מדרש

Midrash

ON GENESIS 25:6

Why things added later can outshine the original

Bereshit Rabbah 61:4

The sages debate the identity of Ketura, with Rav identifying her as Hagar, reunited with Abraham by divine command, her new name reflecting that she was "perfumed" with mitzvot (commandments) and good deeds and had remained sealed and untouched during her years of separation from him. Bar Kappara broadens the discussion into a general principle: whenever Scripture uses a term of "addition" (tosefet) to describe a person or thing, that addition surpasses the original—illustrated through Abel surpassing Cain, Benjamin surpassing Joseph, Shela surpassing Er, the extra years granted to Job and Hezekiah, and the sons of Ketura surpassing Ishmael. The unifying teaching is that what comes as a divinely granted addition often exceeds the original in merit or blessing. AI SUMMARY

"And her name was Ketura" – Rav said: This is Hagar. Rabbi Neḥemya said to him: 'But is it not written "[Abraham took] another [vayosef]"?' He said to him: '[That means only that] he married her on the basis of a divine command, just as it says: "The Lord continued [vayosef] speaking to me again, saying"' (Isaiah 8:5). He said to him: 'But is it not written "and her name was Ketura"?' He said to him: 'That is because she was perfumed [mekuteret] with mitzvot and good deeds.' [He said to him:] But is it not written: "And to the sons of the concubines of Abraham [Abraham gave gifts and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he was still alive...]"?' (Genesis 25:6). He said to him: 'Pilagsham is written. "While he was still alive [ḥai]" – [this alludes to Hagar] the one who had sat by the well and said to the One who lives [ḥai] forever: See my misery.'

Rabbi Berekhya said: Even though it says: "She [Hagar] went off and wandered in the wilderness..." (Genesis 21:14), lest you say that perhaps some person was suspected [of becoming immorally involved] with her, the verse states: "And her name was Ketura" – from the word 'bound up' [ketar]; she was like one who seals a treasure and takes it out bound and sealed.

Bar Kappara said: Additions [tosafto] that are granted by the Holy One blessed be He are even greater than the original item. Cain was the original son [of Eve], and Abel, because he was considered an addition, as it is written: "She continued [vatosef] giving birth...[to Abel]" (Genesis 4:2) – he was born with his two twin sisters. Joseph was the original son [of Rachel], and Benjamin, because addition is written in his regard, he produced ten children, as it is written: "And the sons of Benjamin: Bela, and Bekher..." (Genesis 46:21). Er was the original son [of Judah], and Shela, because an expression of addition is used for him, he produced ten courts. That is what is written in Chronicles: "The sons of Shela son of Judah: Er, father of Lekha; and Lada father of Maresha; and the families of the house of the craft of fine linen, of the house of Ashbe'a..." (I Chronicles 4:21–23). Job's age was originally only seventy years, and one hundred and forty years were added to his life, as it is written: "After this, Job lived for one hundred and forty years" (Job 42:16). Hezekiah's original reign was only fourteen

years, but fifteen years were added to it, as it is stated: "Behold, I am adding fifteen years to your days" (Isaiah 38:5). Ishmael was the original son, and the sons of Ketura, because an expression of addition is used regarding them [the verse tells us] "She bore him Zimran..." (Genesis 25:2).

