

B”H

Parsha and Manuscript: Vayeshev

‘Jacob dwelt in the land of his father's sojournings: The parable of the pearl and the rubble’

Genesis 37:1-2

Jacob dwelt in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob: when Joseph was seventeen years old, being a shepherd.

Genesis 36:1-31

And these are the generations of Esau, that is, Edom. So Esau dwelt on Mount Seir Esau, that is Edom. And these are the generations of Esau the progenitor of Edom, on Mount Seir. And these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the children of Israel.

Genesis 35:27.

And Jacob came to his father Isaac, to Mamre, Kiriath Arba, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac dwelt.

Midrash Tanchuma Vayeshev 6-7 - a pearl lost amongst sand and pebbles

Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, concern Himself from the very beginning of time with the genealogies of the nations? This may be likened to a king who dropped a pearl into sand and pebbles. The king was compelled to search the sand and the pebbles to recover the pearl. As soon as he recovered the pearl, however, he discarded the sand and the pebbles, for he was only interested in retrieving the pearl. Similarly, the Holy One, blessed be He, devoted Himself superficially to the earlier generations, and then ignored them. He mentioned Adam, Seth, Enoch, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, etc.,¹ and also the second ten generations, Shem, Arpachshad, Shelah, etc.,² so that a child could take the Bible and read about the ten generations from Adam to Noah at a single sitting, and also about the ten generations from Noah to Abraham at one time. But when he reached the section dealing with the pearls, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he would have to apply himself diligently in reading about them. That is why the section on Elephaz the son of Esau is included in this chapter.

Tanchuma Vayeshev 4:1; Midrash Rabba 84:5

Now Jacob dwelt in the land. These are the generations of Jacob: Joseph. What is written on the matter above? These are the lords of the children of Esau.³ When Jacob saw them, he became alarmed and said: Who can stand against these? To what is the matter comparable? To a goldsmith who would sit and ply his trade. His apprentice

¹ I Chronicles 1:1-2.

² Ibid. 1:24.

³ Genesis 36:15.

raised his eyes and saw a lot of camels who were loaded with straw. He began to say: Who can stand against these? His master said to him: If a spark went out of this furnace, it would burn all of them. So in the case of our father Jacob, when he saw all of Esau's lords, he began to be afraid and said: Who can stand against these? The Holy One said to him: Look at what is written below: These are the generations of Jacob: Joseph. By your life, someone shall spring from Joseph, a person, who shall burn all of them, as stated: The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau shall be straw; they shall burn it.⁴ R. Hanina said: It is written:⁵ See, they have become like straw; fire consumes them. It is therefore written: These are the generations of Jacob: Joseph.

Rashi 1 – the parable of the pearls amongst the sand and pebbles

Jacob dwelt: Scripture described Esau's settlements and his generations, briefly, because they were not distinguished nor important enough to elaborate on how they settled and the order of their wars, or how they drove out the Horites. In contrast it elaborates at length on the settlements of Jacob and his generations, and all the events that brought these about, since they were important to the Omnipresent to dwell upon at length. Similarly, you find regarding the ten generations from Adam to Noah: So-and-so begot so-and-so, but when it reached Noah, it dwelt upon him at length. Likewise, with the ten generations from Noah to Abraham, it dealt briefly with them, but when it reached Abraham, it dwelt upon him at length. This can be compared to a pearl that falls into the sand: A person searches in the sand and sifts it with a sieve until he finds the pearl, and when he finds it, he casts the pebbles from his hand and keeps the pearl.

Rashi 2 – the parable of the flax

Another interpretation of "Jacob dwelt:" The camels of a flax dealer entered a town, laden with flax. The blacksmith wondered, "Where will all this flax go?" One clever fellow answered him, "One spark will come out of your bellows, which will burn it all." So did Jacob see all the chieftains of Esau mentioned above.⁶ He wondered and said, "Who can conquer them all?" What is written below? "These are the generations of Jacob: Joseph," only, and it is written: "And the house of Jacob shall be fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau shall become stubble."⁷ One spark will emerge from Joseph, which will destroy and consume them all. From an old Rashi.

⁴ Obadiah 1:18.

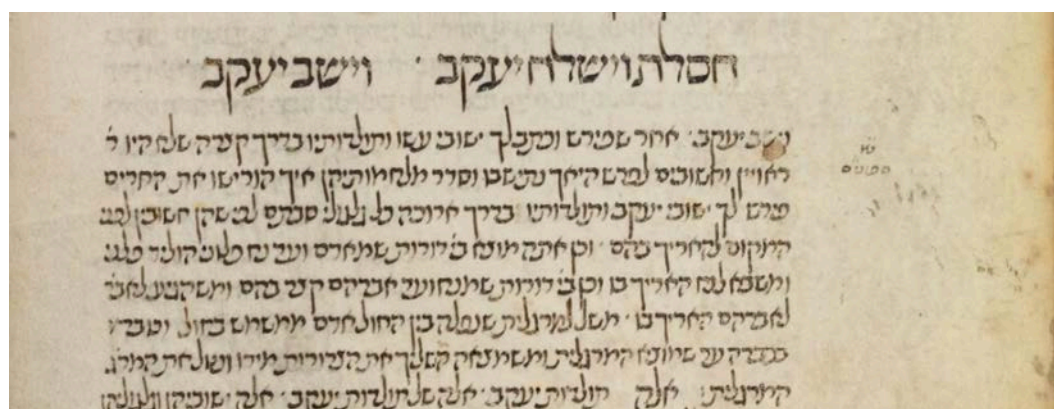
⁵ Isaiah 47:14.

⁶ Genesis 36:15-19, 40-43.

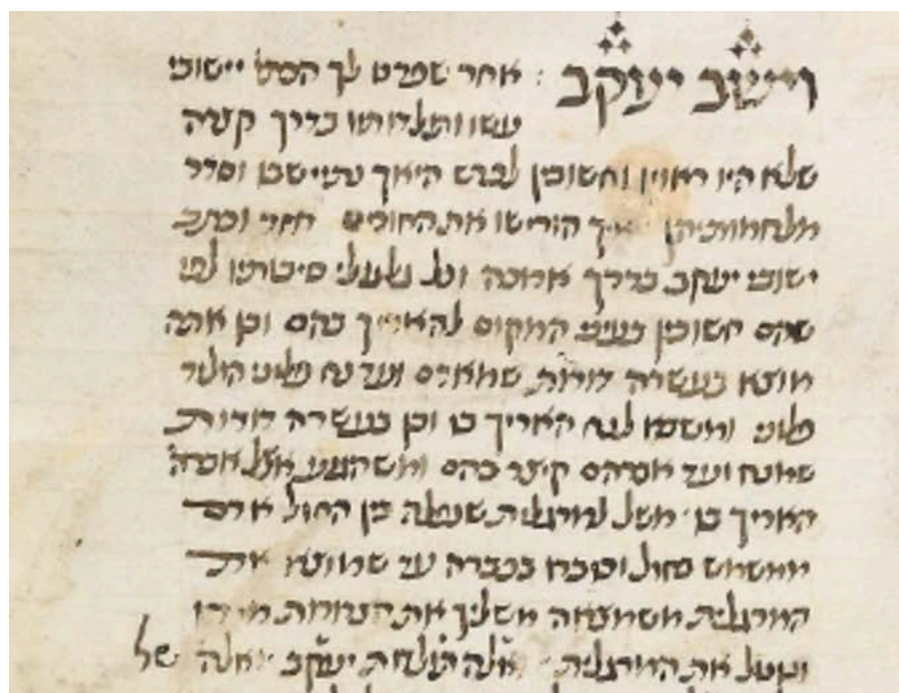
⁷ Obadiah 1:18.

Manuscripts

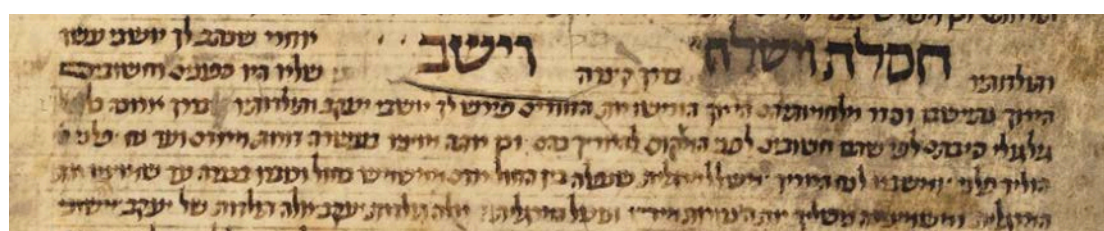
MS. Canonici Or. 35, fol. 43 (1401-1425) – the pebbles - 'hatz'rorot'



MS Michael 384 (1399) – the pebbles - 'hatz'rorot'



MS. Oppenheim 34, fol. 21 (1201-1225) – the pebbles - 'hatz'rorot'



MS Opp. 35 (1408) – all the pebbles – 'kol ha'tzrorot'

יֵשׁוּב יַעֲקֹב אַחֲרֵי שִׁכְתָּב לְךָ יִשׁוּבִי
עָשׂוּ וְתַלְמוּדוֹ בְּדֶרֶךְ דַּעַר
שֶׁלֹא הָיוּ סְטֵעִים וְסֻכּוֹיִם
לְפָנָיו הַיָּאֵךְ נִתְיַטֵּב וְסִדֵּר וְלִמְחִימָהּ הַיָּאֵךְ
בְּזִיטוֹ אֶת הַחֲזוּרִים לֹךְ פִּירֵשׁ לֹךְ יִשׁוּבִי יַעֲקֹב
וְתַלְמוּדוֹ בְּדֶרֶךְ אֲחִיכָה לֹךְ יִשְׁלֹל סְכּוּמֵי אֶפְרַיִם
קְטָנוֹתֵיכֶם לְפָנֶי הַיָּדוֹם הָאֵרִיךְ כִּכּוֹן וְכֵן אֲתָה וְ
וּזְעָא בְּעִשְׂרֵי דְרֹחַת וְאֵרֶם וְעַד נַח פִּלּוֹנִי הָלֹךְ
פִּלּוֹנִי וְשִׁכְחָה לֹנֶה הָאֵרִיךְ כִּכּוֹן וְכֵן בְּעִשְׂרֵי דְרֹחַת
דְּרֹחַת שְׁמִינִי עַד אֲבֵרָהּ דִּיעַר כִּכּוֹן וְשִׁכְחָה
אֶל אֲבֵרָהּ הָאֵרִיךְ וְשִׁלֵּל לְעִקְלֵיט שְׁעִלָּה
כִּחֹל אֵרֶם וְשִׁשְׁטֵשׁ כִּחֹל וְכִכְרֵי כִכְרֵי עַד שֶׁ
שְׁמִינִי אֶת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וְשִׁשְׁטֵשׁ אֶת הַיָּדוֹם
הַיָּדוֹם וְשִׁלֵּל אֶת כָּל הַעֲחֹת וְיִירָו וְנִשְׁלֵל
אֶת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וְאֵלֶּה הַתַּלְמוּדִים יַעֲקֹב וְאֵלֶּה הַתַּלְמוּדִים

MS. Oppenheim Add. 4° 188, fol. 28 (1301-1400) – sand 'hachol'

וְיֵשׁוּב יַעֲקֹב אַחֲרֵי שִׁכְתָּב לְךָ
יִשׁוּבִי עָשׂוּ וְתַלְמוּדוֹ בְּדֶרֶךְ
דַּעַר שֶׁלֹא הָיוּ סְטֵעִים וְסֻכּוֹיִם
לְפָנָיו הַיָּאֵךְ נִתְיַטֵּב וְסִדֵּר וְלִמְחִימָהּ הַיָּאֵךְ
אֶת הַחֲזוּרִים פִּירֵשׁ לֹךְ יִשׁוּבִי
יַעֲקֹב וְתַלְמוּדוֹ בְּדֶרֶךְ אֲחִיכָה
כָּל יִלְקוּלֵי סִכּוּמֵי אֶפְרַיִם
חֲשׁוֹנִים לְפָנֶי הַיָּדוֹם לְהָאֵרִיךְ
כִּכּוֹן וְכֵן אֲתָה מִיִּצְחָר בִּי חֲזוֹן
שְׁמִינִי וְעַד נַח פִּלּוֹנִי הָלֹךְ
אֶת פִּלּוֹן כִּקְיָמִי וְשִׁכְחָה לֹנֶה
הָאֵרִיךְ כִּכּוֹן וְכֵן בִּי דְרֹחַת שְׁמִינִי
וְעַד אֲבֵרָהּ שִׁקְיָרָה כִּכּוֹן
וְשִׁכְחָה אֶל אֲבֵרָהּ הָאֵרִיךְ
כִּכּוֹן מִשְׁלֵל לְמִיִּצְחָר שְׁעִלָּה
הַיָּדוֹם מִשְׁשֵׁשׁ כִּחֹל
וְכִכְרֵי כִכְרֵי עַד שְׁמִינִי
כִּכּוֹן אֶת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וְשִׁשְׁטֵשׁ
הַיָּדוֹם מִשְׁלֵל אֶת הַחֲזוֹן מִיִּדוֹן
וְנִשְׁלֵל אֶת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ לִיִּתְּ כִּיִּדוֹן