Contents

Acknowledgments vii

INTRODUCTIONS

I · Sparks, Fragments, Meanings: A Reader-Friendly Introduction 3

II · Turn It and Turn It!: Introducing the Torah Commentators 7

THE TORAH PORTIONS OF GENESIS

Parashat Bereshit 19
God’s creation is a blessing
Humanity is responsible for the world
Adam’s and Eve’s expulsion from Eden
Human beings are responsible for one another

Parashat Noach 28
One righteous person can save the world
Ingredients for destroying the world
Sources of human unhappiness and confusion

Parashat Lech-Lecha 36
Defining “leadership”
The importance of honesty
How to settle disagreements
The mitzvah of rescuing captives
Circumcision in Jewish tradition

Parashat Vayera 44
The art of hospitality
Consequences of injustice
“Loyalty” to God
Parashat Chaye Sarah  53  
- Jewish mourning practices
- Purchasing at the full price
- Defining “beauty”
- The meaning of “love”

Parashat Toledot  60  
- Jealousy between siblings; stereotypes and prejudice
- Favoritism by parents
- Intermarriage

Parashat Vayetze  71  
- The role of angels in the Torah
- Proper and improper prayer
- Dealing with dishonest people

Parashat Vayishlach  80  
- Confronting “power”
- Wrestling with ourselves
- Responding to rape

Parashat Vayeshev  91  
- Hostility between siblings
- Delivering what is promised; embarrassing others
- Measuring loyalty and success

Parashat Miketz  100  
- Interpreting dreams
- Choosing between revenge and caring
- Choosing between death and survival

Parashat Vayigash  108  
- Speaking out for justice
- Achieving reconciliation between enemies
- Fearing the stranger
- Economic planning and justice

Parashat Vayechi  119  
- Jewish burial practices
- Making “honest” evaluations; more on “leadership”
- Lying in the cause of peace

Glossary of Commentaries and Interpreters  127
Bibliography  133