon as Jacob puts his words into the mouths of his messengers, this verse has them respond immediately upon their return from Esau, namely, that Esau is en route to Jacob. Presumably Esau is coming to Mahanaim (Two Armies, vs. 2).

Vs. 7: *Divided* (chatsah): especially into two parts as is the case here. "...and no longer *divided* into two kingdoms" [Ezk 37.22].

-*Companies* (machaneh): as in 32.2, "army" and hence, Mahanaim. Thus the encounter which is about to take place between Jacob and Esau can be seen as these "two armies."

Vs. 9: "And Jacob said." Compare with Jacob "thinking" in vs. 8, that is, *thinking* ('amar, to speak) to himself. In the verse at hand, Jacob addresses the God of Abraham and Isaac and calls both "my father."

-*Land* ('erets): that is, of Jacob's birth and kindred in reference to 31.3, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you." In that verse there is no mention that God will "do good" to Jacob.

Vs. 10: *Not worthy* (qatan): literally, "to make small." "...that we may *make* the ephah *small* and the shekel great and deal deceitfully with false balances" [Am 8.5].

-Such qatan is in reference to divine *steadfast love* chesed (here in the plural) and *faithfulness* ('emeth). These qualities are shown to Jacob as heved or *servant* (compare with vs. 4 in relation to Esau).

-*Shown* (hasah): literally, "made."

-The first mention that Jacob had crossed the Jordan River; he does it with a *staff* or maqel which refers to sprout or twig. "I see a *rod* of almond" [Jer 1.11]. Compare with Moses' *rod* (mateh: can mean a branch, twig) as in Ex 4.2: "What is that in your hand? He said, 'A *rod*.'"

-Jacob says that only upon having crossed the Jordan has he become "two companies." Again, compare with vss. 2 & 7.

Vs. 11: "*Deliver* (natsal) me." For an alternate use, cf. 31.9 & 16, "to take away." For a use in conjunction with the verse at hand (as noted under 31.9), "You *delivered* me from men of violence" [Ps 18.48].

-"From the hand of my brother" and "from the hand of Esau:" such phraseology shows the fear of Jacob.

Vs. 12: Jacob's statement of remembrance here hearkens back to 28.14 when God said in a dream that "your descendants shall be like the dust of the earth." Also cf. 22.17 for similar words in conjunction with Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac or Jacob's father. In the former verse God says that Jacob and his descendants will spread out to the four cardinal points of the earth or perhaps better, to the cardinal points of the land Israel will later inherit. Also compare this verse's use of "dust" with the verse at hand, "sand of the sea."

Vs. 13: *Lodged* (lun): as in 28.11 where Jacob "*stayed* there that night." I.e., lun is a preparation for Jacob's two dreams, the second being in vss. 24-30. Also cf. 31.54, "...and *tarry*ed all night on the mountain."

-*Present* (minchah): alternately as "offering, "Cain brought to the Lord an *offering* of the fruit of the ground" [4.3]. As "tribute:" "May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him *tribute*" [Ps 72.10]. The present Jacob prepares for Esau is described in vs. 14.

Vs. 16: *Space* (reuach) in reference to the two droves. The only other use of this noun is Est 4.14, "For if you keep silence at such a time as this, *relief* and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter." Reuach is related to the verb ruach from which derives "spirit," "wind."

Vs. 17: "*Meets* (pagash) you" or the "foremost" servant sent to Esau. This verb implies making an attack as in Ex 4.24, "At a lodging place on the way the Lord *met* him and sought to kill him."

Vs. 20: *Appease* (kaphar): in conjunction with that minchah or *present*. This verb fundamentally means “to cover” and intimates pardon, asking forgiveness. “A king’s wrath is a messenger of death, and a wise man will *appease* it” [Prov 16.14].

-“Will accept me:” literally, “will raise my face.”

Vs. 21: Note that the minchah *passes on* (havar) before Jacob as if to receive his approval or blessing. This is followed by Jacob *lodging* (lun again) in the camp or machenah noted in vs. 1. Also consider the play on words, minchah/machenah.

-“That night” or the same night when Jacob lodged as noted in vss. 13 as well as vs. 22. There it reads simply “that night” compared with “he himself” in the verse at hand, the latter signifying Jacob’s preparation for the dream about to occur.

Vs. 22: “The same night he arose:” literally, “he arose in that night” which accentuates this time of total darkness. Jacob takes his immediate family—apparently leaving his servants, etc, behind—and *crossed* (havar; cf. its use with regard to the gift for Esau, the previous verse) the *ford* (mahavar: derived from the verbal root havar) of the Jabbok. The next mention of this place is Num 21.24, “And Israel slew him with the edge of the sword and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok.”

Vs. 23: Two *crossings* (havar): Jacob’s two wives, maids and eleven children plus “what was to him” as the Hebrew text literally reads. This crossing is with regards to a *stream* or nachal; this noun can apply to a river as well as a valley: “I went down to the nut orchard, to look at the blossoms of the *valley*” [Sg 6.11].

Vs. 24: Jacob was “*left* (yatar) alone.” “Not a green thing *remained*” [Ex 10.15]. The simplicity of this short sentence—after Jacob’s immediate relatives crossed the stream—sets the stage for the second half of this verse.

-*Wrestled* (‘avaq): with an unidentified “man,” the common Hebrew word being used. This and a few other verses later in the same context are the only occasions when ‘avaq is used which fundamentally means “to pound,” “to make small” and therefore implies a violent activity. Such wrestling lasted until the “breaking of the day,” so Jacob was unable to clearly identify the “man.”

Vs. 25: *Prevail* (yachal): as in 30.38, “With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister and have *prevailed*.” Compare the verbal root patal (as noted above with respect to that verse) with ‘avaq of vs. 24. Jacob was winning this contest owing to his exceptional strength:” Jacob went up and rolled the stone from the well’s mouth” [29.10].

-*Touched* (nagah): often in the sense of causing affliction or striking a blow: “But the Lord *afflicted* Pharaoh and his house with great plagues” [12.17]. Also 3.3 with another sense, “Neither shall you *touch* it” [3.3].

-“*Hollow* (kaph) of his *thigh* (yarek):” the former can apply to the hollow of one’s hand. For a reference to the latter, cf. 24.2: “Put your hand under my *thigh*.”

-*Put out of joint* (yaqah): that is, dislocated. “Let seven of his sons be given to us so that we may *hang* them up before the Lord at Gibeon on the mountain of the Lord” [2 Sam 21.6]. For another sense, cf. Jer 6.8: “Be warned, O Jerusalem, lest I *be alienated* from you.”

Vs. 26: *Bless* (barak): which here is in the context of a new name for Jacob. Note that the person giving this blessing is the unidentified “man,” vs. 29. There seems no reason for Jacob to ask for a blessing, although the words of vss. 22-4 (or when Jacob sent his immediate family away and was left alone) intimate that something unusual was about to happen that night.

Vs. 27: The unidentified “man” does not seem certain with whom he is wrestling and thus asks his name. Then again, he may have known Jacob’s name but wanted to elicit a response so as to change it to Israel.

Vs. 28: The unidentified “man” changes Jacob’s name to Israel which can mean either “He who strives with God,” “God strives” or “God rules.” Also cf. 35.10.
-*Striven* (sarah). “He *strove* with the angel and prevailed, he wept and sought his favor” [Hos 12.4]. From this verbal root is derived the noun “princess” as well as the proper name “Sarah.” Such striving is not only with God but with “men,” the same word in the plural used to refer to the unidentified “man.”
-Not only has Jacob engaged in this sarah, he has *prevailed* or *yachal* as in vs. 25.

Vs. 29: Here Jacob asks the “man” his name who does not give it. Nevertheless, he *blesses* (barak) Jacob; cf. vs. 26.

Vs. 30: *Place* (maqom) as often noted, here identified with Peniel or “The face of God.” This is the only reference in the Bible. Compare this seeing of God’s face (keeping in mind that Jacob had wrestled with that unidentified “man”) with vs. 20: “afterwards I shall see his (Esau’s) face.” I.e., the verse at hand is a kind of preparation for Jacob to encounter his brother in the next chapter. Also, cf. 33.10: “for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God.”
-The encounter at Peniel is a kind of prelude to Moses who does not see God’s face but only his back: “But you cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live” [Ex 33.20].
-“My *life* (nephesh, also as ‘soul’).” “Let my father arise and eat of his son’s game that you may bless me [27.31].”
-*Preserved* (natsal). “I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and *delivered* me from all my fears” [Ps 34.4]. For another use of this verb cf, 31.9: “Thus God has *taken away* the cattle of your father and given them to me.”

Vs. 31: “The sun rose upon him:” compare with “so he lodged that night in the camp” [vs. 21].
-Penuel: note the different spelling compared with Peniel in vs. 30.
-*Limping* (tsalah). “And I will save the *lame* and gather the outcast” [Zeph 3.19]. From this verbal root the noun “rib” is derived as in 2.21. In the verse at hand, the rising sun, Jacob’s passing by Penuel and limping contribute to a vivid image of his departing from that place.
-There is no biblical injunction recorded prohibiting the Israelites to heat the “sinew of the hip.”

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