**Tanach in Two – תנ''ך בשנתים**

Sefer Bereishit – The Book of Genesis

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1. The Book of Creation

The Book of Bereishit is “The Book of Creation”, which concerns the creation of the world and the formation of all its creatures, as well as the events of the Patriarchs which are also a form of “creation” with regard to their offspring, because all the events of the Patriarchs are illustrations to allude to and foretell all that would come upon their offspring in the future.

Ramban (Nachmanides), *Introduction to the Book of Shemot*

1. Five Major Themes in The Book of Bereishis
   1. **Theme #1: Childbirth**
      1. Chava (Eve)
      2. Lot’s daughters
      3. Barren – Inability to have children
         1. Sarah, Rivka and Rachel

“Why were the Matriarchs barren? Because Hashem desires the prayers of the righteous”

*Talmud, Yevamos, 64a*

**והאריך** הכתוב להזכיר טענות רבות בגאולתם, וישמע אלהים את נאקתם, ויזכור אלהים את בריתו, וירא אלהים, וידע אלהים, כי ידעתי את מכאוביו (להלן ג ז), כי אע''פ שנשלם הזמן שנגזר עליהם לא היו ראויים להגאל, כמו שמפורש על ידי יחזקאל (רמב''ן, שמות ב:כה) ([יחזקאל כ ח](file:///C:\Ezekiel.20.8)), אלא מפני הצעקה קבל תפלתם ברחמיו:

* + 1. The 12 Tribes
       1. Their names
       2. Battle for numbers/dudaim
       3. Rachel dies in childbirth
    2. Yehuda and Tamar
    3. Yosef and the Wife of Potifar
  1. Theme #2: Tracing the Covenant: From Avraham to a Jewish Nation

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| With whom | Source | Text | When |
| Hashem to  Avraham | 12: 1-3  (Lech Lecha) | (1) And the L-rd said to Avram, "Go forth from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you.  (2) And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will aggrandize your name, and [you shall] be a blessing.  (3) And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you." | Our first introduction to Avraham while Avraham is still in Haran |
| Hashem to  Avraham | 12: 7  (Lech Lecha) | (7) And the L-rd appeared to Avram, and He said, "To your seed I will give this land," and there he built an altar to the L-rd, Who had appeared to him. | When Avraham first arrives in the Land |
| Hashem to  Avraham | 13: 14-16  (Lech Lecha) | (14) And the L-rd said to Avram after Lot had parted from him, "Please raise your eyes and see, from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward.   (15) For all the land that you see I will give to you and to your seed to eternity.  (16) And I will make your seed like the dust of the earth, so that if a man will be able to count the dust of the earth, so will your seed be counted. | After Avraham and Lot part ways on their return to Canaan from Egypt |
| Hashem to  Avraham | 15: 4-7  (Lech Lecha) | (4) And behold, the word of the L-rd came to him, saying, "This one [your servant Eliezer] will not inherit you, but the one who will spring from your innards-he will inherit you."   (5) And He took him outside, and He said, "Please look heavenward and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So will be your seed."   (6) And he believed in the L-rd, and He accounted it to him as righteousness.  ( 7) And He said to him, "I am the L-rd, Who brought you forth from Ur of the Chaldees, to give you this land to inherit it." | After rescuing Lot from the 4 Kings, Avraham questions what reward he might receive as he has no children |
| Hashem to  Avraham | 17: 1-11  (Lech Lecha) | (1) And Abram was ninety-nine years old, and G-d appeared to Avram, and He said to him, "I am Hashem Elokim; walk before Me and be perfect.   (2) And I will place My covenant between Me and between you, and I will multiply you very greatly."  (3) And Avram fell upon his face, and G-d spoke with him, saying, (4) "As for Me, behold My covenant is with you, and you shall become the father of a multitude of nations.   (5) And your name shall no longer be called Avram, but your name shall be Avraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.  (6) And I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings will emerge from you.  (7) And I will establish My covenant between Me and between you and between your seed after you throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant, to be to you for a G-d and to your seed after you.   (8) And I will give you and your seed after you the land of your sojournings, the entire land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and I will be to them for a G-d."  (9). And G-d said to Abraham, "And you shall keep My covenant, you and your seed after you throughout their generations.   (10) This is My covenant, which you shall observe between Me and between you and between your seed after you, that every male among you be circumcised (11) And you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be as the sign of a covenant between Me and between you. | The Covenant of Circumcision, at ninety nine year old |
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| Hashem to  Yitzchak | 26: 1-5  (Toldos) | (1) And there was a famine in the land, aside from the first famine that had been in the days of Avraham, and Isaac went to Abimelech the king of the Philistines, to Gerar. (2) And the L-rd appeared to him, and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land that I will tell you. (3) Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you, and I will bless you, for to you and to your seed will I give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Avraham, your father.  (4) And I will multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens, and I will give your seed all these lands, and all the nations of the earth will bless themselves by your seed, (5) Because Abraham hearkened to My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My instructions." | When Yitzchak desired to leave the Land because of Famine |
| Yitzchak to Yaakov | 28: 1-4  (Toldos) | (1) And Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and he commanded him and said to him, "You shall not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.   (2) Arise, go to Padan aram, to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father, and take yourself from there a wife of the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother.  (3) And may Hashem bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, and you shall become an assembly of peoples (4) And may He give you the blessing of Avraham, to you and to your seed with you, that you may inherit the land of your sojournings, which G-d gave to Avraham." | When Yitzchak sends his son Yaakov to find a wife (after he stole the blessing) |
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| Hashem to Yaakov | 28: 10-15  (Vayeitzei) | (10) And Jacob left Beer sheba, and he went to Haran.   (11) And he arrived at the place and lodged there because the sun had set, and he took some of the stones of the place and placed [them] at his head, and he lay down in that place (12) And he dreamed, and behold! a ladder set up on the ground and its top reached to heaven; and behold, angels of G-d were ascending and descending upon it.  (13) And behold, the L-rd was standing over him, and He said, "I am the L-rd, the G-d of Avraham your father, and the G-d of Isaac; the land upon which you are lying to you I will give it and to your seed. (14) And your seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shall gain strength westward and eastward and northward and southward; and through you shall be blessed all the families of the earth and through your seed. (15) And behold, I am with you, and I will guard you wherever you go, and I will restore you to this land, for I will not forsake you until I have done what I have spoken concerning you." | When Yaakov leaves the Land to find a wife |
| Hashem to Yaakov | 35: 10-13  (Vayishlach) | (10) G-d said to him, "Your name is Jacob. Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." And He named him Israel (11) And G-d said to him, "I am Hashem; be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a multitude of nations shall come into existence from you, and kings shall come forth from your loins. (12) And the land that I gave to Abraham and to Isaac, I will give to you and to your seed after you will I give the land."   (13) And G-d went up from him in the place where He had spoken with him. | When Yaakov returns to the Land 20 years later with his family |
| Yaakov to Yosef | 48: 3-5  (Vayechi) | 3. And Jacob said to Joseph, "Hashem appeared to me in Luz, in the land of Canaan, and He blessed me.   4. And He said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and cause you to multiply, and I will make you into a congregation of peoples, and I will give this land to your seed after you for an everlasting inheritance.'   5. And now, [as for] your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt, until I came to you, to the land of Egypt they are mine. Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine like Reuben and Simeon. | In Egypt, before Yaakov dies |
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| Yaakov to Yosef | 48: 21  (Vayechi) | 21. And Yisrael said to Joseph, "Behold, I am going to die, and G-d will be with you, and He will return you to the land of your forefathers. | In Egypt, before Yaakov dies |
| Yosef to his brothers | 50:24  (Vayechi) | 24. Joseph said to his brothers, "I am going to die; G-d will surely remember you and take you up out of this land to the land that He swore to Avraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." | In Egypt, before Yosef dies |

* 1. **Theme #3: Exile**

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| **No.** | **Exiled**  **from . . .** | **Text** | **Who was exiled?** | **Why?** |
| 1 | Eden | 3:23-24 |  |  |
| 2 | Face of the earth | 4:13-14 |  |  |
| 3 | Right to Life | 7:19-23 |  |  |
| 4 | Bavel | 11:4,8-9 |  |  |
| 5 | Birthplace | 12:1 |  |  |
| 6 | New home | 12:10-13 |  |  |
| 7 | Husband | 21:14 |  |  |
| 8 | Family | 27:42-44 |  |  |
| 9 | Brothers | 37:26-28 |  |  |
| 10 | Cana’an | 46:5-7 |  |  |

“The Torah began with the chapter of *At the beginning G-d created* and recounted the whole subject of creation until the making of Humankind; how G-d granted them dominion over the works of G-d’s hands, and put all things under their feet; and how the Garden of Eden, which is the choicest of places created in this world, was made the place of their abode until their sin caused their expulsion from it; and how the people of the generation of the flood were completely expelled from the world on account of their sin, and the only righteous one among them – Noach and his children – were saved; and how the sin of their descendants caused them to be scattered to various places and dispersed to different countries . . .

. . . If so, it is understandable that when a people continues to sin it should lose it place and another people should come to inherit its land, for such has been the rule of G-d in the world from the beginning. That is to say, G-d expelled those who rebelled against Him, and settled there those who served Him so that they know by serving Him they will inherit it, whereas if they sin against Him, the land will vomit them out, just as it vomited out the nations before them . . .”

*Ramban, Commentary to Bereishis 1:1*

* 1. **Theme #4: Sibling rivalry**
     1. Kayin and Hevel (Cain and Able)
     2. Yitzchak and Yishmael (Issac and Ismael)
     3. Yaakov and Eisav (Jacob and Esau)
     4. Rachel and Leah
     5. Yosef and his Brothers

When the Divine Presence withdrew from him [Yaacov, while on his deathbed, surrounded by his 12 sons], he said, “perhaps amongst you there is someone unsuitable?” They all said in unison, “Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad! Just as in your heart, father, there is unity, so too in ours”. At that moment Yaacov exclaimed, “Baruch shem kavod malchuso l’olam v’ed (Blessed be the name of His honored majesty forever and ever)”

*Talmud, Pesachim 56a*

* 1. **Theme #5: Deception**

This Book commonly known as The Book of Bereishis, is referred to by the Prophets as Sefer HaYashar, the Book of the Upright… depicting the lives] of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, who were called “upright” as stated (by Bilaam), “Let me die the death of the upright.” This requires examination. Why did Bilaam characterize our forefathers specifically with the name yashar (upright), as opposed to tzadikim, chasidim, or any other designation [depicting righteousness]?... This was the greatness of our forefathers. In addition to being righteous, pious, and lovers of G-d to the utmost degree, they were also yesharim. That means they were civil with the [other] nations of the world, despite [the latter] being detestable idol worshipers. Our forefathers nevertheless extended them love and concern for their welfare, as this fortifies [G-d’s] creation… We have likewise gleaned much [more] from the forefathers’ societal behavior. This behavior is that which sustains the world, which is in turn a theme particular to this Book, the Book of Creation.

*Natziv, Introduction to Commentary Haamek Davar on Bereishis*

* + 1. The serpent
    2. Avraham lies about his wife Sarah: She is my sister (twice)
       1. Yitzchak does it too
    3. Lot’s daughters deceive him into fathering their children
    4. Avraham deceived Yitzchak as to what will be sacrificed
    5. Yaakov deceives Eisav into selling the birthright
    6. Rivka and Yaakov deceive Yitzchak by dressing up as Eisav
    7. Lavan deceives Yaakov under the chuppah
    8. Yaakov “swindles” all of Lavan’s sheep
    9. Rachel steals her father’s idols
    10. Shimon and Levi deceive and destroy the entire city of Shechem
    11. Tamar tricks her father in law into fathering her child
    12. The brothers dip Yosef’s coat in blood, misleading their father
    13. Potifar’s wife claims he tried to seduce her
    14. Yosef’s deceives his brother’s about his identity
    15. Yehudah lies about the identity of one of the brothers
    16. Yosef sets up Binyamin as a thief

Rav Yosef the son of R’ Yehoshuah ben Levi took ill and slipped into a comatose state [i.e. he briefly ascended to heaven]. When he returned, his father asked, “What did you see?” Rav Yosef answered, “I saw an inverted, upside-down world! The uppermost were below, and the lower ones were above.” His father responded, “My son, you have perceived a clear world”.

*Talmud, Pesachim, 50a*