Why were the years of Ishmael mentioned in the Torah? For what purpose were we told the life span of that wicked man? In order to reckon through them the years of Jacob. As it is written: “And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, a hundred and thirty-seven years” (Genesis 25:17). How much older was Ishmael than Isaac? Fourteen years. As it is written: “And Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram” (Genesis 16:16). And it is written: “And Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him” (Genesis 21:5). And it is written with regard to Jacob and Esau: “And Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them” (Genesis 25:26). Based on these verses, how old was Ishmael when Jacob was born? Seventy-four. How many of his years remained then until his death? Sixty-three, as Ishmael died at the age of a hundred and thirty-seven.

And it was taught in a baraita: Jacob our father was sixty-three years old at the time he was blessed by his father, and at that same time Ishmael died. How is it known that these two events occurred at the same time? As it is written: “When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob...” (Genesis 27:40). From the fact that it is stated: “the daughter of Ishmael,” do we not know that she was the sister of Nebaioth? For what purpose then does the verse say this explicitly? This teaches that Ishmael betrothed her to Esaua and in the meantime he died, and Nebaioth her brother married her off. Therefore, special mention is made of Nebaioth. Consequently, it is understood that Jacob was sixty-three years old when he received his blessing and left his father’s house.
Eber died...two years – seemingly, this additional piece of information is not essential to the rest of the story line. However, it is mentioned for a reason, as it indicates that Jacob did not remain studying under Eber until the latter’s death sixteen years later, but rather, he completed his studies two years prior to Eber’s death (Rabbi Yoshiya Pinto; see Rosh Yosef). He then was in Bethel for six months – רבי הimestone ומשה: The Maharsha explains why the Gemara finds it necessary to mention that Jacob brought offerings while in Bethel. Jacob suffered many trials and tribulations during the first eighteen months, including the incident with Dina, which would make for the entire two years he was not involved in honoring his father.

If we calculate these sixty-three years and the fourteen until Joseph was born, this means that Jacob should have been seventy-seven at the time of Joseph’s birth. And it is written: “And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh” (Genesis 41:46). This indicates that Jacob should have then been at least a hundred and seven years old when Joseph was thirty. Add the seven years of plenty and the two of famine, and this would then indicate that Jacob should have been a hundred and sixteen years old when he arrived in Egypt in the second year of the famine.

But it is written: “And Pharaoh said to Jacob, How many are the days of the years of your life? And Jacob said to Pharaoh, The days of the years of my sojournings are a hundred and thirty years” (Genesis 47:8–9). Jacob indicated that he was a hundred and thirty-three when he arrived in Egypt, which is different from the hundred and sixteen years calculated previously. Where are the missing fourteen years from Jacob’s lifetime?

Rather, learn from here that the fourteen years that Jacob spent in the house of Eber are not counted here. As it is taught in a baraita: Jacob was studying in the house of Eber for fourteen years while in hiding from his brother Esau. If we were to calculate the life spans recorded in the Torah, we would find that Eber died when Jacob was seventy-nine years old, two years after Jacob our father went down to Aram-naharaim, to the house of Laban. When Jacob left after completing his studying there, he then went immediately to Aram-naharaim. Therefore, when Jacob stood at the well upon his arrival in Aram-naharaim, he was seventy-seven years old.

And from where do we derive that Jacob was not punished for the fourteen years that he was in the house of Eber, during which time he failed to fulfill the mitzva of honoring one’s parents? As it is taught in a baraita: It turns out that Joseph was away from his father for twenty-two years, just as Jacob our father was away from his own father for that same period of time. According to the previous calculation, however, the baraita is difficult, as Jacob was absent for thirty-six years. Rather, conclude from here that the fourteen years that he was in the house of Eber are not counted, as he was not punished for them.

The Gemara raises an objection: But ultimately, Jacob was in Laban’s house for only twenty years. Why, then, is he faulted for being away from his father for twenty-two years? Rather, he was punished because on his journey back from Aram-naharaim he tarried another two years before returning home to his parents, as it is taught in a baraita: Jacob left Aram-naharaim and came to Sukkot, and spent eighteen months there, as it is stated: “And Jacob journeyed to Sukkot, built himself a house, and made booths [sukkot] for his cattle” (Genesis 33:17). The Gemara understands this verse to mean that first he made booths [Sukkot], to live in during the summer, and then he built a house in the winter, and afterward he again made booths [sukkot] during the next summer, indicating that he must have been there for eighteen months. He then was in Bethel for six months, and he brought offerings, totaling two years in all. In this way, all the various calculations of years are reconciled.
MISHNA

With regard to one who reads the Megilla out of order, reading a later section first, and then going back to the earlier section, he has not fulfilled his obligation. If he read it by heart, or if he read it in Aramaic translation or in any other language that he does not understand, he has not fulfilled his obligation. However, for those who speak a foreign language, one may read the Megilla in that foreign language. And one who speaks a foreign language who heard the Megilla read in Ashurit, i.e., in Hebrew, has fulfilled his obligation.

If one reads the Megilla at intervals, pausing and resuming, or while he is doing so, he has fulfilled his obligation. If one was writing a Megilla, or expounding upon it, or correcting it, and he read all its words as he was doing so, the following distinction applies: If he had intent to fulfill his obligation with that reading he has fulfilled his obligation, but if not, he has not fulfilled his obligation.

If one reads from a Megilla that was written not with ink but with sam or with sikra or with kosmos or with kankanton, from a Megilla that was written not on parchment but on neyar or on different, a kind of unprocessed leather, he has not fulfilled his obligation. He does not fulfill his obligation unless he reads from a Megilla that is written in Ashurit, i.e., in the Hebrew language and using the Hebrew script, upon parchment and with ink.

GEMARA

It was taught in the mishna that one who reads the Megilla out of order has not fulfilled his obligation. The Gemara asks: From where are these matters derived? Rava said: The verse states concerning Purim: “That they should unfaithfully observe these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed times every year.” (Esther 9:27), and the word “times” is referring to the two days of Purim, the fourteenth and the fifteenth of Adar. And we learn by way of analogy: Just as their appointed times cannot be out of order, as the fifteenth of Adar cannot possibly come before the fourteenth, so too, their writing must not be out of order.

The Gemara rejects this derivation: Is reading written here at all? It is “observing” that is written here in this verse, not reading, as it is written: “That they should unfaithfully observe these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed times.” Rather, the proof is from here, as it is written: “And that these days should be remembered and observed throughout every generation,” (Esther 9:28). Remembering is juxtaposed to observing, indicating: Just as observing cannot be out of order, as was derived from the words “That they should unfaithfully observe these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed times,” so too, remembering, by reading the Megilla, may not be out of order.

The Sages taught in a baraita: This halakha of not reading out of order applies also to halilah, and also to the recitation of Shema, and also to the Amida prayer, meaning that to fulfill one’s obligation he must recite the text of each of these in order.

HALAKHA

According to their writing and according to their appointed times – קבוצת בקבר. In the Jerusalem Talmud the words “according to their writing” is added as a source for all of the halakhah of the mishna, that the Megilla must be read according to writing and not out of order, not by heart, and not in a different language.

Just as keeping ḥayyim cannot be out of order – חזק כהחיים. The commentators disagree in their explanation of this phrase. Some explain that just as it is not possible that the fifteenth of Adar precede the fourteenth, so is it prohibited to change the order of the reading (Rid, Ran). Others, who translate ḥayyim as doing, explain that in general it is impossible, when undertaking a task, to do later that which must, due to the nature of the task, be done first (Rambam’s Commentary on the Mishna). The Tur Even interprets it to mean that just as people in a walled city celebrate Purim the day after those in an unwalled city, and this order is never reversed, so too, the order of the remembrance of Purim, i.e., the reading of the Megilla, is never reversed.

One who reads the Megilla out of order – קבוצת בקבר. Some explain these halakhot as being not only derived from the verses cited in the Gemara, but as based on the requirement of reading the Megilla and thereby publicizing the Purim miracle. If one reads the Megilla out of order, the understanding of the events is impaired. Similarly, when one recites the Megilla without reading it from a written text, it appears as the telling of a mere tale, not as reading an incident that is fitting to be publicized with precise wording (Mikhkant).

If he reads it in Aramaic translation or in any other language – קבוצת בקבר. Rashi explains later in the discussion (18a) that the mishna here makes a distinction between Aramaic and other languages, as though to say: The Aramaic translation, which was known, accepted, and used in synagogues, may not be used for reading the Megilla, and all the mērōg háshirim may not be used (see Ture Even).

Written in Ashurit – תירידת ארצות. Most of the commentators and halakhic authorities maintain that the term here refers to both the language and the script, i.e., the Megilla must be written in Ashurit script and in the Hebrew language. However, some maintain that it is referring specifically to the script and means that even if the Megilla is written in a different language for those who speak that language, it must be transliterated into Ashurit script (see Penin Yehoshua).

If he reads it by heart – קבוצת בקבר. One who recites halilah out of order does not fulfill his obligation. This pertains to one who changes the order of the verses within the individual paragraphs, not to one who recites an entire paragraph out of its designated place. Some say one should also be stringent if he alters the order of the paragraphs (Mishnah Berurah; Kaf Haḥayim, Shulhan Aḥri, Orah Hayyim 422:6).

If he reads it by heart – קבוצת בקבר. One who fulfills his obligation to read the Megilla only if he reads it or hears it being read from the written text but not if he recites it by heart (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 690:3).

What is a valid Megilla – קבוצת בקבר. A Megilla may be written only with ink and on either regular parchment or gevil parchment, like a Torah scroll (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 691:1).

Reading halilah out of order – קבוצת בקבר. One who recites halilah out of order does not fulfill his obligation. This pertains to one who changes the order of the verses within the individual paragraphs, not to one who recites an entire paragraph out of its designated place. Some say one should also be stringent if he alters the order of the paragraphs (Mishnah Berurah; Kaf Haḥayim, Shulhan Aḥri, Orah Hayyim 422:6).
HALAKHA

Reciting the Shema out of order—One who recites the Shema out of order by changing the order of the verses within the individual paragraphs does not fulfill his obligation. However, if he recites an entire paragraph out of order, although one should not do so ab initio, he has fulfilled his obligation, because the paragraphs are not written adjacent to one another in the Torah (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 62:1).

HALAKHA

Hear in any language—Although it is preferable to recite the Shema in Hebrew (halakha), the halakha is in accordance with the Sages, that it is permitted to read the Shema in any language. However, one must take care to avoid making errors in the language he chooses to read as precisely as in Hebrew. Nowadays, for several reasons, e.g., that we are not confident as to the veracity of the translation into other languages, the Shema should be read only in Hebrew (Arukh Ha-Shulhan, Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 62:2).

Making the Shema audible—One who reads the Shema must hear what his mouth says ab initio. However, if he did not recite it audibly he has fulfilled his obligation, as the halakha is in accordance with the Sages. Even so, he must enunciate the words, not merely think them (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 62:3).

NOTES

From where do we derive that hallel may not be recited out of order—The Jerusalem Talmud also offers a proof to this from the verse “From the rising of the sun until its setting,” however, it adds there that the structure of hallel itself is written in correspondence to the order of events, as at first it discusses the Exodus from Egypt and afterward continues to the present time and to the future redemption.

The Gemara asks: From where do we derive that hallel may not be recited out of order? Rabba said: As it is written in hallel: “From the rising of the sun until its setting” (Psalms 113:3). Just as the sunrise and sunset cannot be reversed, so too, hallel may not be recited out of order. Rav Yosef said: It is derived from the verse in hallel that states: “This is the day that the Lord has made” (Psalms 118:24); just as the day follows a certain order, so too, hallel must be recited in its proper order.

Rav Ayana said: It is derived from the verse in hallel: “Blessed be the name of the Lord” (Psalms 113:2), indicating that the blessing of God must “be” just as it is written. Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said, and some say that it was Rav Aha bar Yaakov who said: It is derived from here, the end of the aforementioned verse: “From now and for evermore” (Psalms 113:2), i.e., it should be like time, which cannot be reversed.

From where do we know one has not fulfilled his obligation of reciting the Shema if he recited it out of order? As it is taught in a baraita: The recital of the Shema must be as it is written, i.e., in Hebrew; this is the statement of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. But the Rabbis say: It may be recited in any language. The Gemara asks: What is the reason of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi? The verse states:

“And these words...shall be” (Deuteronomy 6:6), teaching that these words, the words of the Shema, always “shall be” as they are, i.e., in the Hebrew language. The Gemara asks: And as for the Sages, what is the reason for their opinion? The verse states: “Hear, O Israel” (Deuteronomy 6:4), which could also be translated, “Understand, O Israel,” indicating that you may recite these words in any language that you hear, i.e., understand.

The Gemara asks: And according to Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi as well, isn’t it indeed written, “hear”? What does he learn from this word, if not that the Shema may be recited in any language? The Gemara answers: This word is necessary to teach something else: Make heard to your ears what your mouth is saying, i.e., the Shema must be recited audibly, not merely thought in one’s heart. The Gemara asks: And how do the Sages know this? The Gemara explains: They hold like the one who said that if one recites the Shema but does not make it audible to his ears, he has nevertheless fulfilled his obligation.

The Gemara asks: And according to the Sages as well, isn’t it indeed written, “And these words shall be”? What do they learn from this, if not that the Shema must be recited in Hebrew? The Gemara answers: That word is necessary to teach that one must not recite the words of the Shema out of order, but they shall be as they are, in the proper order. The Gemara asks: And from where does Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi learn that one must not recite the Shema out of order? The Gemara answers: He derives it from the fact that the verse does not say just: Words, but “the words,” referring to specific words, which teaches that they must be recited in their proper order without any variation. The Gemara asks: And what do the Sages learn from the phrase “the words”? The difference between words and “the words” is inconsequential according to them.
The Gemara analyzes the dispute: Shall we say that Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi maintains that the entire Torah may be recited in any language? As, if it enters your mind to say that the entire Torah may be recited only in the sacred tongue, Hebrew, and not in any other language, why do I need the Torah to write “and these words shall be” with respect to the Shema? Why would I think that the Shema is different from the rest of the Torah?

The Gemara rejects this argument: There is no proof from here, as even if the Torah must generally be recited in Hebrew it is nevertheless necessary to specify the matter here, since without such specification it might have entered your mind to say that in this context “hear” means understand, as maintained by the Sages, and that the Shema may be recited in any language. Therefore the Merciful One writes in the Torah, “and these words shall be,” to teach us that the Shema may be recited only in the original Hebrew.

The Gemara suggests: Shall we say then that the Sages maintain that the entire Torah must be recited specifically in the sacred tongue, Hebrew? As, if it enters your mind to say that the entire Torah may be recited in any language, why do I need the Torah to write “hear” with respect to the Shema? Why would one think that the Shema is different from the rest of the Torah?

The Gemara rejects this argument: Even if the Torah may generally be recited in any language, it was nevertheless necessary to specify the matter here. Without such specification it could enter your mind to say that the words “and these words shall be” teach that the Shema may be recited only in Hebrew, as asserted by Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. Therefore the Merciful One writes the word “hear” in the Torah, to teach us that the Shema may be recited in any language.

§ The baraita cited previously taught that the halakha against reciting a text out of order applies to the Amida prayer as well. The Gemara asks: From where do we derive this? As it is taught in a baraita: Shimon HaPakuli arranged the eighteen blessings of the Amida prayer before Rabban Gamliel in their fixed order in Yavne,4 which indicates that there is a specific order to these blessings that must not be changed. Rabbi Yoḥanan said, and some say that it was taught in a baraita: A hundred and twenty Elders,5 i.e., the Men of the Great Assembly, and among them several prophets, established the eighteen blessings of the Amida in their fixed order,6 which also shows that the order of these blessings may not be changed.

The Gemara proceeds to explain this order: The Sages taught in a baraita: From where is it derived that one says the blessing of the Patriarchs, the first blessing of the Amida? As it is stated: “Ascribe to the Lord, mighty ones” (Psalms 29:1), which means that one should mention before the Lord the mighty ones of the world, i.e., the Patriarchs. And from where is it derived that one then says the blessing of mighty deeds? As it is stated in the continuation of that verse: “Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength” (Psalms 39:1). And from where is it derived that one then says the blessing of holiness? As it is stated in the next verse: “Give to the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Psalms 39:2).

The Gemara continues: And why did they see fit to institute to say the blessing of understanding after the blessing of holiness? As it is stated: “They shall sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall revere the God of Israel” (Isaiah 29:23), and adjacent to that verse it is written: “They also that err in spirit shall come to understanding” (Isaiah 29:14). This shows that it is proper for the theme of understanding to follow the theme of God’s holiness. And why did they see fit to institute to say the blessing of repentance after the blessing of understanding? As it is written: “And they will understand with their heart, repent, and be healed” (Isaiah 6:10), showing that the theme of repentance properly follows the theme of understanding.
The Gemara asks: If so, that the sequence of blessings is based on this verse, let us say that the blessing of healing should be said after the blessing of repentance. Why, then, is the next blessing in the Amida the blessing of forgiveness and not the blessing of healing? The Gemara explains: This cannot enter your mind, as it is written: “And let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7), which shows that the theme of repentance should be followed by that of forgiveness.

The Gemara poses a question: But what did you see to rely on this verse? Rely on the other verse, which juxtaposes repentance to healing. The Gemara answers: Another verse, in which it is written: “Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from the pit” (Psalms 103:3–4), proves that the theme of healing should follow that of forgiveness. The Gemara asks: Is that verse coming to say that the blessings of redemption and healing should be placed following the blessing of forgiveness? But isn’t it written: “Repent, and be healed” (Isaiah 6:10), which suggests that repentance should be followed by healing? The Gemara answers: That verse is referring not to the literal healing from illness, but rather to the figurative healing of forgiveness, and therefore this verse too supports the sequence of forgiveness following repentance.

The Gemara continues: And why did they see fit to institute to say the blessing of redemption as the seventh blessing? Rava said: Since there is a tradition that the Jewish people are destined to be redeemed in the seventh year of the Sabbatical cycle, consequently, they fixed redemption as the seventh blessing. But didn’t the Master say in a baraita: In the sixth year of the Sabbatical cycle in the days of the arrival of the Messiah, heavenly sounds will be heard; in the seventh year there will be wars; and upon the conclusion of the seventh year, in the eighth year, the son of David, the Messiah, will come! The redemption will take place not during the seventh year but after it. The Gemara answers: Nevertheless, the war that takes place during the seventh year is also the beginning of the redemption process, and it is therefore correct to say that Israel will be redeemed in the seventh year.

The Gemara continues: And why did they see fit to institute that one says the blessing of healing as the eighth blessing?® Rabbi Aha said: Since circumcision was assigned to the eighth day of life, and circumcision requires healing, consequently, they established healing as the eighth blessing.

And why did they see fit to institute that one says the blessing of bountiful years as the ninth blessing? Rabbi Alexandri said: This blessing was instituted in reference to those who raise the prices of food. We pray for rain so that the price of produce will not rise as a result of shortages, as it is written: “Break the arm of the wicked” (Psalms 10:15), referring to the wicked, who practice deception and extort the poor. And when David expressed this request, he expressed it in the ninth psalm. Although today it is considered the tenth psalm, the first and second psalms are actually counted as one, and therefore this is the ninth psalm. Therefore, the blessing of the years was fixed as the ninth blessing.

**NOTES**

To be redeemed in the seventh year — רדית אחרים. Rashi explains that this prayer of redemption is not referring to the Jewish people’s complete redemption in the future, but is a request for redemption from all misfortunes that afflict them in any generation. It indeed appears that the blessing of redemption is a general request for salvation from misfortune, both individual and collective, which explains its place in the Amida as a general prayer, before the series of blessings relating to the future messianic redemption (Zikkaron BaSefer).

And why did they see fit to institute that one says healing as the eighth blessing — ישארוذا. The filava writes that although it has been demonstrated that there is no earlier possible place for the blessing of healing, as there are other blessings that must precede it, the Gemara’s question is: Why was it not fixed further on, after the blessing of years?
And once the scion of David comes, prayer will come. 

And I will…purge away your dross as with lye. Some write that the Gemara also alludes to the continuation of the verse: “And I will take away all your impurities” (Bekiu), as Bekiu can also mean: Those who separate themselves from you, i.e., sectarians, and the suppression of separatist sects is the central theme of the following blessing.

Some explain that here thanksgiving refers to the thanks-offering described in Leviticus 7:12, in that it is among the various kinds of sacrifices and services in the Temple (see Meiri). Others explain that here todah means confession, not thanksgiving, and the Gemara is saying that the Temple service and confession go hand in hand, as when one brings an offering he also confesses his sins (Maharsha).