Ramban’s Integrative Approach to the Reading of Biblical Narrative

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Introduction

The commentary of Rabbi Moses ben Nahman (Ramban), a foremost thirteenth-century Spanish exegete, is a rich, incisive medieval resource for the study of the stories of the Torah. The student of Ramban’s interpretation is drawn into the world of these stories—their plots, characters, themes, and didactic messages. How does Ramban succeed in vivifying the narratives and their personae, engrossing his readers and motivating them to want to study more about the biblical stories and their meanings? What is the unique appeal of Ramban’s commentary, such that nowadays his analyses are increasingly studied? I believe that one of the answers lies in discerning his distinctive mode of reading biblical narrative.

A hallmark feature of Ramban’s exegetical method is his integrative approach to the study of the biblical text and context. Ramban reads globally, associating the different components of a biblical story into a holistic narrative. Building on his predecessors’ insightful analyses, Ramban develops a more extensive interpretative program that reveals the cohesiveness of biblical narrative, which provides the reader with a comprehensive, broad view of the stories. When Ramban reads a biblical story, he reads progressively, but also with an eye to linking what came before with what comes after. Through this amalgamated manner of reading, Ramban delineates the linear sequence of the story line. To facilitate his analysis, Ramban searches for linguistic clues such as key words that are pivotal for interpreting the narrative’s dynamic or repeated words that summon the reader to follow their path in order to decode the wider sense of the narrative. Ramban takes note of changes in time and place as the story unfolds, markers that signal transformations in character experiences. Through his expansive reading, Ramban reconstructs broad portraitures of the biblical personalities by scrutinizing how the narrative describes their thoughts, emotions, speeches, and actions. Extending his integrative approach, Ramban interrelates diverse stories, within the same biblical book or between different biblical books, seeking the linking threads between them that elicit the catalyst for ensuing events, create related

character portraitures, and establish the thematic continuum imparted by these narratives.

The ensuing discussion will illustrate selectively Ramban's analytical method, which will hopefully inspire further study of his engaging biblical commentary.

Plot Sequence and Timing

The following examples will demonstrate how Ramban's integrative approach discerns the sequence, structure, and progression of plot events in biblical narrative.

In his analysis of Exodus 2:10–25, Ramban applies this method of reading in order to clarify the plot sequence from a transitional situation to a complicating event to the final situation that prevails at the conclusion of the narrative. Ramban observes that this text marks a new situation when it references the event of Moshe, the youth, "growing up" in verse 10 (*va-yigdal ha-yeled*). Ramban interprets this to refer to Moshe's physical maturation, prompting his mother to bring him to the palace to be raised by Pharaoh's daughter as a son "who would stand before kings." This reading intimates how Moshe's early experiences prepare him for his role as redeemer who will plead Israel's case before Pharaoh. The second reference to Moshe "growing up" (2:11) specifies the instigating event that initiates the narrative's turning point. Labeling Moshe as "a man of understanding (*ish da?at*)," Ramban (on 2:11, 23) clarifies that Moshe reaches intellectual maturation, and he now becomes aware of his Hebrew origins, causing him to seek out his brethren and assess their oppressive condition. These observations impel him to act immediately and kill the Egyptian taskmaster (2:12), a transformative act that marks the climax of the narrative, as is evident from his confrontation with two wrestling Hebrews on the second day (2:13–14). As Ramban (on 2:14, 23) paraphrases the Hebrew's retort to Moshe, "Who appointed you as an officer and judge over us? Is it because you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian that you are chastising me?"

Their slander forces Moshe to escape to exile, settling in Midian (2:15), which precipitates God's charge that he return to Egypt to redeem his people (Exodus 3–4). Noting, however, the significance of the temporal marker in verse 23, "*It happened during those many days* (*va-yehi ba-yamim ha-rabbim ha-hem)* that the king of Egypt died and Israel groaned from the work and cried out and their cries went up to God . . .," Ramban (on 2:23) observes how the narrative provides the reader with a sense of the passage of time between these main action sequences. Assuming that the marked time frame refers to the length of Moshe's exile,[1] Ramban proposes that Moshe escapes from Egypt when he is less than twenty years old,[2] and, as noted in Exodus 7:7, Moshe appears before Pharaoh at the age of 80. Since he receives the communication from God with only his eldest son, Gershom, having been born, Ramban posits that Moshe wanders for many years, settling in Midian and marrying Tzipporah toward the end of his years in exile (7:21–22).[3] Nevertheless, the narrative condenses its discussion of the wandering sequence as it is a transitional experience. At the end of this time period, while Moshe is in Midian, the Egyptian king dies, prompting God to charge him with his mission.

Ramban's linear insight into the narrative's progression enables the reader to discern a clear sequence and structure that leads to a better understanding of the story's underlying themes: exile, survival, and salvation.

Ramban (on Exod. 4:19–23) also outlines plot progression by tracing the paths of recurrent words within a narrative scene. Through this integrative mode of reading, Ramban makes sense of the episode in Exodus 4:18–21, which is marked by the repeated words, "go (*lekh*)" and "return (*shuv*)," that follow the biblical figures' movements. After Moshe's experience at the burning bush, the text relates,

18. Moshe *went and returned* to Jether his father-in-law and said to him, "Let me *go* now *and I will return* to my brethren who are in Egypt so that I may see if they are still alive." Jethro said to Moshe, "*Go* in peace." 19. God said to Moshe in Midian, "*Go, return* to Egypt for all the men who were seeking your life have died." 20. Moshe took his wife and his sons and mounted them on the donkey, *and he returned* to the land of Egypt, and Moshe took God's staff in his hand. 21. God said to Moshe, "When you *go to return* to Egypt, see all the wonders I have put into your hand and perform them before Pharaoh. But I will harden his heart and he will not release the people. . . ".

Ramban maintains that the primary focus of this scene involves the transformation of the family relationship, which is precipitated by Moshe's mission as Israel's savior. Moshe returns from Mt. Horeb to ask permission from his father-in-law to return to Egypt. The focus on *Moshe*'s movements, however, intimates that he planned to return "alone, in stealth," intending only to remain in Egypt temporarily. Apparently, Moshe still feared for his life, seeing a need to conceal his identity. God therefore reassures him, commanding Moshe, according to Ramban's reading, to return to Egypt and reside there until he liberates his brethren. Accordingly, Moshe takes his family and sets out to return to Egypt. God subsequently reiterates to Moshe that he must diligently perform the wonders with which he has been charged, even though Pharaoh will not listen.[4]

However, since the text anomalously records that only "*he* returned" to Egypt (4:20), Ramban integrates the later scene in which Zipporah circumcises her son (4:24–26) in order to resolve the question of Moshe's family's whereabouts while he confronts Pharaoh in Egypt. Presuming that only Gershom, the firstborn, is alive at the time (despite the plural, "sons," in verse 20, which is attributed to the norm of scriptural style), Ramban suggests that Moshe returns to Egypt with his family, "for this was a sensible idea," as it would prove "that his heart was firm, trusting" that redemption was imminent. Therefore, Ramban surmises that the second son, Eliezer, was conceived on the way to Egypt or in Egypt, and Gershom is circumcised by Zipporah. Although only Moshe's return is specified, Ramban assumes that his family accompanies him.

Alternatively, Ramban examines the family movements from a different perspective. In this reading, Zipporah had already been pregnant with her second child before Moshe receives the divine revelation at Mt. Horeb. When he returns to seek Jethro's permission to go to Egypt, she gives birth. In his alacrity to fulfill God's will, Moshe does not circumcise him; when Moshe is confronted by the angel, the newborn is circumcised by Zipporah on the way to Egypt. As Exodus 18:2 suggests that Zipporah was sent away (*ahar shiluheha*), Ramban speculates that Zipporah and her children turn back to Midian at Moshe's insistence; not wanting to delay his mission, Moshe leaves his family at the inn where they had stopped (4:24), instructing them to return to Jethro's home when the newly circumcised child is sufficiently strong.[5] Ramban also suggests that perhaps they all went to Egypt, but, longing for her father, Zipporah is sent home with her children.

Sensitive to the gaps and ambiguities in this narrative, Ramban integrates its different facets by focusing on the repeated, guiding words that punctuate its context. His interpretations motivate the reader to ponder the relationship between husband and wife and parents and children in association with the broader frame of this narrative, the divine mission to redeem Israel from Egypt.

Ramban is adept at integrating related narratives within a biblical book, divulging how one pivotal incident serves as the catalyst for subsequent events, influencing their outcome. An illustrative example is how Ramban centralizes Joseph's dreams (Gen. 37:5–11) as the crux of later episodes in Genesis. From Ramban's perspective, Joseph does not view his dreams as youthful imaginings, but he sees in them divinely providential import and feels it is his obligation to ensure that they are brought to fruition. Relating Joseph's reaction to his brothers' arrival in Egypt to trade for food, Scripture reports, "Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him, and *Joseph remembered the dreams* he had dreamed about them, and he said to them, 'You are spies. To see the nakedness of the land you have come'" (Gen. 42:8–9). According to Ramban (on Gen. 42:9), when Joseph sees his brothers, he realizes the time has arrived to implement his dreams, and he orchestrates subsequent events to ensure their fulfillment in the order he had dreamed them. "He carried out everything well at its appropriate time in order to realize the dreams, for he knew that they would certainly be realized."

In his first dream, Joseph had envisioned eleven sheaves bowing down to his sheaf, signifying his brothers' obeisance to his sovereignty (Ramban on Gen. 37:7). Since only 10 brothers first arrive in Egypt, Joseph conceals his identity and devises a scenario that will compel the brothers to bring Benjamin down to Egypt so that the first dream will be fulfilled in its entirety and proper sequence (Ramban on Gen. 42:9).

Ramban (on Gen. 37:10) uniquely interprets that Joseph decodes the symbolic meaning of the second dream (Gen. 37:9) as an indication that Jacob (represented by the sun), Jacob's entire lineage

who were born to his four wives (signified by the moon), including the eleven brothers (that is, the stars), would bow down to Joseph. In order to fulfill this dream, therefore, Joseph must ensure that his entire family is uprooted to Egypt, where they will bow down to him when they "see his great success there."[6]

Ramban's focus on the dreams also explains why Joseph never communicates with his father while in Egypt, even though Egypt is close to Canaan. Joseph deliberately keeps his father ignorant of his whereabouts because revealing himself would jeopardize the realization of his dreams in succession (Ramban on Gen. 42:9). For Ramban, Joseph's dreams are the proverbial glue that binds the narrative scenes involving Joseph and his family.

Characterization

Ramban's clear sense of the overall portraiture of the biblical figures emerges from his integrative reading of the narratives in which they appear. This analytical method may be illustrated through his polar characterizations of Noah and Lot. Based on his holistic analysis of the Flood story (Gen. 6–8), Ramban develops a one-sided portrait of Noah, but his global analysis of the episodes in which Lot plays a role leads him to reconstruct a complex portrait of his persona.

Ramban frames his perception of Noah around a key biblical phrase that, in his view, defines this biblical figure's character. Genesis 6:9 relates, "*Noah ish tzaddik tamim hayah be-dorotav*." According to Ramban, the moral epithet, *ish tzaddik*, specifies Noah's righteousness in the particular sense of having been judged innocent of any wrongdoing. Whereas the people of Noah's time are convicted of a host of crimes, which warrant their destruction, God deems Noah to be completely guiltless. Noah therefore merits, without reservation, to be saved from the Flood catastrophe. The adjective, *tamim* (complete), accentuates his absolute vindication in judgment. The time frame, "in his generations (*be-dorotav*)," specifies that although Noah lived a long life, spanning multiple generations, he was never corrupted by his contemporaries' wicked ways, and, exceptionally, only he was worthy of being saved from the Flood. A midrashic view infers that this temporal qualifier delimits Noah's sterling character as being only relative to the wicked men of his generations and certainly not measuring up to extraordinarily righteous individuals like the patriarch Abraham. However, Ramban presumes that this proviso aggrandizes Noah's meritoriousness. As Ramban emphasizes further, only Noah "walked with God" (6:9), exhibiting a spiritual closeness to God that was sorely lacking among his contemporaries.[7]

Ramban supports his monolithic characterization of Noah by analyzing additional textual indicators. Prior to revealing Noah's defining quality, Scripture asserts how God is "saddened" that He must eradicate the very humans He created because of their evil ways (6:5–7). However, the text contrastingly observes, "*But* Noah found favor (*matza hen*) in God's eyes" (6:8). While noted predecessors maintain that Noah's "favorable" effect on God was an activation of His mercy, implying that Noah did not fully merit salvation,[8] Ramban (on Gen. 6:8) claims that this divine "favor" was bestowed upon Noah because "all of his deeds were befitting and pleasing before God."

Additionally, Ramban observes that Noah's praiseworthy character is endorsed by God Himself. In 7:1, God asserts, "Go into the ark, with all your household, for *you alone (otekha)* have I seen to be innocent (*tzaddik*) before Me in this generation." While this confirmation raises the question why Noah's family was saved, Ramban concludes that Noah's merit was sufficient to rescue his household as well. This is why his children are mentioned in conjunction with Scripture's assertion of Noah's defining feature as a "*tzaddik*." Genesis 6:9–10 relates, "This is Noah's lineage (*toledot Noah*)—Noah was a completely innocent man in his generations; Noah walked with God—Noah begat three sons . . .". In Ramban's view, these opening statements direct the reader to focus on the pivotal figure of Noah, whose merit saves his three sons from whom the world will be rebuilt (9:18–19).[9]

Ramban's consistent evaluation of Noah's persona is highlighted by his striking perspective on the inebriation scene in Genesis 9. While one might think this scene is cause for re-assessing Noah's positive characterization, Ramban (on Gen. 9:26) asserts that this episode is a commentary on the potency of wine and its ability to fell even the greatest of men; it does not detract from his worthiness to be saved from the Flood. "For the wholly innocent individual (*tzaddik tamim*), whose merit saved

the entire world, even he was brought to sin by wine."

One might posit that Ramban's integrated study of the Flood story leads him to derive a constant portrait of Noah because this characterization answers a central question of this story: Why did Noah merit to be, in essence, the "Second Adam," whose lineage would be the ancestors of future humanity? By eliciting the narrative's clear conception of Noah's portraiture, Ramban leaves no doubt about this figure's role in the renewal of the world.

Conversely, Ramban (on Gen. 19:8) perceives that the Torah presents Lot as a multidimensional personality. Considering Lot's despicable offer of his two daughters to the vicious Sodomites (Gen. 19:7–8), an act that Ramban surmises could only arise from "a wicked heart," one might question how he deduces that Lot is a complex character. However, Ramban unearths subtle clues that direct him to contemplate Lot's persona more broadly. Ramban (on Gen. 19:3) credits Lot with a display of good will in his desire to host the (angelic) guests (Gen. 19:1–3). The angels cultivate this merit, which plays a part in helping to save him from destruction, by initially refusing to accept his invitation, which prompts Lot to beseech the angels further. Furthermore, Ramban (on Gen. 18:26) maintains that when Abraham begs God to save the cities of the plain for the sake of the righteous, innocent men who dwelled in them *(tzaddikim be-tokh ha-ʿir*) (18:24, 26), he effectively seeks salvation for Lot, whom he deems to be sufficiently innocent of the Sodomites' crimes. Ramban (on Gen. 19:12) observes that Lot's merit suffices to save his family, and his request averts destruction of the nearby city, Zoar, where he will find refuge (19:18–22).

At the same time, Ramban (on Gen. 13:13) finds other textual indications that cast a shadow on Lot's persona. Scripture follows its description of Lot's choice to live in Sodom with an evaluation of its inhabitants as being exceedingly wicked men (13:12–13) in order to castigate Lot's new residence. Ramban (on Gen. 19:16) also suggests that the text implies Lot was ultimately saved out of mercy, not merit; as Genesis 19:16 indicates, Lot was hastened out of Sodom by the angels, "while God's mercy was upon him."

Nevertheless, Ramban reveals Lot's positive qualities in his analysis of Genesis 19:29: "When God demolished the cities of the plain, *God remembered Abraham and He sent Lot out* from the upheaval . . . ". In Ramban's view, this text underscores Lot's loyalty to Abraham, which earns him the merit to be rescued:

> . . . Lot had displayed kindness toward the righteous one [Abraham] by going with him, wandering throughout the land wherever he went . . . And *therefore he had the merit to save him because of Abraham's merit.* For it was because of him [Abraham] that he [Lot] resided in Sodom. Were it not for Abraham, he would have still been in Haran with his family. And it is implausible that harm should occur to him [Lot] because of Abraham, who had departed by the command of His Creator.

By integrating the various narrative scenes in which Lot appears, Ramban directs the reader to appreciate how close reading can reveal the many sides of a biblical personality.

Furthermore, Ramban's integrative method develops comparative portraits between related biblical figures who have active roles in different biblical books.

Representative of this approach is Ramban's perception of the parallel experiences between Joshua and Moshe, revealing continuity between teacher and student in their leadership roles. Explaining what laws were established after the incident at Marah, where the bitter waters were sweetened (*sham sam lo hok u-mishpat*, Exod. 15:25), Ramban posits that Moshe institutes daily guidelines for Israel's interpersonal relationships and between humans and God to ensure stability within the community during their sojourn in the wilderness. Comparatively, Ramban (on Exod. 15:25) observes that the verse in Joshua 24:25, *va-yasem lo hok u-mishpat bi-Shekhem*, indicates through the same language how Moshe's successor establishes similar societal standards and practices before his death, after much of the conquest has been accomplished, in order to guarantee success for the newly settled Israelites.

Correlating these biblical figures' actions, Ramban applies the later episode of the capture of Ai (Josh. 7–8) in order to explain Moshe's conduct in the war against the Amalekites (Exod. 17). Although

Moshe indicates that he will stand on top of the hill with his staff in his hand during the battle (17:9), the ensuing narrative relates only that Moshe raises his hands to ensure the Israelites' victory (17:11–12). To clarify the staff's function, Ramban observes that prior to the assault of Ai, God commands Joshua to perform a symbolic gesture signifying the enemy's defeat: "Stretch out the javelin in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand" (Josh. 8:18). With his hand and spear outstretched, the ambush rushes out, captures the city, and sets it on fire (8:19, 26). Correspondingly, Ramban (on Exod. 17:9) suggests that when Moshe reaches the top of the hill, he first extends his staff over the Amalekites below to preordain their defeat. However, to reinforce this signification, he prays to God with raised hands, having put the staff away beforehand.

In an analogous example, Ramban associates the two leaders' spy expeditions. Noting the disparate accounts in Numbers 13 and Deuteronomy 1 concerning who initiated the spy venture, Ramban posits, in one approach, that although the people introduce the idea of sending spies (Deut. 1:22), Moshe approves their initiative (Deut. 1:23), and God grants His permission (Num. 13:1–2), since the mission's intent is to plan a military strategy to invade Canaan. To bolster his reading, Ramban notes similar reconnaissance missions, expedited by Moshe (prior to attacking the Amorite lands; Num. 21:32), and by Joshua before attacking Jericho (Josh. 2:1). Referencing the attack on Ai (Josh. 8), Ramban reiterates that it was customary to arm the attackers with knowledge of their enemy to assure victory against them. Ramban (on Num. 13:2) observes further that while the Israelites intended to send only two spies, as was the case before the battle of Jericho, God commands that each tribe send its chieftain as spies to maximize the chances of success.

Thematic and Didactic Features

Ramban's integrative approach divulges the interrelated subjects of the biblical books, illustrating their progressive thematic relationship. A notable example is his introduction to the Book of Exodus, in which he encapsulates the contents of the first two books of the Torah, disclosing their thematic continuum. According to Ramban, in the Book of Genesis, the *creation* of the world and its creatures narrows to focus on the creation of Israel through "the experiences of the patriarchs, which are a type of *creation* for their descendants," as their biographies symbolically preordain Israel's historical destiny. Ramban's associative reading suggests how the world cannot exist without a divinely chosen nation that fulfills the purpose for which the world was created. Furthermore, Ramban notes that the promises and decrees foretold in the Book of Genesis come to fruition in the Book of Exodus. The Covenant between the Pieces in Genesis 15 preordains the exile in Egypt and Israel's redemption, the main events of the Book of Exodus.[10]

Noting, however, that the Book of Exodus concludes with Tabernacle's construction, Ramban also applies an integrative reading that circles back to the beginning in order to connect the narratives of both biblical books.

> For the exile did not end until the day that [Israel] *returned* to their place, and *returned* to the high stature of their Patriarchs . . . When they came to Mt. Sinai and built the *Mishkan*, and God *returned* and rested His presence among them, then they *returned* to the heights of their Patriarchs, where the counsel of God dwelled on their tents. . . Then they were considered redeemed.[11]

For Ramban, the crowning distinction of the creation of Israel is its return to the elevated spirituality of its patriarchal ancestors, who felt God's open presence among them continually. Through the medium of the Tabernacle, Israel will realize the purpose for which God created the world and selected the patriarchs to establish the foundation of the nation of Israel.

Ramban also elicits the integral didactic features present within a particular narrative. In his introduction to the Jacob-Esau confrontation (Genesis 32–33), Ramban underscores its three primary messages: 1) "God saved His servant and redeemed him from the hand of one more powerful than he. He sent an angel and saved him"; 2) "Jacob did not rely on his righteousness, but he exerted all of his

effort for his salvation"; and 3) "All that transpired between our patriarch [Jacob] with his brother Esau will continually happen to us with Esau's descendants."

Ramban (on Gen. 32:22, 23, 25) delineates how each of these edifying elements is present in the scene of Jacob's struggle with the angel. Illustrating the second message, Ramban observes that Jacob acts as "a man of war," sleeping outside "in the camp" (32:22), among his servants and shepherds, to guard against his brother's possible attack. During the night, he checks the water level, transfers his wife and children, and the possessions by means of servants, ultimately being left behind on the wrong side of the river, where the struggle occurs (32:25–26).

Ramban (on Gen. 18:1; 35:10) analyzes this struggle in the broader context of the confrontation between Jacob and Esau, identifying the "man" as the angelic "prince of Esau." Accordingly, he intimates that the first didactic feature is expressed in this very event of the struggle, for salvation by an angel does not appear elsewhere in this biblical story. Ramban (on Gen. 32:26) presumes that Jacob needs to endure a struggle with the angel of Esau in order to attain a victory by divine mediation that prevents the angel from mortally harming him, so that Jacob's triumph over his enemy will be assured. [12]

Applying midrashic analysis, Ramban exposes the narrative's third instructive component, its futuristic implications. Jacob's victory over the angel signifies that while his righteous descendants will suffer an injurious blow at the hands of the Romans—Esau's descendants, Israel will ultimately prevail. In conjunction with this thematic underpinning, Ramban presumes that this narrative concludes with Jacob's return to the place of *Shalem* (33:18), alluding to his arrival whole and unscathed.[13]

Additionally, Ramban elicits this didactic perspective in his interpolation of the angel's reaction to Jacob's demand to know his name (32:30). "*Why do you ask for my name*: There is no benefit for you to know my name, for the power and capability belongs to God alone. If you call me, I will not answer you; and I will not be able to redeem you from your travails." Ramban (on Gen. 32:30) suggests that the angel teaches Jacob a lesson for generations: Israel needs to face its enemy by prayer that is directed to God Himself.

Conclusion

Ramban's biblical commentary provides an important interpretative method for the serious study of the stories of the Torah. His integrative approach discerns interlocking connections between the scenes of a biblical narrative or between different narratives, expanding the reader's scope of analysis. By assimilating the components of biblical narrative into a cohesive whole, Ramban delineates plot sequence and structure, primary themes and messages, and a broad perception of the biblical personalities. Ramban's interpretations reveal the essence of the biblical stories, which are the backbone of our national history.

For Further Study

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Notes

[1] Ramban, Exod. 2:23, however, initially identifies this time frame as the length of Israel’s oppression.
[2] Ramban follows the midrashic view, cited in *Shemot Rabbah* 1: 27; 5:2.
[3] Ramban, Exod. 2:23, observes that verse 15 states, “He *settled* in Midian” (not “He *went* to Midian”), intimating that Moshe wandered a long time before settling down.
[4] Yitzhak Gottlieb also addresses this plot sequence in *Yesh Seder la-Mikra: Hazal u-Farshanei Yemei ha-Benayyim al Mukdam u-Me’uhar ba-Torah* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University; Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2009), p. 357.
[5] This reading is influenced by Ibn Ezra, Exod. 4:20.
[6] Ramban, Gen. 42:9. Ramban, Gen. 37:10, observes that the eleven brothers bow to Joseph in Gen. 43:26 (28). Although he does not specify, it appears (as R. Behaye maintains) that Jacob bows to him on his bed (49:31). Furthermore, even though the text does not record that all of Jacob’s household shows obeisance to Joseph, Ramban seems to maintain that this event happened.
[7] For this extensive analysis, see Ramban, Gen. 6:9. For the qualifying view of “in his generations,” see Rashi’s midrashic citation on 6:9.
[8] Cf. Ibn Ezra, Gen. 6:8.
[9] Ramban, Gen. 6:9. Ramban considers that the sons were as righteous as their father, but ultimately prefers the approach that sets Noah apart from all of his contemporaries, including his family. See Ramban, Gen. 7:1, 8:1, 9:8.
[10] Ramban, Introduction to Exodus, observes that the exile to Egypt, which begins at the end of Genesis with Jacob’s household leaving Canaan, is repeated at the beginning of Exodus to demonstrate the continuity between the narratives of these biblical books.
[11] Ramban, Introduction to Exodus.
[12] Compare Pinchas Yehudah Lieberman, *Perush ha-Ramban al ha-Torah: Tuv Yerushalayim, Penei Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem, 1985), I:404, notes on Ramban’s introduction to Genesis 32.
[13] Ramban, Gen. 32:26, based on *Bereshit Rabbah* 77:3; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 2:7.