

# Midrashim - Part II

## **Types of Narrative Expansions:**

1. Gaps
2. Discrepancies and Inconsistencies
3. Interpreting Biblical Dialogue
4. Explaining the Meanings of Words
5. "Rewriting" the Biblical Story
6. Apparent Contradiction
7. Narrative Expansions That Enrich the Biblical Text

## **Problems in Understanding the Narrative Expansion:**

1. The Problem of Factuality
2. The Relationship Between the Midrashic Story and the Biblical Text
3. The Sources of Midrashic Stories

## **Three Approaches to Agada, as related in Rambam's Introduction to *Perek***

### ***Chelek:***

1. Literal (Attitude to *Chazal* = reverence)
2. Literal (Attitude to *Chazal* = primitive storytellers)
3. Figurative and Literal

The methodological approach to studying midrash employed in this study session as well as all translations and headings are taken from Simi Peters's *Learning to Read Midrash*, Urim Publications, 2004.

**Genesis Rabba 38:13**

*And Haran died on the face of Terah his father*

- (1) R. Hiyya the son of the son of R. Ada of Yafo:
- (2) Terah was a maker/worshipper [*oved*] of idols.
- (3) Once, he went somewhere and had Avraham sell [idols] in his place.
- (4) A person would come, wanting to buy, and he [Avraham] would say to him, "How old are you?"
- (5) And he [the customer] would answer, "Fifty or sixty years old."
- (6) And he would say to him, "Woe to a sixty-year-old who wants to bow to [something that is] a day old."
- (7) And he would be embarrassed and go away.
- (8) One time, one woman came, carrying one plate of fine flour.
- (9) She said to him, "This is for you to offer before them."
- (10) He got up, took a stick in his hand, and broke all the idols, and then placed the stick in the hand of the biggest of them.
- (11) When his father came, he said to him, "Who did this to them?"
- (12) [Avraham] said to him, "Shall I hide it from you?"
- (13) A woman came, carrying a plate of fine flour, and she said, "This is for you to offer before them."
- (14) I offered it before them, and this one said, 'I will eat first,' and that one said, 'I will eat first.'
- (15) The biggest one among them got up, took the stick, and broke them."
- (16) He said to him, "Why are you mocking me? And do they know?!" [Are they conscious beings?]
- (17) [Avraham] said to him, "Don't your ears hear what your mouth is saying?"
- (18) [Terah] took him and handed him over to Nimrod.
- (19) [Nimrod] said to him [Avraham], "Let's worship fire."
- (20) Avraham said to him, "Let's worship water, which extinguishes fire."
- (21) Nimrod said to him, "Let's worship water."
- (22) [Avraham] said to him, "Then, let's worship clouds, which carry water."
- (23) He said to him, "Let's worship clouds."
- (24) He said to him, "Then, let's worship the wind, which moves the clouds."
- (25) He said to him, "Let's worship the wind."
- (26) He said to him, "Let's worship Man, who bears the wind."
- (27) He said to him, "You are speaking foolishness. I worship only fire. Now, I will throw you into its midst, and let the God that you worship come and save you from it."
- (28) Haran was standing there, divided.
- (29) He said, "*Ma nafshakh?*"<sup>2</sup> If Avraham wins, I will say, 'I am with Avraham,' and if Nimrod wins, I will say, 'I am with Nimrod.'"
- (30) When Avraham went down into the furnace of fire and was saved, they said to him, "Whose are you?"<sup>3</sup> and he said to them, "I am with Avraham."
- (31) They took him and threw him into the flames and his innards were scorched
- (32) and he came out and died on the face of Terah his father.
- (33) That is what it says, "And Haran died on the face of Terah his father."

# Midrash Worksheet

## **The Use of Structure as an Interpretive Tool**

Please outline the midrash, using the translation on page 2 as a worksheet. Then, if you like, you may list the elements of the midrash here. (Note that there are 4 dialogues presented in the midrash)

## **Linguistic Ambiguity Reflecting Cognitive Dissonance**

Translation of word עובד in Hebrew context of beginning of midrash:

Translation of word עובד in Aramaic context of rest of midrash:

## **The First Dialogue: Avraham and the Customers**

## **The Second Dialogue: Avraham and the Woman**

# Midrash Worksheet

**The Third Dialogue: Avraham and Terach**

**The Fourth Dialogue: Avraham and Nimrod**

**Charan's Internal Dialogue**

**The Reaction of the On-Lookers**

**Charan's Death**

**בראשית רבא**

(יט) וימת הרן על פני תרה אביו . ר' חייא בריה דרב אדא דיפו אמר תרה עובד לצלמים ומוכר היה . חד זמן נפיק לאתר . הושיב לאברהם מוכר תחתיו . הוה אתי בר איניש בעי דיוכן . והוה א"ל בר כמה שנין את . והוה א"ל בר המשין או שיתין . והוה א"ל ווי ליה להוהא גברא דהוא בר שיתין ובעי למסגד לבר יומא . והיה מתבייש והולך לו . חד זמן אתת הדא איתתא טעינא בידה חדא פינג דסולת . א"ל הא לך קרב קודמיהון . קם נסיב בוקלסא בידיה ותברהון לכולהון פסיליא . ויהב בוקלסא בידא דרבה דהוה ביניהון . כיון דאתא אבוה א"ל מאן עביד להון כדין . א"ל מה נכפור מינג . אתת הדא איתתא טעינא לה הדא פינג דסולת . ואמרת לי הא לך קריב קדמיהון . קריבת לקדמיהון . הוה דין אמר אנא איכול קדמאי . ודין אמר אנא איכול קדמאי . קם הדין רבה דהוה ביניהון . נסיב בוקלסא ותברינון א"ל מה אתה מפלה בי וידעון אינון . א"ל ולא ישמעו אוניך מה שפיך אומר . נסביה ומסריה לנמרוד . א"ל נסגוד לנורא . א"ל אברהם ונסגוד למיא דמטפין נורא . א"ל נמרוד נסגוד למיא . א"ל א"כ נסגוד לעננא דטעין מיא . א"ל נסגוד לעננא . [א"ל] א"כ נסגוד לרוהא דמבדר עננא . א"ל נסגוד לרוהא . א"ל ונסגוד לבר איניש דסביל רוהא . א"ל מילין את משתעי . אני איני משתחה אלא לאור הרי אני משליכך בתוכו . ויבא אלוה שאתה משתחה לו ויצילך הימנו . הוה תמן הרן קאים פליג . אמר מה נפשך אם נצח אברהם אנא אמר מן דאברהם אנא . ואם נצח נמרוד אנא אמר דנמרוד אנא . כיון שירד אברהם לכבשן האש וניצול . אמרין ליה דמאן את . א"ל מן דאברהם אנא . נשמחו והשליכוהו לאור ונהמרו בני מעיו . ויצא ומת על פני תרה אביו . הה"ד (נאלשי"ת) וימת הרן על פני תרה וגו' :