

Mei Hashiloach - Vol I. Genesis - *Bereishith* - *Chaye Sarah*

IN OBSCURITY

The first Torah in the Mei Hashiloach, this week, deals with a 'Time of Finding'.

'If you find something it means that you'd previously forgotten about it,' the Talmud says. (Sanhedrin 97a) Life is full of moments we forget about important things, things which turn up again later to surprise, delight or haunt us. Being human is almost a guarantee that we will leave numerous jobs unfinished, projects uncompleted and problems unresolved. We aren't equipped to recall every last detail of every event in which we are participants, or to observe the outcome of everything we start. Life is too complex and goes on after we leave the scene. Who's to say what the outcome of any act really is, when the observer is also part of the action?

So, what's a person to do when they realize that a situation is out of control, unmanageable or unpredictable? When I have done all I can do but still feel that more needs to happen, what recourse have I but to pray to God to finish what I have begun?

Such periods are referred to, in Izbicy, as 'Times of Finding', and they can be divided, roughly, into five categories.

The Mei Hashiloach here only refers to the Talmudic source text in an abbreviated way. The full quote reads as follows:

'For this let every Hasid pray unto You, at a time of finding, only that the floods of great waters shall not reach him.' (Ps. 32:6)

R. Hanina says a 'time of finding' must refer to finding a woman, as it is written 'Who has found a woman has found good.' (Prov. 18:22) In the west when someone got married they would ask, is it found or a find? For there are two contradictory verses about it. In Proverbs 18:32 the verse has the above quote 'Who has found a woman has found good and finds favor from God.' While another verse says 'And I find more bitter than death a woman whose heart is snares and nets and whose hands are fetters etc.' (Eccl. 7:26)

R. Nathan says a 'time of finding' refers the Torah, as it is written 'For he who finds me finds Life and obtains favor from God.' (Prov. 8:35)

R. Nachman b. Yitzchak says a 'time of finding' refers to death, as it is written 'Our God is a God of Salvation, and to God the Lord belong all death findings.' (Ps. 68:21) Similarly, we learned, God created 903 ways of dying in this world, as many as the *Gematria* of the Hebrew word *Totzaoth* - Findings. The worst of them all is Diphtheria, the best of them is the Kiss. Breathing through Diphtheria resembles thorns entangled in the wool which cannot be removed without tearing the fleece. Others say it is like trying to breathe with a dowel blocking the trachea. Death through the Kiss resembles the removal of a hair from milk.

R. Yochanan says a 'time of finding' refers to burial. R. Chanina asks what does the verse mean, 'who rejoice in exceeding happiness and celebrate to find a grave?' (Job 3:22) Raba b. Shilo answered, 'That's what people mean when they say a person should not cease praying even until the last shovelful of earth hits the coffin.'

Mar Zutra says a 'time of finding' refers to the toilet. In the west they said, 'Mar Zutra's understanding is the best of them all.' (Berachoth 8a)

Now on the face of it the Talmud text seems pretty straightforward; i.e. there are things we seek - every search should be accompanied by prayer that we find what we're looking for. But the Izbicy reads the Talmud text as a metaphor describing phases of life in general and Abraham's life in particular.

To begin with, there are times for obeying rules and times for disobeying the rules. Either path may result in the right thing or the wrong thing, the correct result or a mistaken one. Acting within the rules is called Torah, acting outside or against the rules is called Wife.

One significant part of this teaching is that when you are not 100% sure that the act you are about to perform will only have the desired and positive outcome you want, the mere fact that it is a Torah act and permissible according to the law does not absolve you of praying for it to be the right thing to do. The meaning of right and wrong is more complex and nuanced than appears at first sight.

Now, while it may be easy to understand why obeying rules is called Torah, it is not so obvious why acting against the rules is called Wife.

For students familiar with Izbicy thought the following quote is not a surprise. Those learning the Mei Hashiloach for the first time may find it radical.

And He [God] said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

Adam said, "The woman You put with me, she gave me and I ate." (Gen 3:11-12)

Really, the mistake Adam made that led to his sin grew out of this. God had said, 'I will make him a helpmeet.' When he was forbidden to eat from the Tree of Knowledge he grew very afraid. He assumed it was because of some profound spiritual flaw inherent in himself that he was forbidden, by God, from eating it. Once God created Eve, however, and she was given to Adam as a helpmeet, as guide for him to follow; (similar to Abraham who was told, 'Everything Sarah tell you to do, listen to her.' Gen 21:12) thereupon Adams fears were stilled and his mind was at peace. That's why he responded to God saying, 'The woman You put with me, she gave me to eat.' He assumed he was permitted to eat as she instructed him. (Mei Hashiloach Bereishith)

Adam assumes that once Eve tells him to eat of the fruit of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge, it is his duty to obey. Because she was created for that purpose, to be his guide when it came to any question of disobeying the rules. Because the definition of the phrase עֶזֶר כְּנֶגְדוֹ *Ezer Kenegdo* usually translated as 'Helpmeet' actually means to 'assist in adversity', Eve is to advise Adam of the moment when it is the right time to do the wrong thing.

The concept that Eve represents that part of us which knows when to disregard and discard the rules was discussed at some length in the commentary to Sefer Yetzira.

Water and Fire also represent male and female. The quality of the element of Water is male because it preserves the status quo, maintaining continuity with the past. As was explained in the commentary to Mishna 1 in the discussion of the Three Books, it is virtually impossible to make changes to what is already past and done, hence it is easy to preserve. All over the world we see how people agree on the importance of the preservation of memories that they not be corrupted or falsified. The quality of fire, i.e. the female, is the opposite. It has change, evolution and process written into its definition. It is virtually impossible to prevent changes to the future.

For example, although the seas are commanded against mounting the shore to inundate the dry land as it is written 'You put the boundary there that they not cross to cover the land,' (Ps. 104:10) nevertheless, we see from time to time how a powerful tsunami born of earthquakes and tremors rises from the sea and drowns the land.

This is also the feminine aspect of nature, because the Earth could not continue to exist without this dynamic disobedience and occasional rebellion. As we learn in the Midrash:

God said, 'Let the earth bring forth vegetation,' (Gen. 1:11) R. Nathan taught: Three stood trial but four were found guilty. These three, Adam, Eve and the serpent stood trial, but the Earth was cursed with them as it is written, 'Cursed is the earth because of you.' (Gen. 3:17) From now on it will produce cursed things like gnats, flies and fleas. R. Isaac of Magdalea says, Even these [troublesome insects] are of general benefit.

Why was the earth cursed? R. Yehuda b. Simon and R. Pinchas disagree. R. Yehuda b. Simon says, because the earth disobeyed God's command. God commanded, 'Let the earth bring forth vegetation, etc, fruit trees bearing fruit etc.' Just as the fruit was to be edible, so the wood of the tree was to be edible. But the earth did not do so, as it is written, 'The earth brought forth vegetation, etc, and trees bearing fruit.' Their fruit *was* edible but not the wood itself.

R. Pinchas says, the earth also disobeyed another way; it decided, on its own initiative, to exceed the Creator's instructions. God commanded, 'fruit trees bearing fruit etc.' but the earth made fruit grow on trees that were designed to be non-fruit bearing. (Gen. *Rabba* 5:9)

This Midrash is astonishing for the suggestions it makes about free will and desire. How should one react to such daring assumptions? How should we read the Midrashic concept of global free will, that Earth has the power to chose which of God's commands to exceed or disobey? Whence was the idea introduced into rabbinic discourse or exegesis that earth and plants have free will? I have searched without success for early or late commentators who addressed this question. The *Ohr Hachayim* is the only one who even notes the anomaly in his commentary to Genesis. My attempt at an explanation is as follows: The meaning of femininity in the context of Sefer Yetzira has its source in the element of Fire. The imperative to disobey is written into the blueprint of Creation, causing DNA to reproduce in ways that guarantee mutations will occur from time to time. This is why Eve disobeyed the prohibition against eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and this is why the Earth rebelled against its own directives and either produced the wrong sort of trees or else produced fruit where none were ordered.

This acting out of impulsive disobedience or excessive zeal is also encoded in the original blueprint of Creation. The apparent 'disobedience' does not require that the Earth have free will or a cognitive choice or decision making ability. It is simply the way God wrote the program for Life, from time to time it acts *as though* of its own free will and produces something out of the design, uncalled for and unexpected. It is vital to the survival of living things that they have this characteristic built in, and this is the meaning and significance of the element of Fire. (Sefer Yezira: Chronicles of Desire p.p 112-14)

...*Shin* represents Eve at the level of Fire. As was explained in the preface to Ch. I Mishna 11, the reason Eve disobeyed the prohibition against eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is because she was programmed to disobey, her instructions are written into the element of Fire which she represents. Her primary command is to disobey the secondary commands with which she is programmed. That is the first commandment Eve is given by God, to rebel and ignore her instructions. This is the meaning of the element of Fire, for without it the world cannot exist. That's why she is called Mother of all Life. (ibid p.p.138)

Torah - Just because something is fully legal and permissible does not mean it is the right thing to do.

Wife - just because something is illegal and forbidden does not mean it is the wrong thing to do.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

This was the life of Sarah.

We learn in the Talmud (Berachoth 8a) 'For this let every Hasid pray unto You, at a time of finding.' (Ps. 32:6)

One says it is a woman being found, another says it is the Torah. One says it is death being found; one says it is burial, another says it is the toilet.

Each of the things mentioned in the Talmud above refer to moments in a person's life when he encounters variables of an unpredictable nature, over which he has no control; when the only thing to do is to pray to God for help.

One says [a time of finding means] Torah, meaning that when about to take action one should pray for enlightenment in the Torah Way, to to be shown that it is permissible according to the rules of Torah to take that action.

One says [a time of finding means] a wife, meaning that one pray for God always to be immediate and immanent; to know at every moment what to do even if it is the opposite of the Torah way; As we learn in the Talmud, it is written 'A time to do for God - they have overturned Your Torah.' (Ps. 119:126) R. Nathan says, it means they overturned the Torah because it was a time to do for God, i.e. sometimes one must overturn the Torah because it is the right time to do so, a situation demands it. (Berachoth 54a)

And this is the meaning of the phrase, it is a wife being found, as was explained previously at the beginning of Genesis.

ויהיו חיי שרה. איתא במס' ברכות ח'. על זאת יתפלל כל חסיד אליך לעת מצא, (תהלים ל"ב ו') חד אמר זה אשה וחד אמר זה תורה וחד אמר זה מיתה וחד אמר זו ביה"כ, הנה כל הדברים הנזכרים הם שהאדם נכנס בספק בדבר שאינו בידו ורק צריך להתפלל להש"י שיעזרו. חד אמר זה תורה, היינו כשעושה איזה מעשה יתפלל לה' שיאיר לו את דרך

התורה אם ע"פ דרך התורה מותר לעשות. וחד אמר זו אשה, היינו שיהיה הש"י לנוכח תמיד שידע ג"כ עת לעשות לה' הפרו תורתך [ברכות נ"ד]. ואומר: (תהלים קי"ט) עת לעשות לה' הפרו תורתך. רבי נתן אומר: הפרו תורתך משום עת לעשות לד'. וזהו ענין אשה כמו שנתבאר בפ' בראשית,

Raban Yochana Ben Zakai told his disciples he was afraid of dying. 'I see two pathways opening up before me,' he said. 'And I don't know which way I will be led.'

Now, it is safe to presume that R. Yochanan had repented of any wrongs he had done, therefore his fear and uncertainty did not stem from a sense of uncompleted *Teshuva* - Penitence and the impending day of judgment, but of the consequences of those things for which penitence is inappropriate. In response to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in the year 69CE, R. Yochanan had ordered many changes to the Jewish way of life, the consequences of which he could not predict. Even as he lay dying he was fearful that the things he had begun in his lifetime might still spin out of control and turn into catastrophe. In the Talmud there is a discussion concerning enactments to protect the public from unscrupulous business and shop-keeping practices. One such discussion enters into the minutiae of petty theft. Should the stick used by the shopkeeper to wipe the residue from his measuring rod be flat or pointed, flexible or rigid, of hard or softwood, and so on.

R. Yochanan Ben Zakai, who was the authority in all legal decision, is quoted saying, 'Woe to me if I teach these laws, and woe if I do not! Woe if I teach them, lest swindlers learn how to cheat! and Woe if I do not teach them, lest swindlers think that rabbis do not understand their ruses!' (Bava Batra 89b)

In P'shischa the rebbe Reb Bunim taught his students, including the Izbicy, that one must prepare oneself for dying, with great care. As his own death approached, Reb Bunim grew increasingly mute with terror. His son, Reb Avrohom Moshe asked his father what was preventing him from communicating with his family and colleagues? 'I'm too afraid,' whispered the rebbe.

Less than two years later Reb Avrohom Moshe who had taken into his father's place as head of the P'shischa Hasidim was preparing to die. His mother was shocked. 'How can you die' she demanded to know. 'Didn't you hear your father describe all the preparations one needs before becoming ready to die?'

'I've made them all, mother,' he replied. 'I've been preparing.'

When all the preparation is done one still needs to pray, because nothing is obvious or guaranteed. No one can be sure where their death may lead, no one.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

One says [a time of finding means] death. Even in death nothing is sure. As Rabban Yochanan said, "Even in my death I see two pathways opening before me." And as we read in the Talmud quoted above; a person should keep on praying until the last shovelful has dropped onto his grave. (Berachoth 8a)

וחד אמר זה מיתה כי גם שם נכנס האדם בספק כמו שאמר ר' יוחנן [ברכות כ"ח]: שיש לפני שני דרכים, וכדאיתא [ברכות ח]. לעולם יבקש אדם עד זיבולא בתרייתא.

There are sections of the Mei Hashiloach that defy rational interpretation or elucidation. The next short section is such a piece. For most of us reading this text in the 21st century, our English speaking mind simply uses language and word pictures differently. Basically the Torah infers that a dug grave is little more than a set of doors into another dimension. There is a Midrash which supports this reading.

‘Abraham was old, getting on in years, when God blessed Abraham with everything.’ (Gen. 24:1) ‘Getting on in years’ [what does it signify?] R. Yehuda says it means he had reached the *Duoplin* - Doubling. R. Aba says it means he had reached the *Kiplon* - Doubling penetrating thorough to Life in the World to Come. (Gen Rabba 59:6)

Abraham was approaching 140 years of age when this next stage of his life began. 140 is about double a normal life expectancy. So the plural phrasing **בא בימים** *Ba B'Yamim* - Getting on in years could be read as a duplex of years. The word R. Yehudah uses in the midrash is **דיופלין** *Duoplin*, a word that means both a doubling of years and a double colonnade of regularly spaced columns in a grand building like that of the famous synagogue at Alexandria. In R. Yehuda's interpretation Abraham's life now resembled just such a colonnade, with two sets of 70 years in evenly spaced rows on either side of him, down which he progressed in state.

R. Abba also plays on the same theme of $140 = 2 \times 70$, except that instead of *Duoplin* - or grand colonnade leading nowhere in particular, he sees a *Kiplon*. **כפל** *Koful* means a doubling, (cognate with the English word ‘couple’) but also the massive doors at the gateway to a town or city. Doors that fold back and inward to cover the walls of the passage through the wall and into the city. R. Abba see Abraham's years folding back like doors that open into the world to come.

The Izbicy sees the grave in the same light, as an entrance with doors folded back allowing full access to the next part of life's adventure, the world to come.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

One says [a time of finding means] burial. In burial there are also profundities and variables, because a person penetrates to space whose end is life in the world-to-come, as we learn in the midrash.

וחד אמר זה קבורה, כי בקבורה נמצא ג"כ עומק והאדם נכנס בספק כי הוא מפולש לחיי עוה"ב כדאיתא במדרש [בראשית רבא פרשה מ"ט, ו']

Mar Zutra says a ‘time of finding’ refers to the toilet. This text began by quoting the verse from Psalms, ‘For this let every Hasid pray unto You, at a time of finding, only that the floods of great waters shall not reach him.’ In its inimical style, the Babylonian Talmud now brings things right down to earth. What are the things to pray for? Well, the sages outdid themselves in their erudition, looking for the concept best evoked by the Hebrew word **מצוא** *M'tzo* - Finding. This one brought proof that ‘finding’ best applies to Torah itself, the other said that a Wife requires finding. Death and the Grave each received consideration.

Now comes Mar Zutra with the notion that the word **מצוא** *M'tzo* may be hinting at

something else altogether. Time of Finding; sure, why not? But **עַת מְצוּא** *Et M'tzo* - also hints at a time a person needs to go to the toilet, as we read, 'And you shall have a trowel with your tools, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig a hole with it and turn back and cover up your excrement.' (Deut 23:13) The Hebrew word for Excrement is **צוּאָה** *T'zoa*. **עַת מְצוּא** *Et M'tzo* may now be translated as a 'time of going out', which is to say, a person should pray to find a toilet without delay. The reason has more to do with geography than religion. The region of Babylon where the Sages of the Talmud lived and taught, was situated in that area between the two great rivers, the Euphrates and Tigris known as Mesopotamia. While living between two rivers is a practical way of avoiding drought and famine, the downside is this; when you dig a hole it tends to fill with water; the water table is high. This may be problematic when a hole is ahemm, a very pressing and immediate need.

The Talmud ends the discussion with the observation that in the west they said, 'Mar Zutra's understanding is the best of them all.' Whenever the Babylonian sages refer to those in the west, they are referring to the sages in Israel; but few commentators ask why Mar Zutra's interpretation should have pleased the western school above the others'.

Well, one question should be obvious; Kind David had said 'For this let every Hasid pray unto You,' but why only the Hasid; surely everyone needs to pray to find their heart's desire, their share in the Torah or their true soul-mate, etc., why does the verse only talk of the Hasid praying?

It is only this Izbicy Torah which answers the question in any satisfying way, but first we need to define a Hasid. In the Zohar we read, 'Who is a Hasid? One who does *Hesed* - Lovingkindness with his Creator.' (Vol. III 281a) At the beginning of the commentary to Sefer Yetzira this concept was discussed in the context of Abraham's relationship to God. Abraham was the paradigm of *Hesed*; he was the first *Hasid*. There we explained that all the loving acts and other forms of kindness Abraham performed were solely expressions of his love for God. In all his benevolent acts towards friends and strangers, Abraham was only ever thinking of God, to do Lovingkindness for God alone.

But God does not need the toilet. There was a time when North Korean school text books and even a website claimed Kim Jong Il never had the need to pass urine or defecate. In ancient Egypt Pharaoh pretended to commune with nature early each morning by the Nile, when in fact he went to move his bowels, because the Egyptians needed to believe that their Pharaoh had no such human need.

What then was Abraham's *Kavana* - Intent in going to the toilet, if everything he did was for God?

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

One says [a time of finding means] toilet. Toilet refers to things that embarrass us. A person should pray he never utter anything of which he later be ashamed.

וחד אמר זה בית הכסא היינו בושה שיתפלל האדם שלא יצא מפיו דבר שיתבייש בה
אח"כ.

The rebbe now wraps up his thesis; the five interpretations of the phrase 'time of finding', about which the Hasid ought to pray. 1.) Torah. 2.) Wife. 3) Death. 4.) Burial. 5.) Toilet.

First is Torah. There is a Talmudic discussion about the Biblical obligation to revere the aged, the *Zaken*. The Hebrew word זקן *Zaken* - Aged is seen as a Notarikon for the phrase *Zeh Kana* - 'this [person] possesses', and the Gemara shows how the very first 'possession' was Torah, therefore the Aged person must possess Wisdom. Quoting the verse from Proverbs 8:22, "'The LORD already possessed me long ago, when His way began, before any of His works,' it is presumed to mean that the very first of God's creations is the Torah itself. In the Proverb it is called a 'possession', here the word for Aged is a Notarikon for the phrase *Zeh Kana* - 'this possesses'; Possession = Torah, ergo the Aged person deserving of reverence is the person who possesses Torah. (Kiddushin 32b)

Incidentally, this idea that God's first creation is Torah appears numerous times in the Talmud and its source is a Mishna in Avot 6, where it is stated that God has but five possessions. First is Torah, derived from the verse quoted above, 'The LORD already possessed me, etc.' Second are Heaven and Earth. Third is Abraham. Fourth Israel, and Fifth, the Holy Temple.

Abraham and Sarah are first in the Torah to be called *Zaken* - Aged. Abraham has to continue praying for an ever deeper revelation of Torah.

Second is 'Wife'. The most obvious marriage in the Sidra is that of Isaac and Rebecca, and Isaac's preparations for prayer around the subject of his marriage are treated in a separate paragraph of this week's *Mei Hashiloach*. Of equal significance, though, is Abraham's second marriage to Hagar, which receives far less scrutiny in Scripture. The union produced six sons and a daughter. Here we can understand the need for Abraham to pray around the obscure and the unknown, because these children are not going to be Jewish and are not even a part of the Jewish narrative. What was the reason or necessity for their birth, is there something we can learn from it? Whatever it is, Abraham needs to pray around it.

The third and fourth, 'Death' and 'Burial' are not mentioned. It is assumed that the rebbe has said enough about them to be useful to the reader.

Fifth is 'Toilet'. The *Izbicy* refers to a teaching in the *Zohar* wherein Abraham is shown to be less than reliable to his descendents, the Jewish People; in short, he abandons us. This theme is developed in the Talmud, where we find the following *Aggadah*.

What is the meaning of this verse: 'For You are our Father, though Abraham does not know us And Israel does not recognize us. You, O LORD, are our Father, Our Redeemer from of old is Your name.'? (Isa, 63:16)

In the future God will say to Abraham, 'Your children have sinned against Me,' and Abraham will reply to God, 'Let their sins be expunged through sanctification of Your Name.'

God will say, 'I will go and tell it to Jacob who had much pain in raising children, perhaps he will pray I have mercy upon them.'

God will say to Jacob, 'Your children have sinned,' and Jacob will reply, 'Let their sins be expunged through sanctification of Your Name.'

God will say, 'There is no wisdom to be learned from the aged, nor any advice to be had from the young.'

Then God will say to Isaac, 'Your children have sinned against Me.'

Isaac will answer, 'My children and not Your children? When they answered, 'We will do and we will listen,' at Mount Sinai, You were happy to call them, 'My child, My firstborn, Israel,' (Ex 4:22) Now they are suddenly my children, not Yours?

'Anyway, how much could they possibly have sinned? How long does a person live, seventy years? Deduct the first twenty years off the sum, they do not count - no one is punished for sins committed before the age of twenty. That leaves fifty years. Deduct half a lifetime for the nights, that leaves twenty five years. Deduct twelve and a half years

a person spends in prayer, with eating and tending to their toilet, that leaves twelve and half years. Now, if You are willing to tolerate them, well and good, but if not, I will split responsibility with You, I will carry half if You carry half. And if you tell me to carry all twelve and a half years, behold, I have already offered my soul on the altar before You.'

At that moment the Jewish People begin to praise Isaac, saying 'You are our father.' Isaac interrupts them, saying, 'Before starting to praise me, why don't you give thanks to the Holy Blessed One,' And Isaac shows them God before their eyes. Immediately they raise their eyes upon high and begin, 'You, O God, are our Father, Our Redeemer from of old, is Your name.' (*Shabbat 89b*)

God says about Abraham, 'There is no wisdom to be learned from the aged.' While the Talmud does not provide a source text to which Abraham's lack of wisdom can be attributed, the Zohar quotes the verse, 'And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!"' (Gen. 17:18) The implications of Abraham's speech are discussed at length in the final chapter of the Sefer Yetzira: Chronicles of Desire.

Here the Izbicy gives us a hint of just how deeply Abraham is attuned to the Will of God. When words, execrable words whose stench we live with on a daily basis, must needs be spoken, Abraham is there to speak them.

Ishmael has taken over the role of Amalek in this world, providing every anti-semitic with a home in his Quran. May we all live to see the salvation of God!

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Now, all these five things are hinted at in this weekly portion.

1. 'Torah' is hinted at in the verse, 'And Abraham was aged.' The Hebrew word זקן *Zaken* Aged, is a notariqon for the phrase *Zeh Kana Chokhma* - 'This one possesses wisdom.'
2. 'Wife' refers to both Rebecca's marriage to Isaac, and also to Abraham who marries again. Abraham's additional marriage is part of something extremely profound, why did he have to give birth to all these descendents who are not rooted in sanctity, but for Isaac to rule over all these powers in order that the Name of God be magnified.
3. ['Death' is self explanatory]
4. ['Burial' is self explanatory]
5. 'Toilet' refers to the final chapter in the Sidra, the saga of the Children of Ishmael. Because that one prayer Abraham uttered, 'Perhaps Ishmael will walk before You?' was a tremendous embarrassment to him, as we read in the Zohar.

ואלו החמשה דברים נרמזין כאן בזו בסדרה, תורה מרומז ב' ואברהם זקן כי זקן זה קנה חכמה. אשה מרומז ברבקה שנשא יצחק, וכן ויוסף אברהם ויקח אשה כי יש בזה עומק גדול מה שהוצרך להוליד אלו התולדות שאין להם שורש בקדושה, אך שיצחק ישלוט על כל אלו הכוחות ועל כל יתגדל שמו ית'. בית הכסא היא פרשה אחרונה של בני ישמעאל

שזה שהוציא אאע"ה מפיו לו ישמעאל יחיה לפניך נחשב לו לדבר בושה כמו דאיתא בזוה"ק [בראשית ר"ה:].

This is the life of Sarah.

We read in the Midrash. It is written (Psalms 37:18) God knows the days of the flawless. Because, just as they are flawless their lives are flawless. Rabbi Yochanan says, like that perfect circle.

ויהיו חיי שרה. איתא במדרש [בראשית רבא פרשה נ"ח, א'] יודע ה' ימי תמימים [תהילים ל"ז י"ח], כשם שהם תמימים כך שנותיהם תמימים, אמר ר' יוחנן כהדא עגלתא תמימתא.

The explanation of this Midrash is this. We read in Psalms (1:6) God knows the ways of the righteous.

What it really means is that righteous make knowing God their spiritual path. 'Way' is used in the sense people use when they ask, which way is this heading?

ביאר הענין דהנה כתיב [תהלים א' ו'] יודע ה' דרך צדיקים, היינו דרך של צדיקים הוא לידע את ה' כלשון בני אדם לאן הדרך הזו הולך,

The path of the righteous has been smoothed and all the mundane hindrances have been removed, making it a clear path to the knowledge of God. Because 'Knowing' is an expression of connection, as it is written, Adam knew his wife. The righteous seeks ways of connecting and attaching himself to God. So, when they set their feet upon that path it seems to them their lives have just begun.

כך דרך הצדיקים מסוקל מכל מניעות והבלי העולם רק לדיעת ה'. כי ידיעה הוא לשון חבור ודבקות כמו וידע אדם, והיינו לחבר ולדבק עצמם בהש"י, וממילא בבואם לדרך הזו הוא התחלות חיותם,

That's why the Midrash says, This is the life of Sarah, meaning, her life truly begins here. Because God knows the days of the flawless. And Rabbi Yochanan says, like that perfect circle. A perfect circle is something without beginning or end, where it is examined it is the beginning because it is so flawless and its end is inserted into its beginning.

לזה פי' המדרש ויהיו חיי שרה היינו מעתה התחיל החיים שלה באמת, כי יודע ה' ימי תמימים ואמר ר' יוחנן כהדא עגלתא תמימתא, עגלתא פי' דבר עגול הנעשה בעיגול תם ושלם שאין לו שום סוף וקץ ובכל מקום היא התחלתה לפי שהוא הקיף אחד ונעוץ סופו בתחילתו,

So, now that her life ended in this world the text tells us, This is the life of Sarah, meaning, now is when it begins. As is explained in the Zohar.

ועתה כאשר שלמו ימי חייה בעוה"ז נאמר ויהיו חיי שרה היינו שהתחיל החיים שלה, כמו שמבואר בזוה"ק.

Abraham was old, getting on in years, and God blessed Abraham with everything.

We read in Ecclesiastes (2:1). And this is left to me from all my toil. About which we learn in the Talmud, (Sanhedrin 20b) Rav and Shmuel argue. One says Solomon was left with his staff, the other says he was left with his plate.

ואברהם זקן בא בימים וה' ברך את אברהם בכל. כתיב [קהלת ב' י'] וזה היה חלקי מכל עמלי ואיתא בגמ' [סנהדרין כ':] רב ושמואל חד אמר מקלו וחד אמר קידו.

Now, obviously, Solomon was not bemoaning the loss of worldly possessions and playthings; he never put any value on them in the first place. What Solomon is doing is the opposite; he is boasting that even though it appears he has lost it all, nevertheless the essence of all his achievements and acquisitions remain with him. And it is in these two symbols that all of his essential characteristics are encapsulated.

ובטח שלמה המלך ע"ה לא היה מתאונן ח"ו על אברון שעשועי עוה"ז ממנו כי כל זה לא היה נחשב אצלו למאומה, אך התפאר בעצמו ואמר שאף שנראה שנלקח ממנו כל, עכ"ז התמצית העולה מכל חיי עוה"ז נשאר אצלו ובאלו השנים נמצא התמצית מכל חיי עוה"ז,

“And this is left to me from all my toil,” he said. One says it refers to his staff. Staff hints at the life force, because all his life force was still strong in him. We find staff as a symbol of the life force with the verse in Zachariah (8:4), They will sit in the streets of Jerusalem with their staffs in their hands because of their great age.

וזה שאמר זה חלקי מכל עמלי, חד אמר מקלו, מקל רומז על חיים היינו כח החיים נשאר לו, ומצינו שמקל רומז על חיים כמ"ש [זכריה ח', ד'] ואיש משענתו בידו.

One says his plate. Because he was still always prepared and full of desire for more. That was where his true joy lay, because that's what life in this world is about, wanting more.

וחד אמר קידו, קידו היינו כלי קבול היינו מוכן ומשתוקק עוד להוספה ובה היה שעשועיו, כי זאת היא העיקר בחיי עוה"ז,

This then is the meaning of the verse Abraham was old, getting on in years. It means he came, finally, to the root of his life's source. He became a vessel to receive and remained prepared and full of desire to receive more life from God, always lusting for more and more.

וזה פי' הפסוק ואברהם זקן בא בימים, שבא אל שרשי החיים והיה כלי לקבל והשתוקק להוספות חיים מאת ה' בכל פעם יותר.

[וזה גם ענין שלמה המלך ע"ה חד אמר מקלו מורה על חיים וחד אמר קידו מורה על חשק, וזה המחלוקת ביניהם, כי זאת ידוע כי השורש מכל הטובות לא נאבדו ממנו רק שהיה לו כח עצום שהיה יכול לפשט כל הטובות עד אין שיעור, וגם היה יכול לצמצם כל הטובות בתוכו, וזה נקרא סגולה וכמבואר על זה בתקוני הזהר כי יוכל לצמצם ולהתפשט. וזהו חד אמר קידו כי היה יכול להכניס כל הטובות לתוך התשוקה ולהטמינם בה, ובעת שירצה היו באים אליו בחזרה כן היה גדול כח חשקו, וחד אמר מקלו כי גם החשק היה יכול להסתיר, רק כן היה גדול כח חיותו כי בחיים שלו היה נמצא כח גדול שהיה יכול להשיג על ידו גם חשק גם כל הטובות. גליון]

Issac came from *Be'er Lacahi Ro'i*, he went out to pray in the field. And behold he looked up and saw camel coming toward him.

Isaac is the source of all fears in the world. Even those which reduce a person to the inability to act. As it is written, He dwelt in the land of the Negev. *Negev* means dried out and parched. Isaac dwelt without desire or lust.

ויצחק בא מבוא וכו' ויצא יצחק לשוח וכו' וירא והנה וכו'. היינו כי יצחק היה שורש לכל היראות שבעולם אף בשב ואל תעשה כמ"ש והוא יושב בארץ הנגב היינו מנוגב מכל חמדה,

That's why Abraham, who understood Isaac's nature, and knew that Isaac would never risk taking any action, sent his servant to make a match for Isaac.

לזאת אברהם אבינו שהכיר את נפש יצחק בזה וידע כי מאד נמצא בו יראה לעשות איזה מעשה בקום ועשה, שלח הוא את עבדו לזווג לו זיווג.

But in truth, everything is arranged by God anyway. Because when the moment came for Isaac to marry he began to ask himself; Is the world then created for chaos, surely it is created to be inhabited? He thought about marriage.

אך באמת מאת ה' היתה זאת, כי בא העת שישא יצחק אבינו אשה, וגם יצחק התחיל להתעורר בלבו לא תוהו בראה וכו',

But Isaac was fearful of ever taking any action or do any deed. So, he went out into the field to pray to God to help him, to bring him his mate; because, as we learn in the Talmud (Moed Katan 18b) there are those whose match is brought to them. He was answered immediately in his prayer, for there, as soon as he lifted his eyes was the camel bearing his wife. As it is written (Isaiah 65:24) And it will be yet before they call to me I will answer them, they are still speaking and I will have listened.

אך ביען שהיה ירא לעשות איזה מעשה בפועל לזאת יצא לשוח בשדה ולהתפלל להש"י שיעזרו בזה ויזמין לו זווגו, כי יש שזיווגו בא אצלו [מועד קטן י"ח:] ומיד נענה בתפלתו וישא עיניו וכו' [ישעיה ס"ה כ"ד] כי טרם יקראו ואני אענה.
