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ENTITLED "PERUSH L'PESUKIM V'LE TORAH

(A COMMENTARY ON PESUKIM AND TORAH
TRANSLATION AND NOTES ON PARASHAT

MIKETZ (Bereshit 41:1-44:17)

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RABBI JACOB BEN ASHER'S COMMENTARY ON THE TORAH

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"PERUSH L' PESUKIM V' L' TORAH"

(A COMMENTARY ON PESUKIM AND TORAH)

TRANSLATION AND NOTES ON

PARASHAT MIKETZ (BERESHIT 41:1 - 44:17)

by

David Hillel Wilfond

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

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Referee, Dr. Ben Zion Wacholder

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No words can adequately express my gratitude to Dr. Ben Zion Wacholder. With kindness of spirit and brilliance of mind he guided me during the many months that we studied together. Learning with him has been a privilege and blessing of which I have not been worthy. The *chidushim* in this work are his, its weaknesses are mine. I am grateful to him for his mentoring, patience, and insight.

I am indebted to Professor Avraham Grossman of Hebrew University who supervised my work during my stay in Israel in 1995-1996. He helped me navigate through the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts in the Jewish National and University Library, Givat Ram, Jerusalem and locate the Mantua and Montefiore manuscripts.

Lastly I wish thank Professor Lewis Fried of Kent State University for his editorial assistance and friendship.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents
Avraham Menachem Mendel and Chaya Brana,
who raised me to be a Jew.

Digest

Jacob ben Asher (1260-1340) is famous for his *halachic* masterpiece the *Arba-ah Turim*, but his Torah commentary is virtually unknown. Ben Asher created his commentary according to a two fold approach. For each *parasha*, he wrote *parperaot*: intellectual *hors d'oeuvres* of *gematria*, *notorikon* or explanations of the *masora* to enhance his reader's appetite for the main course -- his *peshat* commentary. With tosostic flavor, Ben Asher summarizes the arguments of *Rashi*, *Ibn Ezra* and *Ramban* on almost every *pesuk*. Ben Asher intended his commentary to be a unified work. Nonetheless it has never been studied as such. Copyists and printers divided it into two separate compositions. Ben Asher's original title was lost. This thesis restores, for the first time, Ben Asher's original title. This thesis is the first time that Ben Asher's commentary is being studied as a cohesive unit. Additionally, my thesis deals with aspects of Jacob ben Asher's personality that appear in his exegetical work. For this thesis I have relied upon the Mantua Manuscript No. 32., dated 1389.

My thesis begins with the story of Jacob ben Asher and his Torah commentary. The second chapter entitled "Menu" is a translation and analysis of his introduction to his commentary. Chapter three "Appetizers" examines the *parperaot* for *Parashat Miketz*. Chapter four "The Main Course" is a translation and analysis of his *peshat* commentary on *Bereshit* 41. The closing chapter "Compote" is a discussion on Jacob ben Asher's sources. All the Hebrew texts are in the appendix.

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Chapter One

Jacob Ben Asher

Jacob ben Asher was born in Cologne (*Ashkenaz*) in 1269 and buried in Toledo (*Sepharad*) in 1340. He was the first Jew to have his works in print (*Arba-ah Turim*, Piove de Sacco, 1475).¹ Jacob ben Asher was the third son of Asher ben Yechiel (the *Rosh*). After the death of his teacher, Meir of Rottenburg (*Maharam*), Rabbenu Asher became the leading rabbinical authority of *Ashkenaz* in 1293. Turmoil prevailed in *Ashkenaz* as war raged between Adolph of Nassau and Albrecht of Austria. During the period known as the Reindfleisch massacres over one hundred and forty Jewish communities were devastated. An exodus of Jews from *Ashkenaz* ensued. Jacob ben Asher fled with his father. Stopping briefly in Savoy (northern Italy), then Provence, they reached Barcelona in the month of *Tishrei* 1303, where they were received with honor by the *Sepharadi* sage Rabbi Shlomo ben Adret, the *Rashba*. The *Rosh* then traveled to Toledo where he was invited to head the rabbinical court. Before long, this *Ashkenazi* sage became the leading halachic authority of Castilian Jewry. Jacob however stayed in Barcelona, where he pursued studies at the yeshiva of his brother Yechiel. In 1314, he joined his father in Toledo.

¹ Zingberg, Israel. *A History of Jewish Literature*, vol. 4, pp. 49. "The preface at the end of the first printed Hebrew book, Rabbi Jacob ben Asher's *Arbaah Turim*, provides a clear notion of the ardent enthusiasm with which the Italian Jews approached the "sacred work" of printing books: 'I am the art that is the crown of all the arts. I myself am hidden, but in me all secrets are concealed. Without pens, my script is clear to all; without scribes do I create books. In a moment I am dipped in ink. Without rulers, yet my script is evenly formed. It is remarkable that the prophetess Deborah celebrated the staff of the scribes. If she had seen me, she would carry me as a crown on her head. This is written as a memorial in the year 5235 (1475 C.E.), according to the Hebrew reckoning.' The first Hebrew book that was "written without pens" is printed so magnificently that it could serve as a model even today."

Jacob ben Asher lived in poverty and dedicated his life to study. He devoted his writing to reconciling inconsistencies between *Ashkenazi* and *Sephardi Halachah*. The *Arba-ah Turim* (1340)² was his monumental work and source of his literary name, *Baal HaTurim* (Author of the Turim), by which he is commonly referred. The first systematic organization of *Halachah* was done by the Rambam in the *Mishneh Torah* (1180). Ben Asher's *Arba-ah Turim*³ was the second and assumed even a greater importance than even that of the *Mishneh Torah*. Whereas the *Ramban*'s code embraced all *Halachah* including the *mitzvo*t that were practiced in the time of the Temple and the eschatological Torah,⁴ the *Tur* excluded the laws not practiced after the Temple's destruction. The system for organizing *halacha* that Jacob ben Asher innovated in the *Tur*, was accepted by Joseph Karo as the model for the *Shulchan Aruch* (1575), and has become the standard mode of presentation for all subsequent halachic literature till today.

His Torah Commentary

Jacob ben Asher's halachic works are famous, but his exegetical writings are virtually unknown. My thesis will examine a part of his commentary on the Torah. Jacob ben Asher set his work on two rubrics. The first one he called "*parperaot*"⁵ (appetizers,

² It is difficult to date the *Arba-ah Turim*. All that can be said stated with certainty is that it was written over many years and completed before the author's death in 1340 (12th of Tammuz).

³ Also known by its shorter name, the *Tur*.

⁴ Dr. Wacholder uses the term "Eschatological Torah" to describe the laws that will be observed in the Messianic period.

⁵ Avot 3:18, "*parperaot l'chochma*." "...appetizers to wisdom." Kehati in his *Mishna Commentary* writes "just as delicacies offered **before** the meal to stimulate the appetite, or **after** the meal to sweeten it, do not constitute the main course; so too these...rather than being the essence of wisdom, play but a subsidiary role in facilitating our understanding of the Torah." *Seder Nezikin*, vol. 4, pp. 101.

hors d'oeuvres or *forshpayz*).⁶ In Asher's form, these are entertaining remarks designed to increase the reader's appetite for the real food - the study of the profundities of the Torah. In the introduction to his commentary the author wrote, "I desired to write at the beginning of each *parasha* a few appetizers of *gematriot* and explanations of the masoretic notes to attract the reader." The appetizers are based on the hermeneutic known as *remez*. This method interprets words of Torah as allusions (hints) to other verses in Scripture.⁷ He uses three techniques: *gematria*, comparison of words with similar numerical value; *notarikon*, anagrammatical reading; and explanations based on the masoretic accounting of rare words. The second rubric, which forms the main body of the commentary, deals with *peshat* (commentarial) exegesis, interpreting the straightforward meaning of a scriptural verse in context. This part draws heavily from *Ramban's* commentary and shows a *tosafist*-like style.⁸

The oldest extant manuscript of the commentary was copied in 1389, less than 50 years after Jacob ben Asher's death. This manuscript is known as Mantua No. 32, as it is housed in that city's famous library.⁹ In this manuscript the "appetizers" and "commentarial" portions appear together as one text, and are so described by the author in his introduction.¹⁰ But later copyists and printers separated the entertaining "appetizers" from the main body of the commentary into a seemingly independent work. The

⁶ The Yiddish word "*Forshpays*" accurately expresses Jacob ben Asher's intention. "*Forshpays*" is an introductory dish at the start of a meal. "*Hors d'oeuvres*" is another good translation for *parperaot*. *Hors d'oeuvres* (French) literally means "outside of the main work." This conveys the same idea as the *parperaot*, a tasty side dish designed to enhance but never substitute the main course.

⁷ Current scholarship calls this "Intertextuality."

⁸ The *Tosafist* school resulted from the fusion of *Ashkenazi* and *Tzafrati* approaches to learning during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Freimann hypothesizes that the *Rosh* studied in Troyes. pp. 20.

⁹ In the colophon, the scribe Isaac bar Joseph writes that he began copying the manuscript in Jerusalem and finished in Tzfat in 1389. A copy of the colophon is included in Appendix A.

¹⁰ Mantua No. 32.

"appetizers" were first printed alone in Constantinople in 1514, and were later included by Bomberg in the *Mikraot Gedolot* of 1546 under the title "*Baal haTurim*." This is the popular name under which it has been reprinted in numerous editions.

However, the main portion of the commentary, the more scholarly and interpretive part was ignored for 500 years and did not see print until 1806 (Zolkiev).¹¹ This edition was titled "*Perush al haTorah m'Rabemu Ya'acov ben Kavod Marenu v'Rabemu haRosh*." In contrast to the frequent reprinting of the very popular "appetizers" known as "*Baal haTurim*," the more scholarly part of the work was only printed five times.¹²

The Warsaw edition of 1854 is unique as it contains both the *parperaot* and the *peshat* parts together on the same page. This combined format is somewhat akin to that given the work by its author, five hundred years earlier.¹³ This unified presentation was not repeated in any later editions. The combined presentation makes the commentary longer. The printer of this edition was the first to introduce the title "*Perush haTur haAruch*," (*The Long Tur Commentary*). The printer's name "Long Commentary" probably refers more to the length of the book than to its exegetical nature. This name may have served to advertise this edition as "*new and enlarged*." This title was not

¹¹ Zolkiev was a center of Hebrew Printing in Galicia. Also known as Zholkva, was renamed Nesterov in 1951. Today this is in the Ukraine.

¹² Zolkiev 1806, Hanover 1839, Warsaw 1854 and 1881, Jerusalem 1961. (In 1956 Rabbi Jacob M. Schurkin of Brooklyn, N.Y., published a photo-offset reprint of the Hanover 1839 edition and copyrighted it. The new publisher, Shurkin, printed his name and address in such a way as to cover up "Hanover 1839" on the original title page. This represents the only occasion in which Jacob ben Asher's exegetical works were printed in the western hemisphere).

¹³ The original format as it came from the hand of the author had the *parperaot* as preface comments before the *peshat* exegesis. The Warsaw edition did not recreate this format but positioned the *parperaot* side by side with the *peshat* commentary (and not one after the other). I have not seen this layout myself. It is described by Y. Stern (pp. 7) in his introduction to *Perush haTur ha-Aruch*.

retained in the fourth edition (Warsaw, 1881), but was revived in the most recent edition published by Yitzhak Stern in 1961 (Jerusalem).¹⁴

Generally the *peshat* commentary remains unknown, and even learned people erroneously identify it with that which appears in the *Mikraot Gedolot*.¹⁵ In 1971 Ya'acov Reinetz (Jerusalem) published a critical edition of the *parperaot*.¹⁶ As of this writing there is no critical edition of the *Long Tur Commentary*.

It is clear that Jacob ben Asher did not intend to separate the "appetizers" from the main courses. He wanted to serve it as a single meal. Yet modern scholars have never studied it as a single work.¹⁷ Instead the commentary has invariably been treated as two separate compositions.

Whereas there are numerous articles on Asher's halachic works, in the last three decades only three articles have appeared on Jacob ben Asher's Torah Commentary. One dealt exclusively with the *parperaot* (1992),¹⁸ and the other two with the longer commentary (1964 and 1992).¹⁹ Rabbi Jeffrey Portman published a Hebrew Union

¹⁴ Yitzhak Stern (ed.), *Perush ha-Tur ha-Arokh al ha-Torah*. Jacob ben Asher. Jerusalem: *Perush Uvremez* Publ. House, 1961. Stern's use of the title "*ha-Arokh*" is problematic. This title originally referred to the combined work, not the *peshat* commentary by itself.

¹⁵ Rabbi Zechariah Fendel in "*Masters of the Mesorah: Later Rishonim*" (1990), pp. 192, wrote "Rabbe Ya'akov also wrote a comprehensive commentary on the Torah, *Peirush haTur heAruch*, which has been printed both as an individual, and, in abridged form, in many editions of the *Chumash*." A popular misconception is that the *parperaot* is a shortened version of the *peshat* commentary. This probably arises from the folk name "*Perush Ha-Kitzur*" for the *parperaot* and "*Perush ha-Aroch*" for the *peshat*. The folk names are misleading and mistaken!

¹⁶ Ya'acov Kapel Reinitz (ed.), *Perush Ba'al ha-Turim al ha-Torah*. Jacob ben Asher. Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 1971 (6th ed., 1993)

¹⁷ This may reflect a lack of appetite and aptitude.

¹⁸ Arned, Aharon. "*Perush ha-Kitzur shel Ba'al ha-Turim le-Torah*", in Menachem Hacohen (ed.) *Mahanaim: Quarterly for Studies in Jewish Thought and Culture*, vol. 3, (1992), pp. 180-7. Jerusalem: Mercas Sapir.

¹⁹ Emanuel, Yonah. "*Perush ha-Tur ha-Aroch al ha-Torah*", in *ha-Mayan*, vol. 4, (1964) No. 4, pp. 42-54. Jerusalem: Journal of the Yitzhak Breuer Foundation and the Poaley Agudat Yisroel. And; Shaviv, Yehuda. "*Ha-Perush ha-Aroch shel Ba'al ha-Turim le-Torah*", in Menachem Hacohen (ed.) *Mahanaim: Quarterly for Studies in Jewish Thought and Culture*, (1992) vol. 3, pp. 170-9. Jerusalem: Mercas Sapir.

College rabbinic thesis under the guidance of Professor Samuel Greengus (1973).²⁰ This thesis classified 100 exegetical methods used by Asher in the *parperaot*.²¹ The purpose of my thesis is different. It seems to me that Jacob ben Asher's work should not be treated as two separate parts, but as the author intended it - a unified composition. Optimally one should present a translation and commentary on the entire work as it appears in the manuscript, but time limits my work to the following:

1. A General Introduction.
2. A Translation and Commentary on Jacob ben Asher's Introduction to his exegetical work.
3. Translation with comments of both the "*Parperaot* (Appetizers)" and "Long Commentary" on *Parshat Miketz* (*Bereshit* 41:1 - 44:17).
4. Discussion.

Fortunate to my stay in Israel, I had access to two manuscripts of Jacob Ben Asher's Commentary stored at the Institute for Manuscripts at the National Library of the Hebrew University.²² These manuscripts, Mantua No. 32²³ and Montefiore No. 12,²⁴ aided my research.

A desire of this thesis is discover aspects of Jacob ben Asher's personality that appear in his exegetical work. The great deal of study devoted to Jacob ben Asher's

²⁰ Portman, Jeffrey Ralph. Introduction to Jacob ben Asher's Commentary on the Torah. Thesis. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1973.

²¹ Maintaining Asher's food motif it could be said that Portman reconstructed Asher's exegetical menu which offered a variety of 100 appetizers.

²² I must acknowledge my indebtedness and thanks to Professor Avraham Grossman of Hebrew University who helped me locate and copy these the manuscripts.

²³ Copied in 1389 C.E. in medieval *Sephardi* script.

²⁴ The original manuscript is housed at Jews College (London, England). According to Professor Avraham Grossman this appears to be copied in 15th-16th century *Ashkenazi* script. The text of the manuscript is virtually identical to Mantua No. 32.

magnum opus - ignores the personality of the author. This may be due to the fact that *Halachah* by nature does not lend easily to the revelation of the author's personality that lies behind his work. It is precisely his commentaries' on the *Aggadah* of Scripture, especially the form in which Jacob ben Asher presents it, that opens up the inner thoughts of Jacob ben Asher.

Even though this thesis restricts itself to *Parashat Miketz*, a close reading of the text reveals aspects of Jacob ben Asher's personality. For example his opinions in the following areas are exposed: polygamy, dream interpretation, the power of words, social hierarchy, God's justice, Gentile customs, the redemption of Israel, the revolving wheel of destiny,²⁵ Scripture as prophecy of all events passed, present and yet to be, the seriousness of Agadah, and other dispositions. In addition to being an exegete he also reveals attitudes that may be useful for the halachic tradition, like his relations to *Rashi*, *Ibn Ezra*, his older contemporaries and other commentaries. Even reading only a small part of his commentary presents numerous clues of about his person, his attitudes to life, his generation and Judaism.

²⁵ The high are brought low, while the lowly are raised.

Chapter Two

The Menu

Jacob Ben Asher's Introduction

To His Commentary As A Cohesive Work

Translation:

Please permit me to speak (*Ber.* 18:27)

even though that I am not a man of understanding (*Prov.* 30: 2)

nor do I have much strength (*Eccles.* 10:10).

Not skilled am I at composing words (*Job* 16:4)

for I am ignorant, unimportant and have not mastered wisdom (*Prov.* 30:2-3)

It is not easy for me to structure ideas (*Prov.* 1:4)

and there is no one to help me (*Ps.* 74:9).

Yet my soul thirsts, and my body yearns for her (*Torah*) (*Ps.* 63:2),

even though she is hidden from me and concealed (*Job* 28:21),

for she is as heavenly work (*TB Eruv.* 13b)

and all her words are like the mysterious Wheels²⁶ (*Ezek.* Chap 1:16) (*Prov.* 25:11).

Each of her words can be interpreted in two ways,²⁷ (*Ps.* 111:2) (*Job* 21:29)

²⁶ A reference to the mysterious Wheels of Ezekiel (chapter one). The implication is that there is a mysterious element to the words of the Torah.

²⁷ This is perhaps the most revealing statement in the introduction about the nature of the commentary. Jacob ben Asher makes explicit the dual nature of his commentary. The Hebrew word *derechim* (ways) must be read as *darkayim* (two ways -- or a "pair of paths"). Jacob ben Asher is using literary license to create an unusual form in which *darkhayim* must be understood as a pair. This intention is made explicit by the previous rhyme scheme of *Shamayim*, *Ofnayim* and here *Darkayim*. Were this rhyme scheme not so clear one might read it as the common plural form *derachim* (ways), but via the rhyme pattern of pairs Jacob ben Asher tells us explicitly how he wants the reader to vocalize the word and to understand its meaning as a pair. This refers to different exegetical methods. *Darchiyim*, indicates that two exegetical methods will be employed in the commentary. The "Two Ways" are the *remez* and *peshat* portions of the commentary.

by all who turn their ears to her (Ps. 78:1).

For she is not beyond the sea nor in the heavens (*Devarim* 30:12-13)

but surely she is near to all who draw close to her

with heart and lips (*Devarim* 30:14 and TB Eruv. 54B).

If anyone forsakes the Torah for even one day,

she will forsake him for two days (*Sifre Ekev piska* 48).

And whether one presents much or little - it is the same

as long as he directs his heart to the heavens (Men. 3:11).

Therefore my spirit was stirred (*Shemot* 35:21) to approach the task (*Shemot* 36:2) with

steps and legs²⁸ (Isa. 26:6, *Sh. HaSh. R.* 7:2, *Chagiga* 3).

to undertake it with (a full) heart (*Devarim* 30:14), and with (vigor of) hands (Ps. 90:17).²⁹

³⁰ For behold I saw the sea, vast and wide (Ps. 104:25)

the Torah commentaries of R. Moshe Bar Nachman of blessed memory³¹,

²⁸ "With steps and legs" (*pa'amim u'vregliyim*), may refer to his great eagerness with which Jacob ben Asher approaches this task of writing. Another interpretation is derived from *pa'amim u'vreglayim* which has parallels in: *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 7:2, and *Chagiga* 3a; where it is reference to the pilgrimage festivals (*regelim*). Maybe this should be translated as "regular, or periodic". Perhaps a reference to the manner in which he wrote his commentary (i.e. weekly - in the manner of the weekly study of the *parasha*).

²⁹ By citing all these body parts steps (i.e. feet), legs, heart and hands, Jacob ben Asher conveys his enthusiasm as though he is eager to approach the task with the fullness of all his body. Note again the use of pairs -- legs and hands, another instance allusion the dual nature of the commentary.

³⁰ This whole paragraph is about Jacob ben Asher's attitude to *Ramban's* commentary.

³¹ The tone in which Jacob ben Asher describes his attitude towards *Ramban* and his commentary seems to reflect a young enthusiasm as though this is his first discovery of the *Ramban's* commentary. This may mean that Jacob ben Asher wrote his Torah commentary as a young man, long before he wrote his magnum opus the *Arba-ah Turim*. Wacholder suggested that Jacob ben Asher sounds young (maybe 20 - 25 years old). If he does not reach *Sepharad* till he age thirty than he probably wrote this commentary while still in *Ashkenaz*. The question remains for whom did he write the commentary? Perhaps for him self. But this does not seem likely because he addresses his reader in the introduction. If he is still in *Ashkenaz* than he may be introducing the *Ashkenazi* community to the works of *Ramban* through his

the giant feather of mighty wing³² (Ezek. 17:7)

I was passionate (Micha 7:1)

to pass through it even though its waters reached above my waist (Ezek. 47:4).³³

But I became afraid because it was vast (Ber. 26:13)

and the waters high (Ezek. 47:5)

so I said I will go (Jer. 5:4-5) on its banks³⁴ (Ezek. 47:12),

for there are many trees on both sides of its banks (Ezek. 27:12).³⁵

It (*Ramban's* Commentary) is pleasant³⁶ for wisdom

and delightful for the eyes (Ber. 3:7).³⁷

I have partaken of its fruit (Ber. 3:5), filling both my hands (I Kings 17:12, and Eccles. 4:6).

I have eaten of it (Ber. 3:5), and it has restored my soul (Ruth 4:15),

opening my eyes (Ber. 3:7),

and making attentive my ears for learning (Isa. 50:4).³⁸

simplified version. If however he was older when he wrote and had already emigrated to *Sepherad* than his commentary could be understood as written to introduce the *Sepharadim* to the *Ashkenazi* exegesis.

³² The "Giant feather" may be reference to the feather quill and thus an allusion to *Ramban* as a great writer and master of the feather quill. The "wing" and consequent bird imagery may be a reference to the great scope of *Ramban's* writing. Just a bird sees all, *Ramban's* scope of writing is expansive and seems to cover every genre of Jewish literature. The order of the words has been reversed from the original verse in Ezekiel 17:17, "*Gedol Kanfayim v'Rav Notza*" in order to fit the rhyme scheme of this poem.

³³ This passage is a prophetic vision of a impassable river whose magical waters give life and healing. Jacob ben Asher sees *Ramban's* commentary as a *Torat Chayim*.

³⁴ Literally "lips."

³⁵ The image portrayed here is of a person standing on the bank of a deep river. Numerous trees are growing on both sides. One side is accessible and the other side inaccessible as it is located on the far side of the of impassable river. Perhaps this is an allegory. The river is the *Ramban's* commentary. On one side of the river it the *Peshat* the other side of the river is the kabbalah.

³⁶ *Nachmad* here may be a pun on *Nachman*, an affectionate reference to *Ramban*.

³⁷ *Ramban's* commentary is likened to the *Etz Chayim* (the Tree of Life) in the Garden of Eden. Jacob ben Asher has selected biblical verses from the Story of Eve in the Garden. Verses here play on Adam and Eve imagery.

³⁸ Jacob ben Asher's meaning is "I learned how to get learning."

And **JACOB**³⁹ lives again !(*Ber.* 25:27),
 he has received a double portion! (*II Kings* 2:9)⁴⁰
 For it (*Ramban's* Commentary) revives anyone
 who enters its dual streams (*Ezek.* 47:9).⁴¹

Therefore from the outset I beg permission from the aforementioned Rabbi,
 and then I appeal to any reader of this work,
 that they should not condemn me, saying
 "He has written this for vanity (boasting)" (*Hulin* 7b)
 for this work does not merit boasting
 I am only picking food from other food,
 I pray that I will not turn the food into trash (*Shab.* 74b).
 My sole inspiration for writing this book is because the words of the rabbi "*Of*
Blessed Memory"⁴² are too mysterious for me. (*Prov.* 30:18).
 They are locked up and sealed (*Dan.* 12:9).
 May I select the simple sense of the words⁴³ only (*Ruth* 2:7)⁴⁴
 and I will leave aside the Mysteries (of Kabbalah). (*Ber.* 49.6)

³⁹ In the Mantua Manuscript the name "JACOB" is written in larger letters than any other word on that page. An obvious reference to our author Jacob ben Asher.

⁴⁰ *Peshat* meaning "he has learned twice as much - meaning more than he expected !! The question is what is the double portion that he has received? This could have several meanings. Perhaps is simply saying that he is so enamored with *Ramban's* commentary that its value is worth more than one (ordinary commentary). Perhaps he says he is double blessed because now he has been exposed to a new way to read Torah. Previously he had known the *Ashkenazi* style and now he has been exposed to the *Sepharadi* style. Perhaps this is an allusion to the dual nature by which he will organize his own commentary. Also this verse is about the Prophet Elisha succeeding Elijah. Perhaps Jacob ben Asher sees his relationship to *Ramban* similarly.

⁴¹ Hebrew: *Nachaliyim*. Here again Jacob ben Asher uses poetic license to create a new word that will emphasize the dual nature of the commentary.

⁴² Hebrew: *Zecher Tzaddik Livracha*.

⁴³ Hebrew: *Peshat*

⁴⁴ The image of the gleaner comes from *Ruth*.

For I have not penetrated the Kabbalistic texts⁴⁵ (*Ber.* 49:5)

so that it would be fluent in me.⁴⁶

But if I found an interpretation⁴⁷ or intonation⁴⁸ in another source I added them to the material. But these are rare.

I do not mention *Ramban* in every passage,

because the majority of the passages in my text are based on his. Thus as a rule I do not mention him except when needed.

Furthermore, it has pleased me to preface each new section⁴⁹ with appetizers⁵⁰

based on *gematriot* (numerology)⁵¹ and intonations of the *masora* to (*Avot* 3:13) to attract the reader.

As to God, to whom all thoughts are known,

who knows the true and examines the innermost, (*Jer.* 17:10, *Job* 38:36, *R.H.* 26b)

the One who knows my thoughts (*Ps.* 94:11),

may He give strength to my weak hands (*Isa.* 35:3),

⁴⁵ Hebrew: *Sod*

⁴⁶ The original verse has a strongly negative connotation (Jacob's condemnation of Shimon and Levy. A question arises about Jacob ben Asher's attitude toward Kabbalah. Was he simply not schooled in Nachmanides' Kabbalistic interpretations or deed he oppose them? From the ethical wills of Jacob and his brother Judah we find very different attitudes toward mysticism (Jacob being less inclined), yet in the *Tur* on prayer (*Hilchot Tefila* 98a) he writes in the style of the Kabbalah of Jonah of Gerondi. Also in the *Tur* Jacob writes in admiration of the mysticism of the *Chaside Ashkenaz*. The question of Jacob Ben Asher's attitude towards Kabbalah requires further investigation.

⁴⁷ Hebrew: *Peshat*. *Peshat* is "what" does it say.

⁴⁸ Hebrew: *Ta'am*. *Tam* is "why" it says. *Tam* also has a double meaning. *Tam* can refer to "reasoning or explanation" but *Tam* also refers to the masoretic notations known as *Ta'amim*.

⁴⁹ Note Ben Asher says "seder" which is an *Askenazi* term. *Sepharadim* say "parasha." This insight if from Professor Yom Tov Assis (Hebrew University).

⁵⁰ In rabbinic literature *parperaot* are side dishes, sometimes an appetizer other times a desert. Either way its purpose is to heighten one's appetite for the main course, which in this case is Jacob ben Asher's *peshat* commentary. This reveals to us that Jacob ben Asher saw the *peshat* commentary as more important than his *parperaot*.

⁵¹ (*Avot* 3:18)

and firm my frail knees (Isa. 35:3),

to help me carry out my plans.

And may God turn my heart to him (Ps. 119:36),

may he draw me⁵² close to his service (*Shmoneh Esrei*, Fifth blessing).

May he bring light to me eyes (Ezra 9:8) through the splendor of His Holy Torah (Prov. 6:23).

Amen Amen.⁵³

⁵² Reineitz has printed "yikarevnu" (drawn us close) which parallels the language of the fifth prayer of the *Shmoneh Esrei*. The Mantua Manuscript reads "yikarevni" (draws me close). The manuscript version is better because it is more consistent with the first person grammatical structure which characterizes this section.

⁵³ This ending "Amen Amen" may be a *chatima* as in Psalms 14, 72, and 89. Perhaps Jacob ben Aser's intention is to remind the reader of Nehemiah 8:8-9. This phrase would then be suggestive of the commentary's purpose. "Amen amen" are the words said before the first public reading of the Torah in the days of Nehemiah. Following these words Scripture says "and caused them to understand the reading." This is Jacob ben Asher's goal to cause his reader to understand the reading of Torah!!

What did Jacob ben Asher title his commentary?

To what is this an introduction? What is the work's title? The book seems to lack a name. This is surprising when one considers the sophisticated titles that Jacob Ben Asher gave to his other works!⁵⁴ Yet no title appears on the title page of the Mantua manuscript nor in the introduction. On the top line of the first page of the manuscript (See Appendix A) where the author's title should be, the scribe wrote in bold large letters "*Perush HaTorah L'HaRav Ya'acov ben HaRosh Zecher Tzadik V'Kadosh L'vracha B'siyata D'shimiya*" (The Torah Commentary of Rabbi Jacob Son of the Rosh, may the Memory of the Righteous and Holy be for a Blessing, (written) with the Help of Heaven). This is not the author's title, but a description of the manuscript (perhaps given by the scribe). No printed edition has ever recognized the author's title. In place of the author's title all the printers have given descriptive headings for the material, such as "*Perush Baal HaTurim al HaTorah*" (The Author of the Tur's Commentary on the Torah) for the *parperaot*, and "*Perush haTur haAroch al haTorah*" (The Tur's Long Commentary on the Torah) for the *Peshat* Commentary. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the Jacob Ben Asher did not title his work since he wrote a rhymed introduction to it.

Solid evidence suggests that the author did have a title for his Torah Commentary. The "solid evidence" is Jacob ben Asher's *matzevah* (gravestone). The inscription on his *matzevah* was published by Shmuel David Luzzato (*Shadal*) (d. 1865) in *Eyney Zicharon*

⁵⁴ Jacob ben Asher gave his books with very sophisticated titles. Derived from biblical verses that suggest the work's subject. *Arba-ah Turim*, "The Four Rows" after the four rows of jewels on the breastplate of the priest, *Orach Chayim*, "The Way of life" based on Ps. 16:11 *Yoreh Deah* "Teacher of Knowledge" from Isa. 26:9, *Even HaEzer*, "Stone of Help" 1 Sam. 4:1, with an allusion to Ber. 21:18 *Choshen Mishpat* "Breast plate of Judgment," Shem. 28:15. (These title translations were taken from Louis Lewin, "Jacob ben Asher" in *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*).

(Memorial Stones), in Prague (1841). This book contains the inscriptions from sixty seven memorial stones from the Jewish Cemetery of Toledo.⁵⁵ The *matzevah* lists the deceased's works: First, "Perush L'Pesukim v'l'Torah," (A Commentary on Pentateuchal Verses and Torah; second, "Pesakim⁵⁶ I'shloshah Sedarim," (Halachic Summaries of the Three Orders of the Mishna);⁵⁷ and third, "Malechet Arba-ah Turim," (A Composition of Four Rows).⁵⁸

Who wrote the inscription for the *matzevah*? It was probably written by someone close to Jacob ben Asher, such as his sons. This person likely heard with his own ears the titles by which Jacob ben Asher himself referred to his works. It is also possible that Ben Asher himself wrote the inscription before he died.⁵⁹ Thus the *matzevah* inscription is probably a faithful witness, attesting to Jacob ben Asher's title for his Torah Commentary. This thesis represents the first occasion in which Jacob ben Asher's own title has been restored to his exegetical work. A weakness in the argument that the gravestone contains Jacob ben Asher's own title is the possibility that the inscription's rhyme scheme may have necessitated modifying the words of the title. Due to the significance of the titles

⁵⁵ In 1841 (Prague), Shmuel David Luzzatto (*Shadal*) published "Eyney Zicharon" (*Memorial Stones*), from a manuscript originally written by Yosef Almontzy. This manuscript contains "Seventy six memorial stone inscriptions from the graves of the Rabbis and Jewish aristocracy of Toledo 500 and 600 years ago." *Shadal* adds commentary on the inscriptions. I found this book at the Hebrew University - Mount Scopus Library. A library stamp reveals that this copy was originally part of the collection of the *Bibliothek Des Rabbiners-Seminars Berlin*.

⁵⁶ Consistent with Jacob ben Asher's sense of humor and love of word games he is punning on *pesukim* and *pesakim*. In the Hebrew inscription on the *matzevah* these are written identically, as *pesukim* is spelled without the "vav." The use of puns suggests Ben Asher's style and that he may have authored the text.

⁵⁷ *Halachic summaries on Zemanim, Nashim, and Nezikim*.

⁵⁸ *Arba-ah Turim* innovated a completely new system of organizing *halacha*.

⁵⁹ He also wrote an ethical will. See "The Fruit of Pietism: From the Testament of Jacob Asheri," in Israel Abrahams (ed.) *Hebrew Ethical Wills*, vol. 2, pp. 202-5, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1926.

however, it seems likely that the poem was composed around the titles and not the other way around.

Jacob ben Asher's title "*Perush L'Psukim v'l'Torah*" is a good title because it accurately addresses the two fold nature of his commentary. It seems that "*Perush L'Psukim*" means that Jacob ben Asher did not intend to comment with *parperaot* on *all* of the Torah, but only on certain *pesukim*. Thus "*Perush L'Pesukim*" apparently refers to the *parperaot*. The second half of the title, "*V'l'Torah*," this refers to the real exegesis. This is what is now called the "Long Commentary." Jacob ben Asher intended this to be on the whole Torah (not just certain verses), as he explains in his introduction.

Freimann suggested that the memorial stone inscription list Asher's books in the order that he wrote them.⁶⁰ This would mean that Jacob ben Asher's Torah Commentary was his first composition. Frieman also cites internal evidence to support this hypothesis. In the Torah commentary Jacob ben Asher refers to his father with the blessing "May God guard his body and life." In the *Tur* however the *Rosh* is never referred to in this way but with the respectful, "May his memory be for a blessing." This suggests that at least parts of the Torah Commentary were written while his father was still alive, but the *Tur* was written later after his father's death.⁶¹ Also the youthful tone of the introduction to the Torah Commentary suggest a younger author than the matured style that is characteristic of the *Tur*.

A close reading of Jacob ben Asher's Introduction to his Torah commentary,

⁶⁰ Freimann, pp. 163.

⁶¹ The *Rosh* died in 1327.

reveals a wealth of insight into the personality of the author and the nature of his work. Jacob ben Asher writes to his reader about the purpose, sources and methodology of the commentary. The author expresses himself through form and content. Both are vehicles of meaning and it is hard, if not impossible, to separate the two. According to content, the introduction can be divided into three paragraphs, followed by a few concluding lines of prayer.⁶² An examination of form reveals that the first and second paragraphs are structured with rhyme and meter, while the third paragraph is in prose. The closing lines of prayer resume the poetic style.

What can be deduced from the difference between the two parts, the prose and the poetic part and why is it not consistent? According to Moshe Idel, the rhyme and meter of the poetic sections show that the author is influenced by the style of medieval *Sepharadi* poetry.⁶³ Earlier *Sepharadi* exegetes included poetry in the introductions to their commentaries. Abraham *Ibn Ezra* (d. 1164) prefaced his introduction with a short poem, and *Ramban* (d. 1270) wrote his entire introduction in poetic form. *Baal haTurim*'s poetic style however does not seem nearly as graceful as *Ramban*'s. His use of meter is at times cumbersome and inexact. It may be that this style is a cultural convention which Ben Asher had not practiced in *Ashkenaz*. Or possibly he is just not a natural poet. Perhaps this is why our author abandons the poetic structure in midcourse. Alternatively, a case can be presented that the change from poetry to prose did not arise from any lack of ability, but was intended. A paragraph of prose standing alone within a poem effectively

⁶² In the Mantau manuscript the layout of introduction is graphically divided into three paragraphs (see Appendix A). The first two paragraphs are in poetic style. The third paragraph contains the prose passage with the concluding lines of closing prayer immediately appended to it.

⁶³ I had the privilege of studying with Moshe Idel in his home on French Hill in Jerusalem during *Pesach* 1996. Idel expressed this opinion during conversation.

catches the reader's attention. This may be a way of conveying emphasis. My opinion is that this variation in form may result from a third possibility. It is plausible that the prose paragraph may have actually been written first, and only later the poetic sections were composed as elaboration and decoration. This seems possible because the prose paragraph contains all the basic ideas of the author's purpose, sources and methodology, that are only partially expressed in the poetic sections. The prose paragraph can stand by itself and effectively introduce the author's work to his reader. The only function that the poetic passages primarily achieve is esthetic. While there is no way to conclusively prove the author's intention - the asymmetry does call for interpretation.

Jacob ben Asher not only concerned himself with the gross structure of the paragraphs, he also devoted considerable attention to the fine composition of the individual verses. In what appears a genuine expression of humility, Ben Asher does not speak his own words, but literally endeavors to speak through the voice of tradition. Instead of composing his own sentences, he compiled sixty four quotes from the Bible, Mishna, Talmud, Midrash and the Siddur and weaves them together in tapestry of explication. Only in the prose section is this technique briefly suspended.

The predominate tone of the introduction's first paragraph is one of great humbleness and respect for Rabbinic authority. This may be traced to his family's background among the *Chaside Ashkenaz* who were known for exceptional piety. Though Jacob ben Asher writes with humility -- is worthy to note that he is not so humble that he does not write.⁶⁴ Modesty too may be an element of cultural convention.

⁶⁴ This irony was pointed out by Dr. Wacholder in discussion.

One of the most revealing elements of the first paragraph is the structural scheme of rhyming pairs, such as *shamayim*, *ofnayim*, *sfatayim*, *yomiyim*, *yadayim*, *reglayim*, *eynayim*, and *motnayim*. This sets up a pattern in which Ben Asher deliberately guides us to reread words in a manner that results in some non-conventional meaning and rhyming. For example, in the eleventh verse the word “*derechim*” the convention plural form for “ways,” must be unconventionally reread as “*darkayim*” (meaning “two ways”) because it has been placed in with in a sequence of Hebrew pairs in all must rhyme with *ofnayim*, *oznayim* and *shamayim*.

This new word “*darkayim*” that Jacob ben Asher creates becomes key to understanding the dual nature of the commentary. “All her word are like the mysterious wheels, each can be interpreted in two ways (“*darkayim*”).⁶⁵ This appears to be a description of his methodology, as the commentary is based on interpreting scripture by two exegetical techniques, *remez* (allusions) and *peshat* (contextual meaning), and accordingly the book is divided into sections. There is a convention of interpreting scripture by means of four exegetical methods known acrostically as “PaRDes,” *peshat* (simple), *remez* (allusion), *drash* (homiletic) and *sod* (esoteric). Drawing from this acrostic it could be said that *Baal HaTurim*’s approach is to write a RaP (*Remez* and *Peshat*) commentary on the Torah. The *remez* portion are the appetizers (*paraparot*) and the *peshat* part forms the more interpretive part of the commentary.

In second paragraph our author addresses the influence of *Ramban*’s Torah commentary upon his work. Ben Asher’s tone seems to reflect a young enthusiasm as

⁶⁵ Introduction, verses 10 and 11.

though this is his first discovery of the *Ramban's* commentary. This does not sound like the voice of the matured *Baal haTurim* (author of the *Turim*). Rather it suggests that Jacob ben Asher wrote his Torah commentary as a young man, long before he wrote his magnum opus the *Arba Turim*.⁶⁶

Shadal was the first to hypothesize that Jacob ben Asher's Torah commentary was *Baal haTurim's* first book. *Shadal* brings evidence for his proposition from the observation that on Jacob ben Asher's *matzevah* (gravestone) there is a list of the books he authored.⁶⁷ In the order of the list the Torah commentary comes first. It is reasonable to interpret that the list is arranged in chronological order of composition, as no other logic of arrangement seems apparent. Freimann also proposed that the Torah Commentary was Ben Asher's first work. Freimann notes that three times in the commentary our author mentions his father with the blessing "Yishmerhu tzuro v'yatzilehu" (may God guard and save him). This blessing never occurs in the *Tur*, where the name of the *Rosh* is frequently accompanied by the blessing (ז"ל), "May his Memory be for a blessing (*Zecher Tzadik Livracha*). Freimann wrote that Ben Asher did not reach *Sepharad* till thirty years of age, thus Ben Asher may have written his commentary while still in *Ashkenaz*.⁶⁸

If *Baal HaTurim* was still in *Ashkenaz* at the time of writing then his purpose may have been to introduce the *Ashkenazi* community to the works of *Ramban* through his simplified version. However if he was older when he wrote and had already emigrated to *Sepherad* then his commentary may have been written to introduce the *Sepharadi*

⁶⁶ Dr. Wacholder's opinion is that the voice of the author sounds like a young man about 20 - 25 years old.

⁶⁷ Samuel David Luzzatto (*Shadal*), *Evney Zikaron* (Prague 1841), pp.11

⁶⁸ Freimann, pp. 121.

community to *Ashkenazi* exegesis. Additionally by the time of Ben Asher's writing the Rhine valley centers of Jewish learning, the famed *kehillot Shum* (Speyer, Mainz and Worms) have been devastated by the Reindfleisch massacres. It may be that a desire to preserve the exegetical traditions of the Franco-German communities in general and the *Chaside Ashkenaz* in particular, drove Jacob ben Asher to put his pen to paper. Regardless of when and where the commentary was written its content reflects the author's desire to bring together on the same page elements of *Ashkenazi* and *Sepharadi* exegesis.

The core of the introduction seems to be the third paragraph. Through the language of the Book of Ruth, Jacob ben Asher described his task as being akin a gleaner of the fields. He endeavors to sift through the words of *Ramban* and others hoping to select the most nourishing elements while discarding the chaff. Fascinating to note is the similarity between this paragraph and the final paragraph of his introduction to *Orach Chayim*. Whole lines are identical. The *Orach Chayim* passage however is far more sophisticated than the wording of the "gleaner" image in the Torah commentary, which probably served as the prototype upon which the more developed introduction was based.

Ben Asher writes explicitly that his purpose is to simplify *Ramban's* Commentary and to remove the Kabbalistic interpretations. "*My sole inspiration for writing this book is because the words of the rabbi "Of Blessed Memory" are too mysterious for me (Prov. 30:18). They are locked up and sealed (Dan. 12:9). May I select the simple sense of the words only (Ruth 2:7) and I will leave aside the Mysteries (of Kabbalah), (Ber. 49.6). For I have not penetrated the Kabbalistic texts (Ber. 49:5) so that it would be fluent in*

me.” Why does Jacob ben Asher remove the Kabbalistic elements from the commentary? One possibility is that he wants to simplify *Ramban*’s commentary making more accessible to a wider audience. Another possibility is that during this period of conflict over the study of philosophy he preferred not to take a public stand on the controversy but rather chose the path of peace.

Regarding Ben Asher’s inclusion of *gematria*, it is worth noting that the traditional *sepharadi* commentators frowned upon this practice. *Ibn Ezra* wrote “Heaven forbid that the prophet should speak in *gematriot* and obscure hints.”⁶⁹ *Ramban* tried to limit the use of *gematria*. “No one may calculate a *gematria* in order to deduce from it something that occurs to him.”⁷⁰ In the *Tur* (*Orech Chayim* 113), Jacob ben Asher writes, “The *Chaside Ashkenaz* were in the habit of counting or calculating every word in the prayers, benedictions and hymns, and they sought a reason in the Torah for the number of words in the prayers.” It appears that Jacob ben Asher’s inclusion of *gematriot* reflects a loyalty to *Ashkenazi* culture similar to that expressed by his father in his *responsa*. The *Rosh* wrote “For I adhere to the customs of our forefathers of blessed memory, scholars of *Ashkenaz* who inherited their Torah from their ancestors from the days of the Destruction, and the heritage of forefathers and mentors in France more than to the heritage of the Jews of this land (Spain).”⁷¹ Ben Asher’s inclusion of *gematria* to a simplified version of *Ramban* makes for commentary that appears intended for a wide audience of Jews, both *Ashkenazi* and *Sepharadi*.

⁶⁹ Short Commentary on *Shemot* 1:7.

⁷⁰ *Sha'ar* 4 in *Sefer ha-Ge'ullah* ed. J.M. Aronson (1959).

⁷¹ *Responsa of R. Asher ben Yechiel*, *Klal* 20, no. 20.

Another factor influencing Jacob ben Asher's desire to write a commentary may be a response to a neglect of Bible studies in *Ashkenaz*. In his ethical will,⁷² Asher's brother Judah instructs his children "Appoint regular periods for studying the Bible with grammar and commentary. As in my childhood I did not study it - for in *Ashkenaz* they had not the custom -- hence I have been unable to teach here. Read weekly the Pentateuchal lessons with *Rashi* and other commentaries." Jacob ben Asher's text would have been suitable for the education of his brother's children.

⁷² Hebrew Ethical Wills, Israel Abrahams, pp. 74.

Chapter Three

The Appetizers*Parperaot For Parashat Miketz*

Bereshit 41: 1 IT WAS AT THE END OF TWO FULL YEARS THAT PHARAOH HAD A DREAM, AND BEHOLD HE WAS STANDING ON THE BANK OF THE RIVER. *It was at the end (miketz).*⁷³ Here it says “*end (miketz)*” and about Abraham it says “*At the end of 10 years (miketz eser shanim).*”⁷⁴ Just as there it follows after 10 years, so too with Joseph it follows after 10 years. The meaning of “*It was at the end (vayehe miketz)*” is therefore at the end of 10 years plus another two years. “It was at then of two full years (*Vehaye miketz shnatayim yamim*) = 1161. In *gematria* equals “*At the end of 10 years (miketz eser shanim)* = 1162.”⁷⁵

41:2 BEHOLD FROM THE RIVER EMERGED SEVEN COWS, FINE LOOKING, WELL FLESHED AND THEY WERE GRAZING IN THE REED GRASS. *Seven cows.* For “*Egypt is a beautiful heifer*” (Jer. 46:20).⁷⁶ Why seven? Because “*The Ludim, the Anamim, the Lahavim, the Naftuchim, the Patrusim, the Kasluhim, and the Caphtorim*”

⁷³ Jacob ben Asher understands “*miketz*” as temporal and means the **end** of an epoch. Literally here it is a decimal of time (signifying ten years). So “*miketz shnatayim*” means 10 plus two years. The total of 12 years agrees with the midrash in *Bereshit Rabbah* 89.3 in which, two years more were added to Joseph’s imprisonment of ten years, because he said to the butler, “*Zchartani*” (remember me) and “*v’hizkartani*” (mention me). God punished Joseph an additional year for each word. Joseph’s sin was that he did not trust enough in God, but preferred to pin his hopes on a mere mortal.

⁷⁴ *Ber.* 16:3

⁷⁵ It is common for a *gematria* to be inaccurate by a value of one.

⁷⁶ First Jacob ben Asher asks “why a cow?,” next he asks “why seven?”.

(Ber. 10:13), were the seven nations from the Land of Canaan would be sustained by Egypt.⁷⁷

41:5. HE FELL ASLEEP AND HAD A SECOND DREAM. BEHOLD, SEVEN EARS OF CORN CAME UP ON A SINGLE LINE⁷⁸ WHOLESOME AND GOOD. **On a single line (b'kaneh⁷⁹ echad)⁸⁰**. The *Mesorah*⁸¹ lists three occurrences of this word. Twice here (Ber. 41:5 and 23), and another in connection to the *Menorah* (Ex 36:19). For abundance brings light to the world. The good ears were seen (to have grown) on a single line, but the bad ears were not seen on a single line. This is an allusion that all the years of plenty were equal in goodness, but the bad years were not equally bad, rather each year was worse than the previous one.⁸²

41:13. IT CAME TO PASS, THAT AS HE HAD INTERPRETED FOR US, SO DID IT OCCUR - I WAS RESTORED TO MY POSITION AND HE WAS HANGED. **As he had interpreted (ke'asher patar) = 1200**. In *gematria* equals "Dreams follow their interpretation" (*shechalomot holchim achar hapeh*) = 1201. (*Brachot* 55b).⁸³

⁷⁷ Mantua No. 32, Montefiore No. 12 manuscripts and the printed texts read "the *Mitzrim*, the *Ludim*, the *Lehavim*, the *Naftuchim*, the *Patrusim*, the *Kalsuhim* and the *Caphtorim*"

⁷⁸ The New Jewish Publications Society Bible (1985) translates this as "stalk", but Jacob ben Asher understands *kaneh* by its more literal meaning "line."

⁷⁹ *Kaneh* here should be understood as a unit of measure as in Ezekiel 40:3. The good years were all good in the same measure (hence *b'kaneh echad*), whereas the severity of the bad years intensified at an exponential rate. This appears to be a *chidush* of Jacob ben Asher, and does not appear in earlier commentaries.

⁸⁰ Since this portion is usually read during Chanukah, there may be an allusion here to the Chanukah which halachically consists of lights arranged in a "single line" (*kaneh echad*).

⁸¹ This is a work listing the occurrences of rare biblical words and their location in Scripture.

⁸² This passage reflects Jacob ben Asher's optimism and tries to emphasize the good. This comment here is reminiscent of *Rashi's* on *Beresheet* 23:1 where in a description of Sara's years, he says "*Kolan shavin l'tovah*," they were all equally good.

⁸³ The *Gemara* is cynical about dreams by stating that dreams follow the interpretation rather than the interpretation following the dream. In the ethical wills of Jacob ben Asher and his brother Judah we find

41:19. AND BEHOLD SEVEN OTHER COWS EMERGED AFTER THEM, POOR, VERY BAD LOOKING AND THIN FLESHED. I NEVER SAW IN THE ENTIRE LAND OF EGYPT SUCH BAD LOOKING [COWS] LIKE THEM. **Like Them (k'heneh)**. The *Mesorah* list three occurrences of this word, here *lo ra-iti k'heneh* (I never saw such [bad looking cows] *like them*) and in "*I gave you your master's house and possession of your master's wives; and I gave you the House of Israel and Judah, and if that were not enough I would give you like them (k'heneh) and even more*" (II Sam 12:8) in reference to David. This is what Scripture means in the Eccles. 7:26 "*I find women more bitter than death*" Therefore "*I would give (k'heneh) like them and even more*" indicates troubles, as does "*I never saw k'heneh (like them) [bad looking cows] in all Egypt.*"⁸⁴

41:29. BEHOLD SEVEN YEARS ARE COMING DURING WHICH THERE WILL BE GREAT PLENTY IN THE ENTIRE LAND OF EGYPT. **Plenty (Sova)**. Scripture has two occurrences of *Sova* (plenty). Here, and in Prov. 3:10 "*And your barns shall be*

much material about attitude his dreams. Jacob is staunchly against dream interpretations. Judah writes about his dreams and visitation by the dead. In his ethical will (pp. 205). Jacob writes "Trust not in dreams or omens: inquire not of the fortune tellers. Never cast lots with dice or in any other manner. All such things are vanity, resort to them is due to lack of faith. Trust in God alone and alone he will prove your support." Jacob emphatically, "speaks out against believing in omens or dreams undoubtedly with knowledge that, as his brothers Testament reveals, other members of the Asheri family had inclinations toward such beliefs." (Israel Abrahams, pp. 202) In contrast to Jacob's values his brother Judah ben Asher (Ethical Wills, pp. 186), describes miracles connected with his dead grandfather. Before burial the coffin was opened and the grandfathers closest friend R. Solomon HaCohen spoke aloud to the corpse to remind him of a promise between the two friends all present, according to Judah saw the corpse of the grandfather smile. The dead grandfather's returns to world of the living to visit and in one instance saves the family from near certain tragedy by warning them of an impending fire and telling them to flee. (pp. 186-190).

⁸⁴ This is an indirect attack on polygamy. Jacob expresses his view that what may appear as a blessing may in fact be bittersweet. Blessings can also be troublesome. Jacob ben Asher is a realist one wife may be good, but multiple wives can lead to trouble! (Jacob ben Asher's view is in line with the anti-polygamy attitude of Avot 2:7 "The more wives the more witchcraft.") Jacob ben Asher is taking a position against polygamy which was permitted in Muslim Spain but prohibited in Christian Europe.

filled with plenty (sova)." This means that there will be so much plenty (*sova*) that all the storehouses will be full.

41:34. THIS IS WHAT PHARAOH SHOULD DO. APPOINT OFFICIALS OVER THE LAND AND PREPARE THE LAND OF EGYPT DURING THE SEVEN YEARS OF PLENTY. **Appoint (v'yifaked)** Twice in the *Mesorah*. Here, and about Achashverosh "*Let the king appoint (v'yifaked) officials*" (Ester 2:3). Achashverosh appointed officials to gather for him many women and hence his impoverishment, as the *Chazal* say (*Meg. 11a*), "*King Achashverosh imposed a tax (Ester 10:1)*" on account of his impoverishment through his collection of women. As it says in Proverbs 31:2, "*Do not squander your wealth on women*" By contrast Joseph appointed officials to gather grain and so he increased his wealth ⁸⁵

41:35. LET THEM GATHER IN ALL THE FOOD DURING THESE GOOD YEARS THAT ARE COMING, AND LET THEM STORE UP GRAIN UNDER THE HAND OF PHARAOH. LET THE FOOD BE KEPT IN THE CITIES, AND LET THEM SAFE GUARD IT. **Let them gather (v'yikabtzu)**. Twice in the *Mesorah*. Here, and "*And they gathered (v'yikabtzu) all the beautiful young virgins*" (Ester 2:3). This is referred to in "*Corn shall make young men flourish, and the new wine, the maidens*" (Zechariah 9:17) ⁸⁶

41:40. YOU SHALL BE OVER MY HOUSE, AND BY YOUR WORD SHALL ALL MY PEOPLE BE GOVERNED, ONLY BY VIRTUE OF THE THRONE SHALL I BE

⁸⁵ This too appears to be an anti-polygamous remark.

⁸⁶ The Context of Zechariah passage is a prophecy of happiness.

GREATER THAN YOU. **By your word, *yishak* is listed twice in the Mesorah.** Here, and “*One who responds appropriately is like a kiss (*yishak*)*”⁸⁷ on the lips” (Prov. 24:26). Since Joseph’s reply was appropriate he merited kissing. The connection between “He who responds appropriately is like a kiss (*yishak*)” and “*He will govern all my people,*”⁸⁸ is that the people will kiss you.

41:45. PHARAOH GAVE JOSEPH THE NAME “TZAFNAT PANEACH”, AND HE GAVE HIM OSNAT, THE DAUGHTER OF POTI-PHERA PRIEST OF ON AS A WIFE. THUS JOSEPH EMERGED IN CHARGE OF THE LAND OF EGYPT.

Tzafnat Paneach In gematria equals *m’geleh nestarim* (revealer of the hidden), both = 828. *Tzafnat Paneach* is notorikon for *Tzaddik Pitpet Nefesh Toavah Potiphar Inna Nafsho Chinam* (The righteous man defied his lust, and Potiphar afflicted him without cause). Another interpretation: *Tzofeh* (seer), *Podeem* (redeemer), *Navi* (prophet), *Tomech* (supporter), *Poter* (interpreter), *Anav* (Humble), *Navon* (understanding), *Chozeh* (visionary)⁸⁹

41:50. TWO SONS WERE BORN TO JOSEPH BEFORE THE YEARS OF FAMINE CAME. THEY WERE BORN TO HIM BY OSNAT THE DAUGHTER OF POTI-PHERA, PRIEST OF ON. **And to Joseph (*u’leyosef*).** Twice in the *Mesorah*. Here, and “*And of Joseph (*u’leyosef*) he said, blessed of the Lord be his land (Devarim 33:13).* Joseph abstained from sexual relations during the years of the famine, as it is written

⁸⁷ *Yishak* can be translated as “The lips that respond appropriately.”

⁸⁸ The fact that he responded appropriately made him deserving to be an official.

⁸⁹ These may be qualities that Jacob ben Asher admired. Homiletically this comments that a man’s name is earned through his actions.

"Before the years of famine came." Therefore he merited the reward of "God's blessing on his land". This is what is taught in *Ta'anit* 11a, "He who shares in the distress of the community will merit to behold its consolation."

41:55.⁹⁰ WHEN ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT WAS IN FAMINE, THE PEOPLE CRIED OUT TO PHARAOH FOR BREAD, AND PHARAOH SAID TO ALL THE EGYPTIANS "GO TO JOSEPH, WHAT HE SAYS TO YOU DO." **You do (*l'chem tasu*)** In *gematria* equals "Do circumcision" (*hamilah tasu*), both equal 867. He commanded them to circumcise.⁹¹

42: 6. JOSEPH WAS THE RULER OVER THE LAND, HE WAS THE ONE WHO SOLD FOOD TO ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE LAND. JOSEPH'S BROTHERS CAME AND THEY BOWED DOWN TO HIM WITH THEIR FACES TO THE GROUND. **And they bowed down to him (*v'yishtachavu lo*) = 772.** In *gematria* equals "Now the dream is fulfilled" (*b'chan nitkayam hachalom*) = 776.⁹²

42:7. WHEN JOSEPH SAW HIS BROTHERS HE RECOGNIZED THEM, BUT HE ACTED LIKE A STRANGER TO THEM. HE SPOKE HARSHLY TO THEM, AND SAID TO THEM, "WHERE DO YOU COME FROM?" THEY SAID, "FROM THE

⁹⁰ This comment does not appear in the oldest manuscript (Mantua No. 32.) This is reason to believe that these are not the words of Jacob ben Asher, but those of a later copyist. This comment is based on an idea in *Bereshit Rabbah* 90:6. A variation of this comment occurs in *Moshav Zekenim* pp. 82.

⁹¹ *Bereshit Rabbah* 90:6. Joseph commands the Egyptians to circumcise themselves. Jacob Ben Asher uses *gematria* to strengthen the connection between the Midrash and the biblical verse.

⁹² This comment does not appear in the Mantua Manuscript (the oldest manuscript.) This is good reason to believe that this comment is not Jacob ben Asher's but the addition of a later copyist. Perhaps this is the reason that the *gematria* used here does not work mathematically. This comment is based on *Tanchuma Miketz* six.

LAND OF CANAAN TO BUY FOOD.” Joseph wanted to receive them warmly, but the angel⁹³ who had found the brothers wondering came and told Joseph that the brothers were about to arrive. This is why in the next verse “*He recognized (vayaker)*” is in the singular.⁹⁴ **He acted like a stranger (vayitnaker)** = 686. In *gematria* equals “Because of Gabriel” (*al y'day ha-ish Gabriel*) = 686.

42:8. JOSEPH RECOGNIZED HIS BROTHERS BUT THEY DID NOT RECOGNIZE HIM. **They did not recognize him (hekeroohu).** Twice in the *Mesorah*. In one place it is written fully with the optional letter *yod*, and in the other place it is written with out the optional letter *yod*. In our verse it is lacking. In the other verse, about Job, it is fully written out. “*When they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him*” (Job 2:12). Just like there they did not recognize him on account of his suffering, so too here they did not recognize Joseph because he had changed. From a slave he had become a great ruler over all the land. In the case of Job, though the friends did not recognize him from a distance, when they got closer they did recognize him. But with Joseph’s brothers, they did not recognize him at all! For it was inconceivable to the brothers that Joseph could have risen to such a high position, and this is why “*recognize (hekeroohu)*” is written with out the *yod*.

⁹³ This is the same angel who found Joseph searching for his brothers near Shechem. (See classical medieval commentators on *Bereshit* 37:15).

⁹⁴ According to Avraham Grossman this is a different type of use of singular and plural. Plural was used first because Joseph’s initial response was to give the brothers a full welcome (i.e. plural), but then the angel tells Joseph to wait until the dream of the eleven stars is fulfilled. This means that Joseph should wait till Benjamin arrives. Joseph acting on the Angel’s advice diminishes his reception. This is the reason that there is a change from plural (full) to singular (diminished). Another explanation is that there are two stages to the recognition. The first stage is plural because both the Angel and Joseph together recognize the brothers. The second stage is singular because Joseph by himself recognized the brothers.

42:9. JOSEPH REMEMBERED THE DREAMS HE HAD DREAMT ABOUT THEM AND HE SAID TO THEM "YOU ARE SPIES." "YOU HAVE COME TO SEE WHERE THE LAND IN ITS NAKEDNESS." **You are spies.** Meaning you and not me. The salvation that will come from me was not from council with spies⁹⁵. The brothers said "*Your servants have never been spies.*" For this statement to be true than it must have been Judah that responded to Joseph on the brothers' behalf, since he was the spokesman. Also it is from Judah that Caleb is descendant, and Caleb refused to take council with the spies.⁹⁶ **Never were (lo hiyu) = 52** In *gematria* equal **Caleb = 52**.

42:11. "WE (*NACHNU*) ARE ALL THE SONS OF ONE MAN. WE (*ANUCHNU*) ARE HONEST (MEN) YOUR SERVANTS HAVE NEVER BEEN SPIES." **We (*nachu*) are all the sons of one man.** The Hebrew word "We (*nachnu*)" is written with the letter *aleph* missing (from the usual form *anuchnu*) to indicate that one of the brothers is missing. **We (*nachnu*).** Three times in the *Mesorah*. Here in our verse, another time in "*We (*nachnu*) are ready to fight*" (BaMidbar 32:32), and in "*We (*nachnu*) have transgressed*" (Lam. 3:42). This is the basis for the midrash (*Ber. Rabb.* 91.6) in which the brothers say, "We (*nachnu*) will kill the entire city if they do not give us Joseph." (They are looking for their missing brother Joseph.) Since "We (*nachnu*) have transgressed" against him, "We (*nachnu*) are ready to fight" if they do not let us ransom Joseph.

⁹⁵ Joseph is accusing them of the crime that they will commit in the future. They shall listen to the evil report by the spies which said the children of Israel are too inferior to live in the promised land.

⁹⁶ Caleb and Joshua disagreed with the report given by the other ten spies.

42:13. THEY SAID, "YOUR SERVANTS ARE TWELVE BROTHERS, WE ARE THE SONS OF ONE MAN IN THE LAND OF CANAAN. THE YOUNGEST HOWEVER IS THIS DAY WITH OUR FATHER, AND ONE IS NO MORE. HE SAID TO THEM, JOSEPH, "IT IS JUST AS I TOLD YOU, YOU ARE SPIES." **And one is no more.** Is immediately followed by **He said to them, Joseph (v'yomar l'hem yosef).** He (Joseph) struck his magic cup and said "I divine that his name is Joseph!"⁹⁷

42:15. "WITH THIS SHALL YOU BE TESTED: BY PHARAOH'S LIFE, YOU SHALL NOT LIVE THIS PLACE UNLESS YOUR YOUNGER BROTHER COMES HERE. **Comes (bevo).** In *gematria* this word equals 11, meaning "You will not get out of this until you bring your eleventh brother."

42:17.⁹⁸ AND JOSEPH PUT THEM IN PRISON FOR THREE DAYS. This corresponds to the three things that the brothers did to Joseph. (1.) "They stripped him of his coat" (37:23), (2.) "They threw him in a pit" (37:24), (3.) "They sold Joseph" (37:28).⁹⁹

42:28. HE SAID TO HIS BROTHERS, "MY MONEY HAS BEEN RETURNED! IT IS HERE IN MY BAG!" THEIR HEARTS SANK, TREMBLING THEY TURNED TO ONE ANOTHER, SAYING "WHAT IS THIS THAT GOD HAS DONE TO US?" **God has done (osah elohim).** Twice in the *Mesorah*. Here, and in "*The Lord (YHVH) has*

⁹⁷ This *drash* is derived by rereading the verse without punctuation! Joseph is hinting that he is the spy. Reread the verses without the period as "One is no more...and his name is Joseph!" Joseph can not help but reveal his secret, even if only cryptically.

⁹⁸ In the Mantua manuscript this comment comes after *Ber.* 42:3. This suggests a mistake by the copyist.

⁹⁹ Justice is served measure for measure.

done to Pharaoh and Egypt" (*Shemot* 18:8). Because the Egyptians made the children of Israel suffer, God will do to Pharaoh and Egypt, just like they did to Israel. This is why God killed them and drowned them.¹⁰⁰

42:33. BUT THE MAN WHO IS THE MASTER OF THE LAND SAID TO US, "THIS IS HOW I SHALL KNOW THAT YOU ARE HONEST. LEAVE ONE OF YOUR BROTHERS WITH ME, AND TAKE FOOD FOR YOUR STARVING HOUSEHOLDS AND GO." **And go (*velechu*)**. Three times in the *Mesorah*. Here, and in "*Take also your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go (*velechu*)*" (*Shemot* 12:32), and "*As soon as you have light, and go (*velechu*)*" (*I Sam.* 29:10). This teaches that Joseph permitted them to lead flocks and herds despite that "No cow... leaves Egypt" (*Bekorot* 28b). This is "Your flocks and your herds **and go (*velechu*)**." And he also said to them "Do not leave except by daylight"¹⁰¹ (*Pesachim* 2a), and this is "*as soon as you have light, and go(*velechu*)*."¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ It is important to note that here the printed text and Mantua manuscript are identical. There is a problem with this comment in that name of God in Exodus 18:8(YHVH) is not the same as in *Bereshit* 42:28 (*Elohim*). The method of drash, *Mesorah*, that Jacob ben Asher uses here is built on the appearance of identical language. Yet here the names for God are not identical. This may indicate a degree of literary license (or latitude) in the rules of exegesis. For reasons unclear, Jacob Ben Asher employed the less precise verse 18:8 for exegesis. This comment would have worked better with verse Exodus 18:1 which uses the *Elohim* -- which is the name of God that would be consistent with our verse *Bereshit* 42:28. Perhaps homiletical value over-rides literal exactness. Homiletically, Jacob Ben Asher sees the Joseph story as foreshadowing the exodus from Egypt. God acts justly and punishes those who oppress Israel.

¹⁰¹ The Hebrew expression "*bechi tov*," has a double meaning of "morning light" and with joy. (Derived from *Bereshit* 1:4 "the light that it was good" (*ha-or ki tov*) and from *Bereshit* 1:10 (*ki tov*). Jacob ben Asher understands this as a foreshadowing that ultimately the children of Israel will go out *bechi tov* (with joy) from Egypt.

¹⁰² This comment may reflect something of medieval attitudes towards journeying. Traveling was seen as dangerous. One should only travel by daylight. The Asheri family's famous journey from *Ashkenaz* to *Sepherad* in 1303 was likely an indelible for Jacob.

42:36. JACOB, THERE FATHER SAID TO THEM "YOU HAVE BEREAVED ME OF MY CHILDREN, JOSEPH IS NO MORE, SHIMON IS NO MORE, AND YOU WANT TO TAKE BENJAMIN. ALL THIS HAS HAPPENED TO ME." **All this (*kulanah*)**. Twice in the *Mesorah*. Here, and in "*You surpass all of this*" (Prov. 31:29). Jacob's pain about Benjamin surpassed all the sorrow that he had been grieving, even more than for Shimon and Joseph.¹⁰³ Since tragedy had befallen¹⁰⁴ Jacob three times he said "A child can not be used for divination, but may be taken as a sign" (*Chulin* 95b).¹⁰⁵ Another interpretation: **All this (*kulanah*)** is written in the short form with a *vav* missing, thus it can be read as "brides (*kalenah*)". It is my obligation to provide sustenance for their wives.¹⁰⁶

42:37. REUBEN SPOKE TO HIS FATHER SAYING¹⁰⁷, "YOU MAY PUT MY TWO SONS TO DEATH IF I DO NOT BRING HIM (BENJAMIN) BACK TO YOU. PUT HIM IN MY HANDS AND I WILL RETURN HIM TO YOU." **Put to death (*tamit*)**. Twice in the Scripture. Here, and in "*envy kills (*tamit*) the simpleton*" (Job 5:3). This was interpreted in the midrash that refers to Korach's band. Its written that they were

¹⁰³ This is a keen psychological insight on the affect of accumulated emotional stress through a succession of tragedies.

¹⁰⁴ The Halachic term "*hechuzak*" is used here and means that after three times it becomes presumptive.

¹⁰⁵ This may reveal something of Jacob ben Asher's attitude towards signs and superstitions.

¹⁰⁶ In Hebrew daughters-in-law are called "brides" (*kalot*). Jacob explains that he will have to provide for his daughter-in-laws.

¹⁰⁷ From this we can learn about how Jacob ben Asher perceives the power of words, in which oaths for good or bad will come true; if not now, then in a later generation. One must be very careful about what one says. A similar expression exists in modern American English, "Be careful about what you ask, for you may get it." The punishment for Reuben's his rash words would be fulfilled through the death of his descendants Dotan and Aviram. This idea also occurs in *Masechet Makkot* 11a "The curse of a sage though uttered with out cause takes effect." (Soncino Edition pp. 74)

envious, "*They envied Moses in the camp*" (Ps. 106:16).¹⁰⁸ These were Dotan and Aviram. Because he said, "Two sons shall be put to death," this was fulfilled through his two sons, and they are Dotan and Aviram.¹⁰⁹ (Dotan and Aviram are Reuben's sons). **Two** (*et shneh*) = 761. In *gematria* equals **These are Dotan and Aviram** (*elu dotan v'aviram*) = 750

43: 4 "IF YOU WILL SEND OUR BROTHER WITH US, WE WILL GO DOWN AND BUY FOOD FOR YOU." **We will go down** (*nerda*). Three times in the *Mesorah*. Here, and in "*Let us go down* (*nerda*) *and confound their speech*" (Ber. 11:7), "*Let us go down* (*nerda*) *after the Philistines by night*" (1 Sam. 14:36). Meaning that if you will let Benjamin go with us, we will leave (*nerda*) immediately. We will go down (*nerda*) day and night to rush the matter, just like in the verse about David in which they went down day and night. Another interpretation is that there is also a hint in this verse to the midrash that the brothers went down to destroy the Land of Egypt, as it is written, "*they went* (*nerda*) *down and confounded* (*nevelah*) *their speech*." This is an allusion to the Midrash¹¹⁰ they went down to kill.¹¹¹

43:7. THEY SAID THE MAN KEPT ASKING ABOUT OUR FAMILY, SAYING IS YOUR FATHER STILL ALIVE? DO YOU HAVE ANOTHER BROTHER? AND WE ANSWER HIM ACCORDING TO HIS WORDS. COULD WE HAVE KNOWN THAT

¹⁰⁸ Most of Jacob ben Asher's comments are made to demonstrate the integrity of the text. All biblical verses relate to one another. Here verses from *Bereshit*, Job and Psalms are shown to be connected.

¹⁰⁹ M. Kasher, *Torah Shlemah*, pp. 52 "Said Reuben, 'My two sons you shall slay (43:37)...because he uttered this, it came true [as it were] about his two descendants Dotan and Aviram (*Bamidbar* 26:9-10).

¹¹⁰ *Bereshit Rabbah* 91:7.

¹¹¹ Litter the streets of Egypt with carcasses (*nevelah*).

HE WOULD SAY, "BRING YOUR BROTHER DOWN?" **According (al pi).** Twice in the *Masorah*. Here, and "*According (al pi) to two witnesses*" (*Devarim* 17:6). They had to answer to his words as though they were witnesses to the matter.

43:9. I WILL GUARANTEE HIM, FROM MY HAND YOU CAN DEMAND HIM. IF I DO NOT BRING HIM TO YOU AND STAND HIM UP BEFORE YOU, I WILL HAVE SINNED AGAINST YOU FOREVER. **Against you forever (l'cha kol hayamim)** = 205. In *gematria* this equals "In this world and the next" (*b'olam hazeh v'labah*) = 204.¹¹²

43:10. IF WE HAD NOT HESITATED, WE COULD HAVE BEEN THERE AND BACK TWICE. **We could have been there and back (ki atah shavu zeh).** The *Sofey Tevot* (inverse notorikon) of this phrase contains the Tetragrammaton.¹¹³ God escorts the righteous.¹¹⁴

43:11. THEIR FATHER ISRAEL SAID TO THEM, "IF SO THEN THIS IS WHAT YOU MUST DO: TAKE SOME OF THE BEST FRUITS OF THE LAND IN YOUR VESSELS, AND TAKE A PRESENT TO THE MAN, A LITTLE BALSAM, A LITTLE HONEY, WAX, LOTUS, PISTACHIOS AND ALMONDS." **A little balsam, a little honey (me-ot there u'me-ot dvash).** They brought him seven species corresponding to the seven sons of Jacob's wives¹¹⁵. Each one brought him a present.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Jacob ben Asher uses *gematria* to support *Rashi's* statement.

¹¹³ God's four letter name can be founded embedded in this phrase. If you highlight the last letter in each word you will notice that it spells God's name.

¹¹⁴ *Bereshit Rabbah* 86:6.

¹¹⁵ Jacob's wives are Rachel and Leah. Zilpah and Bilhah are not Jacob's wives but hand-maidens.

¹¹⁶ This reflects an awareness of a class system. A class distinction is made between the *bnei gevirot* and the *bnei shifchot* (sons of Jacob's wives verses the sons of the hand-maidens).

43:15. SO THE MEN¹¹⁷ TOOK THIS GIFT OFFERING, AND THEY TOOK

DOUBLE THE MONEY IN THEIR HANDS AND BENJAMIN, AND THEY ROSE

AND WENT DOWN TO EGYPT. THEY STOOD BEFORE JOSEPH. **Double**

(u'mishneh). Twice in the *Mesorah*. In our verse here, and in Jeremiah 17:8, "*Destroy*

them with double destruction." This tells us by means of *al v'chomer* (an inference from

minor to major), that if even here where unintentionally money came into the hands of

Joseph's brothers and they had to come back to pay him double then all the more so in the

future the nations (of the world) shall have to pay over and over again all the money that

they took from Israel¹¹⁸. And this is the what Scripture means in the verse "*Destroy them*

with double destruction."

43:29. HE RAISED HIS EYE AND SAW HIS BROTHER BENJAMIN, HIS

MOTHER'S SON, AND SAID, "IS THIS YOUR YOUNGER BROTHER OF WHOM

YOU SPOKE TO ME? HE THEN SAID "MAY GOD BE GRACIOUS TO YOU MY

SON." **Be gracious (yachn'cha)**. Twice in the *Mesorah*. Here, and "*He will be very*

gracious (yachn'cha) to you at the sound of your cry" (Isa. 30,19). This is what *Chazal*

¹¹⁷ The Men (*ha-Anashim*) may refer to the superior class, who in medieval *Askenaz*, represented the Jewish community before the gentile authorities who often extorted large sums of money from the Jews through the kidnapping and ransoming of Jewish leaders.

¹¹⁸ This comment may be a reference to the contemporary problem of *pidyon shevuyim* (ransoming of captives) through extortion. Not only was this a general crisis of the day, but it figured prominently in the personal experience of Jacob ben Asher through the tragic and infamous incident in which Meir of Rothenburg (*Maharam*), the leading Talmudic scholar of his day and teacher of Jacob ben Asher's father (the *Rosh*) was imprisoned on false charges in 1286 by Emperor Rudolph I. The Emperor made it known that he was willing to release the *Maharam* for a large ransom. Meir of Rothenburg however refused to allow the community to pay the ransom for fear that it might and encourage the furthering capture and extortion of Jews. Meir died in jail in 1293. Asher ben Yechiel, succeeded *Maharam* and became the new leading rabbinical authority of *Ashkenaz*. Fear of future seizures motivate the *Rosh* and his son Jacob ben Asher to flee with their families from *Ashkenaz* to the *Sepharadi* lands in 1303.

said (*Ber. Rabb.* 94.8), "He asked Benjamin, how many children do you have, and what are their names?" And Benjamin told him that each one is named for a hardship that had befallen his brother. This is the "*sound of the your cry*." When Benjamin told him he was grieving over his brother, Joseph was moved by compassion and he said, "*God will be gracious (yachn'cha) to you my son.*"

43:31. HE WASHED HIS FACE AND CAME OUT. HE CONTROLLED HIMSELF AND SAID, "SERVE BREAD." **He controlled (*vayitapek*).** These words occur twice in the *Mesorah*. Here, and in the Book of Ester(5:10) "*Haman controlled (*vayitapek*), himself and went home* " Just as the story of Joseph begins in sorrow but then ends in joy, when he announces that he is Joseph, there too (in the Book of Ester) what begins in sorrow ends in "*Joy and happiness for the Jews*" (Ester 8:17).¹¹⁹

43:33. THEY WERE SEATED BEFORE HIM, THE FIRST BORN ACCORDING TO HIS BIRTHRIGHT AND THE YOUNGEST ACCORDING TO HIS YOUTH. THE MEN LOOKED AT EACH OTHER IN ASTONISHMENT¹²⁰ **The youngest (*v'haztair*).** Twice in the *Mesorah*. Here, and "*The youngest (*v'haztair*) one a strong nation*" (Isa. 60:22), thus telling Benjamin who was the youngest that he would be made

¹¹⁹ This is the revolving wheel of history and justice from *Chumash* to *Ketuvim* (Joseph to Mordecai). We can see that the wheel returns (justice and goodness). So there is hope because in the future the wheel will return.

¹²⁰ The looked at each other in astonishment because they never told Joseph their ages. Nonetheless Joseph placed the eleven brothers in precise age order. The brothers were amazed by Joseph's ability.

greater than the rest.¹²¹ As it was written in the next verse "*Benjamin's portion was greater than all theirs - five times as much.*"

43:34. HE HAD PORTIONS CARRIED FROM BEFORE HIM TO THEM.

BENJAMIN'S PORTION WAS GREATER THAN ALL OF THEIRS- FIVE TIMES AS MUCH. The word **Portions (masot)** occurs twice in the *Mesorah*. In this verse, and in Lamentations 2:14 "*They prophesied to you oracles (masot) of delusion and deception (meduchim).*" There is a midrash (in *Tanchuma*) that Joseph had struck his goblet and said "All those who are brothers from the same mother shall sit together. But I do not have a brother from my mother, neither does Benjamin have a brother from his mother so we shall sit together. This is the meaning of "*Oracles (masot) of delusion and deception (meduchim).*"^{122 123}

Discussion

The above text are the *parperaot* (the intellectual *hors d'oeuvres*) that Jacob ben Asher serves to his reader as an introduction to the main dish- his *peshat* exegesis on the *parasha*. These entertaining comments are meant to attract and focus the reader's attention toward issues that will be addressed in the coming section.

¹²¹ This foreshadows that from Benjamin will come Saul the first king of Israel.

¹²² Professor Avraham Grossman suggested that the "*meduchim*" (deception) is problematic here because it has a very strong connotation of "disaster." There may be an allusion here that also in common between Benjamin and Joseph is that disaster shall fall upon their families in the future. From Joseph will come Jeroboam who will build altars of idolatry at Dan and Beth El, and destroy the united monarchy by dividing the country into northern and southern kingdoms. From Benjamin will come the *pilegesh* (the concubine) of Givah who will testify through her death and dismemberment that the members of the tribe of Benjamin are as wicked as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

¹²³ Jacob ben Asher reads the Bible in the tradition of the Rabbis as described in *Masechet Ta'anit* 9a. "Everything that is in the Bible (Prophets and Writings) is hinted at in the Torah (Five books of Moses). Thus the future tragedies that will befall Joseph's and Benjamin's families in the later books of the Bible were already hinted at in the Chumash.

The child who only eats candies is never properly nourished. So too, the Shabbes dinner guest who gorges himself on *challah* to the point that he can not enjoy the main meal is rarely satisfied. The *Mikraot Gedolot* commentary called *Baal haTurim* offers its reader an unbalanced diet. It only offers the reader Ben Asher's appetizers. As the author explained in his introduction, he never intended the *parperaot* to be a meal in and of themselves. They were prepared solely as a *forshpays* to heighten one's desire for the main course. The next chapter will examine the meal that follows the *hors d'oeuvres*. The rest of this chapter will discuss Ben Asher's method and persona as seen in the text of the *parperaot*.

Method

In *Masechet Ta'anit* 9a, there is teaching that "Everything that is in the Bible (Prophets and Writings) is hinted at in the Torah (Five books of Moses)." The Gemara uses the word "*remez*." *Remez* implies another level of connection between words that goes beyond their contextual meaning. This exegetical technique was popular among the *Chaside Ashkenaz*. Jacob ben Asher was exposed to this culture in his father's home in while in *Ashkenaz*. It appears that Ben Asher genuinely enjoyed this type of exegesis. One of his goal in writing may have been to introduce this material into *Sepharad* where it was unknown. Perhaps a cultural longing for exegesis as he knew it back home motivated Ben Asher to pen these comments.

Ben Asher uses three techniques: *gematria*, comparison of words with similar numerical value; *notarikon*, anagrammatical reading; and explanations based on the masoretic accounting of rare words.

As noted earlier, *Sephardi* exegetes generally frowned upon the use of *gematria*. *Ramban* and *Ibn Ezra* warned their readers to avoid interpretations based on this technique. Just as Jacob ben Asher's halachic works strive to unify *Ashkenazi* and *Sephardi* halacha so does the nature of his exegesis. By placing *Ashkenazi* style *gematriot* before his main commentary (which is more *Sephardi* in style), ben Asher effectively achieves an exegetical montage that unified these diverse cultural style.

In *Parashat Miktz*, *Baal haTurim* primarily uses *gematria* to demonstrate the connection between the Written Torah and the Oral Torah. It appears to be Ben Asher's goal to show that they form a whole and that insights into this unity can be glimpsed via *gematria*. On *Ber. 41. 32*, Ben Asher brings *gematria* to show the oneness of Joseph's dream interpretation and the power of dream interpreters as taught in the Talmud (*Brachot 55b*). *Gematria* is also used to reinforce the connection between rabbinic midrash and the biblical verse. On *Ber. 42:4*, *Baal HaTurim* uses *gematria* to show that the biblical verse hints at its own midrashic explanation. In this case, we find "evidence" that the angel Gabriel warned Joseph about his brothers' impending arrival. When the brothers meet Joseph, "he acted like a stranger" to them. The answer to the question why he acted like this is suggested by the common value between the words "he acted like a stranger" and "because of Gabriel." Another example of *gematria* based on a biblical verse foreshadowing for a midrashic explanation can be observed from *Ber. 42.6* where the brothers come down to Egypt. "And they bowed down to him" equals the *gematria* of "now the dream is fulfilled," (*Tanchuma*). The *gematria* technique has an entertaining playfulness that reinforces the oneness of Scripture and Rabbinic Literature.

Though *Notorikon*, anagrams, are infrequent among the *parperaot* for *Miketz*, they are elaborate. The words "*Tzafnat Paneach*"¹²⁴ have long been the subject of interpretive speculation, largely because they have no biblical parallel and appear to be of a non-Hebrew origin. *Baal haTurim* offers two acronymic interpretations for his reader. One translates as "the righteous man (Joseph) defied his lust (for Potiphar's wife), and Potiphar afflicted him without cause."¹²⁵ The second describes Joseph's outstanding qualities, "*Tzofeh* (seer), *Podeem* (redeemer), *Navi* (prophet), *Tomech* (supporter), *Poter* (interpreter), *Anav* (Humble), *Navon* (understanding), *Chozeh* (visionary)."¹²⁶ There is once case in this *parasha* of a "*Sofey Tayvol*," a reverse *notorikon*. On *Ber.* 43:10 "We could have been there and back (*ki atah shavu zeh*). The inverted acronym of this phrase contains the Tetragrammaton. This means that God escorts the righteous.

The most frequently used *remez* device by *Baal HaTurim* are his interpretations of the *Masorah*. The *Masoretes*¹²⁷ made lists of the Bible's rare words. These are words that generally occur three times or less in Scripture. *Baal HaTurim* frequently uses the *Masorah* to demonstrate the unity of Scripture. He wants to show that *Nach*¹²⁸ is as holy as the Five Books of Moses. An example of this can be seen in his comment on *Ber.* 41:29. "Scripture has two occurrences of *Sova* (plenty). Here, and in *Prov.* 3:10 "*And*

¹²⁴ *Ber.* 41:45.

¹²⁵ His conviction was a frame. Joseph was innocent and wrongly sent to jail.

¹²⁶ These maybe qualities that Jacob ben Asher admired. Homiletically this comments that a man's name is earned through his actions.

¹²⁷ Between the sixth and tenth century CE a number of scholars, collectively known as the Masoretes, sought to ensure the accuracy of scripture by counting each letter and word of each book. They established the proper spelling of each word. Lists of rare words were made. "*Ochel V'ochla*" is one such book.

¹²⁸ *Nach* is an acronym for *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim* (Prophets and Writings - the second two books in the Biblical trilogy.)

your barns shall be filled with plenty (sova)." This means that there will be so much plenty (*sova*) that all the storehouses will be full." One verse is used to explain the other. A more sophisticated example can be observed in *Baal HaTurim*'s comment on *Ber.* 41:50. Here an interpretation of a connection between two rare words is found, and then a halachic support is found in the Talmud. **"And to Joseph (u'leyosef).** Twice in the *Mesorah*. Here, and *"And of Joseph (u'leyosef) he said, blessed of the Lord be his land (Devarim 33:13).* Joseph abstained from sexual relations during the years of the famine, as it is written *"Before the years of famine came."* Therefore he merited the reward of *"God's blessing on his land"*. This is what is taught in *Ta'anit* 11a, "He who shares in the distress of the community will merit to behold its consolation."

Even a variation as minor as one letter in the spelling of a biblical word prompts *Baal HaTurim* to comment upon it. Noting an unusual spelling in *Ber.* 42:11 he writes **"We (*nachu*) are all the sons of one man.** The Hebrew word "We (*nachnu*)" is written with the letter *aleph* missing (from the usual form *anuchnu*) to indicate that one of the brothers is missing."

Gematria, Notarikon and explanations of the Masorah are the three main tools used by *Baal HaTurim*. Though the tools are different they are used for the same purpose, to demonstrate the unity of Chumash, Nach, and Midrash and Talmud. This is like the rabbinic notion of *"Shivim panim laTorah"* (the Torah has seventy faces). The genres may appear distinct on the outside but they all share one common in-side.

Persona

What can we learn about the author from his text? First it must be noted that method and persona cannot really be separated, as persona is also revealed through method. But here the examination will focus on attitudes revealed through author's content. Jacob ben Asher reveals his opinions in a number of topics through his commentary. Significant discussion of this is made in the notes that accompany the translation. Some of these observations will be summarized here.

Baal haTurim expresses opposition to the practice of polygamy. In his time this was still practiced among Sepharadim that could afford the high expense. In *Ashkenaz*, polygamy was banned by a *Takanah* enacted by *Rabbenu Gershom* (965-1028). Ben Asher may have experienced some culture shock as adjusted to life in *Sepharad*. He speaks out against this practice at least twice in *Miketz*, on *Ber.* 41:19, 41:34, 41:35.

Ben Asher reveals a degree of distrust towards dreams and omens. In his comment in *Ber.* 41:13, he appears to be making a cynical comment that the dream interpreters can be manipulative. A similar distrust is expressed in the reference that children cannot be used for divination when discussing *Ber.* 42:36.

A strong sense of divine justice is characteristic of *Baal haTurim*'s commentary. That Israel will ultimately be redeemed and compensated for her sufferings is suggested in several comments; *Ber.* 41:28, 43:15, 43:31.

Chapter Four

The Main Course

Jacob ben Asher's *Peshat* Commentary on *Bereshit* 41

***Bereshit* 41:** 1. IT WAS AT THE END OF TWO FULL YEARS THAT PHARAOH HAD A DREAM, AND BEHOLD HE WAS STANDING ON THE BANK OF THE RIVER. This means that the incident of Pharaoh's dream occurred at the end of two years. But nowhere is it indicated when these two years began. It seems that Joseph was at the end of end of two years from the time that the butler had been released from prison. Joseph should have gotten out then, but he was imprisoned for another two years because he had hung his trust on flesh and blood¹²⁹ (the butler and not on God). So in actuality Joseph was imprisoned for twelve years, and he was only a servant in his masters house for one year. As it says in *Ber.* 39:5, "*And the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house and in the field.*" This indicates one full year of summer and winter. Thus Joseph was in imprisoned for nine years before the arrival of the baker and the butler, and they were incarcerated with him for one year. This is indicated in (*Ber.* 40:4) "And they were under guard for a '*yamim.*'" *Yamim* means a year.¹³⁰ And after that year they were imprisoned another two years. But there is a contradiction¹³¹ between

¹²⁹ Joseph is punished for having said to the butler "Think of me (*Zachartani*) when all is well with you again, and do me the kindness of mentioning me (*hizkartani*) to Pharaoh, so as to set me free from this place. For in truth I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews; nor have I done anything here that they should have put me in the dungeon." (*Ber.* 40:14-15).

¹³⁰ *Rashi* on *Vayikra* 25:29 "The days of a complete year are called *yamim.*"

¹³¹ The contradiction is that if the reason the butler and baker went to jail was to distract public attention away from Joseph; then why was it after nine years! The word "*kasheh*" (there is a difficulty or contradiction) is a characteristic expression of the *Baale Tosafot*, and the appearance of this term indicates the influence of this school on our author.

the above interpretation and the midrash¹³² in which God ordained that the butler and the baker should offend Pharaoh, so that the people would talk about the scandal (of the butler and the baker) and forget their gossiping about Joseph.¹³³ But if they did not offend Pharaoh until nine years after Joseph entered prison, then the public talked about Joseph's case for a long time - nine years! Now it is possible that they offended Pharaoh without delay and that the matter dragged on and on, so that they were not imprisoned till after nine years. And some find support for this idea in our verse in which it is written *miketz*. Because in *Bereshit* 16:3 it also says *miketz* "after ten years" (*miketz eser shanim*). Like in the verse about Abraham the word *miketz* connotes ten years, so too here about Joseph *miketz* means ten years.¹³⁴

MIKETZ (IT WAS AT THE END). According to *Rashi*, Onkelos translates *meketz* as "at the end." He translates it this way to make it clear that you should not say it means "at the beginning," like in *Devarim* 14:28. "Every third year (*miketz shalosh shanim*) you shall bring out the full tithe of your field in that year." In this verse from *Devarim* *miketz* means the beginning of the third year.¹³⁵

SHNATAYIM YAMIN (TWO YEARS OF DAYS). Since it says *shnatayim* (two years), why does it also say *yamin* (days)?¹³⁶ Some commentators explaining that

¹³² *Bereshit Rabbah* 89:1-2.

¹³³ Ginsberg, L. "Legends of the Jews", vol. II, pp. 60. "For a long time the people talked of nothing but the accusation raised against Joseph by his mistress. In order to divert the attention of the public from him, God ordained that two high officers, the chief butler and the chief baker should offend their Lord the king of Egypt and they were put in the ward in the house of the captain of the guard. Now the people ceased their talk about Joseph, and spoke only about the scandal at the court."

¹³⁴ This last comment also occurs in Jacob ben Asher's *parperaot*.

¹³⁵ Jacob ben Asher wants to clarify the ambiguity inherent in the word *miketz*.

¹³⁶ Are these not redundant expressions of time?

this makes it clear that these were sun years,¹³⁷ and not lunar years. As in *Vayikra* 25:29 “within a full year (*yamim*) he may redeem it,” this is a sun year, and then continues “before a full year (*shannah*) has passed (*Vayikra* 25:30).”¹³⁸ Another interpretation¹³⁹ is that *shnatayim* (two years) means exactly two years from those very three *yamim* (days) from the in which Joseph said to the butler “in another three days (*yamim*) Pharaoh will pardon you (*Ber.* 40:13).”¹⁴⁰

AND PHARAOH DREAMED (U'FARO CHOLEM). The letter “vav” attached to the word in “U'faroh” means “And Pharaoh.” This is a hint in scripture to the midrash that Joseph also dreamed Pharaoh's dream. Thus fulfilling the verse in Amos (3:7), “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.” The letter “vav” indicates that Joseph **and** Pharaoh dreamed the same dream.

AND BEHOLD HE WAS STANDING ON THE BANK OF THE RIVER (HA-YEOR). *Rashi* commented that no other river is called *yeor*, except for the Nile. But *Ramban* disagreed and wrote “We find that the Tigris is also called *yeor*” as it is written (Daniel 12:6) “a man clothed in linen was above the waters of the *yeor*.” Likewise Onkelos translated *yeor* as river. It seems that *yeor* and river convey the same

¹³⁷ *Yamim* (days) represents the number of days that make up a “sun year”. So *yamim* is used to make it clear that we understand that we are discussing sun years (365 days) and not lunar years (354 days).

¹³⁸ In *Vayikra* 25:29-30 we see a similar pattern of *shana* and *yamim*. Just there they are understood not to be redundant, but rather make clear that we are discussing a sun year, so too this is the case in our verse (*Ber.* 41:1).

¹³⁹ *Paneach Raza* (A commentary on the Chumash by medieval scholar Rabbi Yitzhak ben Yehuda HaLevi)

¹⁴⁰ This happened exactly two years to the day from the incident with the baker and the butler. According to *Ber. Rabbah* 89:3 these two years were added to Joseph's imprisonment, because Joseph said to the butler “Remember me (*Zechartani*) and..mention me (*hizkartani*) ...” (*Ber.* 40:14). Joseph was punished one year for each time he said *z-ch-r* (remember/mention me).

concept, both being an expression of *orah* (light). Rain is also called *or* (light), as it says in Job 36:30, "He spreadeth *oro* (his light) upon it," and in Job 36:11, "*He spreadeth abroad the cloud of oro (his light).*" And it is written in *Bereshit Rabbah* 26:18 that Rabbi Yochanan said, "All verses in Elihu's speech in the book of Job containing the word *orah* refer to the coming of the rain."¹⁴¹ Perhaps this is because the rains are caused by the Lights (the luminaries).¹⁴² Thus the rivers which are formed from the rains are related to light (ha-*or*).¹⁴³

41:2. AND BEHOLD FROM THE RIVER UP OUT SEVEN COWS. Since it is from the waters of the Nile that Egypt receives abundance or famine, the cows were shown to Pharaoh coming up out from the river. The cows are a symbol for working¹⁴⁴ the land, while the ears of grain symbolize the harvest. If Pharaoh had only seen cows, it might have been possible to interpret the dream as meaning that foreign nations would come and conquer Egypt. Therefore Pharaoh also dreamed about ears of grain because they are a symbol of harvest. In any case dreaming about the ears of grain alone would not have been enough because it was necessary for the dream to have second phase. *Ramban* wrote that there was only plenty in the land of Egypt, as it says in *Ber.* 41:29, "*Seven*

¹⁴² *Ibn Ezra* in his comment on Job 36:30 explains that the movements of the moon causes the rain to fall.

¹⁴³ This is a very important section. First, Jacob ben Asher engages in etymology: this is rare for him. Moreover, this is an excellent example of his looking at *Ramban's* comment on this verse and Jacob ben Asher reworking of it. Jacob ben Asher makes it shorter and clearer and changes key words. Also compare manuscripts with printed edition (MS is superior). Note last word here *Ramban* has "*avot*" and Jacob ben Asher has "*ha-or*" printed edition has "*orot*" (plural - no good reason for plural). See page 494 in Chavell English translation. This may represent an example where Jacob ben Asher eliminated a Kabbalistic allusion of *HaRamban*.

¹⁴⁴ Plowing. In the agricultural practices of ancient Egypt, plowing the fields was performed by yoked oxen.

years of great plenty in the land of Egypt." And similarly in the verse "*and he stored up all the food of seven years that was in the land of Egypt.*"¹⁴⁵ But the famine was in all the lands, therefore Joseph said in his interpretation of the dream that "*there shall arise seven years of famine,*"¹⁴⁶ but after that Joseph does not mention the land of Egypt!¹⁴⁷ This was because in the other lands people were unable to gather food even though the prediction of the coming famine was well known. Perhaps there was an allusion to this in the dream when it mentions "*and they were grazing in the reed grass,*" but then the gaunt cows came up after them, ate the well-fleshed cows "*and wandered to and fro throughout the world (Zechariah 6:7)*" And Pharaoh did not know to where they had gone.¹⁴⁸

41:3. AND BEHOLD, SEVEN OTHER COWS EMERGED AFTER THEM, FROM THE RIVER, BAD-LOOKING AND THIN FLESHED, AND THEY STOOD NEXT TO THE COWS THAT WERE ALREADY ON THE BANK OF THE RIVER. By their side and immediately adjacent to them. This was a sign that there would be no break of time between the years of plenty and the years of famine. Even though Scripture does not tell us that Pharaoh told this detail to Joseph,¹⁴⁹ maybe the dream and the its recounting were identical, but Scripture does not concern itself with mentioning all the details. We observe in the recounting of the dream there are details not mentioned in the actual dream. For example in verse *Ber. 41:21*, "*It could not be recognized that they had*

¹⁴⁵ *Ber. 41:48.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ber. 41:30.*

¹⁴⁷ That Joseph does not mention Egypt means that the experience of the famine will not be exclusive to Egypt but will spread to all other lands throughout the world.

¹⁴⁸ The "*wondering to and fro*" are the people of the nations searching for food.

¹⁴⁹ *Ber. 41:19.* When Pharaoh tells the dream to Joseph in *Ber. 41:17-23*, Pharaoh omits out some of the details.

eaten them up,” and in verse Ber. 41:22, “the ears of grain (that were wholesome and good)¹⁵⁰ came up on one stalk,” which was a sign that the seven years will occur consecutively.¹⁵¹

41:4. THEY ATE THE COWS. This is a sign that the years of famine shall digest the years the years of plenty. From this Joseph deduced to tell Pharaoh, “let them store up the all the food of the good years,”¹⁵² “and the food shall serve as a reserve.”¹⁵³ For Joseph saw that the ears of grain and the healthy cows entered inside the bad ones. This was not counsel¹⁵⁴, for Pharaoh had not sought counsel. Rather it only in interpreting the dream that Joseph said to Pharaoh “the plenty shall be forgotten,”¹⁵⁵ “nor will the former abundance of the land be known.”¹⁵⁶ The meaning of “it could not be known that they had eaten them up, their appearance being as bad as previously.”¹⁵⁷ For Joseph saw that by their consumption of the fat cows, the lean cows did not become fine and plump. They served them for subsistence only, for had they not eaten them would have died. And this is not like the words of *Rashi*, in which he commented that “the plenty shall be forgotten”¹⁵⁸ is the interpretation of the eating itself.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁰ Ramban cites Ber. 41:5. “on one stalk,” Jacob ben Asher instead cites Ber. 41:25 “On one stalk wholesome and good.” Jacob ben Asher amendment of Ramban’s comment provides more detail.

¹⁵¹ This section closely parallels Ramban’s commentary.

¹⁵² Ber. 41:35.

¹⁵³ Ber. 41:36.

¹⁵⁴ See II Chronicles 25:16, “Did we appointed you as a counselor to the king?” You should be killed for your chutzpah!

¹⁵⁵ Ber. 41:30.

¹⁵⁶ Ber. 41:31.

¹⁵⁷ Ber. 41:21.

¹⁵⁸ Ber. 41:30.

¹⁵⁹ For *Rashi*, the thin cows eating the fat cows is a sign that the joy of the years of plenty shall be forgotten in the days of the famine. For Ramban the thin cows eating the fat cows is a sign that that during the years of famine the Egyptians would eat the grain they had stored during the years of plenty. *Rashi*’s understanding is that the meaning of “everything will be eaten” is that not a trace of food will

41:6 AND BEHOLD, SEVEN EARS, THIN AND SCORCHED BY THE EAST WIND, GREW UP AFTER THEM. Pharaoh did not see them in the process of growing, rather he saw the ears appear fully formed. This suggests that immediately upon seeing the full ears of grain, he saw the thin ears instantly come up after them. This is sign that the famine will immediately follow the years of plenty.¹⁶⁰ By contrast, about the thin ears it does not say that “they came up on a single stalk,”¹⁶¹ as it does in the case of the full ears. This teaches that the years of plenty were all equally good, but the bad years were not evenly bad. Rather each year was more disastrous than the previous year.¹⁶²

41:7 THE SEVEN THIN EARS SWALLOWED THE SEVEN HEALTHY FULL EARS. It does not say here “they ate,” because it is impossible for an ear of grain to eat another ear of grain!¹⁶³ A person is only shown in dreams that which can exist in reality. Therefore the word “swallowed (*vetebelana*)” is used because this expression also means “covered up.” Like in *BaMidbar* 4:20, “the holy objects are covered up (*kivlah et ha-kodesh*).” So here “swallowed” really means that the thin ears of grain grew until they “covered up” the good ears.¹⁶⁴ But some commentators¹⁶⁵ say it was “real” actual

remain - people will forget the former years of plenty (the forgetting is swallowing/eating). *Ramban* understands the consumption of the cows to indicate that the people need to collect food needed for subsistence.

¹⁶⁰ Till here this comment parallels *Ramban*.

¹⁶¹ *Ber.* 41:5.

¹⁶² Jacob ben Asher includes this comment twice -- here and in the *parperoot*. It also appears this way in the manuscripts.

¹⁶³ Not only do ears of grain have no teeth, but also have no mouth! So the question remains -- what does the Torah mean when it says “The thin ears of grain swallowed the...healthy ears?”

¹⁶⁴ A parallel occurs in *Lekach Tov*.

¹⁶⁵ The expression “some commentators say” (*v'yesh mefarshim*) is a characteristic term used by the *Tosafists*. This is a further indication of the author's indebtedness to the *Tosafist* school.

swallowing, and this is why Scripture states after the second dream "*Vihene chalom*" (Pharaoh awoke and behold it was a dream). This means that Pharaoh saw something so weird that it could only be a dream. It was this second dream that made interpretation an imperative, because the cows eating one another in the first dream was not nearly as bizarre and unexplainable as the ears of grain eating each other in the second dream.¹⁶⁶ *Rashi*¹⁶⁷ interpreted that "*behold it was a dream*"¹⁶⁸ meant that the dream was complete and called for interpretation. *Ramban*¹⁶⁹ noted "*and Pharaoh awoke and behold it was a dream*" occurs twice (in verse 4 and verse 7). After Pharaoh awoke he lay awake in bed thinking about his dream, wondering if perhaps he will see a third dream! But when he arose in the morning and saw that he had not dreamed again, his spirit was throbbing.¹⁷⁰ This is the meaning of the verse "*and it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was throbbing*"¹⁷¹ In the case of Nebuchadnezzar immediately that night "*his spirit was disturbed and his sleep broke from him*"¹⁷² Our verse says "*v'yeketz pharaoh*" (Pharaoh awoke) to instruct us about a principle of dream interpretation that is described in the Book of Sleep.¹⁷³ There it teaches "that when a dream is followed by a second dream of

¹⁶⁶ Though cows are ruminants ^{consume} a vegetarian diet, they do have mouths. So it is conceivable that in a situation of extreme depravity such as famine they could become cannibalistic. Nonetheless ears of grain do not have mouths!

¹⁶⁷ *Rashi* writes that the dream required immediate interpretation.

¹⁶⁸ Verse 7.

¹⁶⁹ *Ramban* disagrees with *Rashi* and says Pharaoh needed to wait to see if there would be a third dream, in order to know if dream interpretation would be necessary.

¹⁷⁰ This might be understood as "His soul was so agitated and overcome with anxiety that his was throbbing, and his spirit was utterly disturbed."

¹⁷¹ Verse 8.

¹⁷² Daniel 2:1.

¹⁷³ In his edition of *Ramban's* commentary (pp. 497), Chavel writes "apparently this book by an unknown medieval author dealt with the area of dream interpretation." *Paney Yerushaliyim*, a commentary on *Ramban*, states "This book is no longer with us, (*Zichron Yitzhak*). This medieval book appears not to have survived. Dr. Wacholder suggests that this might have been a Latin or Greek text. *Ramban* was familiar with non-Jewish literature and had medical training. *Ramban* is known to have known Greek. The search for *Ramban's* source is not complete.

different content¹⁷⁴ during the same night - the dream is not fulfilled!" Therefore "*he awake and behold it was a dream*,"¹⁷⁵ indicates that he kept thinking about the dream till morning.

AND BEHOLD IT WAS A DREAM. Even though he dreamed a second time Pharaoh himself realized that both dreams were about the one matter, and that is why he said "*behold it was a dream*," (singular). Likewise when Pharaoh said I have dreamed a dream and there is no one to interpret it," he did not say "**dreams**" in the **plural** form, but said to Joseph, "In my **dream**" in the **singular**.¹⁷⁶ Now you might have thought that this interpretation is contradicted by the verse "*and no one could interpret **them** (plural) to Pharaoh*,"¹⁷⁷ but this means that no one could interpret even one of the dream segments.¹⁷⁸

41:8. AND IT CAME TO PASS IN THE MORNING THAT PHARAOH'S SPIRIT WAS THROBBING. Pharaoh did not forget his dream like happened to Nebuchadnezzar, for that was not necessary. Nebuchadnezzar forgot his dream because its interpretation was about events far-off into the future. The Babylonians were not willing to trust Daniel's interpretation and promote him to high office unless Daniel could tell word-for-word to Nebuchadnezzar his dream (Nebuchadnezzar could only partially remember his dream). But in Joseph's situation the (events of the dream) the interpretation that there

¹⁷⁴ The printed text reads "*m'inyan echad*" (One matter), both manuscripts read "*m'inyan acher*" (in a another matter). Also "acher" in Chavell's edition of *Ramban*.

¹⁷⁵ Verse 7.

¹⁷⁶ Verse 17. "Pharaoh said to Joseph in my dream, behold I stood upon the bank of the river..."

¹⁷⁷ Verse 8.

¹⁷⁸ This kind of hair-splitting is called *pilpul* and is common among the *Baalei Tosafot*

would be years of plenty occurred immediately! Thus Joseph's interpretation of the dream was instantly confirmed. Therefore the interpretation by itself was sufficient for Joseph to be immediately promoted to high office. And there are some who say: The reason that Pharaoh did not forget his dream like Nebuchadnetzar, is that if Pharaoh had also forgotten his dream the Butler might not have remembered Joseph. Since Pharaoh's dream experience was similar to what had happened to the Butler, the Butler knew that Joseph would know how to interpret Pharaoh's dream. Because in the case of the Butler, Joseph did not tell the Butler his dream, but proceeded immediately to the interpretation.¹⁷⁹

41:9 THE BUTLER SPOKE TO PHARAOH SAYING, "I RECALL MY SINS TODAY." The word "*sins*" is plural.¹⁸⁰ There were two sins. He sinned against Pharaoh by not telling him about Joseph sooner and allowing Pharaoh to become more and more frustrated over his dream.¹⁸¹ And he sinned in forgetting about Joseph, as he should remembered Joseph as soon as he got out of prison.

41:10 PHARAOH WAS ANGRY WITH HIS SERVANTS, AND PLACED ME CUSTODY IN THE HOUSE OF THE CHIEF STEWARD, TOGETHER WITH THE BAKER. It is a breech of etiquette to address a king by his personal name. Pharaoh is not a personal name (like John) , but a title of majesty for all Egyptian kings. The Butler

¹⁷⁹ In order to stimulate the Butler's memory to recall Joseph, God caused the events around Pharaoh's dream to parallel the experience the Butler had undergone.

¹⁸⁰ As though to say, "I am doubly guilty."

¹⁸¹ *Ber. Rab.* 89:7. The Butler sinned against Pharaoh by not telling him sooner about Joseph. Pharaoh had almost died from stress of having an uninterpreted dream!

spoke to Pharaoh saying "*Pharaoh was angry*," in the third person because it would have been rude to speak to the king in the familiar of the second person.

ME AND THE CHIEF BAKER: The Butler said "*he placed me (oti) under guard*,"¹⁸² but then repeat himself saying "*me (oti) and the chief baker*."¹⁸³ You might have thought that the chief butler the chief baker were in different jail cells.¹⁸⁴ Or maybe their offenses were not the same,¹⁸⁵ and from this Joseph could see that the chief baker was on death row, but the chief butler was not. But in fact we were imprisoned together in the same cell and for the same offense - and nevertheless Joseph interpreted for us our dreams in consonance with what came to be: "*As he interpreted for us, so it came to pass*."¹⁸⁶

41:13. HE RESTORED ME TO MY POST, THE OTHER HE HUNG. The subject of "He" refers to Pharaoh, meaning that it was Pharaoh who restored me to my post. But some¹⁸⁷ interpret that "He" really refers to Joseph, since dreams follow the interpreter.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸² Verse 10.

¹⁸³ The question to which he is responding is why is "*oti*" (me) repeated.

¹⁸⁴ Mantua No. 32 says "*echad*" (meaning in the same cell). Montefiore No. 12 says "*acher*" (meaning in another cell). Dr. Wacholder suggested that "*echad*" is the better reading. The point is to show the sagacity of Joseph. There were no external clues by which he could discern the difference between the case against the butler versus the case against the baker. Yet so miraculous were his abilities of interpretation that he was still able to correctly interpret the dream.

¹⁸⁵ Different offenses, i.e. misdemeanor or felony.

¹⁸⁶ Verse 13.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibn Ezra*.

¹⁸⁸ This midrash goes against the *peshat*.

An alternative interpretation is not that Joseph restored me, but Joseph's interpretation restored me to my post.¹⁸⁹

41.14. SO PHARAOH SENT FOR JOSEPH, AND THEY HURRIED HIM OUT OF THE DUNGEON: It is written that "*The prison warden did not see any fault in Joseph.*"¹⁹⁰ So why did Joseph end up in the prison's dungeon?¹⁹¹ The answer¹⁹² is that when it was heard that Pharaoh had sent for Joseph, the warden got nervous because he had granted Joseph privileges. Fearing that he would get in trouble for having favored Joseph, the warden threw Joseph down into the dungeon. This is the real reason¹⁹³ that Joseph went to jail!¹⁹⁴ So that from the deepest depths of the dungeon Joseph could rise to the highest height of king-like power. Since he had been down in the dungeon he was able to rise higher than if he had been living in the prison house and by chance overheard the dream and offered an interpretation. Furthermore Pharaoh sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt and they could not interpret the dream. Thus when Joseph interpreted it he was dramatically elevated.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁹ *Baal haTurim* examines three possible interpretations: First, the *peshat*, second, a midrash, and third, a variation on the midrash. This kind of fine tuning of interpretation resembles the style of the *Tosafists*.

¹⁹⁰ *Ber.* 39.23.

¹⁹¹ The dungeon is the lowest place in the jail. The head of the jail liked him and granted him privileges. Therefore we would expect that Joseph should be living in the prison house (*Bet haSohar*), and not be in the dungeon, the *Bor*.

¹⁹² The text uses "*Yesh Lomar*" which is a standard *Tosafist* response to a question.

¹⁹³ The providential reason. This was God's plan.

¹⁹⁴ *Baal haTurim* is asking a subtle but significant question. Why couldn't Joseph have risen as a dream interpreter from Potiphar's house? Why did Joseph need to go to jail? Why does Joseph have to go down before he can come up? The message is the lower you go the higher you can rise. Joseph went to even the lowest part of the jail. He went to the dungeon. And the reason he went to low, was so that he could so rise as high in an equal inverse proportion. There maybe an illusion here to the suffering of Israel and divine justice.

¹⁹⁵ We can gain an insight here on *Baal haTurim*'s theology. Nothing happens by accident. God has a plan. Also Ben Asher wants to emphasize the dramatic tension of the episode. This is done to show God's greatness, "*magbiah shefalim*" (raises up the lowly).

41:16. JOSEPH ANSWERED PHARAOH, SAYING "NOT I! GOD WILL RESPOND TO PHARAOH'S PEACE." R. Abraham *Ibn Ezra*¹⁹⁶ wrote that when Pharaoh told Joseph to interpret the dream, Joseph said "Let God do it (Biladi)! God will respond to Pharaoh's peace."¹⁹⁷ A simpler interpretation is Joseph said "I am not an interpreter. God is the true interpreter, not me (Biladi)."¹⁹⁸ Joseph is merely delivering God's message. Furthermore It is God who will bring peace to Pharaoh¹⁹⁹

Since Joseph acknowledged the authority of his "Master"²⁰⁰ (*Ba'alav*) by using the word "*Biladi*," So Pharaoh used the same word "*Biladi*" to elevate Joseph saying "*Biladeycha*" - "*Without you* no one shall lift his hand or foot in the entire land of Egypt (Ber. 41:44)."²⁰¹

41:23. BUT RIGHT BEHIND THEM SPROUTED SEVEN EARS, SHRIVELED, THIN, AND SCORCHED BY THE EAST WIND. *Tznumot* (shriveled). According to *Rashi* this is similar to "*tznuma*," which in Aramaic means 'hard as a rock.' Onkelos

¹⁹⁶ Here we see Jacob ben Asher's attitude toward *Ibn Ezra*. It seems that Ben Asher follows *Ramban's* approach to *Ibn Ezra's* "Hidden love, but open warfare. (*Ramban's* introduction to his Torah commentary). Jacob ben Asher also opposes *Ibn Ezra*.

¹⁹⁷ Joseph does not want credit. He want to give the credit to God. Joseph is saying here "I could interpret it--but let God do it.

¹⁹⁸ Here Joseph says the he is not the interpreter. God is the interpreter! Joseph's role is only to communicate God's interpretation.

¹⁹⁹ This is the *peshat*. God will not only interpret, but also will bring peace (*shalom*) to Pharaoh. This explains why the *pesuk* uses "*shalom*" an expression of peace.

²⁰⁰ God.

²⁰¹ Jacob ben Asher shows his great sensitivity to the sounds of words and links them (*Ba'alav*, *Biladi*, *biladeycha*). Pharaoh responds with language that reflects Joseph's words. Dr. Wacholder says this is intertextuality, and linguists have made a great mistake in ignoring the exegetical works of Jacob ben Asher, which demonstrate tremendous sensitivity to linguistic word plays upon which the original *pesuk* was built.

interpreted it as “*natzan lakyan*,” (their blossoms are withered²⁰²). *Rashi* explained that there was nothing in them but the blossoms which had been emptied of their seeds. But *Ramban*²⁰³ raised an objection to *Rashi*’s *perush*, noting that the time when ears of grain lose their seed is a late stage long after their are no more blossoms. Likewise Pharaoh did not see the ears of grain in the blooming stage, but saw them full and healthy and then empty and shriveled.²⁰⁴

The meaning of the word “*Tznumot*” is ‘crummy,’ like in the Talmudic teaching that “*pat tznumah*” (bread crumbs) require the blessing of *haMotzi* (*Brachot* 39a).” Similarly, “*Neyztah*” like “*mulya*”²⁰⁵ “*neytza*”²⁰⁶ (*Baba Batra* 54a).” A pit is called “*neyztah*” when it lacks soil. This is the opposite of “*mulya*” (full). Like this the ears of grain were not full, but were pitted and lacking seeds.

During the dream scripture said “*he (Pharaoh) was standing on the river*,”²⁰⁷ but when Pharaoh told the dream he said he was “*standing on the bank of the river*”²⁰⁸ Because Pharaoh worshipped the Nile as a God, he did not say that he stood on the river since this would have been disrespectful. Similarly when Pharaoh speaks of the good cows “*coming up from the river*”²⁰⁹ he mentions the “*river*.” But when he speaks about

²⁰² “*Lakyan*” literally means ‘whipped.’ The blossoms had been ‘whipped’ (by the harsh east wind) and that is why there were falling off.

²⁰³ *Ramban* interpretation is the right one and it is also really the meaning of the Targum.

²⁰⁴ Jacob ben Asher shows his allegiance by choosing to cite *Ramban* against *Rashi*. In fact Jacob ben Asher could have rejected the botanical explanation and stated that in dreams anything can happen (See *parperaot*). He shows that he is a good disciple of *Ramban* by defending his “*Rebbe*.” He also shows that he is a good *tosafist* by giving *Rashi* a hard time.

²⁰⁵ See Jastrow, pp. 742 for discussion on “*mulya*.” Just as a field can become “pitted,” so too the ears of grain can become pitted.

²⁰⁶ See Jastrow, pp. 926. Also see the Targum on *Ber.* 41:23 on “*tznumot*.”

²⁰⁷ *Ber.* 41:1

²⁰⁸ *Ber.* 41:17.

²⁰⁹ *Ber.* 41:18.

the bad cows Pharaoh says “*coming up after them*,”²¹⁰ and he does not mention the Nile. This is because Pharaoh does not want to mention the river in connection with badness.²¹¹ But when Pharaoh told Joseph the dream he changed the order saying “*well fleshed and fine looking*,”²¹² but he had dreamed “*fine looking and well fleshed*.”²¹³ In reference to the bad cows Pharaoh changed the words of his dream and told Joseph “*emaciated and very ugly form and with meager flesh*.”²¹⁴ In fact he had dreamed “*ugly appearance and lean flesh*.”²¹⁵ So too in connection with the ears of grain Pharaoh dreamed about “*healthy and good*,”²¹⁶ but he told Joseph “*Full and good*.”²¹⁷ About the bad ears Pharaoh added in the word *tzumot*²¹⁸ to test Joseph!²¹⁹ Joseph responded, “*Pharaoh’s dream is one*,”²²⁰ ‘although you changed around the story, even if the dream had been like you said “it is all one thing!”’ (*mishna echad ho*).²²¹ And the interpretation is not changed by your misrepresenting the dream. Joseph then told Pharaoh the literal presentation of the dream.

²¹⁰ Ber. 41:18.

²¹¹ It seems that Pharaoh does not want to mention the deity and badness in the same breath. This may be like the ‘evil eye’ admonition “*Kinahora!*”

²¹² Ber. 41:2.

²¹³ Not only is the word order changed but two different forms are used to express “fine looking” (*yafot toar* and *yafot mareh*). Ber. 41:2.

²¹⁴ Ber. 41:19.

²¹⁵ Ber. 41:3.

²¹⁶ Ber. 41:7.

²¹⁷ Ber. 41:22.

²¹⁸ It is because of this word that this comment is here. Pharaoh adds this word. This comment is based on a midrash in *Tanchuma* 3 (M.Kasher, *Torah Shlemah, Miketz* pp. 144). *Baal haTurim* takes midrash very seriously.

²¹⁹ Why does Pharaoh alter the vocabulary? To test Joseph. (Jacob ben Asher lists all the variants).

²²⁰ Ber. 41:25

²²¹ This is a talmudic saying from *Baba Metzia* 33a. Strangely Jacob ben Asher’s grammar appears to be wrong here. In *Baba Metzia* the expression is “*Mishna Echad he*,” but Asher writes “*Mishna Echad hu*.” There may also be a pun on *Mishna* (one thing) and *M’shena* (from one sleep or dream). The Mantua manuscript has “*echad*.” Dr. Wacholder said that medieval Hebrew is not consistent with *dalet* and *tav*. Dr. Wacholder also suggested that from “One sleep” is probably the better reading.

Pharaoh was amazed²²² and said "*Since God has let you know all this, there is no one so wise and understanding as you.*"²²³

41:27. THERE SHALL BE SEVEN YEARS OF FAMINE. The interpretation of the dream began with the "*seven years of famine*," because abundance (*sova*) is common place in Egypt since the Nile floods water the land. Thus there was nothing unusual about the contents of the dream except for the part about the famine. This is why the interpretation of the dream began with the famine.²²⁴ Another reason that Joseph began with the famine was to keep them alive for a great deliverance. As it is written "*the seven years of famine began to come, according as Joseph had said.*"²²⁵ It was not known if Joseph's words were true until the years of the famine.²²⁶

41:32. AS FOR THE REPETITION OF THE DREAM - TWO TIMES - IT MEANS THAT THE MATTER STANDS READY BEFORE GOD, AND THAT GOD IS HASTENING TO DO IT. It was only repeated once! *Ramban* interpreted that it was repeated twice during the night. Could no Pharaoh have seen the cows and the corn in one dream (without waking up in the middle)?²²⁷ Why was it divided into two dreams, one

²²² Pharaoh now understood that Joseph was inspired by God, because Joseph knew the dream exactly rather than confusedly as Pharaoh had presented it.

²²³ *Ber.* 41:39.

²²⁴ The question is "Why does Joseph not tell the interpretation in the order of the dream?" The answer is that the "famine" was the confirmation of Jacob's interpretation.

²²⁵ *Ber.* 41:55.

²²⁶ The purpose of the dream is that it should warn people about the famine. *Baal haTurim*'s comment on *Ber.* 41:27 parallel's *Ramban*'s, but with modifications.

²²⁷ The question is why did Pharaoh wake up and thereby divide the dream into two segments? Could he not have seen this all in one dream without awakening and then dreaming again?

after another in the same night? This is not the way dreams normally happen!²²⁸ But it happened this way make it known that the matter (of the coming famine) is already set (by God) *Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra* remarked about the repetition of the dream - with the cows and the ears of grain, saying this is a sign that the matter is already set and established, and the fact that the dream occurred twice in one night is a sign that “*God is hastening to do it*”²²⁹ Another interpretation about the repetition of the dream is ‘that you altered the wording of the dream, but I will tell it to you as you literally saw it, thus you can know that the interpretation that I am telling you is true!’

41:33 NOW LET PHARAOH SEEK OUT A DISCERNING AND WISE MAN AND SET HIM OVER THE LAND OF EGYPT. **Discerning (*Navon*)**²³⁰ That he will know how to administer the land to provide everyone with enough bread for their children. **(Wise) *Chacham***²³¹ that he will know how to preserve the crops, so that they do not rot by mixing with each some kind of preservative.²³² He shall govern all the land of Egypt by means of officers whom he shall appoint to serve under him, because a discerning ruler can not personally travel to every province. Joseph said all this in order that they should choose him since “*The wise man's eyes are in his head.*” (Eccles. 2:14).²³³

²²⁸ Dreams do not normally repeat themselves after waking.

²²⁹ *Ber.* 41:32

²³⁰ The question is are the words *Navon* and *Chacham* redundant or do they have different meanings? The word *Navon* describes a person who is good with *BeMidbar*. This is abstract knowledge (theory). We see this in our verse here because Joseph uses the population data.

²³¹ A *Chacham* has knowledge of nature and physical materials. This is practical (applied) knowledge about which materials to add to the crops so that they would not spoil.

²³² *Navon* means what you can see and refers to managing the present situation. *Chacham* refers to planning for the future.

²³³ This comment is a good example of Jacob ben Asher taking *Ramban's* comment and simplifying it.

41:34. LET PHARAOH PROCEED AND LET HIM APPOINT OFFICERS OVER THE LAND, AND HE SHALL PREPARE (*CHIMESH*) THE LAND OF EGYPT DURING THE SEVEN YEARS OF ABUNDANCE. Some interpreters say he acquired a fifth (*chimesh*)²³⁴ of the produce and stored it. This suggests that since Pharaoh stored a fifth of the produce, from which he distributed a fifth for seed, and eventually Pharaoh acquired a fifth of the land of Egypt²³⁵

41:35. LET ALL THE FOOD OF THESE GOOD YEARS THAT ARE COMING BE GATHERED, AND LET THE GRAIN BE COLLECTED UNDER PHARAOH'S AUTHORITY AND LET THEM KEEP²³⁶ FOOD IN THE CITIES. So they will not need to transport it from place to place, which would make additional expenses., Also the local people will have peace of mind when they know that there are food supplies in their city, and each land produces its own crop.²³⁷

41:38. SO PHARAOH SAID TO HIS SERVANTS, "COULD WE FIND ANOTHER LIKE HIM, A MAN IN WHOM THERE IS THE SPIRIT OF GOD?" Joseph was a Hebrew. Because the Egyptians hated the Hebrews they did not want him. Pharaoh did not want to appoint Joseph viceroy without the Egyptian people's consent. Pharaoh said

²³⁴ Jacob ben Asher is punning on "*chimesh*," which can mean 'to prepare' or literally a 'fifth.'

²³⁵ This appears to be a *mida k'neged mida* where the *mida* equals a fifth. The world operates in such a manner that balance is maintained.

²³⁶ *Baal HaTurim's* comment explains this word "keep" (*veshamru*). He wants to explain that they will keep it in their own cities.

²³⁷ So there is no need for importing produce. This may also suggest that crops are best stored in the region where they were grown

'even if its against our will we need to appoint him, because no one can be found like Joseph in Egypt.'²³⁸

41:39 THEN PHARAOH SAID TO JOSEPH "SINCE GOD HAS LET YOU KNOW ALL OF THIS,"²³⁹ Since Pharaoh was pleased with the interpretation, Pharaoh regarded it as though it had already been fulfilled. Another interpretation: "*All this*" means the interpretation of the butler's dream, and Pharaoh's dream. THERE IS NO ONE AS UNDERSTANDING (*Navon*)²⁴⁰ AND WISE (*Chacham*) AS YOU. In our verse understanding (*navon*) precedes wisdom (*chacham*), but further on the sequence is reversed in "*Surely this is a wise (chacham) and understanding (navon) people (Devarim 4:6)*."²⁴¹ Because here one needs insight (*tevuna*)²⁴² to abstract the message of the dream, and then to apply it concretely.²⁴³ But with the "*Divre Torah*" (words of Torah)²⁴⁴ one first needs wisdom (*chochma*) (i.e. concrete, factual knowledge) of the matter, and afterwards to abstract (*l'hitbonen*) from it.²⁴⁵

²³⁸ This is a shortened form of a longer comment from Ramban's commentary.

²³⁹ The problem is that the interpretation has yet been realized, so how does Pharaoh know that Joseph's interpretation is true?

²⁴⁰ *Navon* means abstract or conceptual knowledge, *chochma* means factual or concrete knowledge.

²⁴¹ The question is why is the order of *navon* and *chacham* reversed?

²⁴² *Tevuna* is understood to mean *navon*.

²⁴³ "*Mayveen devar mitoch devar*," (You can understand new matters from old matters). This is an expression which means to apply a lesson from one thing to another. This is "abstract thinking." For example in our case, Pharaoh dreamed about cows and grain, but Joseph was able to deduce that the dream was really about prosperity and famine. For other examples of "*Mayveen devar mitoch devar*," See Rashi on *Ki Tissa* 31:3., *Chagiga* 14a, and *Sanhedrin* 93b.

²⁴⁴ This comment may reveal some insight about the culture of Torah study in the *Baal haTurim*'s circle.

²⁴⁵ With "*Divre Torah*," the process is reversed, we need wisdom (*chochma*) first to understand what God is saying (concretely), and later to be able to abstract (*tevuna*) from God's words to apply the message to our lives."

41:40. YOU SHALL BE IN CHARGE OF MY COURT AND BY YOUR COMMAND SHALL ALL MY PEOPLE BE RULED. Means he shall arm (*yishak*) them with weapons²⁴⁶. Alternatively some interpret: this means actual kissing (*nishika*), since everyone will come to kiss his hand²⁴⁷

41:42. PHARAOH REMOVED HIS SIGNET RING FROM HIS HAND AND PLACED IT ON JOSEPH'S HAND. According to *Rashi* this is a symbol of high office. Another interpretation is that Pharaoh gave Joseph his ring because it had the king's seal. Nothing could come to pass without Joseph placing this seal upon it.²⁴⁸

41:43. HE MADE HIM RIDE IN THE SECOND (*HAMISNEH*)²⁴⁹ CHARIOT WHICH HE HAD. According to *Rashi* this is the second chariot (*hamisneh*) that follows after Pharaoh's chariot.²⁵⁰ But *Ramban* commented that the word "*mishneh*"²⁵¹ is an adjective as in *cohen mishneh* (a second ranking priest),²⁵² *mishneh torah* (a second copy of the Torah),²⁵³ and *mishneh l'melech* (second to the king).²⁵⁴ The sense of the present verse is that the king had a chariot known to be his as it says "a horse on which the king has

²⁴⁶ Joseph will be in charge of the police. Joseph will be in charge of arming those who keep the law and order in Egypt.

²⁴⁷ In a literal sense, the people will actually kiss his hand. They will be grateful and bow down to Pharaoh through him

²⁴⁸ *Rashi*'s interpretation is that the ring is only a symbol for office, but the second interpretation is that the actual ring is necessary tool needed to function in office, like for signing documents.

²⁴⁹ "*b'Mirkevet haMishneh*" this a strange grammatical form, hence the need for interpretation.

²⁵⁰ In *Rashi*'s interpretation the chariot procession followed a prescribed order. Pharaoh's chariot went first, and Joseph followed behind in the next chariot.

²⁵¹ Note that none of *Ramban*'s following illustrations represent the same grammatical form of the problematic phrase.

²⁵² II Kings 23:4.

²⁵³ *Devarim* 17:18.

²⁵⁴ Ester 10:3.

ridden,” and there was another chariot known to be for his second in rank, and another one for the third in rank.²⁵⁵ AND THEY CRIED OUT BEFORE HIM “AVRECH!”²⁵⁶ This means they will bow down before him on their knees²⁵⁷. Another interpretation is that they will bless him (with words) like a servant does to his master.²⁵⁸

41:44 I AM PHARAOH. This is the title by which all the kings of Egypt were known. Thus Pharaoh said that he will hold back nothing except for this title.²⁵⁹

41:45. PHARAOH GAVE JOSEPH THE NAME “TZAFNAT PANEACH.” It is the manner of kings to give names to their servants, like happened to Daniel.²⁶⁰ AND HE GAVE HIM OSNAT, THE DAUGHTER OF POTI-PHERA. Pharaoh did not give him a wife from the daughters of the high aristocracy²⁶¹ because Potiphar had purchased him to be his slave, and there was a concern that Potiphar would object to Joseph saying ‘You are my slave,’ but now Potiphar would be embarrassed to say to his son in law ‘You are my slave.’ According to *Rashi* Potiphera is Potiphar²⁶². His name was changed to

²⁵⁵ *Ramban*’s interpretation differs from *Rashi*’s. Instead of riding second in the procession order, *Ramban* says Joseph rode in the chariot that was designated for the second in command. (In this interpretation there is no procession order, but simply that Joseph rode in the chariot that was designated for the viceroy) Dr. Wacholder likened this to “Airforce Two,” the airplane designated for the vice-president.

²⁵⁶ The problem here is in the word “*Avrech*” whose Hebrew meaning is unclear. A Hebrew root of *b-r-ch* is identified by the commentators and this prompts *midrashic* interpretation.

²⁵⁷ This is based on the connection between “*Avrech*” and “*berchayim* (knees).” This is a physical gesture of respect.

²⁵⁸ This is prompted by “*v’yikra*” (they called out). Thus, they called out words of blessing.

²⁵⁹ Pharaoh will be the figurative executive, but Joseph will be the actual executive. The word “*Pharaoh*” becomes a title and no longer a description of job responsibilities.

²⁶⁰ Daniel 1:7 “*The chief officer gave them names: to Daniel he gave (the name) Belteshazzar...*”

²⁶¹ The question is why did Pharaoh not give Joseph a wife from the high aristocracy? After all, Joseph is about to become the most powerful man in Egypt save Pharaoh.

²⁶² In the previous comment, Jacob ben Asher made the same assumption that Potiphar is Potiphera.

Potiphera because he was castrated.²⁶³ Additionally *Rashi* interpreted '*Cohen On*' as a title of high office. Since he was the chief slaughterer (of the king's animals), *Ramban* explains that he was called "*Priest of On*" because of the following reason. When he was castrated he became embarrassed, and retired from his office and entered a temple of idol worship, and became a priest of idol worship, as such was the custom among the nobility.²⁶⁴ It is also possible that '*On*' was the name of his God. Likewise "*Cohen Midian*"²⁶⁵ means 'priest' like our Rabbis interpreted in the Talmud²⁶⁶ about Jethro, who fattened calves for idol-worship. There are other commentators who say that Potipera became a priest of idol-worship because of awe for Joseph²⁶⁷.

41:46. NOW JOSEPH WAS THIRTY YEARS OLD WHEN HE STOOD BEFORE PHARAOH KING OF EGYPT; JOSEPH LEFT PHARAOH'S PRESENCE AND HE PASSED THROUGH THE ENTIRE LAND OF EGYPT. Joseph's name went out. Like in the verse "*Your name shall go out among the nations.*"²⁶⁸ Alternatively according to the *peshat*, he went forth and as he passed by each city he was announced in order that the people would know him.²⁶⁹

²⁶³ This is based on a *Sotah* 13b, where Gabriel castrates Potiphar, who as a result is renamed Potiphera. The word play is on '*paru*,' (punished). Gabriel punished Potiphar for attempting to sodomize Joseph. '*Potiphera*' might be translated as '*Poti-Punished*.'

²⁶⁴ Jacob ben Asher seems to be making a comment on a custom of monks in the middle ages.

²⁶⁵ *Shemot* 3:1.

²⁶⁶ *Sanhedrin* 82b.

²⁶⁷ If "*Amat Yoseph*" is translated as "awe" then this comment serves as a contrast to that which comes before it. But "*Alnat Yoseph*," is hard to translate. It could also mean "Fear of Joseph." Perhaps Potiphar/Potiphera feared that the now powerful Joseph might seek revenge for having been placed in jail.

²⁶⁸ *Ezek.* 15:14. Joseph's name went out metaphorically.

²⁶⁹ Jacob ben Asher takes this from *Ibn Ezra*. Joseph actually went from town to town on a 'working-tour' in order that the people would get to know him.

41:47. DURING THE SEVEN YEARS OF ABUNDANCE THE LAND PRODUCED BY THE HANDFULS (*LIKMATZIM*). *Rashi* interpreted “handful upon handful (*kometz al kometz*), hand by hand.” Some comment that they scrupulously (*mikamtzim*)²⁷⁰ stored every kernel for the famine. Onkelos’ *mikamtzim* as “storehouses” indicating the pits that are dug in the earth to make a storage place are called “*kmatzim*” (pits)²⁷¹. The connection between the between the Hebrew and Aramaic can be seen in Targum Yonatan on Isaiah 17:19, “*He is now in one of the pits (haf-chotim)*” Yonatan translate this “*in one of the kumztaya*.”²⁷²

41:48. HE COLLECTED IN ALL THE FOOD OF THE SEVEN YEARS THAT WAS IN THE LAND OF EGYPT, AND PLACED THE FOOD IN THE CITIES. THE FOOD OF THE FIELDS SURROUNDING EACH CITY WAS PLACED WITHIN (THE CITY). *Rabbenu Avraham Ibn Ezra* explains that Joseph did not collect all the food, for had they done so they would have died.²⁷³ Rather it means Joseph collected most of it. *Ramban* interpreted that Joseph collected it all, and then rationed it to the Egyptians each year for sustenance²⁷⁴. This is the meaning of the statement “*let them store up all the food of these good years*.”²⁷⁵ As it says “*let them store up grain under the hand of*

²⁷⁰ Word play on “*kamtzan*,” suggests scrupulousness. They scrupulously (*kamtzan*) stored every handful (*kometz*).

²⁷¹ II Samuel 17:9.

²⁷² This is to demonstrate the relationship between the Hebrew “*haf-chotim*” and its Aramaic equivalent “*kumztaya*.” According to this interpretation the word *kumztim* describes the location of the storage (in pits) and does not describe the way (scrupulous) in which they stored the food.

²⁷³ The problem is the verse says he collected “all” the food. This can not be true. Some of it was eaten.

²⁷⁴ *Ramban* says they did take all the food away from the people but they rationed it back to the people during the years of prosperity in order to save food for the coming famine.

²⁷⁵ *Ber.* 41:35.

Pharaoh,²⁷⁶ this means they stored everything that people eat, corn, bread all sorts of foods, even figs and raisins and the like. He collected from them the grain, namely the crops that are brought under a winnowing shovel and fan for fanning and cleansing²⁷⁷ under the hand of Pharaoh. He placed in the cities enough fruits, that the stored food could be held in reserve for the years of the famine. They rationed it to keep themselves alive, and the remaining grain was kept in the storehouses. Perhaps Joseph paid them at the low rate from the king's treasury. This is why the grain belonged to Pharaoh and He sold it to them at a high price during the years of famine.²⁷⁸

41:50. TWO SONS WERE BORN TO JOSEPH BEFORE THE YEARS OF THE FAMINE CAME. From this we learn that a person may not have marital relations during years of famine.²⁷⁹ Levy had marital relations during the years of the famine²⁸⁰, we know this from his daughter Yocheved who was born between the walls.²⁸¹ Since Levy did not know when the years of famine would be over, but he knew that in his father's house there was food, then one need not practice abstinence on account of the sorrow of the nations. But Joseph knew when the famine would end, and he did not know if there was food in his father's house, therefore it was forbidden for him to have to have marital relations.²⁸²

²⁷⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷⁷ The entire threshing process was under Pharaoh's control.

²⁷⁸ Pharaoh benefited from the classic scheme of "buy low and sell high."

²⁷⁹ *Ta'anit* 11a.

²⁸⁰ The question is: Did Levy violate the Talmudic taboo against having marital relations during a time of famine?

²⁸¹ This is based on a midrash in *Baba Batra* 120a, which says that Yocheved was born as the Children of Israel passed through the walls of the city.

²⁸² This comment reveals a significant insight about Jacob ben Asher. He is reluctant to challenge *Chazal*. He shows tremendous respect for rabbinic authority. In this case we see that it is easier for him to challenge a Biblical verse or to argue against the classic medieval commentators than to disagree with *Chazal*.

41:54. THERE WAS FAMINE IN ALL THE LANDS. This means the lands around Egypt, for there could not have been famine in all the lands in the world, because had that been the case, they would have died from hunger.²⁸³

41:56. THE FAMINE SPREAD OVER THE FACE OF THE LAND. JOSEPH OPENED EVERYTHING THAT HELD GRAIN AND HE SOLD (GRAIN) TO THE EGYPTIANS. This means that first he sold to the Egyptians before selling to others.

41:57. FOR THE FAMINE WAS SEVERE IN THE LAND OF EGYPT. Joseph did not sell to them until the famine was severe, and not immediately upon their crying out to Pharaoh, only when it was clear to Joseph that the famine was seriously upon them.²⁸⁴

Discussion

Above is a translation of Jacob ben Asher's *peshat* commentary on *Bereshit* 41. In his introduction to the commentary Jacob ben Asher explains that this is the core of the work. The appetizers were only intended as such. This part, the *peshat* exegesis is the main meal. Worthy of note is the relationship between the *parperaot* and the *peshat* commentary. On *Bereshit* 41 Jacob ben Asher presents twelve *parperaot*. Of these, seven are on verses also commented upon in the *peshat* commentary. From these common

²⁸³ The people in countries too far from Egypt to travel there to get food would have perished if the famine had really been in all the world. Rather the famine was only in the lands immediately surrounding Egypt. This comment is a shorter version of a similar comment by *Ramban*.

²⁸⁴ Joseph waited till the people felt their suffering in order that they would appreciate what he had done.

verses, four *parperaot* present a message identical to that in the *peshat* commentary. While the sample studied is small there seems to be relationship between the commentaries. In this case one third of the *parperaot* served as 'previews' to coming material in the *peshat* commentary. A larger representative sample needs to be studied to evaluate this relationship more comprehensively.

It appears that *Baal haTurim*'s main purpose is to present the *Perush haRamban* in a more accessible form. In the introduction to his commentary, Ben Asher explains his intention to remove the Kabbalistic references from *haRamban*'s commentary to make it easier for the reader to understand. From the sections that were translated for this thesis it is clear that *Baal haTurim* does simplify Ramban's commentary, but as to whether or not the Kabbalistic elements were removed could not be confirmed. This determination will require future investigation. What can be stated with certainty from the sections translated is that *Baal HaTurim* strives to reduce *Ramban*'s wordiness. Where a single illustration will suffice, *Baal HaTurim* omits the extraneous.

Baal haTurim's commentary is more than a simplified version of *haRamban*'s commentary. One of the great strengths of Ben Asher's writing is his ability to concisely summarize the arguments of others. This is precisely the treatment that he applies to the classic medieval Bible commentators. Moses Sofer (Also known as the *Chatam Sofer*, 1762-1839) made this observation in the approbation that he penned for the Hanover 1838, Rosenthal edition of *peshat* commentary.²⁸⁵ *Chatam Sofer* wrote "This wonderful composition covering all of the Torah is gleanings from the best of the Rishonim. Just like

²⁸⁵ *Chatam Sofer* wrote this approbation in the year before his death.

his manner in *Halacha* so is Jacob Ben Asher's manner in this delightful commentary." There appears to be a consistent methodology that guides both his halachic writings and his commentaries. Much of Jacob ben Asher's exegetical effort is dedicated to *shaklah v'taryeh* (Talmudic styled debate over the precise interpretation of a verse). Jacob ben Asher's work is more than an anthology, it is combination of critical commentary on the work of his predecessors and his own *chiddushim*.²⁸⁶

This edition also contains an approbation by Natan Adler (1803-1890).²⁸⁷ Adler writes that Ben Asher reveals the best of *Ramban* and *Ibn Ezra* and makes them easier to understand. He also writes that the Jacob ben Asher includes many comments attributed to *Rosh* and Joseph Kimchi that do not exist in any other source.

Jacob ben Asher also show that he is under the influence of the *Tosofist* school. His choice of terminology and style reveal this on almost every verse. Phrases such as "*kashe, hiksha, yesh lomar, im tomar, yesh m'farshim etc.*" which occur frequently in the sections translated for this thesis attest to this. The style of the *Tosofists* is an element of his father's legacy that Jacob ben Asher helped to establish in *Sepharad*.

Persona

The predominant tone of Jacob ben Asher's introduction is one of great humbleness and respect for Rabbinic authority. This may have be traced to his family's background amongst the *Chaside Ashkenaz* where these are values of the highest order. Upon arrival to the *Sephardi* lands how did he look upon the new culture? Did he view one as superior to the other? At the time of Jacob ben Asher's arrival, *Sepherad* was in

²⁸⁶ Innovations or new insights.

the midst of an intense *Kulturkampf* between rationalism and philosophy (as paradigmatically represented by Maimonides), versus anti-rationalism (mysticism) given the rise of Kabbalah.²⁸⁸ Perhaps it is *davka* Nachmanides' mystical side that attracts Jacob ben Asher. Although he writes in his introduction that he is not schooled in Kabbalah, it seems reasonable to assume that Jacob ben Asher's background of anti-rationalism from *Ashkenaz*, would favorably predispose him towards the writings of the *Sepharadi* mystics, even if he had not been initiated in their particular brand of esotericism. The difference between the Kabbalistic orientation of Nachmanides and Jacob ben Asher requires further study.

²⁸⁷ Adler left Germany for England. There he founded Jews College and later became Chief Rabbi of Britain.

²⁸⁸ I believe a study of Jacob ben Asher's work within the context of the controversy within medieval *Sephardi* society between rationalist philosophy and Kabbalistic mysticism is of great importance.

Chapter Six

CompoteThe Manuscripts

A strange phenomenon common to both the Mantua and Montefiore manuscripts is that the *parperaot* are not arranged in the order of the biblical verses. One might think this stems from sloppiness on the part of the Mantua Manuscript's scribe Isaac the son of Rabbi Joseph. Yet the arrangement is so visibly out of order that it is hard to attribute to scribal oversight. If the manuscript is true to the original, then one might ask why did ben Asher did not write them in order? One possible explanation is that commentary text was composed gradually over time. Comments were written in the order in which they were conceived. Additional evidence supporting the theory of gradual composition will be discussed in the next section. An example of the disorder of the *parperaot* for *Parashat Miketz* in the manuscripts²⁸⁹ appears below.

Bereshit 41: 1, 2, 5, 13, 19, 29, 35, 34, 40, 45, 50.

Bereshit 42: 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 28, 33, 17.

Bereshit 43: 7, 10.

Bereshit 42: 36, 37,

Bereshit 43: 9, 4, 11, 15, 33, 29, 34, 31.

The *parperaot* for *Bereshit 41:55*, and *Bereshit 42:6* which appear in the Reineitz Edition (1993), do not appear in the manuscripts. It is plausible that these were not

²⁸⁹ Mantua manuscript No. 32 and Montefiore manuscript No. 12 are identical in the *parperaot* (order and number).

written by Jacob ben Asher but were copyists' emendations. Rosenthal²⁹⁰ in his introduction to the Hanover 1838 edition wrote that his work is faithful to the Zolkiev 1806 volume, but with one significant change. Rosenthal explained that he noticed the verses of the commentary were not in order, so he reordered them.²⁹¹

Jacob ben Asher's Sources

What books were on Jacob ben Asher's shelf? From his commentary we can tell that Jacob ben Asher was faithful to the spirit of *Pikre Avot* 6:6, "*kol ha-omer devar beshem omro mavee geula l'olam*," (Whoever reports a teaching in the name of the person who said it brings redemption to the world.) Meir Rosenthal (*Emek Shoshan*), who was the publisher of the 1838 Hanover Edition of the *peshat* commentary entitled "*Perush al haTorah m'Rabenu Ya'acov ben kavod marenu v'rabenu haRosh zichrono l'chaye l'olam haba*," added to the last page of this volume a list of rabbis that Ben Asher explicitly referred to by name.²⁹² Rosenthal wrote that most of Jacob ben Asher's text is gleaned from the writings of *Rashi*, *Ibn Ezra* and *Ramban*, therefore it would have been impractical to include them in the index. Further, the words of these three rabbis are frequently quoted without attribution. Therefore Rosenthal only lists their names but proved no further reference information. The three main sources are:

1. *Rashi* (b. Troyes, France 1040, d. Troyes, France 1105)
2. *Avraham Ibn Ezra* (b. Tudela, Spain 1089, d. c. 1164)
3. *HaRamban* (b. Gerona, Spain 1194, d. *Eretz Yisrael* 1270).²⁹³

²⁹⁰ Meir Rosenthal (*Emek Shoshan*) is best known for his commentary on *BaMidbar Rabbah*, entitled "*Gashmay haTaf*" (Frankfort am Main, 1857).

²⁹¹ Rosenthal though only worked with the *peshat* commentary and not the *parperaot*.

²⁹² The Warsaw 1881 edition of the *peshat* commentary the index but omits the page citations.

²⁹³ Rosenthal only list their names. The rest of the information provided hereare my additions.

The following list is based on Rosenthal's index of rabbis that Jacob ben Asher refers to by name. I can not verify the accuracy of Rosenthal's work but it suggests the scope of Jacob ben Asher sources. Rosenthal's index is based on *daf* (folio) and *amud* (page). I have looked up each reference and re-indexed them according to Chapter and Verse in the *Chumash*. I have listed the names as they appear in Rosenthal's index

1. *Rabenu Asher* (Jacob ben Asher's father, the *Rosh*).²⁹⁴ (b. Germany, c.1250, d. Toledo, Spain, 1327). *Bereshit*: 1:30 (z"l), 3:12 (z"l), 4:1 (z"l), 19:21 (z"l), 19:31 (z"l), 28:13 (z'tz"l), 38:18 (z"l), 42:27 (z'tz"l). *Shemot*: 15:10 (z'tz"l), 19:23 (z"l), 25:12 (z"l). *Vayikra*: 10:19 (z"l), 13:5 (y'tz"v), 21:7 (y'tz"v). *Bamidbar*: 22:1 (z'tz"l), 14:40 (y'tz"v).
2. R. Chiya HaSepharadi.²⁹⁵ *Vayikra*:23:2 (b'Shabbat)²⁹⁶
3. R. Yehuda HeChasid (b. Speyer, Germany c. 1150, d. Regensburg, Germany, 1217). *Bereshit*: 35:22, 38:24.
4. R. Yehuda (Jacob ben Asher's brother) (b. Germany, c. 1280, d. Toledo, Spain, 1349). *Berseshit*: 4:11.
5. R. Yosef Kimchi (b. Spain, c. 1105, d. Narbonne, Provence, c. 1170). *Bereshit*: 1:16, 2:9, 2:19, 3:23, 4:4, 4:4,²⁹⁷ 4:23, 6:4, 14:20, 16:13, 21:1, 27:1, 45:17, 49:4, 49:7. *Shemot*: 2:10, 3:19, 14:27, 17:11, 19:17, 21:1.

²⁹⁴ In every case that the *Rosh* is referenced, ben Asher prefaces with "Adoni Avi," (my master and father). Whenever Jacob ben Asher mentions his father he always adds a blessing, either "may his memory be for a blessing (*zichrono l'vracha* 'z"l)," or "the memory of the righteous is a blessing (*zecher tzadik l'vracha* (z'tz"l)), and in a few occasions "may God guard and save him (*yishmereyu tzuro v'yaztilehu* (y'tz"v)). These blessings are not included by Rosenthal are not included in the index. I have included them here for the benefit of the reader."

²⁹⁵ This may be R. Chiya al-Duadi, d. 1154, Catsille, Spain.

²⁹⁶ I do not know to what "b'shabbat" is a reference. This may refer to a commentary on *Masechet Shabbat*.

²⁹⁷ The second time he comments on a different part of the verse.

6. R. Yosef Kara (Troyes, France, late 11th-early 12th cent.). *Bereshit*: 14:13.
7. R. Yisrael.²⁹⁸ *Bereshit*: 19:21.
8. HaRav Meir.²⁹⁹ *Bereshit*: 23:15, 23:19.
9. HaRav Meir of Rutenberg (*Maharam*) (b. Worms, Germany, c.1215, d. Ensisheim, Alsace, Germany, 1293) *Vayikra*: 13:4.
10. HaRav Saadyah Gaon (b. Upper Egypt, 882, d. 942 Sura, Babylonia). *Shemot*: 8:12.
11. Aruch (R. Natan ben Yechiel), (b. Rome, Italy, c. 1035, d. Rome, Italy after 1102) *Bereshit*: 8:6.
12. Rashbam (R. Shmuel ben Meir), (b. Ramerupt, France, 1085, d. France, 1174).
13. HaRav Shimon bar Avraham (*Rash*), (b. France, c. 1150, d. Eretz Yisrael, c. 1230) *Bereshit*: 18:14.
14. Rabenu Tam (R. Ya'acov ben Meir), (b. Ramerupt, France, 1100, d. Troyes, France 1171). *Bereshit*: 24:25.
- 15.³⁰⁰ HaRambam, (R. Moses ben Maimon, "Maimonides"), (b. Cordova, Spain 1135, d. Cairo, Egypt 1204) *Bereshit*: 5:4, 6:3.

One should note the variation in the wording of the blessings with which Jacob ben Asher refers to his father.³⁰¹ Usually Ben Asher refers to his father with the blessing "zichrono l'vracha" (may his memory be for a blessing). This suggests that these

²⁹⁸ Unidentified.

²⁹⁹ The identity of HaRav Meir is uncertain. This may be R. Meir Abulafia (d. Toledo, Spain, 1244), who wrote a Kabbalistic commentary on *Bereshit*. Or it may be R. Meir ben Shmuel (d. Ramerupt, France, 1130), Father of *Rashbam*, frequently cited by Tosofists. It possibly may be R. Meir ben Yekutiel (d. Germany, 1298), wrote *hagahot maimoniyot*, perished with family in Rindfleisch massacres. Or it could be R. Meir of Narbonne (d. Toledo, Spain 1263), a colleague of *Ramban*, wrote a commentary to the Torah.

³⁰⁰ Strangely Rosenthal does not list *Rambam*. This is my addition. Omissions such as this cause me to question the quality of Rosenthal's index.

³⁰¹ The blessings do not occur in the index, but are located in the text.

comments were penned after his father's death in 1327. On three the occasion the father's name appears with the blessing "yishmerehu tzoro v'yaztilehu" (may God guard and save him). This blessing is used to honor the living and therefore suggest that these passages were written before 1327 when his father was still alive.

Jacob ben Asher appears to be greatly influenced by the writings of Joseph Kimchi. After *Rashi*, *Ibn Ezra* and *Ramban*, Kimchi is the most frequently cited source used by Ben Asher. Kimchi is mentioned even more frequently than the *Rosh*, Ben Asher's second most cited source. Jacob ben Asher only uses Kimchi's comments on *Bereshit* and *Shemot*. This may suggest that Ben Asher did not possess Kimchi's commentary on other biblical books. Natan Adler in his approbation to the Rosenthal edition states that Jacob ben Asher's references to the *Rosh* and Joseph Kimchi of particular importance as they do not occur anywhere else.³⁰²

In his article, "*Ha-Perush ha-Aroch shel Ba'al ha-Turim le-Torah*," Yehuda Shaviv,³⁰³ identified many of *Baal HaTurim*'s sources for the *parperaot*. He notes the following sources:

1. *Midrash Chaserot V'Yeterot*
2. *Midrash R. Akiva ben Yosef al haTagin v'al ha-Otiot Gedolot v'Katanot*,
3. *Midrash Chamash Esrie Nekudot sh'biMikra*,
4. Efraim bar Shimon,
5. R. Yehuda Chechasi

³⁰² Moshe Greenburg, pp. 92 in "Introduction to Jewish Bible Exegesis" (Mossad Bialik, 1983), writes that the commentary attributed to the *Rosh* (that appears in *Hadar Zekenim*) is not his.

³⁰³ Shaviv, Yehuda. "*Ha-Perush ha-Aroch shel Ba'al ha-Turim le-Torah*," in Menachem Hacohen (ed.) *Mahanaim: Quarterly for Studies in Jewish Thought and Culture*, (1992) vol. 3, pp. 185-7. Jerusalem: Mercaz Sapir.

6. *Perush HaRokeach* (R. Elazar of Worms),
7. R. Meir of Rutenburg
8. R. Asher ben Yechiel.

While it appears that for the *peshat* commentary Jacob ben Asher drew from both *Ashkenazi* and *Sephardi* sources, the *parperaot* are based primarily on *Ashkenazi* sources. If a critical edition of Jacob ben Asher's commentary were to be ventured, use of reference collections such as *Tosofot HaShalem* (J. Gelles) and *Torah Shelema* (M. Kasher) would be of great value for evaluating *Baal haTurim*'s sources.

Appendix A.

The Mantua Manuscript No. 32, *Perush al ha-Torah*,

Housed in the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts in the Jewish National and
University Library, Jerusalem, Israel. Permission for photocopying microfilm
granted by the Biblioteca Comunale, Mantua, Italy; July 1996.

1. Jacob ben Asher's Introduction To His Commentary
2. *Parashat Miketz*
3. Colophon

Translation of Colophon:

"I am Isaac the son of Rabbi Joseph from the Kingdom of Portugal from the
Province of Evora. I wrote this book. I began it in **Jerusalem** the Holy City may she be
rebuilt and established speedily in our day, and I finished in **Tzfat** on Sunday seven days
from *Rosh Chodesh Tevet* in the 5149 year since the creation of the world (1389).³⁰⁴ May
God who has given me the merit to study it and to make it complete,³⁰⁵ fulfill through me
and my seed the verse "May the words that I have placed in your mouth never depart from
your mouth, nor from the mouths of your children, nor your from the mouths of your
children's children - saith the Lord - from now on, and for all time."³⁰⁶ And may we merit
to see the fulfillment of the verses that Jerusalem shall be speedily rebuilt, that the
scattered of Israel shall be gathered, the weary given strength and the powerless made
powerful. Finished and completed with thanks to God. Amen."

³⁰⁴ Jacob ben Asher died approx. 1340. This manuscript was written about 50 years after Jacob ben Asher's death.

³⁰⁵ This means to bind it, but not to alter the text.

³⁰⁶ Isaiah 59:21

[illegible][illegible]

Jim

[illegible]

1. The first part of the paper is a review of the literature on the topic. It discusses the various methods used to study the effects of stress on the immune system, and the results of these studies. It also discusses the role of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis in the stress response.

[illegible][illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

לחמשה ימים...
לחמשה ימים...
לחמשה ימים...
לחמשה ימים...
לחמשה ימים...

[illegible]

וְהַיְהוּדִים הָיוּ עֹשִׂים כֵּן וְכֵן וְהָיוּ מִתְּחִילָה מְשֻׁמְּרִים וְעַתָּה מְשֻׁמְּרִים
וְעַתָּה מְשֻׁמְּרִים וְעַתָּה מְשֻׁמְּרִים וְעַתָּה מְשֻׁמְּרִים וְעַתָּה מְשֻׁמְּרִים

סך לנתן נזירת המעקב נשנה שני כ.מ. וחצי ונזקקו ונזקקו לה
סבירו על כך חזא אסא חן מדינא ונזקקו לה סבירו ונזקקו לה
נזקקו לה ונזקקו לה ונזקקו לה ונזקקו לה ונזקקו לה ונזקקו לה

[illegible]

הענין הזה נראה כי הוא נשקף
בפניו של המלך וזהו שכתב
המלך כי הוא ראה את המלך
הזהב וזהו שכתב המלך כי
הוא ראה את המלך הזהב

על שנתקנו לו חכם שהקדימו פ'...
ה' שאלו מיון לפרעם לב...
למיון לו חכם... שאלו מיון
למיון לו חכם... שאלו מיון

[illegible]

היו ויהיבנו להם חתנים ואחרים: והוא זה אשר יאמרו ארונים בן שמריה
לא למה הניבנו לא ערפנו עתה כל ידוע שהם לקחו חתנים לבן אמנם
הוא זה שאלמנחם הוא אשר יאמרו ארונים בן שמריה חתנים חתנים
הוא זה שאלמנחם הוא אשר יאמרו ארונים בן שמריה חתנים חתנים

חונם וקניס מבשרו ומצדקה
קיונה נח ימאכרנו יטעם כמצילו שכל הנחתים והנחתים עצמיהם
ישאל לבוא לן למשולו והם רוצין לו שלקחום חיות ועל כל דרך אחריהם
יותר מכל הנחתים לעיתים וינתן מקור מנחה בו אידגו ויצד שאלת אחד

[illegible]

שבתות סחירות רבניות לא הוזכרו מידה לא אחת הוצגו ענפים
אחרים ובהם נמצא נצח הלבית: "שם עתה יכרדכם ביה"א אצל חני"
אפשר ששם נמצא לפרש ומאדיר הדין, וכל ה'הוצגו' ו'חני' שם נוסף על
השבתות רבניות.

הנה הנה ופי הנה לפי שבתם אמרו ופי שבתם שיהיה ופי שבתם
אף אם נבחרו היה יעל כי אמרו אמרו הדין הוא חייב מנחה והם פאורס
למנה לא סתמו עמם להורע עבדים אמרו היו ויועזים כולם כעבד
למה יהיה הוא נמנה והם עבדים אמרו יהיו כולם נמנה או כולם עבד

[illegible][illegible]

קדושת שבת ושלש ספרים שבתות: דברים ופסוקים
 פסוקים שן הוסיפה מביד שבת על שבת מצד אורח
 ונשאל קדוה

היה להם גם סוף וכל עם נבון ופיוסילי נלמד להבין דברים
בכך "בנוי כחלום בלתי כף חרות". ואחר כך ואחר עשר
אחר בענינים כי אצלם אחר דבר ודברים אחר אחר.

פֿאַר אַ שטענדיקן אַרבעטס־פּראָגראַם
צו זיין רעגולערעם אַרבעטס־פּלאַן
וועגן אַלע קוואַליטעט־קאָנטראָלן

והוא להלחם עם יוסף ופנחס ונצח גם נח
בעם ייטון כפרתו ונח כן את
אומר בעצמו כי מצדדים אחרים. זה

55

הנאון חידא בש"ג מוכיר כתי' זה ומביא קטע מדברי המעתיק — המופיעים בתצלום, — שכתב בסוף הספר בזה הלשון:



תצלום דף האחרון מכת יד של פירוש השור שוכתב כחמישים שנה אחרי פטירת רבינו הסור זצ"ל. הכתי' נמצא במנוסחה ותצלום ממנו בהמכון לכת"י מה ירושת"י.

אני יצחק ב"ר יוסף הסופר ממלכות פרוטוגל ממדינת אבורה כתבתי זה הספר, והתחלתי אותו בירושלם עיר הקדש תבנה ותכונן במהרה בימינו, וסיימתי אותו בצפת יום ראשון שבעה ימים מראש חדש סבת שנת חמשת אלפים ומאה וארבעים ותשעה לבריאת עולם. והשם שזיכני (—) לכותבו יזכני ללמוד בו ולהשלימו אני חרעי, י"י יקיים בנו קרא דכתי' לא ימוש מפיד ומפי זרעך ופי זרע זרעך אמר י"י מעתה ועד עולם: ונזכה לראות בקיום הפסוק מהרה בונה ירושלם י"י נדחי ישראל יכנס: הנותן ליעף כח ולאינן אונים עצמה ירבה: תם ונשלם ת"ל אמן:

יצחק ב"ר יוסף
הסופר

Appendix B.

The Montefiore Manuscript No. 12

Perush al ha-Torah

Housed in the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts

in the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem, Israel.

Permission for photocopying of microfilm granted by the Offices of the Spanish and

Portuguese Jews Congregation and Jews College, London, England; July 1996.

[illegible]

אפילו אצלנו נשטותן מסתכן לערשעך הדין והיו מנצחין למלכות ישראל
לעמוד. אם הושת היה רשעים ששנא: "והיה כבודי כבודי ויהיה לי ויהיה לי"
ל"עניינות ומה יצאין ואלו עניינות מסריסם שלא היה עניינות. עניינות."

ה' ושלמים בארץ." כרת פתח ב' וסוף א' והפסק ב' רמב"ם.

אמר עובד סדר ב' פתח פתח. ששן שאז נכח המלות יעלה עליו ואף ה' שהיה לו הפסק (כי לא על כל העליות חלקה ב' פתח) — לא לך

[illegible][illegible]

Appendix C.

The Hebrew Text of Jacob Ben Asher's Introduction to his Torah Commentary

From

Perush Ba'al ha-Turim al ha-Torah,

Ya'acov Kapel Reinitz (ed.)

Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 1971 (6th ed., 1993)

פירוש התורה לה"ר יעקב בן הרא"ש זצו"ל

הנה נא הואלתי לדבר ^א
 כי לא בינת אדם לי ^ב וחילולים לגבר ^ג
 [גם] כי לא מילין לחבר ^ד
 כי בער אנכי מאיש ולא למדתי חכמה ^ה
 ואין בי דעת ומזימה ^ו
 ולא אתי יודע עד מה ^ז
 אמנם צמאה [לה] נפשי ובשרי לה כמה ^ח
 אף אם נסתרה ממני ונעלמה ^ט
 כי היא מלאכת שמים ^י
 וכל דבריה על אופנים ^{יא}
 נדרשת היא ^{יב} לכל שואל בה על דרכים ^{יג}
 ולכל אשר יטה לה אזנים ^{יד}
 כי לא מעבר לים היא ולא בשמים ^{טו}
 אכן קרובה היא לכל אשר יקרב אליה בלב ובשפתים ^{טז}
 ואשר תעזבנה יום תעזבנו יומים ^{יז}
 אחד המרבה ואחד הממעט ובלבד שיכוין לבו לשמים ^{יח}
 על כן נדבה רוחי ^{יט} לקרבה אל המלאכה ^כ בפעמים וברגלים ^{כא}
 ולעשותה בלב ^{כב} ובמעשה ^{כג} [ה] ידים ^{כד}
 והנה ראיתי הים הגדול [ו] רחב ידים ^{כה}

- [א] עפ"י בראשית (יח כז) הנה נא הואלתי לדבר
 אל אדני ואנכי עפר ואפר.
 [ב] עפ"י משלי (ל ב) ולא בינת אדם לי.
 [ג] עפ"י קהלת (י י) אם קהה הברזל והוא לא
 פנים קלקל וחילולים יגבר.
 [ד] עפ"י איוב (טז ד) אחבירה עליכם כמלים.
 [ה] עפ"י משלי (ל כ-ג) כי בער אנכי מאיש ולא
 בינת אדם לי. ולא למדתי חכמה וגו'.
 [ו] עפ"י משלי (א ד) לתת לפתאים ערמה לנער
 דעת ומזמה.
 [ז] עפ"י תהלים (עד ט) ולא אתנו יודע עד מה.
 [ח] עפ"י תהלים (סג ב) צמאה לך נפשי כמה לך
 בשרי. ובדפויי "וכשרי לך כמה". והגזון נוסח
 כח"י שמדבר בלשון נסתר.
 [ט] עפ"י איוב (כח כא) ונעלמה מעיני כל חי
 ומעוף שמים נסתרה.
 [י] עפ"י עירובין (יג.) אמר לי בני הר' והיר'
 במלאכתך שמלאכתך מלאכת שמים היא.
 [יא] עפ"י משלי (כה יא) דבר דבר על אפניו.
 [יב] עפ"י תהלים (קצ"ב ב) דרושים לכל חפציהם.
 ואולי יש כאן לשון נופל על לשון מלשון
 "דרוש" דהיינו נצרך ומלשון דרשה כמובן פירוש
 וביאור (הערת הר"י ר' אבינדרו נבנצל שליט"א).
 [יג] עפ"י איוב (כא כט) הלא שאלתם עובדי דרך.
 ובדפויי (וממנו לחומשים) בטעות "ורכים".
- [יד] עפ"י תהלים (עת א) הטו אזנכם לאמר פי.
 [טו] עפ"י דברים (ל יב-יג) לא בשמים היא וגו'
 ולא מעבר לים היא וגו'.
 [טז] עפ"י דברים (שם יד) כי קרוב אליך הדבר
 מאד בפיו ובלבבך לעשותו. ועיין עירובין
 (נד.) ואימתי תשמרם בבטן, בזמן שיכונו יחדיו על
 שפתך [שאתה סודרן ומוציאן כפה ולא כמגום
 ובלחישתה. רש"י] וע"ע לעיל מיניה שם שינא פתח
 פומך קרי וכו' למוציאם כפה.
 [יז] עפ"י ספרי עקב (פיסקא מח). ובדפויי "אשר
 יעזבנה יום היא תעזבנו יומים".
 [יח] עפ"י מנחות (פ"ג מ"א). ובכח"י "ובלבה
 שיהא לבו לשמים".
 [יט] עפ"י שמות (לה כא) וכל אשר נדבה רוחו.
 [כ] עפ"י שמות (לו ב) כל אשר נשאו לבו לקרבה
 אל המלאכה.
 [כא] עפ"י ישעיה (כו ו) רגלי עני פעמי דלים.
 ובלשון המדרש (שהש"ר ד ב) "ועלה לפעמי
 רגלים" ושם הכוונה לשלש רגלים וכן בחפלת
 מוסף של שלוש רגלים "פעמי רגלנו" וע"י חגיגה
 ג, א אין פעמים אלא רגלים.
 [כב] עפ"י דברים (ל יד) ובלבבך לעשותו.
 [כג] עפ"י תהלים (צ יז) ומעשה ידינו כוננה עלינו.
 [כד] עפ"י תהלים (קד כה) זה הים גדול ורחב
 ידים.

הקדמה

פירושי התורה (כח) לרב ר' משה בר' נחמן ז"ל (טו)
גדול הנצח (נ) רב הכנפים (כו)
ונפשי אִתָּה (כח) עבור בו אף במי מתנים (כט)
ואירא כי גדל מאד (ל) וגאו המים (לא)
ואומר אלכה לי (לב) על השפתים (לג)
כי על שפתו עץ רב מאד מזה ומזה (לד)
נחמד הוא להשכיל ותאווה הוא לעינים (לה)
ואקח מפרי (לו) מלא כפים (לז)
ואוכל (לח) ותהי לי למשיב נפש (לח) ולפקוח עינים (לח)
ולשמוע בלימודים העיר לי אזנים (לח)
ותחי רוח יעקב (לט) ותהי אליו פי שנים (ס)
כי יחיה כל אשר יבא שמה נחלים (סא)
לכן תחילת דברי אני מבקש רשות מאת הרב הנזכר
ואחר כן אני מחלה פני כל קורא בחיבורי זה
לבל ידינני לכף חובה לאמור שעשיתי להתגבר (סב) בו
כי לא עשיתי דבר שיהא ראוי להתגדל (כו)
שאני (סג) אלא כמלקט אוכל מתוך אוכל
ולואי שלא הייתי מחזיר האוכל (ל) פסולת (סד)
ואין כוונתי בזה רק כי [יען] נפלאו ממני (סה) דברי הרב ז"ל
והם סתומים וחתומים (סו)
אמרתי אלקטה נא (סז) מהם דברים הפשוטים

כח) כן הוא בראש פירושי התורה לרמב"ן דפוס
רומי (לפני שנת ר"ס), ואולם בדפוס השני
(ליסבון שנת רמ"ט) "חידושי התורה", והנה מרכיז
דבינו למדנו על הנוסח הנכון. ובדפוס "פירוש
התורה", והנכון "פירוש התורה" בנוסח דפוס
הראשון הנ"ל.
כז) בדפוס "לרב הגדול הרמב"ן ז"ל", ובדפוס
רומי הנ"ל "פירוש התורה" לרבינו הרב ר'
משה בר' נחמן זלה"ה גירונדי.
כז) עפ"י יחזקאל (יז ז) גדול כנפים ורב נוצה.
וצ"ע מדוע הפך רבינו את התוארים "גדול"
"רב".
כח) עפ"י מיכה (ו א) בכודה אותה נפשי. וכך
היא מנוקדת בכתה"י.
כט) עפ"י יחזקאל (מז ד) ויעבירני מי מחנים.
ל) עפ"י בראשית (כו ג) הלך וגדל עד כי גדל מאד.
לא) הנוסח בכתה"י "ונבהו המים". והנכון הנוסח
שבדפוס עפ"י יחזקאל (מז ה) לא אוכל
לעבור כי גאו המים, והוא המשך המליצה "ויעבירני
מי מתנים" (לעיל הערה כט).
לב) עפ"י ירמיה (ה ד-ה) ואני אמרתי וגו' אלכה
לי אל הגדולים.
לג) עפ"י יחזקאל (מז יב) ועל הנחל יעלה על
שפתו מזה ומזה כל עץ מאכל.
לד) עפ"י בראשית (ג ו) כי טוב העץ למאכל וכי
תאווה הוא לעינים ונחמד העץ להשכיל ותקח

ספריו ותאכל.
לה) עפ"י מ"א (יז יב) וכן קהלת (ד ו) מלא כף.
לו) עפ"י רות (ד טו) והיה לך למשיב נפש.
לז) עפ"י בראשית (ג ז) ותפקחנה עיני שניהם
(בהמשך למליצה לעיל, ראה הערה לד).
לח) עפ"י ישעיה (נ ד) יעיר לי אוזן לשמוע
כלמודים.
לט) עפ"י בראשית (מה כז) ותחי רוח יעקב
אביהם, רמז לשם המחבר.
ס) עפ"י מ"ב (כ ט) ויהי נא פי שנים ברוחך
אלי.
סא) עפ"י יחזקאל (מז ט) אל כל אשר יבוא שם
נחלים יחיה.
סב) בדפוס "להתגדל". ונוסח כתה"י נראה נכון
יותר כמש"כ לעיל שורה שניה "כי לא כינת
אדם לי וחיילים לגבר". ואילו המליצה "להתגדל"
היא בשורה הבאה. ואולי צ"ל "להתגדל" עפ"י
חולין (ז.י) מקום הניחו לי אבותי להתגדל בו (והערה
הרה"ג ר' אביגדור נבנצל שלי"ס א).
סג) בדפוס "שאינר", והוא טעות.
סד) עפ"י שבת (עד) בורר ואוכל אוכל מתוך
פסולת וכו'.
סה) עפ"י משלי (ל יח) שלשה המה נפלאו ממני.
סו) עפ"י דניאל (יב ט) כי סתומים וחתומים
הדברים. ובדפוס נשמט "וחתומים".
סז) עפ"י רות (ב ז) ותאמר אלקטה נא.

ואשאר הסתומים

כי בסודו לא באה נפשי ^(מח)

למען היות נקל בעיני ^{מט} ללמוד בו.

ואם מצאתי פשט או טעם במקום אחר

חברתי עמו ואף כי הם מעטים ^{מט}.

ועל כן לא הזכרתי שם הרב בכל ^{המקומות}

כי רובם דבריו

ולא הזכרתי רק במקום הצריך כפי הענין.

וראיתי עוד לכתוב בתחילת כל ^{סדר} וסדר

מעט פרפראות מגימטריאות ^{נח} וטעמי המסורות ^{נח} להמשיך הלב ^{נח}

ואשר לו כל מחשבות גלויות

חוקר טוחות ובוהן כליות ^{נח}

הוא יודע מחשבתי ^{נח} והוא יחזק ^{נח} ידי הרפות ^{נח}

ויאמץ ברכי הכושלות ^{נח}

להוציא מחשבתי לפועל ^{נח}

ויטה לבי ליראתו ^{נח}

ויקרבנו לעבודתו ^{נח}

ויאיר עיני ^{נח} במאור תורתו ^{נח} הקדושה אמן אמן ^{נח}

הקדמה זו כתב רבינו לפירושו על התורה ובסופה מזכיר את הפרפראות מגימטריאות וטעמי המסורות להמשיך הלב שהקדים לכל סדר וסדר. העתקתי מכת"י מנטובה ובחומשים נרפס על פי הדפוס ישן והוא משובש מאד. ההוספות שבסוגרים הן עפ"י הנוסח שבדפוס ישן.

מכבוד את בעליהם בעיני הבריות ע"כ. וכבר השיג עליו תוס' יו"ט ופירש כדברי רבינו. ועיין ברכות (פ"ו מ"ה) וברע"ב שם. ובגמ' ברכות (מב.) מתני' ברכך על היות וברש"י שם.

נח] עפ"י ירמיה (ד' י) אני ה' חוקר לב בוהן כליות. וברפ"י נשמט "ובוחן". וטוחות

הן ג"כ כליות עפ"י איוב (לח לו) מי שת בטוחות חכמה. ועיין ראש השנה (כו.) אלו כליות.

נח] עפ"י תהלים (צד יא) ה' יודע מחשבות אדם.

נח] ברפ"י "יחזיק", והוא טעות.

נח] עפ"י ישעיה (לה ג) חזקו ידים רפות וברכים כושלות אמצו.

נח] ברפ"י "להוציא מחשבתי זאת אל הפועל".

ס] עפ"י תהלים (קט לו) ה' לבי אל עדותך.

וכדפ"י "ויטה לבבי".

סא] עפ"י הברכה החמישית שבתפלת שמונה עשרה.

סב] עפ"י עזרא (ט ח) להאיר עינינו אלהינו.

סג] עפ"י משלי (כג) כי נר מצוה וחזרה אור.

סד] שלש המלים האחרונות אינן ברפ"י ובכת"י

פריס 236 כתוב: וראיתי עוד לכתוב ר"ת

וס"ת הנקראים פרפראות מגימטריאות וטעמי

המסורות... ויראנו מתורתו נפלאות לאור באור החיים

וינחנו כמעגלי צדק במאמר תורתו אמן.

מח] עפ"י בראשית (מט ו) בסודם אל תבוא נפשי. מט] עפ"י בראשית (טז ה) ואקל בעיניה. אך כאן מלי "קל". וכן בישעיה (מט ו) נקל מהיותך לי עבד. מט"י] בכת"י פריס (236): ואם מצאתי פשט או טעם במקום אחר לא רציתי לזכור אלא הצריך אליו לפי הענין.

ג] ברפ"י "ברוב כי רובם... והוא טעות. ועיין יבמות (צו:) אלא יהושע יושב ודורש סתם והכל יודעין שתורתו של משה היא וכו' (הערת הר"ג ר' אביגדור נבנצל שליט"א).

נא] נשמט ברפ"י.

נב] אבות (פ"ג מ"ח) תקופות וגמטריאות

פרפראות לחכמה.

נג] שם (פ"ג מ"ג) מסורת סייג לתורה. ופירש

רבנו יונה, מסורת, אלו מלא וחסר וחטעמים

שמסרו חכמים לחלמדיהם. והם סייג לתורה

שכתב, שלא תמצא הספרים חלוקים כי אם

במקומות מעטים ע"כ. ונראה כי כוננו רבינו

לדרשת המסורה המחברת פסוקים זהים ע"ד הרמז.

נד] עפ"י דברי רבינו נראה דהיינו הפרפראות

שלפני הסעודה, ודלא כפירוש הרע"ב באבות

(פ"ג מ"ח) כמו הפרפראות שרגילין לאכול בסוף

הסעודה לקנות דרך תענוג, כך החכמות הללו

Appendix D.

Hebrew Text of the *Parperaot* to *Parashat Miktetz*

From

Perush Ba'al ha-Turim al ha-Torah,

Ya'acov Kapel Reinitz (ed)

Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 1971 (6th ed., 1993)

Appendix E.

Text of the *Peshat* Commentary to *Bereshit* 41

From

Perush ha-Tur ha-Arokh al ha-Torah,

Yitzhak Stern (ed.)

Jerusalem: Perush Uvremez Publ. House, 1961

Appendix F

Hebrew Text of Jacob ben Asher's *Matzevah*

Copied From

Perush Ba'al ha-Turim al ha-Torah,

Ya'acov Kapel Reinitz (ed)

Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 1971 (6th ed., 1993)

First Printed In

Samuel David Luzzato (*Shadal*). *Evney Zikharon* Prague, 1841.

לתולדות חייו של רבינו "בעל הטורים"

ר' יעקב, בנו השלישי של הרא"ש, נולד בגרמניה בשנת ה' כ"ט (1269) לערך. בשנת ה' ס' בקירוב ברח עם אביו לברצלונה שבספרד לאחר מכן קבע מושבו בעיר טולידו (טוליטולא), שם המליכו עליהם בני הקהילה את הרא"ש לרבם. נלב"ע בשנת ה' ק"ג (1343) לערך והובא למנוחת עולמים ליד קבר אביו בטולידו ביום י"ב בתמוז*.

זהו הנוסח של מצבת רבינו

עדה המצבה הזאת	ונפטר באהבה רבה
מחזה עליון לחזות	וב"ב בתמוז הובא עד אביו הרא"ש ד'ל
כי תחתיה נגנוז איש תם יושב אהלים	לשכב בצלו
רב פעלים	בקברו אשר כרה לו
צדיק מושל ביראת אלהים	והנה חמשת בניו באו גבולו
הר' יעקב בן הרא"ש ד'ל	שנים מימינו ושלשה משמאלו
אמרתו כטל תזל	להם אמר אל נורא
מפי ספרים אשר חבר בשפה ברורה	אליכם אישים אקרא
פירוש לפסקים ולתורה*	לעלות דרך הקדש אל המקור העליון
ופסקים לשלשה סדרים	שיורד על הררי ציון
ומלאכת ארבעה טורים	כי שם צוה ה' את הברכה
אבן העזר וחושן משפט לנחשלים	שמורה וערוכה
יורה דעת וארחות חיים לנכשלים	לאשר לעבדו כמהים
כל ימיו היו מכאובים	ויעקב הלך לדרכו ויפגעו בו מלאכי
וסבל יסורין בחבה	אלהים.
ועל האבן הראשה:	ולרגליו:
אבן העזר ראשו בנו לתלפיה	אורח חיים למעלה ריחו יפיח כמור
כי יעקב בחר לו יה	ורגלי חסידיו ישמור

(שד"ל אבני זכרון עמ' 11).

*אולי צ"ל: פירוש לפסוקים לתורה. ואולי: פירוש לפסוקים ופרפראות לתורה, כי כן מלאכת ר' יעקב על התורה כוללת שני העניינים האלה, פירוש ופרפראות (הערת שד"ל, שם).

א) לתולדות רבינו וחיבוריו ראה א"ח פריימן, הרא"ש (מוסד הרב קוק, ירושלים, תשמ"ו), פרק יג (ועיי' שם צמ' קסג הערה 262 הוכחות כי פירשו לתורה קדם לחיבור "ארבעה טורים"), וע"ע בשער הספר "פירוש הסוד הארוך על התורה" (מהדורת הרב יצחק שטרן, ירושלים, תשכ"א).

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