Sages in the Talmudic tradition, commenting on the long chapters in Genesis which tell the story of the Patriarchs, teach us that the Fathers’ actions are signs for their descendants. At first sight, one gets the impression that this implies a kind of determinism: must the Patriarchs’ trials, failures and advances in the religious sphere necessarily be reproduced from one generation to the next? In his Maxims of the Fathers of the Synagogue, Rabbi Akiba, one of the greatest doctors of the law (who died a martyr in 135), taught that though everything is predetermined, freedom remains intact.

This seems quite clear to Rabbi Akiba. As for us, how are we to resolve this apparent contradiction? Perhaps by linking it to this other assertion: Teshuva—repentance—was created before the creation of the world. In other words, teshuva is, as it were, a grain of sand wanted by God which can disorganize the perfect order of His work. This work is thus paradoxically brought to a far better completion than if it had proceeded according to the divine design only. It now belongs to both God and man created free and in the image and likeness of God. It leads to the ultimate stage which is the coming into the Eighth Day, symbolizing the messianic era. At that time, God will add to the Hebrew Bible the only missing verse: And there was evening, and there was morning, an eighth day.

I should like to introduce my remarks today with some thoughts about the relations between Joseph and his brothers. Here is what the Bible says:

This is the history of the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. He was
Chief Rabbi René-Samuel Sirat

a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. Joseph brought an evil report of them to their father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colors. His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, and they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him. Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brothers, and they hated him all the more. He said to them, “Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and behold, your sheaves came around, and bowed down to my sheaf.” His brothers said to him, “Will you indeed reign over us? Or will you indeed have dominion over us?” They hated him all the more for his dreams and for his words. He dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brothers, and said, “Behold, I have dreamed yet another dream: and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down to me.” He told it to his father and to his brothers. His father rebuked him, and said to him, “What is this dream that you have dreamed? Will I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves down to you to the earth?” His brothers envied him, but his father kept this saying in mind. His brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. Israel said to Joseph, “Aren't your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them.” He said to him, “Here I am.” He said to him, “Go now, and see what is the peace in which your brothers live, and the peace within the flock; and bring me word again.” So he sent him out of the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

Many points immediately catch our attention.

1. This is the history of the generations of Jacob. This break in the narrative raises a question in our minds. After the history of the generations of Jacob, one would expect an account of the Patriarch's twelve sons and one daughter. In the text, Joseph alone seems to be the continuation of Jacob's lineage, just as Isaac alone continued Abraham's lineage: This is the history of the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham became the father of Isaac...⁵

2. [...with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives] Were not the sons of Leah, the eldest sons in the family, also his
brothers, sons of his father’s first ranking wife?

3. [. . . an evil report of them] Contrasting with the impression produced by the preceding paragraph, Joseph visibly lacks generosity.

4. [. . . he (Jacob) made him a coat of many colors.] How surprising! Instead of scolding his son, Jacob presents him with a multicolored tunic, much to the annoyance of his brothers. [His brothers saw that Jacob loved him (Joseph) more than all his brothers, and they hated him.] Who will tell how much mistakes by fathers (and mothers) in the raising of their children directly contribute to failures in a siblings’ group, hatred and jealousy among its members? Rashi, the great exegete of the Bible, like the Midrash before him, judges the Patriarch’s conduct most severely.

5. [. . . they (the brothers) could not speak peaceably to him.] Isn’t this a serious lapse from brotherly love?

6. Worse still: by telling his dreams to them, Joseph, perhaps knowingly, makes the situation worse. [Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: ...your sheaves came around and bowed to my sheaf...] Joseph sees that his brothers can no longer speak to him peaceably. Will he be provocative to the point of telling them about a dream the interpretation of which is obvious? He goes even beyond that. In spite of their strong reaction, he perseveres. He tells them about a second dream, thus driving them to hatred. He will soon experience the effects of that hatred.

   More surprising still: after hearing about the second dream, Jacob rebukes his son. (Is one responsible for one’s dreams? The revealed text seems to say so thirty-three centuries before Freud.) Now, what does the father say to his beloved son: “Will I and your mother (who died many years earlier) and your brothers indeed come to you to bow ourselves down to you to the earth?” What a strange rebuke!

7. Is Jacob the Patriarch—now he is called Israel, the name he has just received from God—unaware of the brothers’ hatred and jealousy? He tells Joseph to go and see what is the peace in which your brothers live. Alas! It is a peace which links them only as criminal accomplices preparing a dreadful revenge against their young brother. Is he then responsible for the tragic event that will happen next?

   The Bible, of course, provides us with answers to all these questions.

*The break in the account of Jacob’s generations.*

This anticipates, if only in part, Joseph’s family history. Joseph will later tell his father through his brothers, “There I will nourish you...lest you come to poverty.”66 Indeed, only Joseph can ensure the material and
spiritual survival of his father and brothers. But the end of the story, the meeting and reconciliation of the brothers, contradicts this affirmation. Hence the opening verse of Exodus: "Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who came into Egypt." Understand: upon the generous initiative of Joseph, the Viceroy. This verse provides a definite redress to the verse we have just recalled. The apparent break in the Biblical narrative is given its full meaning.

*Joseph seeking the company of the servants' sons.*

It is characteristic of Jacob's descendants that they go and help the weakest, the sons of the maidservants. Indeed, Bilhah and Zilpah first were servants of Rachel and Leah, respectively, before they became, at their mistresses' request, wives of their common husband. "If your brother has become poor, and his hand can't support him among you; then you shall uphold him."³⁸

*Joseph makes known to his father evil rumors concerning his brothers.*

Joseph's behavior is unworthy of the leader he thinks he is (as his dreams demonstrate). Reporting the brothers' evil deeds instead of assuming joint liability with them, the better to make good their errors (tikkun) and foster their teshuva (repentance) is not morally acceptable.

*Jacob orders a multicolored tunic to be made for Joseph and does not present the other brothers with any.*

One must refer to the rabbis' commentary on this point: "Because of a cheap tunic, hatred made its appearance in Jacob's family, causing it to undergo exile, suffering and servitude."³⁹

*The brothers refuse to make a show of a fictitious peace and brotherhood.*

Unlike the negative value judgments just mentioned, the rabbis' comment on this point is paradoxical. It shows, they say, that Jacob's sons are not hypocrites. As they felt resentment toward Joseph, they could not address him with peaceful words. What was wrong is that no one, not even the Patriarch, attempted to restore the necessary peace in their hearts.

Jacob is puzzled by the dream Joseph just recalled before him. Let us recall Psalm 126:

When The Lord brought back those who returned to Zion, we were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.
Then they said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them.”
The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad.
Restore our fortunes again, Lord, like the streams in the Negev.
Those who sow in tears will reap in joy.
He who goes out weeping, carrying seed for sowing, will certainly come again with joy, carrying his sheaves.

This is the *tikkun*, the reparation of the crime that took place in Shechem. Full reconciliation will be achieved between Joseph and his brothers on an equal footing — not as happened at the time of Jacob’s death when the brothers tried to stir him to pity, now that he had become the viceroy of Egypt, by proposing to become his slaves.¹⁰

Then all Israel’s children will finally be reconciled, as foretold by the prophet Ezekiel:

Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, where they are gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.¹¹

Then Israel as a whole will be made up of people who dream, whose tongue is filled with joyful singing, who are admired by the nations: “The Lord has done great things for them.” Those who went out weeping, carrying grain to be scattered for sowing, sing joyful songs as they return, bending down under the weight of the harvest’s sheaves.¹²

Indeed, these are the sheaves Joseph, the unloved one, dreamed about.

*Jacob takes the risk of sending Joseph alone to meet all his brothers together.*

At this point, the Biblical text calls the Patriarch not Jacob, the father of sons who are about to murder their brother, but Israel, the father of the people of the ultimate Redemption, a people proclaiming
peace for itself and for mankind as a whole. At the time when the Biblical story takes place, Israel is concerned about the peace and happiness of all his children, and Joseph is precisely the one he chooses to see to it that the necessary brotherhood be established within Israel's family. God himself and Rachel, the mother who died too soon, will acknowledge and proclaim Joseph's election in peace and serenity restored.

For there shall be a day that the watchmen on the hills of Ephraim shall cry: "Arise you, and let us go up to Zion to the Lord our God." For thus says the Lord: "Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout for the chief of the nations: publish you, praise you, and say, Lord, save your people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the uttermost parts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her who travails with child together: a great company shall they return here. They shall come with [sweet] weeping and with [touching] petitions. I will lead them: I will cause them to walk by rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn."

Hear the word of the Lord, you nations, and declare it in the islands afar off and say: "He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock." For the Lord has ransomed Jacob, and redeemed him from the hand of him who was stronger than he. They shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow to the goodness of the Lord, to the grain, and to the new wine, and to the oil, and to the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old together; for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. I will satiate the soul of the priests with fat victims, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, says the Lord.

Thus says the Lord: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no
more.” Thus says the Lord: “Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded,” says the Lord; “and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your latter end,” says the Lord; “and your children shall come again to their own border.” I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: “You have chastised me, and I was chastised, as a calf unaccustomed to the yoke: turn you me, and I shall be turned; for you are the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I struck on my thigh: I was ashamed, yes, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.” “Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him,” says the Lord.  

Let us not forget that Ephraim is the favorite son of Joseph, the son both Jacob and Rachel loved so much, a favorite also of Jacob himself.  

The way in which verses in the Bible mutually shed light on one another makes the text in Genesis brilliantly clear and will allow us to bring out the Biblical lesson applicable to our time. This is what rabbis mean by the sentence I quoted earlier: the Fathers’ actions are signs for their descendants. This long series of chapters telling in detail the story of Jacob’s family will enable us to attempt to draw an indispensable lesson about the conduct we should adopt if we also are to reach the peace to which all aspire. We will now apply these verses to the present time.

Let us first recall that for many centuries, Christians’ attitude towards Jews was a hostile one. If we ask ourselves why this was so, the problem raised by Israel’s election is obviously what comes first to our mind. Having been chosen by God, the Jewish people felt that it had a spiritual mission on a universal scale. Christendom did not accept this choice of God. It could not speak peaceably to the people of the Promise. This rivalry is what we discover in the subsequent verses relating Joseph’s first dreams. The sheaves which the brothers bound in the fields bow down to Joseph’s. The sun, the moon and eleven stars respectfully bow before him.

These verses are wonderfully echoed at the end of the book of Genesis. After the Patriarch has died, the brothers are worried. They are afraid of Joseph’s mounting hatred. A spirit of jealousy or demand for
things due is not, this time, the reason why they could not directly address him with words of peace. What kept them from it is their feeling of guilt and inferiority. They went so far as to resort to language never used before: Your father commanded before he died, saying: "You shall tell Joseph, now please forgive the disobedience of your brothers, and their sin, because they did evil to you. Now, please forgive the disobedience of the servants of the God of your father." (...) Joseph replies: "Don't be afraid, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save many people alive." (...) He comforted them, and spoke kindly to them.¹⁵

Since events concerning the Patriarchs are bound to be reproduced in the life of their descendants, whether close or remote, let us continue our meditation and try to clarify the Jewish quest for true peace. As distant disciples of the Midrash masters, let us modestly try to ask the same questions again and bring the answers up to date.

The break in the account of Jacob's generations.

Let us listen to the reflections in the Talmud about the attitude toward Jesus of doctors of the law—including some of the most famous—who lived at the same time when he did.

This is what the Masters teach; if a man has committed an offence, push him away with your left hand—which symbolizes rigoroussness and also relative weakness, compared to the right hand, a symbol of mercy—but draw him back with your right hand, unlike Elisha who pushed away his [errant] servant Gehazi with both hands,¹⁶ or Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perahia who cast off Jesus of Nazareth with both hands.

When king [Alexander] Jannaeus put the Sages to death, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perahia and Jesus went to Alexandria, in Egypt. When peace returned [to Jerusalem], Simeon ben Shetah [Queen Salome Alexandra's brother] sent to the Master the following written message: From me, Jerusalem, the holy city, to you, Alexandria, in Egypt. O, my sister! My Lord and Master dwells in you and I am reduced to widowhood. Rabbi Yehoshua immediately set out to return. He had to stop at an inn where he was most respectfully treated. He exclaimed: "How wonderful the welcome in this inn!" His companion said: "Yet her eyes are so small!" The Master burst
out: "Is that what concerns you?" He then excommunicated him by blowing four hundred times in his shofar (the ram's horn used for the New Year and Kippur). Jesus returned several times and asked: "Master, accept my repentance." Rabbi Yehoshua paid no heed. One day, as the Master was reciting the prayer in Deuteronomy 6, — Shema Israel...Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might—Jesus asked once more [for forgiveness]. Rabbi Yehoshua decided to accept his repentance. With his hand he gave him a sign [to wait, for he could not interrupt his praying]. His disciple mistook this gesture for a final refusal. He erected a monument and became an apostate. Rabbi Yehoshua came to him and said: "Repent." Jesus replied: "I have received this teaching from you: whoever commits an error which brings along other people in its wake can no longer repent." 17

This text which dates from the third century gives precious indications about the break which took place in Jewish history at this most important time. Precisely at the moment when Simeon ben Shetah, an eminent figure in the Sanhedrin, informs the undisputed Master (my Lord and Master) that peace has returned to Jerusalem, a schism takes place which is based on a double misunderstanding. One should return to the basic exegesis of this particularly important text, insist on the symbolism of Jerusalem and Alexandria, emphasize the severe judgment passed on Rabbi Yehoshua (He could have referred to the precedent of Prophet Elisha's failing when he treated his servant Gehazi without an ounce of mercy.). One could wonder about his blaming Jesus for showing an interest in the innkeeper (see Luke 7, 36 - 8, 3). Also the strong desire by Jesus to see his repentance agreed to by his master (Don't think that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets... Matthew 5, 17) Then, at the end, the final break, in spite of Rabbi Yehoshua's abjuration, his offer of forgiveness comes too late (Don't think that I have come to send peace on the earth. People from one's own family will be one's enemies. Matthew 10, 34-35) One can understand why for many centuries this text was not promoted by the Vatican. It was known by Jews only through a confidential booklet (texts "omitted" from the Talmud). Even the Vilnius edition—the Talmud Vulgate—did not dare reprint it in its entirety.
Chief Rabbi René-Samuel Sirat

The final break between the Pharisees and the Judeo-Christian community mostly took place after Saul of Tarsus prevailed. At the time to which this text about the break refers, dissensions were raging among the people of Judea. A measure of their intensity is the Essenes' hatred of the Sadducees (and, to a lesser extent, the Pharisees).

And the [Essene] priests will bless all the people in God's lot, those who walk perfectly in all His ways, and they will say: "Let Him bless you in every good thing and guard you from every evil! Let Him enlighten your heart with the intelligence of life and let Him favor you with eternal knowledge! And let Him raise before you His gracious face to grant eternal happiness to you!" And the Levites will curse all the people in Belial's lot. They will speak up and say:

"Be cursed in all the works of your criminal impiety! Let God make you an object of fright through all the avengers of His revenge! Let Him throw at you extermination through all the executioners of his punishments! Be cursed, with no mercy, according to the darkness of your works! And be damned in the night of the eternal fire! Let God not favor you when you invoke Him and let Him be without forgiveness to atone for your iniquities! Let Him raise His angry face to take revenge of you, and let there be for you no [word of] peace on the lips of all those who have an attachment to the Fathers' [Alliance]!"

And all who tread in the Alliance will say after those who bless and those who curse: "Amen! Amen!"19

The Dead Sea manuscripts also provide us with precious details about the persecutions which the Sadducees—being at the time in power—inflicted on other Jewish sects.20 The flight of Rabbi Yehoshua and Jesus to Alexandria was probably not unrelated to these persecutions and accusations.

Jesus himself shows little kindness to the Jews in Chorazin, Bethsaida and Kfar Nahum:

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and
Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. You, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, you will go down to Hades. For if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in you, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, on the day of judgment, than for you.\(^{21}\)

During the centuries of persecution endured by the Jews, defensive reactions were in evidence from their side. They mostly demonstrated a will totally to ignore the Christian message and deprecate it as much as possible. A more balanced, more equitable judgment about Christianity as well as Islam had to wait until Jewish thinkers in medieval Spain and Catalonia formulated it for the benefit of their Jewish brethren. I have in mind masters like Maimonides (1138-1204), Nahmanides (1194-1270), and especially Rabbi Menahem ha Meiri (1241-1316).

Israel’s election was a bone of contention which led to many misunderstandings and much suffering. It was necessary to reaffirm, on each occasion, that it involves no exclusive rights or privileges reserved for Israel. On the contrary, it confers upon Israel additional obligations. These were willingly accepted at the foot of Mount Sinai when the Hebrew people exclaimed in unison: All that God shall say, we will do and we will hear it. This is recalled by the Bible in Deuteronomy when it says: “You have declared the Lord this day to be your God... and the Lord has declared you this day to be a people for his own possession” [literally: his jewel people].\(^{22}\) Israel’s mission is to spread among all human beings, created in the image and likeness of God the knowledge of and the faith in one only God, Creator of heaven and earth.

To be fair to both Christians and Jews, one must say that they never hid their feelings. They never advocated a fictitious peace, a fictitious friendship. By contrast, all declarations from both sides during the last half-century reveal a deep feeling of fraternity which is affirmed on every occasion. Jews and Christians fully appreciate it. Let me mention just one example: the remarks by Pope John Paul II and Prime Minister Ehud Barak at the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem in 2000. These statements will remain as testimony to Christian repentance after the Shoah and the will for friendship and brotherhood of Jews who survived horror.

The time has come, we fondly hope, to see those who, during many centuries, carried seed to be scattered for sowing and sowed in tears
because of the suffering inflicted upon their people, now return with joy, bending under the weight of their sheaves. Already at the time of the Second Temple, our forebears had crossed the seas so as to convince the God-fearing to come closer to the truth. Jesus paradoxically bears witness to this most difficult mission when he vehemently rebukes the scribes and Pharisees, saying: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel around by sea and land to make one proselyte."  

The priests also testify:

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under the sky. When this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because everyone heard them speaking in his own language. They were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Behold, aren't all these who speak Galileans? How do we hear, everyone in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, the parts of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians: we hear them speaking in our languages the mighty works of God!"

Even when Israel is surrounded by enemies seeking to ruin it, even when it is worried about its survival and the peace of the world which human folly may destroy forever, Israel must take upon itself its primary responsibility to be the light of nations, the announcer of good tidings, the peace maker, the builder of the temple of universal brotherhood.

The conflicting relations Christians and the Jewish people have entertained during many centuries culminated at the time of the Shoah. Israel then found itself alone before its persecutors. They were born in Christian Europe, but they held theories contrary to any revealed Faith. In a certain way, they became guilty of the crime of idolatry or, more exactly, self-idolatry. After the fall of Nazism, after the restoration of peace and democracy in Europe, we witnessed a sincere repentance by the Christian community. This culminated in the Declaration by the German bishops in 1997, followed by the Declaration of the French bishops at Drancy in 1998, then the Vatican Declaration in 1999, and the prayer by Pope John Paul II at the Western Wall in 2000. All these events show how far we have gone. They demonstrate a radical trans-
formation of relations between the Jewish and many Christian communities.

In concluding, one must however emphasize that there is a difference between what happened to Joseph and to the Jewish people of the present day. For Joseph it was no more than a time of trial. For the Jewish people, alas! it was the sad reality. This being said, what lesson must we draw from our recalling the family history of Patriarch Jacob, the most important of the three patriarchs according to the Jewish tradition? We have lived through a time of rupture, lack of understanding, persecution and, for Christians, the tragic misunderstanding about the subject of Israel's election, a time of hatred openly declared and endured. We have now come to the time when once again Patriarch Jacob asks us to go to humankind and see what kind of peace is shared by nations, what sort of fraternity rules their behavior. We are asked to lend a careful ear in order to try to discern the steps of Prophet Elijah announcing the coming of the Messiah. We should actively prepare ourselves for this privileged moment which has been awaited for so long. Let God soon, in our days, grant to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call on the name of the Lord, to serve him shoulder to shoulder. Meetings like this one, today, will bring us closer to the fulfillment of this beautiful prophesy by Zephaniah.

In an apocryphal text, Levi's Testament, the glory of the new priest is described as follows:

After their punishment is accomplished on behalf of the Lord, priesthood will disappear. Then the Lord will raise up a new priest to whom all the Lord's sayings will be revealed. He will judge on the earth in truth for numberless days. His star will rise in the heaven like a king's, resplendent in the light of Knowledge like the sun shining at noon and he will be magnified in the whole world. He will shine like the sun above the earth. He will remove every darkness from below the heaven and peace will reign all over the earth. The heavens will jubilate in these days, the earth will rejoice and the clouds will be in joy. The Knowledge of the Lord will spread out over the land like the water of the sea and the glorious angels of the Lord's Face will be joyful because of him. The heavens will open up and sanctification will come upon him from the Temple of glory as well as a paternal voice like that of Abraham over
Isaac. The glory of the Most High will be proclaimed over him and the Spirit of intelligence and sanctification will dwell on him in the water. For he is the one who will give the Lord's magnificence to his sons in truth forever and no one will succeed him from generation to generation forever.\footnote{28}

Let Prophet Elijah\footnote{29}—High Priest Phineas—come soon and in our days, announcing the Messiah.\footnote{30}

Notes

1. \textit{Midrash Rabba} on Genesis 70, 6.
2. III, 19 (16).
3. \textit{Midrash Rabba} on Genesis 1.
5. Ibid. 25, 19.
6. Ibid. 45, 10-11.
7. Exodus 1, 1.
8. Leviticus 25, 35.
9. Babylon Talmud, \textit{Shabbat} Treatise, 10 B.
11. 37, 21-22.
12. See also Jeremiah 31, 7.
15. Ibid. 49, 17.
16. 2 Kings 5, 27. 17. Babylon Talmud, \textit{Sanhedrin} Treatise 107 B.
18. See reference a few lines above, in the same text by Rabbi Yohanan.
20. \textit{Writing from Damascus} 1, 13 - 2, 13, ibid. pp. 143-144.
22. Deuteronomy 26, 17-18.
25. Emphasizing this point is the subject for a moving elegy recited until now in Ashkenazim rite synagogues on the 9th day of the month of Av for the commemoration of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. This elegy recalls the horrors the Jews endured in Christian Europe, especially on the banks of the Rhine River, at the time of the Crusades. The last verse reads: “Go, you martyr, and tell Abraham our father that for him [the binding of Isaac] was just a test, whereas, for us, it is the dreadful reality.”

26. Midrash Rabba on Genesis 76.


