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## **Genesis Questions:**

### **Chapter and Verse**

#### **Question #1:**

##### 1. Genesis 2:20 (NIV1984)

20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam[a] no suitable helper was found.

*a. Genesis 2:20 Or the man*

Is Adam or man meant here?

1) Yes, this refers to Adam. The translation "the man" is possible since there is no distinction between the two possibilities (since "Adam" means "man" or is used to mean "man" everywhere in scripture), except that we do have the definite article. However, since Adam's name means "man", without the article the translation "a man" would be possible. When it is a case of a unique individual within a category, Hebrew uses the article to demonstrate that it is "the famous one" we are talking about (as in "the God" for "God"). A long way of saying that I would prefer "Adam" as the better and more defensible translation here.

##### 2. Genesis 3:20 (NIV1984)

20 Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

Since the passage says "because", I take it there must be something in the name Eve that indicates she is "the mother of all the living"?

2) "Eve" is derived from the root *chavah* which seems to be a parallel form of *chayah* which means to "be alive"; also, it is a *piel* form so that it would be a reasonable supposition that native speakers of the time would conclude her name meant something like "she who makes alive"; that certainly fits with the etiology.

### 3. Genesis 4:8 (NIV1984)

8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." [a] And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

*a. Genesis 4:8 Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac; Masoretic Text does not have "Let's go out to the field."*

Could you clarify the point from the footnote? Should Cain words be a part of the scripture?

3) The words are not present in the Masoretic text. I am not able to say whether or not there is any serious evidence for mss. in Hebrew which have this portion of the verse. Eventually, the Oxford Bible Project and other efforts (Aleppo Codex et al.) may make a better critical apparatus available for scholarly use, but at present one has to rely mainly on BHS's apparatus, and it is very limited on this score, to say the least. Many of the versions do have these words (e.g., the LXX). However, not only would it be risky to go against the MT here, but it is also much easier to explain why this would have been added than why it would have been left out. It is not uncommon in ancient languages to leave out the direct object when that may be easily supplied. The beginning of the verse therefore may be taken to mean something like, "Cain spoke to his brother", or, a bit more literally, "Cain said to his brother [something appropriate]". It is very tempting to want to fill in the blank, and that is what it appears the versions have done.

### 4. Genesis 4:23 (NIV1984)

23 Lamech said to his wives,  
"Adah and Zillah, listen to me;  
wives of Lamech, hear my words.  
I have killed[a] a man for wounding me,  
a young man for injuring me.

*a. Genesis 4:23 Or I will kill*

Could you clarify the point from the footnote? Can the tense not be surmised here?

4) The tense is perfect in Hebrew. But of course you know that there are only two tenses (essentially) in BH, the imperfect and the perfect, so that they cover more ground than Indo-European tenses. In a simple statement, the perfect can be the equivalent of the English simple past tense but also of the perfect. Understand, it means what it means in Hebrew; we are only trying to find the best way to bring it into English, and in this case the issue is whether or not putting someone into a state of being "dead" is best described by past or perfect in English. So "I killed" is certainly a legitimate way to translate. However, "I *will* kill" is a very heavy "lift". It is true that the Hebrew perfect is occasionally used as the equivalent of the gnomic aorist in Greek, that is, to express generalized statements of things often repeated (hence the name "gnomic" as having to do with a gnome or proverb). If that is what this statement is taken to mean, then the translation would have to take this one step further to see Lamech's statement as a prediction of the repetitive or generalized behavior he revels in as being likely to be repeated. Very unlikely, in my opinion, that this can even be what the verse means (it is no doubt suggested because verse 24 does look forward - there is no verb present there, but in that case a future-imperfect could be conjectured).

5. Genesis 4:26 (NIV1984)

26 Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the Lord.

What does the second sentence of this verse mean?

5) As I say in [BB 4B](#) in quoting this passage:

"Therefore believing in the Name of the Son of God is believing in His divine Person and in His divinely ordained work of salvation. **"Calling on the Name"** is likewise merely a different way of expressing the life-changing results of genuine faith in the Lord, and that has been the case since the beginning of human history".

So I take this to mean the expression of saving faith based upon the reality of saving faith (the "flip-side of the coin" as we have discussed it). Compare in Romans chapter ten where Paul quotes the verse from Genesis:

For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, **"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."**  
Romans 10:10-13 NIV

### **Addendum:**

**Q:** Why is it from the time of Seth and Enosh? Should we understand this as "from the beginning"? If so, why did "calling on the Name" did not start with Adam and Eve? Is it to do with the plural - "men began to call"? Some suggest that public worship could be meant here, and maybe that's why "men" are needed?

**A:** I agree that from the beginning believers believed. Formally calling out to the Lord (YHVH) apparently began at this point, but not saving faith. Unger (*in loc.*) sees this as a "revival", which is not a bad way of looking at it (as long as we subtract the modern abuses and assumptions often associated with that word).

6. Genesis 6:14 (NIV1984)

14 So make yourself an ark of cypress[a] wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out.

*a. Genesis 6:14 The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain.*

Please clarify the footnote - is the meaning of the word rendered "cypress" not possible to discern?

6) The traditional translation is "gopher wood" (Heb.: גפר) – the common word for cypress is 'erez (ארז). "Gopher wood" occurs only here. Lots of speculation but no certainty as to the precise type of wood.

7. Genesis 7:2 (NIV1984)

2 Take with you seven[a] of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and two of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate,

*a. Genesis 7:2 Or seven pairs; also in verse 3*

Does the passage say "seven" or "seven pairs"?

7) The Hebrew says, literally, "seven / seven", which is clearly different from merely "seven" and thus usually take to mean "seven pairs" or "seven of each sex" – I agree with this.

8. Genesis 8:2 (NIV1984)

2 Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens had been closed, and the rain had stopped falling from the sky.

What is meant by "springs of the deep"?

8) The [biblical "geography"](#) of the underworld is significantly different from what science supposes (see the link). When the universe was cleared of water in the

seven days of reconstruction, the waters were divided into "the waters above" and the "waters below" (Gen.1:7). Some of the "waters below" are contained by the oceans, but not all. We know that from the account of the flood where in Genesis 7:11 the "fountains of the *tehom*" (the same phrase you ask about here) are broken open. The *tehom* is the sea, but it is also the universal/cosmic (and as here the subterranean) "deep". Its fountains are the channels whereby the water enters (as part of it did during the separation in Genesis one) and exits (as it did in the inundation of the earth during the great flood). The two sets of channels in this verse (from above and below) are the means of flooding the earth (not just rain), and both had to be stanchied before the flooding stopped.

#### 9. Genesis 9:24-25 (NIV1984)

24 When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, 25 he said, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers."

Why does Noah call Canaan his son if he was his grandson?

9) He doesn't. Canaan must have been a mere infant when Noah pronounced this curse (born after the flood) Ham is the one who did this (cf. v.22); but Canaan, the grandson, is cursed because he is the father of the Canaanites who embody the sort of behavior Ham has evidenced. See the link: ["Why was Canaan cursed?"](#)

#### 10. Genesis 10:2 (NIV1984)

2 The sons[a] of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras.

*a. Genesis 10:2 Sons may mean descendants or successors or nations; also in verses 3, 4, 6, 7, 20-23, 29 and 31.*

How can it be distinguished whether "sons" or other rendering is appropriate?

10) We have to get this from context. After all, the "sons of Israel" is a term used for Israelites well after Jacob and the patriarchs departed this earth. Hebrew uses "son of" and "sons of" as generic gentilics representing a general category (cf. "sons of surety" = "hostages" in 2Ki.14:14). That said, in this particular verse, absent evidence to the contrary, I would take these sons of Japheth to be actual sons of Japheth since there is nothing in the context to indicate that this is not what is meant.

11. Genesis 10:8 (NIV1984)

8 Cush was the father[a] of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth.

*a. Genesis 10:8 Father may mean ancestor or predecessor or founder; also in verses 13, 15, 24 and 26.*

How should the word "father" be rendered here? Nimrod is not listed among the sons of Cush in verse 7?

11) Verse 8 is a disjunctive noun clause, put here (as K&D suggest) to add a notable event to the genealogy as is common in such lists. I would translate, "Now Cush also sired Nimrod . . . "; that is, he is not listed in verse seven precisely in order to "save" him over for verse eight and to there begin the digression which details the history about him.

12. Genesis 10:21 (NIV1984)

21 Sons were also born to Shem, whose older brother was[a] Japheth; Shem was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber.

*a. Genesis 10:21 Or Shem, the older brother of*

The alternative rendering in the footnote conveys opposite meaning - could you clarify?

12) The question is one of whether in Genesis 10:21 the phrase *hagadol*, "the eldest", is to be taken with Jappeth (which it follows) or Shem (who is the semantic "subject" of the verse); in my view it goes with Shem and he is the oldest (he is listed first in Gen.10:1); in my view, [the three brothers are triplets](#) (see the link), but Shem was first of the three.

13. Genesis 10:23 (NIV1984)

23 The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether and Meshech.[a]

*a. Genesis 10:23 See Septuagint and 1 Chron. 1:17; Hebrew Mash*

Footnote says that not all of the manuscripts contain this line?

13) It's there in Genesis in the Hebrew text; the issue is that in 1Chron.1:17 the line is not present in most Hebrew mss. (though it is in some, as well as in the Samaritan Pentateuch). The point is that this is the valid genealogy; whether or not these words are legitimately to be included in Chronicles (or were added to harmonize the genealogies) is another question.

14. Genesis 11:2 (NIV1984)

2 As men moved eastward, [a] they found a plain in Shinar[b] and settled there.

*a. Genesis 11:2 Or from the east; or in the east*

*b. Genesis 11:2 That is, Babylonia*

I) How should "eastward" be rendered?

II) How do we know that "Shinar" stands for Babylonia?



14) a) The preposition *min* plus the noun *qedem* seems as if it ought to mean "from the east", therefore, "westward"; in fact, there are other ways to say that, and in Genesis 13:11 it pretty clearly means "eastward"; Gesenius explains this from the fact that *qedem* as an adverb/preposition means "in front of" and in directional terms that would mean "east", the direction of the sunrise; *min* would make it an adverbial phrase with directional emphasis meaning "front-wards" or "towards the east"; that is my preference - southeast, to be precise, from the Caucasus and/or western Turkey (today) towards the Tigris-Euphrates plain.

b) Genesis 10:10 states that Babylon (along with the other three places mentioned) were in "the land of Shinar".

### **Addendum:**

**Q:** Regarding "eastward" in Genesis 11:2, I'm still unclear as to how *min* makes "east" change into "front-wards" or "towards the east"?

**A:** It doesn't. What the preposition *min* does is make *qedem* in the sense of "in front" into an adverb, "front-wards" or "to the east".

15. Genesis 15:1 (NIV1984)

1 After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield,[a] your very great reward. [b]"

*a. Genesis 15:1 Or sovereign*

*b. Genesis 15:1 Or shield; / your reward will be very great*

Could you explain both footnotes?

15a) The Hebrew word *magen* literally means "shield" but is sometimes used in poetic contexts as a synonym for "king" (e.g., Ps. 84:9; 89:18); but usually this use

augments the idea of a "king" already being present; it is not uncommon to refer to the Lord as one's "shield" (e.g., Ps.33:20; 59:11), so there is no need at all to translate other than literally here since the sense is clear enough.

15b) This seems to be a very esoteric suggestion; I cannot find it elsewhere. The best I can suggest is that the editor thinks that the Hebrew word *sachar*, wages, could be pointed differently as *socher*, "employer" or "one who hands out wages", which loosely might mean sovereign.

#### 16. Genesis 15:2 (NIV1984)

2 But Abram said, "O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit[c] my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?"

*c. Genesis 15:2 The meaning of the Hebrew for this phrase is uncertain.*

What phrase is used here and how was it possible to translate it?

16) The phrase in question is *ben-mesheq* and is a paronomasia for Damascus (*damesheq*), which probably explains the unusual use of the phrase (i.e., Abraham had only been in the habit of saying it this way because of the pun, a familiar joke between him and his right-hand man, no doubt). The word *ben-* means "son of" and is the Hebrew way of expressing a category (cf. NT based on Hebrew "son of perdition" in 2Thes.2:3). The word *mesheq* is otherwise unattested and is usually conjectured from context to mean "possession" since Eliezer is both steward and putative heir so that "son of acquisition" yields a good sense, and there is a *mimshaq* in Zeph.2:9 in a phrase which might then mean "place possessed by nettles". Personally I think that both forms may be back-formations of the *piel* stem of *shaqah* (meaning "to give drink"), because we do have a parallel in the noun so derived *mashqeh* which means "server" (e.g., Gen.40:5; Neh.1:11). So giving the pun a loose English equivalent we

might get something like "Mr. Rostov will be the one to get all my-stuff".

17. Genesis 15:16 (NIV1984)

16 In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."

What is the relationship between the coming back of Abraham's descendants and the sin of Amorites?

17) The Amorites have a certain amount of time left before they have used up the Lord's patience and grace in overlooking their idolatry (cf. Deut.9:4-5), and the terminal point will coincide with the return of the Israelites into the land.

18. Genesis 16:1-2 (NIV1984)

1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; 2 so she said to Abram, "The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said.

Did Abraham at that time not know that it was his wife that would bear the son of the covenant?

18) Abraham *should* have known. This is a classic test of faith and a very good lesson for all Christians to consider carefully. Abraham had an abundance of promises from the Lord Himself, but as the time dragged on and the deliverance he was waiting for did not develop, a chink opened up in his shield of faith, one which the devil was very quick to exploit. Sarah, in my reading, became convinced that it was not her fault that she hadn't conceived; therefore the problem must lie with her husband. When she convinced him to take Hagar as a surrogate, I don't think she had any idea that Hagar

would actually conceive (as evidenced by her reaction after the fact). Abraham, on the other hand, never imagined that he was sterile, and also did not see through his wife's true motives. He was vexed about not having an heir, and the weakness of faith that he allowed to develop thereby made him vulnerable to this suggestion (and pressure) from his wife. It is all too frequent that we Christians pray to the Lord for deliverance from a particular problem, express (and perhaps also genuinely do feel) complete faith in His eventual rescue of us; but then we come to rationalize some solution that we have thought up and that we implement ourselves which is not in fact of Him. And if Abraham, the great believer of faith, the founder of the people of faith, Israel, could fall into this trap, how much more ought we not to be very circumspect about latching onto any "solution" in such circumstances which even has a hint of being wrong, or not completely of God, or smacking of self-effort not of faith in any way? Blessedly, however, just as the Lord did not throw Abraham aside and did in fact grant him the perfect deliverance in a miraculous way in the birth of Isaac, we may all rejoice in the fact that He is faithful to us even when we prove to be less than trusting in response to Him - though I will also note that Abraham no doubt had to wait quite a bit longer as the result of the Hagar affair than would otherwise be the case. Who knows? If Abraham had told his wife "no!", perhaps Isaac would have been conceived that very night (instead of over a decade later).

**Addendum:**

**Q:** I'm not clear about this - why is it that Sarah sent Abraham to Hagar if she was convinced that it wasn't her fault that she didn't conceive? If she thought that fault wasn't hers and the problem lies with her husband, then why take the surrogate?

**A:** This is, of course, my interpretation of the text (though I do think it is correct). I'm no expert in female psychology, but it is true that in antiquity there was

"reproach" and much anxiety involved in being unable to conceive, and the woman was the one who was considered "responsible", not the man (cf. Gen.30:2; 30:23; Lk.1:25). That being the case, if Sarah suspected that Abraham was infertile, giving him Hagar would deflect blame and reproach from her when Hagar failed to conceive as well. It's not a question then of what she thought as much as a question of her reputation – an even bigger issue in antiquity (where societies verged more on "shame cultures" than is the today).

19. Genesis 16:12 (NIV1984)

12 He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward[b] all his brothers."

*b. Genesis 16:12 Or live to the east / of*

There is a discrepancy between the meaning in the text and proposed alternative in the footnote - "in hostility toward" and "live to the east of"?

19) The Hebrew phrase *al-peney* means, literally, "against the face of", so that "in hostility towards" is no doubt the correct translation. However the phrase sometimes does mean "east of" (e.g., 1Ki.6:3; Ezek.42:8), since "east" is the main cardinal direction in Hebrew (i.e., the sunrise vs. modern "magnetic north"); that, by the way, also justifies "in front of" and therefore (more problematically in my view) "in the presence of" (which occurs in some versions). The main reason some wish to say "east of" is because "east" is (roughly speaking) the historic biblical location of the Ishmaelites (Gen.21:20; 25:13-18).

20. Genesis 17:5 (NIV1984)

5 No longer will you be called Abram[a]; your name will be Abraham,[b] for I have made you a father of many nations.

- a. *Genesis 17:5 Abram means exalted father.*
- b. *Genesis 17:5 Abraham means father of many.*

Could you please explain the Hebrew etymology of these two names?

20a) Abram is probably from *'abh* (father) and *ram* (fr. *rum*, a root meaning "high").

20b) Abraham is probably from *'abh* (father) and ? *raham* ? - we need the root to mean "many/multitudes", but this root is not attested in BH (though it does, apparently, occur in Arabic with this meaning, so it may exist in Semitic generally as it often the case); however, BDB see a word play where the *resh* of Abram is kept, and the root *hamah* ("to be many") is what is added. In any case "father of a multitude" is surely correct, and this is a deliberate contrast to "he of the exalted father": by the Lord's grace, Abraham's fortunes now looked forward to his own family and not backward to that of his ancestors.

**Addendum:**

**Q:** I thought that "Abram" meant "exalted father" rather than "he of exalted father". Your rendering seems to be pointing towards Abraham's ancestors, but most others ("exalted father") point to Abraham himself?

**A:** The form is ambiguous. But as Abram didn't name himself, I think it unlikely that Nahor gave his son a name that bestowed more honor on his son than on himself.

21. Genesis 17:13 (NIV1984)

13 Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant.

Why does God call this covenant "everlasting", if it was later to change?

21) The covenant is a covenant of faith (cf. Rom.4:1ff.); circumcision is the physical sign in the time of shadows and renewed as a memorial in the time of fulfillment; in-between, the Church is the time of spiritual realities: those who are of faith need no physical sign of our faith and salvation; rather, the Holy Spirit is our pledge of the salvation we have in Jesus Christ.

**Addendum:**

**Q1:** Like you wrote, the covenant is a covenant of faith, but how should we understand that it's the "covenant in your flesh" which is "an everlasting covenant"?

**A1:** The shadows of the Old are temporary, but the promises they foreshadow are eternal. It's what the covenant represents that is eternal.

**Q2:** When you say that circumcision will be renewed in the time of fulfillment, which time do you mean?

**A2:** The millennium, when Israel is restored as a covenant nation, and many of the features of the Old are reintroduced as memorials which harken back to the realities of Christ's sacrifice and our relationship to Him through His blood.

22. Genesis 18:1-15 (NIV1984)

Could you clarify the whole passage? It starts with the three visitors, but from verse 9, where the subject is "they" it changes to "the Lord" in verse 10. Who are the three visitors?

22) The three visitors are, first, the Angel of the Lord (the pre-incarnate manifestation of our Lord Jesus; i.e., a Christophany), and, second, two unnamed angels (see the link for discussion: "[Genesis 18:3 and the so-called 134 Massorah](#)" in "[Grace vs. Law](#)").

23. Genesis 18:22 (NIV1984)

22 The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the Lord. [a]

*a. Genesis 18:22 Masoretic Text; an ancient Hebrew scribal tradition but the Lord remained standing before Abraham*

Based on what the footnote says, how should the text be rendered? As indicated in the previous question, I'm not able to envisage this situation with the three men and the Lord.

23) Only two of the "men" go to Sodom (Gen.19:1); these are the two angels who accompanied our Lord. So the translation here is correct. The "men" (the two angels only) go to Sodom, but Abraham remains with the Lord (YHVH), as this Person is a Christophany of our Lord Jesus.

24. Genesis 19:14 (NIV1984)

14 So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry[a] his daughters. He said, "Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!" But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.

*a. Genesis 19:14 Or were married to*

Is the rendering "pledged to marry" or "were married" correct?

24) In antiquity generally and particularly in the biblical area being betrothed was a legal obligation almost as binding as marriage (cf. Deut.22:23-25; Matt.1:19-20). The Hebrew says, literally, "his sons-in-law who were going (pres. ptc. *laqach*) to take his daughters", indicating that the marriages had been contracted but had not yet taken place at this time.

25. Genesis 19:30 (NIV1984)



30 Lot and his two daughters left Zoar and settled in the mountains, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar. He and his two daughters lived in a cave.

Why was Lot afraid to stay in Zoar?

25) Another good lesson for believers. On the point of being forced to leave the new home where he had foolishly invested everything, Lot, who grew up as an itinerant shepherd, was now afraid of going back to his previous lifestyle (or at least very reluctant, possibly owing to enjoying the "good life" too much at this point). On arriving at Zoar, however, he changed his mind. In my view, this must have been because of the fact that as the only survivor from Sodom and Gomorrah he naturally came under great suspicion and no doubt also provoked a good deal of resentment (from friends and family members of those destroyed). Though being directly responsible for the fact that the people of Zoar were not also destroyed, Lot felt, and no doubt rightly so, that he was in danger if he remained. This is good to remember whenever we plead with the Lord for something we know very well is not in His first best will for us - as if we knew better. Even if we get what we want, it may very well be that we cannot enjoy it or have to give it up for reasons we didn't or perhaps couldn't anticipate - but we could have trusted the Lord that He knew better in the first place.

### **Addendum:**

**Q:** Why was Lot's investment foolish?

**A:** As believers, we are all sojourners on this earth. Nothing here lasts; everything is temporary. Sowing to the material is a foolish waste; sowing for what is eternal is the only thing of true value:

For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit

reap everlasting life.  
Galatians 6:8 NKJV

We all have to live in this material world, and our Lord knows that and does provide, but I consider Lot's decision foolish because it destroyed his freedom of movement which, in the midst of a lawless time and land, was an important feature of his spiritual independence as well. By "buying into" Sodom, he linked his fortunes with that place irretrievably – and we see the results.

26. Genesis 21:16 (NIV1984)

16 Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there nearby, she[a] began to sob. 17 God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there.

*a. Genesis 21:16 Hebrew; Septuagint the child*

Who was sobbing - Hagar or Ishmael? Verse 16 says it's Hagar (although the footnote indicates there might be ambiguity here), but the beginning of verse 17 indicates it's Ishmael.

26) There is no ambiguity. Hagar is crying in verse 16; the boy is crying in verse 17. There was plenty for both of them to cry about, after all; God hears Ishmael because he is Abraham's seed.

27. Genesis 21:31 (NIV1984)

31 So that place was called Beersheba,[a] because the two men swore an oath there.

*a. Genesis 21:31 Beersheba can mean well of seven or well of the oath.*

What does Beersheba mean?

27) The word *be'er* means "well" (as in well of water); the word *shebha* means "seven" but also "oath" - because seven is a sacred number so that to "seven" something means to make a sacred oath on it / about it. So "seven wells" is not a bad translation if one understands that the "seven" refers to the oath mentioned here (see also Gen.26:32-33).

28. Genesis 23:8-11 (NIV1984)

8 He said to them, "If you are willing to let me bury my dead, then listen to me and intercede with Ephron son of Zohar on my behalf 9 so he will sell me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and is at the end of his field. Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you." 10 Ephron the Hittite was sitting among his people and he replied to Abraham in the hearing of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of his city. 11 "No, my lord," he said. "Listen to me; I give[a] you the field, and I give[b] you the cave that is in it. I give[c] it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead."

a. *Genesis 23:11 Or sell*

b. *Genesis 23:11 Or sell*

c. *Genesis 23:11 Or sell*

I) Is there any reason Abraham wanted this particular cave?

II) How should Ephron's words be rendered - "I give" or "I sell"?

28)

I) can only speculate that it was a particularly suitable cave for the purpose, and that the location, in the heart of the land, was a sort of symbolic staking of a claim to possession of the whole of the land in the future.

II) As to Ephron's words, *nathan* means "give", not sell. Ephron clearly wanted to appear magnanimous (and feared to appear stingy) in the presence of all the elders and nobles of his people. Abraham, in his wisdom, knew that it was up to him to insist that it be a sale, not a gift, both for the security of the deed, and also on the principle that it was God who enriched him in all things, not mortal man (cf. Gen.14:22-24).

29. Genesis 24:2-4 (NIV1984)

2 He said to the chief servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh.  
3 I want you to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living,  
4 but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac."

I) Why was it up to the chief servant to choose a wife for Isaac?

II) Was putting hand under the thigh a customary gesture for swearing?

III) Why didn't Abraham want a wife for Isaac from among the Canaanites, if they were living in the promised land?

29)

I) Abraham obviously chose this man for his integrity, good judgment, and most importantly of all his godliness and faith in God (cf. his prayer to the Almighty that is fulfilled immediately and fully).

II) Apparently so; otherwise unattested as far as I know except in Genesis (cf. Gen.47:29 and #85 below). Such an oath would be memorable and hard to forget, and also something that would not happen by accident, so that it couldn't be easily denied as mere words might be.

III) They were accursed and godless (e.g., Gen.9:25; 15:6; Deut.9:4-5); mixing with their seed was always a problem for the Israelites because it always led to being dragged into their idolatrous religion.

30. Genesis 24:12-14 (NIV1984)

12 Then he prayed, "O Lord, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. 13 See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. 14 May it be that when I say to a girl, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too'-let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master."

How is it that the servant himself comes up with a condition to be fulfilled by the woman to be Isaac's wife?

30) I think rather that it is the Lord who knows not only what Rebecca will do but also what the servant will pray. This episode demonstrates just how completely everything is in God's hands, and how our Lord has planned every last detail of all that would transpire in history down to the last step and word, knowing the possible as well as the actual, and having incorporated everything into His perfect plan in the perfect way so as to accommodate every free will decision and work everything out for the absolute good for all who love Him (Rom.8:28).

31. Genesis 24:22 (NIV1984)

22 When the camels had finished drinking, the man took out a gold nose ring weighing a beka and two gold bracelets weighing ten shekels.

Some translate "earring" instead of "nose ring"?

31) Well, a *nezem* is usually a nose-ring, and in verse 47 the servant says "Then I put the ring in her nose". Apparently some people don't want to think of Rebecca in this way, but it suited the custom of the time. In my youth, only sailors and ex-cons had tattoos; nowadays, finding an undergraduate without a tattoo is exceptional.

32. Genesis 24:36 (NIV1984)

36 My master's wife Sarah has borne him a son in her[a] old age, and he has given him everything he owns.

*a. Genesis 24:36 Or his*

Is the translation "her" or "his" correct here?

32) The MT has "her"; however, the LXX has "his" (lit. "after he become old"), and this is [apparently] the reading of the Samaritan Pentateuch as well; the issue is that the suffix, while usually feminine, could potentially be read as masculine in the absence of vowel points, and since these two ancient witnesses took it that way, and since in Genesis 21:2 we have phrase referring to Abraham (although there the noun is plural for emphasis: "his very old age"), some have wished to say "his" rather than "hers". However, it is understandable how that Abraham, as the patriarch, would be the focus of later readers and translators, and they may have forced the issue for this reason. Since it would be a stretch to read "his", and since *lectio difficilior* favors "her", I would prefer "her" (cf. Rom.4:19b).

33. Genesis 24:55 (NIV1984)

55 But her brother and her mother replied, "Let the girl remain with us ten days or so; then you[a] may go."

*a. Genesis 24:55 Or she*

Is the translation "you" or "she" correct here?

33) The Hebrew 3rd person singular feminine form is the same as the 2nd person singular masculine form (*telech*, תֵּלַךְ, in both cases); that is what we have here. The LXX has "she" (i.e., a third singular form), and that seems to me to be correct as well since it is the departure of Rebecca that is at issue (Abraham's servant is not being told whether or not he "may go").

34. Genesis 24:63 (NIV1984)

63 He went out to the field one evening to meditate, [a] and as he looked up, he saw camels approaching.

*a. Genesis 24:63 The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain.*

Could you explain the point made in the footnote?

34) The word "meditate" has a number of questionable connotations in English and is probably responsible for the note (i.e., to qualify the translation so as not to make it sound as if Isaac is involved in some "new age" activity); the Hebrew verb (*suach*, שוּחַ) only occurs here; if it is an alternative form of *siyach* (שִׂיחַ) - as seems probable inasmuch as there are often two or three slightly different roots in BH which mean essentially the same thing - then "meditate" is not a bad translation if understood in the sense of "musing" or "thinking things over": Isaac was apprehensive about his upcoming marriage and went out to be alone to think it over.

35. Genesis 25:18 (NIV1984)

18 His descendants settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near the border of Egypt, as you go toward Asshur. And they lived in hostility toward [a] all their brothers.

*a. Genesis 25:18 Or lived to the east of*

Could you explain the point made in the footnote?

35) Same as #19 above.

36. Genesis 26:32-33 (NIV1984)

32 That day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well they had dug. They said, "We've found water!" 33 He called it Shibah,[a] and to this day the name of the town has been Beersheba.[b]

*a. Genesis 26:33 Shibah can mean oath or seven.*

*b. Genesis 26:33 Beersheba can mean well of the oath or well of seven.*

Could you explain both footnotes?

36) Same as #27 above.

37. Genesis 26-34-35 (NIV1984)

34 When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. 35 They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

Were only the wives of Esau a grief to Isaac and Rebekah, or does the "they" in the second sentence include Esau also?

37) The Hebrew verb is the 3rd person plural **feminine** form, so it is only the two wives who are meant, not Esau too.

38. Genesis 28:20-22 (NIV1984)

20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear 21 so that I return safely to my father's house, then the Lord[a] will be my God 22 and[b] this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."



- a. Genesis 28:21 Or Since God... father's house, the Lord*  
*b. Genesis 28:22 Or house, and the Lord will be my God,*  
*22 then*

I) Could you explain both these footnotes and how do the renderings proposed in them fit into the sentences, as I'm not clear about it?

II) How would you translate these two verses?

38) Hebrew syntax is often difficult to pin down, owing in part to the lack of discrete moods such as we find in Greek and other Indo-European languages. This is a complex conditional sentence, and the main issue is the question of where the apodosis (i.e., the "then" clause) occurs. Verse 21 starts with a *waw*; your version translates "so that"; better is a simple "and", because this is another protasis (i.e., "if" clause); Jacob piles up four "ifs" in verses 20-21a. Your version then has "then" in the last clause of verse 21, and I think that part is correct. That is to say, this is where the apodosis (the "then" clause concluding the condition) rightly begins. That is not so clear necessarily in Hebrew since in the case of what we would call a "more vivid" condition (i.e., one that is envisioned as likely to be fulfilled as opposed to merely possible or even unlikely), the imperfect is found in both parts (making it difficult to discern except from the sense of the passage where the ifs stop and the thens begin where we have multiple parts on both sides of the equation); here of course we have "consecutive perfects", that is, perfects standing for imperfects because of the narrative sequence set up by the multiple protases (i.e., If [imperfect], and/ *waw* [perfect standing for imperfect]], and/ *waw* [perfect standing for imperfect]], and/ *waw* [perfect standing for imperfect]], THEN/ *waw* [perfect standing for imperfect])). I think footnote [a] is so unlikely, both from the standpoint of the grammar and the meaning of the context, that it would have been better if the editor had removed it. Footnote [b] gives the option of delaying the start of the apodosis to the next clause; this is much more defensible (even though I think it is also incorrect). Since the "and the Lord will be

my God" is both literally what the Hebrew says and could technically be another protasis, and since one can imagine "the Lord being my God" as one of the conditions Jacob has in mind, then the next clause will have to begin the apodosis. There are two problems with this, however. First, it seems much more likely to me from the place Jacob is spiritually at this point and from his prior behavior, that He is "making a deal", and that, after all, is what vows are (and why it is dangerous in this era of grace to get anywhere near them). Jacob's "deal" is to keep faith with the Lord if the Lord will keep faith with him, and then he adds other "benefits" thereafter; alternatively, if he really were spiritual enough to see "the Lord being my God" as the truly great and desirable thing, then the preceding conditions seem very dissonant with that. The second problem is with seeing "and this stone" as commencing the apodosis. That is because what we have here is a disjunctive clause (*waw* followed by a noun not the main verb) with a verb in the imperfect. That is not the normal construction of the apodosis (as discussed immediately above), and it should be here for emphasis (i.e., "but" or "so that", "and moreover", etc., rather than being a simple sign of the apodosis). Given the flexibility of Hebrew grammar, and also the fact that this is spoken language (always more loose than written prose in its construction in any language), footnote [b] is not grammatically impossible. But it is unlikely, so that these objections coupled with the good sense the passage makes as translated originally in your version would be preferable in my view.

### 39. Genesis 29:22-25 (NIV1984)

22 So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast. 23 But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and Jacob lay with her. 24 And Laban gave his servant girl Zilpah to his daughter as her maidservant. 25 When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you

have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have you deceived me?"

How did Jacob not recognize that Leah was given to him instead of Rachel?

39) We can only speculate: he was *very* drunk (deliberately so, courtesy of Laban), and was brought to the bridal chamber where the bride was veiled and bedecked in bridal clothes; given the customs of the time, it is not impossible that there was no conversation and nothing to alert a barely conscious Jacob that he was being tricked.

40. Genesis 29:31-35 (NIV1984)

31 When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. 32 Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben,[a] for she said, "It is because the Lord has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now." 33 She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Because the Lord heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too." So she named him Simeon.[b] 34 Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." So he was named Levi.[c] 35 She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "This time I will praise the Lord." So she named him Judah.[d] Then she stopped having children.

*a. Genesis 29:32 Reuben sounds like the Hebrew for he has seen my misery; the name means see, a son.*

*b. Genesis 29:33 Simeon probably means one who hears.*

*c. Genesis 29:34 Levi sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for attached.*

*d. Genesis 29:35 Judah sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for praise.*

Do you agree with the etymologies of names given here in footnotes?

40) For [c] and [d], yes; as for [a], Leah says in יהָרָה רָאָה בְּעֵינַי, which if one removes consonants 3,4,5 and 7,9, and 11,12, yields the name רָאוּבֵן. So in the sense of it being a shortening of this phrase, it is a paronomasia, but it actually means, as the note says, "behold, a son!"; as for [b], "hearing" (or "heard", or "thing/person heard") would be my preference; what we have here is the root *shama'* with a *nun* affirmative; nouns of this type (which often tend to be passive in sense) are usually general nouns rather than agent nouns (i.e., "one who hears" as the note suggests); they can often also just be proper names.

#### 41. Genesis 30:4-13 (NIV1984)

4 So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife. Jacob slept with her, 5 and she became pregnant and bore him a son. 6 Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me; he has listened to my plea and given me a son." Because of this she named him Dan.[a] 7 Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. 8 Then Rachel said, "I have had a great struggle with my sister, and I have won." So she named him Naphtali.[b] 9 When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she took her maidservant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. 10 Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. 11 Then Leah said, "What good fortune!"[c] So she named him Gad.[d] 12 Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. 13 Then Leah said, "How happy I am! The women will call me happy." So she named him Asher.[e]

- a. *Genesis 30:6 Dan here means he has vindicated.*
- b. *Genesis 30:8 Naphtali means my struggle.*
- c. *Genesis 30:11 Or "A troop is coming!"*
- d. *Genesis 30:11 Gad can mean good fortune or a troop.*
- e. *Genesis 30:13 Asher means happy.*

Like above, do you agree with the etymologies of names proposed above? Could you explain verse 11? Which rendering is complete: "What good fortune!" or "A troop is coming"?

41) [a] Dan means "he has judged"; [b] is correct; [c] given the family's inclination to superstition (e.g., Gen.31:19; 35:2; cf. Gen.30:35ff.), "with luck" seems likely for what Leah says first, whereas "a troop is coming" would be a stretch here given the form (even though that is the meaning of the alternative root; see [d]); [d] true; [e] true.

#### 42. Genesis 30:17-24 (NIV1984)

17 God listened to Leah, and she became pregnant and bore Jacob a fifth son. 18 Then Leah said, "God has rewarded me for giving my maidservant to my husband." So she named him Issachar. [a] 19 Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. 20 Then Leah said, "God has presented me with a precious gift. This time my husband will treat me with honor, because I have borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun. [b] 21 Some time later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah. 22 Then God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and opened her womb. 23 She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, "God has taken away my disgrace." 24 She named him Joseph, [c] and said, "May the Lord add to me another son."

*a. Genesis 30:18 Issachar sounds like the Hebrew for reward.*

*b. Genesis 30:20 Zebulun probably means honor.*

*c. Genesis 30:24 Joseph means may he add.*

Please clarify name etymologies again.

42) [a] "recompense", or "there is recompense", or, possibly, "He will [re]pay"; [b] the root *zabhal* used by Leah may mean "to honor" so the translation, "my husband will honor me", is defensible; however, a *zabhul* is something lofty, like a high dwelling place (or a place of honor), so the translation "he will dwell with me" and the name then meaning "abiding" is also possible (which I prefer); [c] true.

43. Genesis 30:27 (NIV1984)

27 But Laban said to him, "If I have found favor in your eyes, please stay. I have learned by divination that [a] the Lord has blessed me because of you."

*a. Genesis 30:27 Or possibly have become rich and*

How should this verse be rendered?

43) The Hebrew verb is *barakh*, and that means "to bless"; in the context Laban probably is thinking of the increase of his flocks and wealth since Jacob's arrival.

44. Genesis 30:37-43 (NIV1984)

37 Jacob, however, took fresh-cut branches from poplar, almond and plane trees and made white stripes on them by peeling the bark and exposing the white inner wood of the branches. 38 Then he placed the peeled branches in all the watering troughs, so that they would be directly in front of the flocks when they came to drink. When the flocks were in heat and came to drink, 39 they mated in front of the branches. And they bore young that were streaked or speckled or spotted. 40 Jacob set apart the young of the flock by themselves, but made the rest face the streaked and dark-colored animals that belonged to Laban. Thus he made separate flocks for himself and did not put them with Laban's animals. 41 Whenever the stronger females were in heat, Jacob would place the branches in the troughs in front of the animals so they would mate near the branches, 42 but if the animals were weak, he would not place them there. So the weak animals went to Laban and the strong ones to Jacob. 43 In this way the man grew exceedingly prosperous and came to own large flocks, and maidservants and menservants, and camels and donkeys.

Could you explain this whole passage? What was Jacob's cutting of stripes aimed at? Was this a folk magic practice of that time?

44) There is much about the natural world that science does not yet understand; animals have spirits, and they react to stimuli, sometimes in a physical way. I would not wish to say that what Jacob was attempting to do is impossible. After all, there is a large element of selective breeding here, and I dare say that if today we had only gray wolves and no dogs, that science would scoff at the notion of developing all the wildly varying breeds we find today (most of which were developed without the help of modern science). In any case, Jacob did come to appreciate who was behind his success:

Yet your father has cheated me by changing my wages ten times. However, God has not allowed him to harm me. If he said, 'The speckled ones will be your wages,' then all the flocks gave birth to speckled young; and if he said, 'The streaked ones will be your wages,' then all the flocks bore streaked young. So God has taken away your father's livestock and has given them to me. "In breeding season I once had a dream in which I looked up and saw that the male goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled or spotted. The angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob.' I answered, 'Here I am.' And he said, 'Look up and see that all the male goats mating with the flock are streaked, speckled or spotted, for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.  
Genesis 31:7-12 NIV

45. Genesis 32:28 (NIV1984)

28 Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."

Could you clarify the etymology of the name "Israel" based on this passage?

45) Jacob contended with the Lord, wrestling with Him in faith and refusing to give up. So "he who contends with God" is a good rendering; it also cuts both ways (just as Jacob's experience that night did): Israel as a people are

known for their exceptional reliance on God (not letting Him go), but also for their exceptional resistance to Him (wrestling against the truth), just as Jacob that night wrestled at first to resist crossing the river and to trust God in the process, but then, when humbled, wrestled so as not to let go of God. There is more on this at the links: "[Jacob wrestling I](#)" and "[Jacob wrestling II](#)". Incidentally, we may find fault with the negative part of Israel's stubborn hardness (and rightly so), but it is good also to remember our Lord's words to Laodicea: "I would that you were either hot or cold [rather than lukewarm]" (Rev.3:15-16) - Israel, it seems, is always either hot or cold, never in-between (a state which the Lord abominates).

#### 46. Genesis 33:10 (NIV1984)

10 "No, please!" said Jacob. "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably.

What does Jacob mean by "For to see your face is like seeing the face of God"?

46) He is flattering his brother because he is afraid of him (out of a guilty conscience and remembrance of Esau's threat to kill him).

#### 47. Genesis 33:18 (NIV1984)

18 After Jacob came from Paddan Aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city.

a. *Genesis 33:18 Or arrived at Shalem, a*

Should it be "Shechem" or "Shalem"?

47) The question is not Shechem or Shalem, but whether or not Shalem should stand here as a place name or we



should instead *shalom* and translate "safely"; since the word is followed by "a city of Shechem (not *the* city of Shechem), I think it is best to see Shalem as locality (also, for *shalom* to be used adverbially here we would expect the preposition *be*).

48. Genesis 33:20 (NIV1984)

20 There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel. [a]

*a. Genesis 33:20 El Elohe Israel can mean God, the God of Israel or mighty is the God of Israel.*

Which rendering of "El Elohe Israel" is correct?

48) I would prefer "The God of Israel is the Mighty One (*El*)"; this assumes, as does translation #2, that we are to supply the copula. Translation #1 is merely takes the Hebrew words as a title, not a statement (possible); translation #2, while it does supply the copula (correct in my view), turns the noun *El*, "mighty one", into an adjective (a very loose non-literal translation which diminishes the power of the original unnecessarily).

49. Genesis 34:7 (NIV1984)

7 Now Jacob's sons had come in from the fields as soon as they heard what had happened. They were filled with grief and fury, because Shechem had done a disgraceful thing in[a] Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter—a thing that should not be done.

*a. Genesis 34:7 Or against*

Is "in" or "against" the correct translation?

49) The preposition *be* when used with the verb *'asah* expresses the material "worked" (the verb itself in the passive means something "not to be done" as in the second occurrence here; it is active in the first occurrence with *be*, but the sense of forbidden action is still present);

so the meaning is clear and it is really a question of how best to accommodate a translation to English usage. "In" is really too general, while "against" is too specific; "[done] to Israel" is perhaps the best choice (an English "dative of disadvantage"); alternatively "with" also works (indication wrongful use).

50. Genesis 34:10 (NIV1984)

10 You can settle among us; the land is open to you. Live in it, trade[a] in it, and acquire property in it."

*a. Genesis 34:10 Or move about freely; also in verse 21*

Is the same word used in Hebrew for trading and moving about freely?

50) The root *sachar* in my view means, originally, to move about with frequency, and from this activity "to trade"; since "acquire property" is the next thing said, it seems that this is likely to be the point of the statement - although since that is said a second time some may feel that a differentiation is needed (I do not personally feel that way). A good way out the dilemma would be to do what the KJV does and use the verb "traffic" which, while archaic, is equally applicable and equally ambiguous in English.

51. Genesis 34:13-16 (NIV1984)

13 Because their sister Dinah had been defiled, Jacob's sons replied deceitfully as they spoke to Shechem and his father Hamor. 14 They said to them, "We can't do such a thing; we can't give our sister to a man who is not circumcised. That would be a disgrace to us. 15 We will give our consent to you on one condition only: that you become like us by circumcising all your males. 16 Then we will give you our daughters and take your daughters for ourselves. We'll settle among you and become one people with you.

I) Is the interpretation that Jacob's sons shouldn't have used the sign of covenant with God as a means of deception correct?

II) Similarly, was the slaughter of the men of Shechem illegitimate?

51) As you rightly discern, the two questions are interrelated. For people living together in one society, since no self-defense was involved, such actions would certainly be illegitimate. However, for peoples of different nations/tribes, the standard for preemptive self-defense and redress of grievances is obviously quite different. On the one hand, I think it is safe to say that if Jacob's sons had asked for Shechem to be put to death for his crime, not only would they have been turned down, but the local men might well have decided to attack them as a threat to preempt a vendetta against themselves. On the other hand, for a tribe on good terms with another and otherwise enjoying its hospitality to deceptively destroy the others stock and stem is the most extreme possible reaction; but if this is warranted, then the deception would be warranted too (as a necessary part of warfare). Ultimately, of course, God says that He Himself will wipe out the Amorites and the rest of the Canaanites (Ex.23:23), and the Israelites are told to have no mercy upon them (Deut.7:2); on the other hand, that day had not yet come (Gen.15:16). Israel himself is less than pleased with this event, but his concern is for the danger this extreme action may bring from the surrounding tribes rather than any care for the destruction of the Shechemites (Gen.34:30), and his sons certainly have a point: "Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?" (Gen.34:31). Finally and most importantly, however, this action brings about a "blessing" from Israel that is more of a curse (and results in the rights of the firstborn resting upon the fourth born, Judah):

"Simeon and Levi are brothers-- their swords are weapons of violence. Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly, for they have killed men in their anger and

hamstrung oxen as they pleased. Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel! I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel."

Genesis 49:5-7

As this prediction is of divine origin, we may conclude that this reaction of the brothers was a serious overreaction, and that the better course would have been to demand appropriate recompense through a legal process; failing that or in consequence of hostilities from the other group, more extreme action may have been justified. It is a question of trusting God. Those who immediately resort to measures more violent and extreme than prudent or absolutely necessary ultimately do so because they have no faith that God can and will protect them in the event that things develop in a dangerous way.

52. Genesis 34:17 (NIV1984)

17 But if you will not agree to be circumcised, we'll take our sister[a] and go."

*a. Genesis 34:17 Hebrew daughter*

Why is "daughter" offered as an alternative rendering of "sister"?

52) The Hebrew word is "our daughter" (*bitenu*). While it is possible that the brothers are replying to Hamor in his own words (he had said "your daughter") when speaking to Jacob and to the brothers; but in verse 17, Jacob is not present. The use of "daughter" instead of "sister", therefore, is designed to give Hamor and company the impression that this "deal" has Jacob's approval and that the brothers are just go-betweens. So here is another offense, namely, engaging in the deception and doing this deed in Israel's name without his knowledge or approval.

53. Genesis 34:27 (NIV1984)

27 The sons of Jacob came upon the dead bodies and looted the city where[a] their sister had been defiled.

a. *Genesis 34:27 Or because*

Which word is used for "where" in this passage and how should it be rendered?

53) The Hebrew word is *'asher*, the relative pronoun used flexibly in a variety of ways. Often, to make the usage clear, a preposition will be used as in Greek; the LXX has *en*, which would yield "because" (i.e., "on account of which"), but there is no preposition in the Hebrew. Taking it as a straight relative would yield "the city which", and that could then to be expanded by understanding the "accusative" as specifying, yielding "the city [in respect of] which" or "where". However, it is also possible to translate "the city which had defiled their sister". The last possibility is the best because the verb is not passive (as both alternatives above suggest), but active in voice (i.e., *piel*, not *pual*); the fact that "city" is singular while the participle "defiled" is plural presents no obstacle since a city is semantically collective even if grammatically singular (and many such instances occur); moreover, the desire to emphasize the individual actions of the men of the town, rather than the city itself, is brought out more forcefully by this *ad sensum* construction in using the plural.

54. Genesis 35:5 (NIV1984)

5 Then they set out, and the terror of God fell upon the towns all around them so that no one pursued them.

Why would Jacob be pursued? Why did God have to send terror upon the towns?

54) It seems Jacob's fears about retaliation from the other inhabitants of the land (expressed at Gen.34:30) would have been realized had not the Lord been His wall of fire. This then is a final indication that the preemptive attack

by Levi and Simeon was ill-advised even from the standpoint of the most generous interpretation: not only did the action not make them more secure - but for this protection from God Himself it would have led to their destruction. I think it is safe to say, therefore, that the true and sole motivation for the attack was revenge alone (never a salutary thing, even in the coldest light of *Machtpolitik*).

55. Genesis 35:10 (NIV1984)

10 God said to him, "Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel." So he named him Israel.

Why does God name Jacob Israel here, having already done this at Genesis 32:28, when Jacob was preparing to meet Esau?

55) This is a reiteration of the promise inherent in the new name analogous to the reiteration of the covenants to Israel. If God says something once, it is enough; however, often He says important things more than once for our benefit (cf. Heb.6:16-19). For we human beings actually in the trenches in this world, repetition of this sort is very encouraging (and the Lord actually appeared to Jacob and said this to him at this time, a time when he was no doubt still uneasy about his status in the land as a result of what had happened at Shechem). I would also call attention to this part of the verse: "you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel". Given that the name Jacob occurs multiple times between the first and second naming, I think we must conclude that the first naming did not result in Jacob "sharing" this new name with everyone, or at least that he did not encourage others to use it nor did he forbid them from calling him "Jacob", but that is what the Lord commands here. So this reiteration serves notice that the Lord is serious about the *change* of name: i.e., it is not an additional title, but a mandatory replacement for the old name ("chisler").

56. Genesis 35:13 (NIV1984)

13 Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him.

Since the passage says "God went up from him", God must have appeared to Jacob there in some form - what form is it?

56) It is not specified here but we can imagine that it would be the same form in which the Angel of the Lord, the manifestation of Jesus Christ before His incarnation (aka a "Christophany"), always appeared, namely, in human form (as is also the case with angels), but with an obvious supernatural character (cf. Gen.3:8; Num.12:8; Josh.5:13-15; Judg.2:1-5; etc.).

57. Genesis 35:18 (NIV1984)

18 As she breathed her last-for she was dying-she named her son Ben-Oni.[a] But his father named him Benjamin.[b]

*a. Genesis 35:18 Ben-Oni means son of my trouble.*

*b. Genesis 35:18 Benjamin means son of my right hand.*

Why did Jacob rename the child?

57) Because for him this son was a great blessing rather than a cursing; despite the grievous loss of Rachel, Benjamin was not "trouble" but "a godsend".

58. Genesis 36:16 (NIV1984)

16 Korah,[a] Gatam and Amalek. These were the chiefs descended from Eliphaz in Edom; they were grandsons of Adah.

*a. Genesis 36:16 Masoretic Text; Samaritan Pentateuch (see also Gen. 36:11 and 1 Chron. 1:36) does not have Korah.*

I) Could you explain the point made in the footnote?

II) What does the word "chief" mean here?

58) The point is that while in the Hebrew for this verse we do have "Korah", where this same genealogy is given elsewhere (Gen.36:11 and 1Chron.1:36), it is omitted; and it is omitted even here from the Samaritan Pentateuch; that might indicate that the MT has added it, but why? Using the *lectio difficilior* principle of textual criticism (i.e., all other things being equal, the more troublesome reading is probably the correct one because its very difficulty explains why readers would want to get rid of it), we should look for another reason for the discrepancy; the most obvious possibility is that Korah was an insubstantial person for reasons not disclosed.

Secondly, the Hebrew word is '*aluph* (אלוף), which, in Israel today, means "general"; the word is derived from '*eleph*, meaning "a thousand", so that, properly, the word means "chiliarch" or "leader of a thousand men"; that would be roughly equivalent in English to a regimental commander, which in our western system is commanded by a colonel - but we may note by way of comparison that in our society at large "Colonel" is occasionally used as an honorific (at least it is in Kentucky where I live). In any event, this is a case of a military rank being used as a political title (cf. *Imperator*, "emperor").

59. Genesis 36:24 (NIV1984)

24 The sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah. This is the Anah who discovered the hot springs[a] in the desert while he was grazing the donkeys of his father Zibeon.

*a. Genesis 36:24 Vulgate; Syriac discovered water; the meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain.*

What is your view on the point made in the footnote?



59) The word in the MT is *ha-yemiym* (הַיְמִיִּם); the Hebrew word for "the waters" is *mayim* (מַיִם); the Vulgate and Syriac may reflect understanding the latter rather than the former (but see below). On the one hand, this would be a simple orthographic mistake to make (transposing the *yodh*); on the other hand, it is also a very easy reading mistake to make (similarly transposing the *yodh* in one's perception); in fact, it is more explainable as a reading mistake than a writing mistake. However, in favor of "waters" are also the facts that this is then an odd plural (without *yodh*), and there seems to be no Semitic equivalent to support the root thus configured as relating to "waters" or "springs". The "hot springs" translation comes from the Vulgate, and that leads me to think that Jerome (or his exemplar) was reading or interpreting *chami[y]m* (i.e., "hot", with *cheth* instead of *he* in the place of the article, a common enough confusion of letters) in order to interpret the crux. I would prefer translating "springs", as that seems to be clearly the case no matter what (Koehler-Baumgartner have "serpents", but I think the context rules out that possibility entirely).

#### 60. Genesis 37:3 (NIV1984)

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented[a] robe for him.

*a. Genesis 37:3 The meaning of the Hebrew for richly ornamented is uncertain; also in verses 23 and 32.*

Could you explain the point from the footnote?

60) The Hebrew phrase is *cethoneth passiyim* (כְּתוֹנֶת פַּסְיִים), and while it is true that the second word is difficult, the first most definitely means "robe" (the *cethoneth* is the basic item of clothing in the Mediterranean world of that time, a long "t-shirt"). The second word is plural, the singular of which means "extremity of the body", namely "palm of the hand" or "sole of the foot". It has been suggested that this then refers to the exceptional length of

the robe (cf. RSV: "a long robe with sleeves"), and that would seem to be correct. The Vulgate uses *polymita* which is from Greek meaning "many threaded", but this seems in turn to be a translation of the LXX *poikilon*, which means "variegated" and the variegation can be colors as well as textures. The sense, the customs of the day, the versions and the scholarship all go in this direction. The reason "many colored" persists is that it is a favorite cultural idea so that translating it differently is felt to be iconoclastic (rather than what it is, namely, correcting an error from the KJV and the *Luther-Bibel*).

#### 61. Genesis 37:21-22 (NIV1984)

21 When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said.<sup>22</sup> "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the desert, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.

It seems Reuben has got a good intention here, and yet Joseph doesn't reward him more than his brothers when they come to Egypt, but rather Benjamin?

61) Not as far as we know, at any rate. Of course, Reuben was the eldest, and should have been much more forceful with his brothers in their horrific scheming. Good intentions poorly carried out mean nothing, especially if they evince, as in this case, a sloppy approach to things (and Reuben's character was notoriously questionable, as a result of which he lost the rights of the firstborn).

#### 62. Genesis 37:29-30 (NIV1984)

29 When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes. 30 He went back to his brothers and said, "The boy isn't there! Where can I turn now?"

Where did Reuben go? In verses 21-22 he talks to his brothers and shortly after, in verse 29, he is said to return

to the cistern, having missed out on the rest of his brothers selling Joseph.

62) Scripture doesn't say. We can speculate that he may have had some duties to attend to (putting the best possible spin on things for his sake). But for me, this is another indication of his poor management of things. Given that his brother's life was endangered, what could have been so important that he abandoned him to the caprice of his other savagely jealous brothers?

63. Genesis 37:36 (NIV1984)

36 Meanwhile, the Midianites[a] sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.

*a. Genesis 37:36 Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac (see also verse 28); Masoretic Text Medanites*

Could you explain the footnote?

63) The only difference in the MT between the consonantal spelling of the merchants' name here and in verse 28 is the absence of the *yodh* here. Since *waw* and *yodh* are often "*matres lectiones*", that is, consonants standing for vowels as helps for pronunciation, we sometimes do find the letter in one place and not in another. It seems clear to me that there has been no change of nationality between the two verses (in the second instance they are described as "the" people).

64. Genesis 39:6 (NIV1984)

6 So he left in Joseph's care everything he had; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

What is meant by "except the food he ate"? Is it to say that Potiphar was only concerned about what he was eating?

64) Potiphar handed every item of business in his household to Joseph and was only concerned with his personal pleasures, the menu being the main thing he seems to have really cared about.

65. Genesis 40:16 (NIV1984)

16 When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given a favorable interpretation, he said to Joseph, "I too had a dream: On my head were three baskets of bread.[a]

*a. Genesis 40:16 Or three wicker baskets*

Could you explain the footnote? Which rendering is correct?

65) A *sal* is a basket. It is generally made of wicker. It's just a question of whether or not a translator feels that making this clear or not is necessary. Personally, I was not aware that there were other basket materials (not being an expert in basket-weaving); there are certainly different types of baskets, but I thought they were mostly all wicker.

66. Genesis 40:19 (NIV1984)

19 Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and hang you on a tree.[a] And the birds will eat away your flesh."

*a. Genesis 40:19 Or and impale you on a pole*

Alternative translation of the part of first sentence is proposed in the footnote - how should the passage be rendered?

66) The text gives the literal rendering; the footnote interprets that the "hanging" will be by impaling (rather than by rope); that is true, but I doubt many people will be thinking of a modern day "noose hanging" under the circumstances (since the head is removed first), and, after

all, the body has to be secured to the pole somehow, so I doubt the expansion is necessary, but it would be fine.

67. Genesis 41:37-38 (NIV1984)

37 The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. 38 So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God[a]?"

*a. Genesis 41:38 Or of the gods*

Did Pharaoh acknowledge that Joseph was a man with the spirit of the true God? Or was it the case, as the alternative translation given in the footnote suggests, that to Pharaoh Joseph seemed a supernaturally gifted man, yet Pharaoh did not attribute Joseph's discernment and abilities to one true God, but rather to Egyptian deities?

67) The word here, *'elohiym*, is a plural which technically and sometimes literally means "gods", but more frequently refers to "God". Pharaoh said what he said. The problem is an English one: we have to choose between the two when we translate (in Hebrew the reader decides). Here is a place where a transliteration would avoid the dilemma (even Joseph might have wondered what Pharaoh really meant on this the first occasion of their meeting). If it is the former, we would have to translate "**a** spirit of gods", since it is only by understanding the lead noun, *ruach*, "Spirit", and "the Spirit", that we can make *'elohiym* "God" as opposed to "gods" (no definite article).

68. Genesis 41:50-52 (NIV1984)

50 Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. 51 Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh[a] and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." 52 The second son he named Ephraim[b] and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."

- a. *Genesis 41:51 Manasseh sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for forget.*
- b. *Genesis 41:52 Ephraim sounds like the Hebrew for twice fruitful.*

Would you agree with the etymologies of the names of Joseph's sons proposed in footnotes?

68) Yes; in the case of the second name, the Hebrew dual ending accounts for the "twice".

69. Genesis 41:56-57 (NIV1984)

56 When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. 57 And all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world.

Joseph starts selling the grain to the Egyptians

69) Yes.

70. Genesis 42:8-9 (NIV1984)

8 Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. 9 Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected."

Can we surmise what were Joseph's dreams regarding his brothers? Did he dream that he would condemn them of being spies, knowing that it was not the case?

70) I think we have the whole dream in scripture. Joseph's reaction was what it was, and in the event resulted in the fulfillment of the dream more particularly. I am certain that if he had reacted differently, perhaps more generously, the dream would still have been fulfilled precisely. God certainly knew how he would react before the dream was ever given.

71. Genesis 42:16-20 (NIV1984)

16 Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth. If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!" 17 And he put them all in custody for three days. 18 On the third day, Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God: 19 If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households. 20 But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die." This they proceeded to do.

Why does Joseph start by saying that all brothers will be kept in prison but one who will go and get the one brother who stayed and then commands something exactly opposite - that one should stay in custody and the rest should take the grain and go?

71) Well, this certainly has the effect of terrifying the brothers in the first instance, then allowing for a workable situation after that effect has sunk in - no doubt the better to bring about the desired result, namely, that his brother, Benjamin should be brought down to Egypt, and there should be no doubt about the necessity of doing so in order to liberate Simeon and receive more supplies.

72. Genesis 42:21 (NIV1984)

21 They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us." 22 Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood."

I) Why did Joseph's brothers come to link their treatment of Joseph with their current situation? Was that true

remorse they felt there? It is somewhat hard to understand why they draw a conclusion regarding the erstwhile evil deed based on what they were going through at the time.

II) Linked to the above is my question regarding their words "that's why this distress has come upon us". Certainly they found themselves in a less than perfect situation, but why are they distressed, if they have the grain, for which they came, and all they have to do is get their other brother to be seen by Joseph?

72) I think this demonstrates that the brothers are all believers, albeit very immature ones (to do something like this to their brother). Guilt is what is motivating them; God is smiting their consciences through the Spirit as they are convicted (finally) about the wrong they have done. As to the circumstances, they assume they have lost one brother (by their own actions), see another being taken away (to an uncertain fate), and are being pressured to bring a third down to Egypt - the very thing they know for certain their aging father is unlikely to permit. They not doubt fear both his wrath and his anguish, and this is compounded by their guilty knowledge that they alone are responsible for the disappearance of Joseph, even though they deceived their father about this at the time: that sin is going to come out too.

73. Genesis 42:23 (NIV1984)

23 They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter.

Why did Joseph have to use an interpreter to understand his brothers speaking in his native language?

73) Joseph did not have to use an interpreter. It says "he could understand them". This adds to the effectiveness of the deception. If the effective ruler of Egypt could understand Hebrew (a very obscure dialect at this point), that would lead to suspicion about just who this man was,



and Joseph was not yet ready to reveal himself to his brothers.

74. Genesis 42:27-28 (NIV1984)

27 At the place where they stopped for the night one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack. 28 "My silver has been returned," he said to his brothers. "Here it is in my sack." Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, "What is this that God has done to us?"

Again it's hard for me to understand Joseph's brothers' behaviour. "Their hearts sank" when they discovered that their silver has been returned and they complain about what God has done to them, yet they don't turn back to Egypt, so as to pay for the grain?

74) The brothers are terrified because they have no idea who did this thing, but, as with all who have guilty consciences in general, they are afraid that the effective ruler of Egypt is not only not the one who ordered this but that he will never believe that they have not stolen the money themselves. At this point, making a quick escape is much easier for those with little moral courage than going back to explain the "misunderstanding".

75. Genesis 42:37-38 (NIV1984)

37 Then Reuben said to his father, "You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him back." 38 But Jacob said, "My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow."

Jacob doesn't agree to entrust his youngest son to Reuben, but later does agree to entrust him to Judah:

Genesis 43:8-11 (NIV1984)

8 Then Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die. 9 I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life. 10 As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice." 11 Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be, then do this:

Why did Jacob heed to Judah's proposal, but not to Reuben's? Is it to do with the position of these two sons of his, or is it simply a decision influenced by their situation growing increasingly harder?

75) I think your observation is correct, namely, that time has passed and the increasingly dire situation has made this more of a necessity.

76. Genesis 43:23 (NIV1984)

23 "It's all right," he said. "Don't be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver."

Why does Joseph say that he received their silver, when he didn't?

76) It is Joseph's steward who makes this statement. He had received the silver; but he gave the silver back on Joseph's orders. He is telling them this in order to put their minds at ease so they don't assume that "the ruler or the land" thinks they are thieves.

77. Genesis 44:9-10 (NIV1984)

9 If any of your servants is found to have it, he will die; and the rest of us will become my lord's slaves." 10 "Very well, then," he said, "let it be as you say. Whoever is found

to have it will become my slave; the rest of you will be free from blame."

Jacob's steward says "let it be as you say", but doesn't repeat what Joseph's brothers said?

77) The "as you say" part is the party to whom guilt will accrue; he merely modifies the terms to be more lenient (so that Benjamin alone will have to stay).

78. Genesis 45:7 (NIV1984)

7 But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.[a]

*a. Genesis 45:7 Or save you as a great band of survivors*

Could you clarify the point made in the footnote?

78) The question has to do with the Hebrew word *peleytah*, a noun based on the root *palat* (meaning "escape"). As a verbal noun, it sometimes means the fact of escaping, and sometimes means the thing/person/group which has escaped. So both "band of survivors" and "great deliverance" are possible, though I feel that the former is correct (as well as much more likely under the circumstances).

79. Genesis 46:13 (NIV1984)

13 The sons of Issachar: Tola, Puah,[a] Jashub[b] and Shimron.

*a. Genesis 46:13 Samaritan Pentateuch and Syriac (see also 1 Chron. 7:1); Masoretic Text Puvah*

*b. Genesis 46:13 Samaritan Pentateuch and some Septuagint manuscripts (see also Num. 26:24 and 1 Chron. 7:1); Masoretic Text Iob*

Could you relate to both footnotes?

79) The names in the footnotes are what the Hebrew text reads. The alternative names are what one finds in the Hebrew at 1st Chronicles 7:1 (and also in the Greek LXX in this passage); so some versions harmonize the names. However, it is not uncommon at all to find alternative names for individuals in either testament (cf. the names of the twelve apostles).

80. Genesis 46:16 (NIV1984)

16 The sons of Gad: Zephon, [a] Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi and Areli.

*a. Genesis 46:16 Samaritan Pentateuch and Septuagint (see also Num. 26:15); Masoretic Text Ziphion*

Could you relate to the point in the footnote?

80) Same as previous note, only here Genesis 46:16 is the place in the MT where the names are listed differently.

81. Genesis 46:27 (NIV1984)

27 With the two sons[a] who had been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob's family, which went to Egypt, were seventy[b] in all.

*a. Genesis 46:27 Hebrew; Septuagint the nine children*

*b. Genesis 46:27 Hebrew (see also Exodus 1:5 and footnote); Septuagint (see also Acts 7:14) seventy-five*

Could you explain both footnotes?

81) I explain the discrepancy between the MT on the one hand, and the LXX on the other ([Acts 7:14 is really consistent with the MT](#)) at the link. In a nutshell, the LXX is misunderstanding the "math" here.

82. Genesis 46:34 (NIV1984)

34 you should answer, 'Your servants have tended livestock from our boyhood on, just as our fathers did.'

Then you will be allowed to settle in the region of Goshen, for all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians."

What is the relationship between the Egyptians allowing Joseph's family to settle in Goshen and the fact that all shepherds are detestable to them?

82) Goshen was apparently a pasture land area and therefore characterized by flocks and shepherds; so it was a "good place" both for Israel's family with their large flocks, and also from the Egyptian point of view since they would be out of sight of the royal court.

83. Genesis 47:7 (NIV)

7 Then Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him before Pharaoh. After Jacob blessed[a] Pharaoh,

*a. Genesis 47:7 Or greeted*

I) Could you relate to the footnote? Which rendering is better?

II) Was this Pharaoh a believer? Or was it right for Jacob to bless him regardless of that?

83) As to the footnote, the Hebrew word is *barakh*, and this usually does mean "bless"; most greetings in most languages - as well as parting words - are derived from mild blessing formulae so that it is possible to understand this as a mere "greeting", but that does not seem from the context to be the case here. As to the blessing, God often blesses unbelievers, especially leaders in circumstances where they will then be used to protect/bless the believers under their charge (e.g., Is.45:1-6 cf. Matt.5:45; Acts 14:7).

84. Genesis 47:21 (NIV)

21 and Joseph reduced the people to servitude, [a] from one end of Egypt to the other.

*a. Genesis 47:21 Samaritan Pentateuch and Septuagint (see also Vulgate); Masoretic Text and he moved the people into the cities*

How should this passage be rendered?

84) The footnote is correct; the MT should be read. LXX is just trying to make sense of a passage the translator(s) didn't understand, and it was followed by the versions.

85. Genesis 47:29 (NIV)

29 When the time drew near for Israel to die, he called for his son Joseph and said to him, "If I have found favor in your eyes, put your hand under my thigh and promise that you will show me kindness and faithfulness.

Was putting the hand under the thigh a custom linked with swearing?

85) see answer 29 II.

86. Genesis 47:31 (NIV)

31 "Swear to me," he said. Then Joseph swore to him, and Israel worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. [a]

*a. Genesis 47:31 Or Israel bowed down at the head of his bed*

Which rendering is correct?

86) Hebrews 11:21 favors the text version. The issue is that the consonants *MTH* are vocalized here in the MT as *mittah* (bed), whereas the same consonants vocalized as *matteh* would mean "staff". The consonants are the inspired text; the vowels (unless being *matres lectiones* or consonants which are part of what was originally written standing for vowels) are not original and were added later by the Masoretes (ca. 8th cent. A.D., give or take a few centuries). Based on Hebrews, I conclude that "staff" is correct.

87. Genesis 48:5 (NIV)

5 "Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine.

Why does Jacob say that these two sons of Joseph are his?

87) This is done as a prophecy in response to the Spirit's guidance (cf. Heb.11:21), analogous to Isaac's blessing of Jacob and Esau (cf. Heb.11:20). The practical and divinely intended effect is to provide a double portion tribe to fill the gap left by the special promotion of Levi (which was yet to come of course).

88. Genesis 48:8 (NIV)

8 When Israel saw the sons of Joseph, he asked, "Who are these?"

Jacob first says that two sons of Joseph will be his and shortly after, when they are before him, he asks who they are?

88) Just as his father Isaac was nearly blind when he blessed his two sons, so Jacob seems to have been at this point. The parallels between the two blessings are interesting and important.

**Addendum:**

**Q:** I came across an interpretation which seems to make good sense and ties in well with your point about Israel's prophecy being given in response to Spirit's guidance. Namely, Israel's prophecy is given before he sees Joseph's sons. What do you think?

**A:** Yes indeed, that is the biblical order.

89. Genesis 48:20-22 (NIV)

20 He blessed them that day and said, "In your[a] name will Israel pronounce this blessing: 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.'" So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. 21 Then Israel said to Joseph, "I am about to die, but God will be with you[b] and take you[c] back to the land of your[d] fathers. 22 And to you I give one more ridge of land[e] than to your brothers, the ridge I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow."

*a. Genesis 48:20 The Hebrew is singular.*

*b. Genesis 48:21 The Hebrew is plural.*

*c. Genesis 48:21 The Hebrew is plural.*

*d. Genesis 48:21 The Hebrew is plural.*

*e. Genesis 48:22 The Hebrew for ridge of land is identical with the place name Shechem.*

I) If the passage says "blessed them", why is the "your name" in singular?

II) Is the blessing from verse 20 only for Ephraim?

89) I think this is a recognition of the collective nature of the two even though they are two, technically speaking; and I think that therefore that the blessing has to encompass both as both are mentioned in verse 20.

90. Genesis 49:5 (NIV)

5 "Simeon and Levi are brothers-their swords[a] are weapons of violence.

*a. Genesis 49:5 The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain.*

Could you relate to the footnote?

90) The word here, *mecherah*, is a "*hapax legomenon*", that is, it only occurs once in scripture, right here, and on top of that it is not clear what its root is. For those reasons, we have to guess from context and use the versions as our guide; on the latter score, there is no



unanimity. Aquila (one of the three Greek alternatives to the LXX) does have "swords", and that does fit the context and the history. An aside: the word strongly resembles the Greek word for sword, *machaira*, but the commentators who know something about linguistics are very certain that this is merely an accident. If *machaira* comes from *machomai*, the verb "to fight", that is probably true; if, however, it is a loan word (and the resemblance to *machomai* is accidental), then an argument might be made for "swords" on that evidence.

91. Genesis 49:10 (NIV)

10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, [a] until he to whom it belongs [b] shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his.

*a. Genesis 49:10 Or from his descendants*

*b. Genesis 49:10 Or to whom tribute belongs; the meaning of the Hebrew for this phrase is uncertain.*

Could you explain both footnotes?

91) On the first note, *regel* is "foot", but can mean "following" in the sense of those who follow "at one's heel/foot" (cf. "footman"); I don't find that paralleled anywhere to mean "descendants", however. As to the second, I like [the NIV rendering here](#) (see the link).

92. Genesis 49:12 (NIV)

12 His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk. [a]

*a. Genesis 49:12 Or will be dull from wine, / his teeth white from milk*

Could you explain the footnote?

92) The "from vs. than" in the two halves stems from the fact that the Hebrew preposition *min*, which we have here in both parts, can mean "from" (its basic meaning), but also "than" in the sense of expressing a comparison. Hebrew does not have comparative adjectival or adverbial forms, so one has to take this cue from the context and the presence of *min*. The problem here is that it works "nicely" either way in terms of pure language, although I think the NIV is clearly correct for a number of reasons, mostly theological: this is a Messianic prophecy describing the exceptional appearance of the Messiah.

93. Genesis 49:14-15 (NIV)

14 "Issachar is a rawboned[a] donkey lying down among the sheep pens.[b] 15 When he sees how good is his resting place and how pleasant is his land, he will bend his shoulder to the burden and submit to forced labor.

*a. Genesis 49:14 Or strong*

*b. Genesis 49:14 Or the campfires; or the saddlebags*

Could you explain both footnotes and the meaning of this prophecy?

93) On the first note, the issue is the meaning of *garem* (a poetic form of *'etsem*) which literally means "bone" but often is used as the Hebrew intensive reflexive, "self". So according to the former the text printed would be an attempt to work in the "bone" meaning; the note (which I take as correct) is a way to express "real donkey" or "strong donkey". As to the second note, the word *mispethaim* is a difficult one, but it occurs again at Judges 5:16 where "sheep folds" is a good rendering (so I agree with NIV); the other possibilities are based on etymology and logic respectively (i.e., "campfires" because the word is close to the word for "ash heaps" and thus may be a misspelling, and "saddlebags" because the word is dual and saddlebags are a "dual" thing often associated with donkeys). As to the interpretation, it seems clear that Issachar is by nature not a particularly ambitious tribe but

one which will be satisfied with agricultural endeavors and menial work (and if memory serves this fits the later biblical account quite well; cf. Deut.33:8; notable exceptions: Judg.10:1; 1Ki.15:27).

94. Genesis 49:16-17 (NIV)

16 "Dan[a] will provide justice for his people as one of the tribes of Israel. 17 Dan will be a snake by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider tumbles backward.

*a. Genesis 49:16 Dan here means he provides justice.*

In [Coming Tribulation](#) at the link you wrote that antichrist will come from the tribe of Dan, so why does the prophecy regarding him say that he "will provide justice for his people"?

94) I translate:

(16) Dan [in the person of antichrist] will judge his people as if he were [of] one of the tribes of Israel. (17) [But] Dan (i.e., antichrist) will be a serpent beside the road, a viper beside the path, one who strikes at a horses heels, so that its rider falls [off] backwards. (18) I wait [in hope] for your deliverance, O Lord!  
Genesis 49:16-18

The verb *dhiyn* means "judge", often in the sense of ruling, but does not necessarily imply fairness.

95. Genesis 49:21 (NIV)

21 "Naphtali is a doe set free that bears beautiful fawns. [a]

*a. Genesis 49:21 Or free; / he utters beautiful words*

How should this prophecy be interpreted?

95) The Hebrew says "words"; the sense has bothered many. As a result, other "solutions" have been found. The

LXX talks about "beautiful (offspring) in procreation", so that ways have been sought to make *'emer* (from *'amar*, the basic verb for speaking) mean something else than it means. "Boughs" is sometimes tried based on a questionable parallel in Isaiah, and this further necessitates making "doe" into some sort of leafy tree (based on a similar root). Alternatively, *'immer* (same roots), is said to mean "lamb" in Assyrian, so might mean "fawns" in this context. In my view, better to stick with the MT and go with note (a.).

96. Genesis 49:22 (NIV)

22 "Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall. [a]

*a. Genesis 49:22 Or Joseph is a wild colt, / a wild colt near a spring, / a wild donkey on a terraced hill*

I) How should this verse be rendered?

II) In general, the prophecy regarding Joseph is very promising, but yet our Lord doesn't come from this tribe?

96) To take the last question first, yes it is true that the decline of Ephraim and Manasseh is amazing and distressing all at once, especially given Joseph's greatness. In my view this goes to show how many with great potential who make a good start of things often "come a cropper" in the end - a salutary lesson to us all (for an angelic parallel, see the link: "[The ordering of the angelic clans](#)"). Our Lord comes from Judah, the tribe which receives the first-born rights and the resulting double portion.

As to the meaning, this is another very difficult verse and the text printed (or thereabouts) is the best that can be made of the passage (*parah* meaning bough/fruitful in noun/adj. forms respectively). The alternative attempt noted here is clever if highly speculative requiring us to read *para'* (with final *aleph*) instead = "wild ass"; I don't

think there is a good enough "sync" with what follows (where one runs into other troubles) to embark on a series of emendations.

97. Genesis 49:27 (NIV)

27 "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he devours the prey, in the evening he divides the plunder."

What is the meaning of this prophecy?

97) I think Unger *in loc.* (*Commentary on the Old Testament*) is correct in seeing this as a prophecy of the warlike nature of the tribe (he lists many examples; cf. in particular Saul and his sons).

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