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...I lived with Lavan... (Gen. 32:5). Rashi explains that “I lived” (גרתִי = 613) equals the number 613, as if Yaakov said that even when he lived with Lavan, he still kept the 613 *mitzvos* and did not learn from Lavan’s wicked ways. The Rashba (Teshuvos Harashba, vol. 1 94) asks that if Yaakov kept all 613 commandments, then how could he marry two sisters? He answers that when it says that the forefathers kept the Torah, it means the following. There are deep principles of the Torah which exist on the theoretical plane. On a practical level, those theoretical principles demand certain actions. When it says that they kept the Torah way back then, it means it means that they followed the deeper principles behind the commandments and the prohibitions, but not that they observed the Torah in just the form that we do.¹ Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel of Apta (*Ohev Yisroel, Parshas Bereshis* p. 3) explains that in our reality, the deeper Kabbalistic ramifications of the Torah’s laws can only be achieved by following the precepts of the Torah as they were given to us. But really, those precepts represent loftier ideas or “Divine lights” that are dressed in more practical terms. The forefathers who kept the Torah before it was given at Mount Sinai were able to intuit how to access those “lights” without confining them to in the same behaviors that the Torah later does. Therefore, they were able to produce the same effects that our Torah observance produces through different means. For example, the Arizal writes that whittling into wooden branches for his sheep, Yaakov Avinu fulfilled the commandment of *tefillin* (see also *Zohar* vol 1, 162a). This means that the spiritual benefits of Yaakov setting up those branches were the same as the effects of our fulfillment of the commandment of *tefillin*. Because of Yaakov’s lofty intentions when doing this seemingly mundane act, he was able to show the Unity of Hashem by simply placing branches in front of his sheep, and we fulfill the Torah’s precept of *tefillin* in order to achieve the same effect. By this token, Yaakov was able to draw out the “Divine light” by marrying two sisters and fathering the Twelve Tribes of Israel, yet if we tried to do the same act, it would have a detrimental effect on the world, and would, in fact, be forbidden. The same is true of Avraham who our Sages say observed the entire Torah before it was given—especially the commandment of Shabbos. This need not necessarily mean that Avraham kept Shabbos in the same way that we do; rather it

¹ A cryptic paragraph at the end of his tshuva seems to say that just as some mitzvos depend upon time despite the truth of the principle at all times, like Shabbos observance specifically being every 7th day, so too did the more general application of the mitzvos in the physical way that we observed them after Sinai did not apply beforehand despite the truth of these principles.

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means that Avraham brought out the “Divine lights” of Shabbos observance in other ways.² The same idea is found in the work *Meor va-Shamesh* (Hints of the First Day of Sukkos) who writes that we never find that the forefathers actually performed the actions of the various *mitzvos* like donning *tefillin* and the like. Rather, through their lofty intentions, they were able to draw upon themselves the same inner holiness as doing those actions. Rabbi Yosef Engel (*Beis HaOtzar* 1:48) answers our original question in another way. He explains that subtracting one from a whole unit is not considered a deficiency in that unit. To that effect, he explains that even if Yaakov violated one of the 613 commandments by marrying two sisters, he can still be said to have fulfilled all 613 commandments. He proves this idea from the fact that the Talmud (*Kiddushin* 24b) does not consider the commandment of procreation a time-bound positive commandment (from which women are exempt). Rather, the Talmud assumes that the commandment of procreation is a positive commandment which is not at all related to time. This is true even though marital relations are forbidden on Yom Kippur,³ which would suggest that procreation should be considered “time-bound” because it only applies 364/365 days of the year. Instead, argues Rabbi Yosef Engel, the fact that **one day** a year is not suitable for the fulfillment of procreation does not make that commandment time-bound because that one day happens to be a mere exception, but that exception when weighed against everything is not considered a deficiency in the application of procreation to all times. This idea is well-known to those who calculate *gematrias*, as the *gematria* of one side of an equation can sometimes be one number off from the *gematria* on the other side of the equation, because the equation takes into account the unit itself, not just the parts of which the unit is made up (see footnote for examples⁴). R. Yosef Engel further explains that for

² See *Ohev Yisroel* (beginning of *Parshas Vayeishiv*) who explains that when the Torah says, “And Yaakov dwelled in the place...” (וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִגֹּרֵי), the first letters of the words in the phrase spell out the *v’yibem* (וַיִּבֵּם), which means that by settling the Holy Land, Yaakov’s actions were tantamount to performing the *mitzvah* of *yibbum* (the levirate marriage, whereby one marries his childless brother’s widow).

³ This proof only applies according to the opinion that the afflictions on Yom Kippur are of Biblical origin (see *Ran* to Yoma 73b and *Sheiltos*, 167). If the afflictions, including the prohibition of marital intercourse, are only rabbinically forbidden, then this is certainly not a deficiency in the applicability of the commandment of procreation to all times.

⁴ This concept is referred to as a *gematria* with the *kollel* (+1). R. Chaim Kanievsky (Siach Hasadeh, likkutum p. 211) points out that it is found in the Midrash (Bamidbar RAbbah 17:1) regarding *yirah* and *Torah*. This sort of calculation is also found in *Midrash Talpiyos* (s.v. אַמֵּת) who points to the verse (Bereshis 48:5) “Ephraim and Menashe, like Reuven and Shimon they will be to me.” “Ephraim and Menashe” (אֶפְרַיִם וּמְנַשֶּׁה = 726) equals

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this reason, the Tosafists (*Shabbos* 33a) write that the Torah is called a “covenant” (ברית = 612), because even if one violates of the 613 commandments, but observes the other 612 commandments, he will simply receive a punishment for his violation, but can nonetheless be said to have kept the entire 613 commandments. In another approach, Rabbi Yosef Teomim, author of the *Pri Megadim*, writes (*Teivas Gomeh, Vayishlach* 3) that because Yaakov Avinu had his two wives convert before he married, they were considered like “newly born children” (*Yevamos* 22a) and lost their technical status of family to one another. Because of this, he was not considered to have married two sisters.

...I lived with Lavan... (Gen. 32:5). Rashi explains that “I lived” (גרתִי = 613) equals the number 613, as if Yaakov said that even when he lived with Lavan, he still kept the 613 *mitzvos* and did not learn from Lavan’s wicked ways. How can one person fulfill all 613 commandments? Not all of those commandments can apply to the same person, as some only apply to a man, some only to a woman, some only to a Kohen, some only to a Levite, some only to neither a Kohen or Levite, some only to a king, some only to a slave? Rabbi Yosef Teomim, author of the *Pri Megadim*, writes (*Teivas Gomeh, Vayishlach* 3) that the through the concept of *arvus* (the notion that all Jews are “guarantors” of each other’s observance of the Torah), all Jews observance of the Torah are pooled together and everybody can be considered to have fulfilled whatever their fellow Jews have fulfilled. See introduction to *Kiryas Sefer* (ch. 7. *Beis Shmuel Acharon (Shemos, pg. 56)* further explains that when the potential proselyte asked Hillel to be converted to Judaism on condition that he be able to study the entire Torah on one foot (see *Shabbos* 30a), this meant that he wanted to ensure that he would be able to complete his mission in This World without having to be reincarnated and returning Here again after his death. In other words, he wanted to be able to fulfill all 613 commandments in one lifetime, or “al regel achas - in one shot”. Hillel answered him that such a feat is possible if only he would be able to attach himself to the collective body of the

“Reuven and Shimon” (רֵאוּבֵן וּשְׁמוֹן = 725), even though they are one-off from each other, but the latter should be calculated with the numerical value of the phrase, plus one for the entire unit itself (725 + 1 = 726). See also Beni Yissaschar Kislev-Teves 2:2, and Sivan 2:13. See also Daas Zekenim to Bereshis 47:2. Baalei Tosafos to Yavikra 19:17, Rabbenu Bechaya to Bereshis 3:1, and Bamidbar 6:23. To explain the concept of “gematria with the kollel” R. Yehuda Koriat in his kabbalistic work *Maor Vashamesh* compared it to a visitor to a shipyard who sees all sorts of objects, planks, beams, ropes, fabric, nails, and bolts. But when looking at a ship, no person would say “here is a nail and plank,” but rather “here is a ship!” It is no longer just a bunch of parts, but a new identity. Gematria, a bunch of letters, combine to form a new identity, and that is represented by the kollel, an additional number representing the additional value of its new identity which is greater than just a “pile” of disparate parts.

*Much of the material presented in **Oneg!** has been translated from Rabbi Elchanan Shoff's weekly **Aalefcha Chochma** parsha sheet in Hebrew by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein. To sign up to the **Oneg!** weekly email list, or to sponsor a week of **Oneg!** send an email to BKLAshul@gmail.com*

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Jewish people (through being meticulous not to do unto others what he would not like them to do to him), and pool together their *mitzvos* to his credit. After all, when we are all connected and help one another as a community, then the person who helps a friend perform his mitzvahs and live as he should is in a way fulfilling that commandment too. Rabbi Dovid HaLevi Segal, author of the *Turei Zahav (Taz)* on *Shulchan Aruch*, writes in his commentary *Divrei Dovid* that there is another way for every Jew to fulfill the 613 commandments. The Talmud (*Menachos* 110a) teaches that he who studies the Torah portion concerning the sacrifices is considered himself to have offered those very sacrifices. In this spirit, the *Taz* explains that studying the portions of Torah relevant to *any* commandment is tantamount to fulfilling that commandment. Thus, every Jew can potentially be considered to have fulfilled all 613 commandments simply by studying the laws relevant to each of those commandments.

And Yaakov was very scared, and it distressed him (Gen. 32:8). Rabbi Azraria of Figo (author of *Binah L'Ittim and Gedulei Trumah*) writes (*Chevel Naim* to Ps. 2:11) that Yaakov was distressed over the fact that he was scared. The Tosafists in *Daas Zekanim* similarly explain that Yaakov was distressed over the fact that he was scared of Esav, even though Hashem already promised that He will protect him. The Talmud (*Brachos* 60a) explains that Yaakov was scared that perhaps he had sinned and deserved his divine protection to be removed. The great Lithuanian Kabbalist Rabbi Shlomo Elyashiv (*Shaarei Leshem, Bitachon* ch .11) explains that the catalyst for Yaakov's fears was his great level of holiness and humility which suggested to him that for some reason he was not worthy of Hashem's Divine protection. Nonetheless, there is some nuanced error in Yaakov's approach to this episode, and his fears were not for naught, but did have some basis in reality. Rabbinic tradition criticizes Yaakov approach in this episode for "waking up the sleeping Esav" by sending Esav emissaries and gifts, he incited the dog upon himself, like somebody who ignites the anger of a dog by grabbing its ears. Esav was travelling on his merry way, but because of Yaakov's emissaries, he changed course to meet up with Yaakov. When Yaakov sent presents to Esav, he showed to Esav his subservience and essentially crowned Esav as a chieftain to whom he was second. In doing so, Yaakov Avinu put himself in grave danger. In fact, the *Zohar* (vol. 1, 166a) explains that because Yaakov put himself into a situation of danger, the Divine angels which had been sent to protect him left him - leaving Yaakov alone. Because Yaakov was alone, the Angel of Esav was able to strike him with a direct hit, which the Midrash (*Bereshis Rabbah*, end of 77) explains the effects that righteous men and women, prophets and prophetesses have for generations to come. That strike represented the future generations which will make decrees against the Jewish People. Yaakov's morsel

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of effort to ward off Esav ended up haunting the Jewish People for generations to come, and is seen as a root cause of all four future exiles (as is evident from *Bereshis Rabbah* 75:3 and *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, end of ch. 37). Nevertheless, when all is said and done, we cannot—heaven forefend—implicate Yaakov, for ultimately he is the Choicest of the Forefathers, and everything he did was always of the Holiest and for Hashem. Rather, Hashem allowed all of this to happen in order to fulfill a deep-rooted decree already revealed to Avraham Avinu at the Covenant Between the Pieces that the Jewish People will have to suffer the ordeal of four exiles. Instead, we must explain that the encounter between Yaakov and Esav is not the *reason* for the exiles, but simply *foreshadows* the exiles in the spirit of **מעשה אבות סימן לבנים** (“the deeds of the forefather are an omen for the descendants”, see Ramban to Gen. 12:6). The fear and terror which befall Yaakov mirrors the fear and darkness which overtook Avraham when he was first told about the bitter exiles destined to ensue for the Jewish people in the future.

...for with my stick I crossed this Jordan [River] (Gen. 32:11). Rabbi Yaakov Baal HaTurim (*Peirush HaTur HaAruch Al HaTorah*) asks why Yaakov said “this” Jordan if he was not standing next to the Jordan River, rather he was next to the Yabok River? The Gerrer Rebbe (*Imrei Emes*, 5693) answers that Yaakov meant to acknowledge all the good with which Hashem provided him not just for one day or one year, but for all time. To that effect, Yaakov spoke as though everything Hashem did for him happened just as that moment. Therefore, Yaakov said “this Jordan” even though he was not near the Jordan River: because he felt as though Hashem had just aided him in crossing the Jordan River “now”; even though it happened in the past, his appreciation for Hashem’s help did not diminish with time.

Save me now from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav (Gen. 32:12). Rabbi Chaim Palagi (*Tenufab Chayim, Vayishlach* 17) writes that the first letters of the words in the phrase “save me now from the hand of” (**הצליני נא מיד**) spell out “Haman” (**המך**). This hints to what the Targum (Esther ch. 3) says about Haman hating Mordechai because Yaakov (Mordechai’s ancestor) took the firstborn right and the Yitzchok’s blessing from Esav (Haman’s ancestor), see there for more explanation. The *Degel Machane Efraim* also cites this allusion to Haman in the passage at hand, and adds that the letters in the word “from the hand of” (**מיד**) can be descrambled to spell out “Media” (**מדי**), because in the story of Purim, the Persian Kingdom and Median Kingdom were united, such that Achashverosh, the king, was Persian, and second to him was Haman, from Media—for that was the terms of their agreement, one senior official should be Persian while the other would be Median. Another

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parallel between Yaakov/Mordechai and Esav/Haman is that while Yaakov bowed to Esav in our *Parshah*, Mordechai rectified that by refusing to bow to Haman in *Megillas Esther*. Similarly, when Yaakov encountered Esav, Yaakov had a document proving he was in the right (see *Sotah* 13b), and Mordechai similarly had a document on his person proving that Haman was his slave (as it says in the *Zohar*, that the document bound on his thigh). See R. Eliyahu Wolff's *Mab SeHayab Hu SheYihyeh* and what I wrote in my pamphlet *El Mekomo Shoef* about such parallels.

And twenty he-goats (Gen. 32:15). *Gali Razya* (cited in *Yalkut Reuveni* to Parshas *Acharei Mos*) writes that for the twenty years that Yaakov worked for Lavan, he did not perform the rite of sending a scapegoat to Azazel on Yom Kippur. For this reason, after he left Lavan's house, he sent twenty he-goats to Esav at once in order to make up for this lost goats he should have sent to Azazel.

And put space between each flock (Gen. 32:17). Rashi explains that was intended to "satisfy" Esav's eye by making it look like he was receiving more than he actually received. The *Yalkut Chamishai* quotes the work *Pirchei Shoshanah* that he heard from the *Chofetz Chaim* that in this the Torah teaches us that when one must bribe someone hostile, it is better to bribe him with large amounts of small change or bills in order that his eye be "satisfied" by the great amount of money he received, as opposed to giving him a smaller amount of larger bills which will not have this same effect.

And his eleven children (Gen. 32:23). Rashi explains that Dinah was not included (which would otherwise make the total number twelve, not eleven) because Yaakov hid her in a box so that Esav would not lay eyes on her. Yaakov was punished for doing this because there was a possibility that Dinah could have brought Esav back to the "light side", so instead she fell into the hands of Shechem. Rabbi Ovadiah of Bartenuro (in *Amar Nekeh*) writes that the reason that Yaakov was punished was not simply that he withheld from his brother an opportunity to become good (ostensibly because there is no chance that Esav would have taken advantage of that opportunity to better himself). Rather, Yaakov was punished because his intentions in withholding Dinah was that *he did not want* Esav to become good, he did not want Esav to become a *tzadik* because that would activate Yitzchak's blessing to Esav. Because Yaakov Aveinu hid Dinah from Esav for this selfish reason, he was punished. [See *Lekach Tov Al HaTorah* p. 201 which has a correspondence between Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman and the *Chazon Ish* about this topic, and the former cites the explanation of R. Ovadiah of Barteunro.]

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And Yaakov remained alone (Gen. 32:25). Rashi explains that Yaakov returned to the other side of the Yabok River because he forgot some small jugs. Rabbi Yissachar Ber Eilenberg writes in *Tzeidah LaDorech* (a super-commentary on Rashi) in the name of Rabbi Shlomo Luria (the Maharshah) that Hashem said in response to this: “You risked your life for a small jug... I will do the same for the Hasmoneans”. This is an allusion to the story of Chanukah whereby the Maccabees of the the Hasmonean dynasty sought out pure olive oil to light the Menorah in the Holy Temple, and after some searching miraculously found one untouched jug. Other sources find an allusion to the jug in the very text of the Torah as Rabbenu Bachaya, *Daas Zekanim*, and *Kli Yakar* cite an exegetical interpretation of the word “alone” (לבדו) in this verse to allude to “his jug” (לכדו), because the letters ב and כ are orthographically similar. Rabbi Mordechai HaKohen of Tzfas writes in *Sifsei Kohen* (to Gen. 32:25) that the jug of oil for which Yaakov Avinu risked his life was no ordinary jug of oil. Rather, it was instrumental in various miracles through history: When Yaakov woke up the morning after his fateful dream, he found that not only did the stones under his head merge into one stone, but that a single jug of olive oil miraculously materialized on the spot. As a token of his gratitude to Hashem, he poured out the oil from that jug onto the single stone (which he consecrated as an altar) and—lo an behold!—the jug miraculously refilled itself. Yaakov realized that this jug of oil was no ordinary jug, so he took it with him. That jug of oil was later used for the *shemen hamishchah* (anointing oil) which was used to inaugurate the Mishkan and its paraphernalia, the altar, Aaron the Kohen and his sons, and subsequent Jewish kings. From the jug, its entire contents are still extant, as the Gemara (*Horayos* 11b) expounds on the verse concerning the anointing oil, “this for Me for your generations” means that the jug of anointing oil will, for all generations, remain “this” (זה = 12)—a *gematria* which equals twelve, the exact number of *lugim* (a wet measurement) used in the anointing oil. That jug of oil also ended up being used by the Tzarfatit women for whom Eliyahu HaNavi performed a miracle that the jug kept on pouring, and was the oil used by the wife of Ovadiah the Prophet. When Yaakov realized all these different miracles that were destined to come from this one jug, he endangered his life to retrieve it.

And he [the angel] said, ‘send me, for the morning has risen’ (Gen. 32:27). Rashi explains that because the morning had already risen, the angel wanted to leave in order sing “songs” in front of Hashem. The great Italian Kabbalist, Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Fano (cited in the *Yalkut Reuveni* here)⁵ explains that this means the entire purpose of this angel’s

⁵ The R. Yisrael of Kozhnitz in *Avodas Yisrael* writes a similar thing in the name of the *Olas HaChodesh*. See also R. Avrohom Schorr’s *HaLekach VeHaLibuv* (5763, *Parshas Vaykhel* p. 140)

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existence was for Yaakov to fight and defeat him. This angel represented the angel of Esav, the yetzer hara. The challenges that we face are actually meant to build us – and they are there for us to beat. In a certain sense, the challenges find their purpose on when we conquer and vanquish them. Immediately after this angel had fulfilled its purpose, it was time for the angel to return to the Heavens and sing its song, for the fulfillment of its mission is its “song of praise for God”. The Talmud (*Shabbos* 89a) says that when Moshe ascended Mount Sinai, the angels argued that they should receive the Torah instead of man. After a lengthy debate on this matter, Moshe came out victorious and proved from the Torah itself that it is more applicable to man than to angels. The Talmud reports that in the aftermath of this debate, the angels became “friends” with Moshe and each one gave him a present—even the Angel of Death gave him a present, and it was the *ketores* (“incense” which have the power to stop plagues and overcome death). Why did the Angel of Death give him *ketores* and not something else? The Angel of Death had nothing else to give except or *ketores* because an angel only exists for whatever purpose it was created and there is nothing more to him than that. Accordingly, the Angel of Death—which is the same as *Yetzer HaRah* (Evil Inclination) is really here to be made sweet, and is actually an unlikely ally toward holiness! For this reason, that angel gave Moshe the *ketores* which also has the power to make the *chelbanah* (a foul-odored ingredient required for the *ketores*) smell sweet once properly mixed with the other sweet-smelling ingredients. In fact, it even made the sweet smell of the other ingredient more potent and wafting. The truth is that the entire purpose of the Angel of Death / Satan / *Yetzer HaRah*’s existence is to be defeated (in the same way that Yaakov defeated it), thereby drawing a person closer to Hashem. (See more in R. Moshe Shapiro’s *Afikei Mayim, Shavuos* 42).

‘Tell now your name’, and he [the angel] said, ‘why are you asking for my name?’ (Gen. 32:30). Rav Elazar Menachem Mann Shach once said in a sermon (printed in *Yesburun*, vol. 11 p. 460) that Rabbi Leib Chasman, one of the great Mussarists of his generation, explained that “why are you asking for me name” is actually the angel’s answer! He explains that something’s “name” represents its essence and helps define what exactly it is. To that effect, Adam took everything which existed and gave it a name which explained what it was. When Yaakov asked the angel for his name, he wanted to know “what is the essence of this angel and what sort of ideology does he represent.” However, this angel actually does not have a name. This is because he is the angel of Esav, in other words, the angel of evil. Evil is a construct which does not actually exist (because evil is always destined to fail in the long run), but only appears to exist in the imaginative machinations of lust. Evil

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is simply a mirage that has no basis in reality. As such, this angel, which represents the powers of evil cannot have a name, because it is not *real* enough to have a name.⁶

And he camped facing the city (Gen. 33:19). According to the Midrashim, the word “he camped” (ויחן) can be understood as “he brought charm” (ויחן) to the city. What charm? According to *Bereshis Rabbah* 79:6, Yaakov sold goods inexpensively to the locals. According to the *Yalkut Shimoni* (133) it is a disagreement between Rav and Rav Yochanan: the former says that it means that Yaakov introduced a system of currency, while the latter sage says that it means that Yaakov Aveinu established bathhouses in the city. The *Zera Kodesh* explains that the word יחן serves as an acronym for the verse “Yaakov—the portion/rope of His inheritance” (יעקב חבל נחלתו), alluding to the fact that benefits which Yaakov Aveinu brought to the people of Shechem were not physical benefits, but spiritual benefits. Indeed, the word *chen* relating to coinage is interesting. After all, The word Chanuka (חנוכה) is also related to “charm” (חן), and there is a custom of giving Chanuka Gelt (Yiddish for: “Chanuka Money”) to children. The word for a store in Hebrew is *chanut* which is rooted in the word *chen* and a moneychanger in talmudic parlance is a *shulchani* someone who works at a table. A table, a place where the physical is enjoyed it itself names *shulchan* which means a place of charm. Fascinatingly, when the Angel of Esav request that Yaakov let him leave, he said “send me away” (שלחני), a word which is a portmanteau of “of” (של) and “charm” (חן)—as if to say that he wished to go to the “place of charm.” Perhaps the contribution of Yaakov can be understood in light of this all as Yaakov teaching the locals the value of the physical and how it can be uplifted for spiritual ends.

And Dinah the daughter of Leah—who was born to Yaakov—went out to see the daughters of the land (Gen. 34:1). The Chida, notes (*Chomas Onach, Parshas Vayishlach* p. 55) that Yaakov Aveinu did not get angered over the incident surrounding Dinah in the same way that her brothers did. He explains based on the Arizal that Dinah was a reincarnation of Amaslai bas Carnevo (the mother of Avraham Avinu, see *Bava Basra* 91a), with whom Terach would forcibly engage in martial relations when she was menstruating.⁷ When Shechem raped Dinah, he took away from her the spiritual pollution which Terach had inserted into Amaslai, as it says about somebody who fornicates with a menstruant woman “and her menstruation shall be upon him”. Because Yaakov Avinu knew about the positive effects/rectifications of what Shechem did to Dinah, he did not become as angry as

⁶ This idea is also found in *Likutei Basar Likutei* in the name of *Mar Deror*.

⁷ For this reason, Terach himself was reincarnated as Job who was stricken with leprosy, as the *Zohar Chadash* teaches that whoever fornicates with a menstruating woman will be struck with leprosy.

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his sons did over the entire episode. This is also what it means when we say that the rape of Dinah was punishment for Yaakov hiding Dinah during his family's encounter with Esav. Yaakov knew that the rectification of Amaslai, who was reincarnated into Dinah, could only come about through an act of intercourse with a wicked man. If so, then Yaakov should not have hidden Dinah when he met with Esav, because if Esav and Dinah would have united, then her rectification would have come earlier. R. Yitzchak Lamprotni writes in his encyclopedia *Pachad Yitzchak* (s.v. Avraham) that it says in an ancient work that if somebody says the name Amaslai, daughter of Carnevo three times in front of a government official, then he will automatically find favor in the eyes of that official. The Chida similarly writes (*Avodas HaKodesh, Kaf Achas* 9) that there is a *segulah* that if one must meet a king or nobleman or wife, then he should say name "Amaslai bas Carnevo" seventeen times before the meeting in order to be successful. Interestingly, Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Shapiro, author of the *Bnei Yissaschar (Regel Yeshara* 1:61) says that Amaslai, daughter of Carnevo was reincarnated in the woman whose seven children were martyred (Gittin 58), and after the death of the last one, she recalled the memory of Avraham Avinu, which brought about her final rectification. See also *Gilgulei Neshamos* by the great Italian Kabbalist, Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Fano.

Get up and ascend [to] Beth El and settle there and make an altar (Gen. 35:1). Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk (*Mesbech Chochmah* here) points out that throughout the entire Torah, we never find that Hashem ever commanded somebody specifically to build an altar, except for when He commands Yaakov to do so here. Why is this? He explains that Hashem's commandment was meant to assuage Yaakov's fear that perhaps some of the livestock which is part of his entourage does not really belong to him and is really stolen goods. As we know from Isa. 61:8 and Mal. 1:3, Hashem despises sacrifices offered from stolen goods. Therefore, if He commanded Yaakov to build an altar and ostensibly this includes also offering sacrifices, this shows Hashem's stamp of approval for all of Yaakov's property, thus proving to him that he should not worry that some of which he had was really stolen.

And it was when Israel settled in that land, and Reuven went and he slept with Bilhah, his father's concubine, and Israel heard—and the Sons of Yaakov were twelve (Gen. 35:22). The Chida, writes (*Pnei Dovid* 20) that he heard from a great Ashkenazi rabbi in the name of the Rema (Rabbi Moshe Isserles), that whenever Yakov wanted to engage in intimacy with Bilhah, Reuven would go near their bedroom, and since it is forbidden to engage in intimacy within the earshot of other people, Yaakov would hear that Reuven is near and hold back from intimacy with Bilhah. Because of this, Yaakov did not engage in

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intimacy with Bilhah, and she never bore him more children. With this explanation in hand, he explicated the verse in question as follows: "...and Reuven went [i.e. strolled near Bilhah's tent when], his father [Yaakov wanted to] sleep with Bilhah the concubine, and Israel [i.e. Yaakov] heard [that Reuven was nearby so he did not engage in intimacy with Bilhah]—[therefore] the Sons of Yaakov were [only] twelve." The Chida relates that after he said this explanation, the Rema encountered Reuven in a dream, and Reuven expressed his gratitude to him for explicating the passage in question in a way that portrays him positively. This story is also found in *Chiddushei HaGirshuni* (pg. 39b). The Chida continues to write that after some time, he saw in the commentary of the rishon, Rabbeinu Efraim of Regensburg a slightly different rendering of this verse: "And it was when Israel settled in that land, and Reuven went [away from that land because] he [i.e. Yaakov] slept with Bilhah his concubine [instead of Reuven's mother Leah], and Israel heard [that Reuven left the land and went elsewhere, so he sent after him and Reuven returned so that now]—the sons of Yaakov were twelve [and not eleven as it was when Reuven was absent]". Rabbeinu Efraim relates that when the Chassid (Rabbi Yehuda HaChasid) publicly interpreted the verse thusly, he met Reuven in a dream and Reuven kissed him on the head.

And the sister of Lotan was Timna (Gen. 36:22). Rabbi Mordechai HaKohen of Tzfas (in *Sifsei Kohen* at the end of *Parshas Vayishlach* in the section of *gematrias* cited in the name of R. Shimshon) writes that the name Timna (תִּמְנָה) is an acronym for the description of the Torah given in Ps. 19: "wholesome, soul-returning, testimony" (תְּמִימָה מְשִׁיבַת נֶפֶשׁ עֵדוּת). This alludes to the fact that seemingly irrelevant or meaningless passages in the Torah also share this property of being able to be a soul-returning testimony. Menashe, one of the wicked kings of the Kingdom of Judah made mockery of this passage by rhetorically asking, "Did Moshe have nothing [better] to write than 'and the sister of Lotan was Timna?'" (*Sanbedrin* 99b).⁸ The Gerrer Rebbe (*Imrei Emes, Shabbos Shuvah*) explains in the name of the Arizal that the letters before the letters of the name Lotan (לוֹטָן) in the Alphabet (ל=כ, ו=ה, ט=מ) spell out the word "wisdom" (חכמה). This alludes to Rav Ashi's criticism of

⁸ The Talmud explains that this passage is significant because it shows the importance of the Abrahamic family. Timna was a Chorite princess who could have married anybody she wanted, but she specifically chose to join herself to the family of Avraham Aveinu because she recognized their importance. She presented herself in front of Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov and they all rejected her. So instead she settled for being a concubine to Eliphaz, Esav's son. She reasoned that it is better to be a like a maid for such a prominent family than to be a mistress in another family. From her descends the nation of Amalek who were destined to payback the Jews for rejecting her.

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Menashe who showed his penetrating wisdom was questioned, “*After* you got so smart, why did you worship idolatry”.