

## שמות

א ואלה שמות בני ישראל העליו למצרים  
 עם יעקב גבר ואיש ביתיה עלו: ב ראובן  
 שמעון לוי ויהודה: ג יושכר זבולן  
 ובנימן: ד דן ונפתלי גר ואשר: ה ויהודה

(א) ואלה שמות בני ישראל. אף על פי שמנאן בחייהן  
 שגמלו לכוכבים, שמואלן ומכניסן במספר ושמותם,  
 שגמלו (ישעיה מ, כו) המוציא במספר נבאם לכלם בשם יקרא:

~ ואלה שמות - *And these are the names.* The appellations given to the books of the Torah generally reflect the themes within. For example, *Bamidbar* is not merely the first word of the fourth book; it alludes to the thirty-eight years the children of Israel sojourn in the desert. Every event recounted in the book of *Bamidbar* took place in the desert, so this choice of name is not merely semantic. Similarly, *Devarim* is a repetition of "items" (i.e., *mitzvos* and events) previously discussed in the Torah. *Vayikra* refers to the appointment between God and Moses in the *Ohel Moed*.

What is the significance of the name *Shemos*?

A name indicates individuality. The Torah wishes to emphasize that God concluded the covenant not with a nation but with an individual. The covenant was initially made with Abraham alone. Although the community through its sins may lose its right to exist, God is willing to deal with but one person. A name signifies uniqueness. The Ten Commandments were addressed not in the plural but in the singular, to emphasize that God relates not only to the collective but to the individual as well. That is why in *Shemos*, the names of Jacob's children are repeated and emphasized.

When I visited the Land of Israel, I was taken to a secular kibbutz, where the tour guide introduced me to a cow he called Rachel. Upon hearing this, I instinctively recoiled. When the guide saw my reaction, he asked sarcastically if giving a cow a name was yet another prohibition imposed by the rabbis.

Giving an animal a human name is in fact wrong because the individuality denoted by a name belongs exclusively to humans. Every human death is a loss which cannot be replaced: Reuven is not like Shimon. The Torah introduced the laws of mourning because even if someone of lowly character dies, his death is still a loss, for every individual has been endowed with the divine image. The preservation of life is a supreme value, even if it necessitates the breaking of the Sabbath. The Torah therefore emphasizes the importance of *bikur cholim* (visiting the sick) and *hachnosas orchim* (welcoming guests).

A dog may exhibit great friendship for his master, but a different dog can be substituted which could display an identical friendship. A dog fundamentally has no name; it is merely part of a species. As devoted as a dog may be, there can be no *aveilus* for it.

That is why *halachah* is so insistent that the names recorded in a marriage document be written with precision. Abraham was elevated to spiritual greatness by changing his name. Maimonides says that the name Jacob reflected a certain destiny, while Israel reflected a different destiny. The appellation of the book of *Shemos* signifies that the Exodus would have taken place even if only one individual had been in Egypt.

## SHEMOS

**1** *And these are the names\* of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt;\* with Jacob, each man and his household came: 2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. 3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin. 4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. 5 Now all those*



Rashi cites the phrase, *He brings out and counts His heavenly Hosts* (Is. 40:26). This phrase refers to the position of the stars within each constellation. Each star is but part of a universe, yet each star is numbered, named and accounted for individually by God. Each has its individual function. Similarly, *Knesses Yisrael* is one system which is composed of individuals. (Boston, 1980)

וְהַבָּאִים מִצְרַיִם - *who came to Egypt*. The Torah should more properly have used the past tense, *אֲשֶׁר בָּאוּ*, *who came*, and not the word *הַבָּאִים*, which more literally would be translated as *who are coming*. The Children of Jacob were long gone. This phrase refers to events that transpired two hundred and ten years before the *Shemos* narrative.

The Midrash noted this anomaly and interpreted the intent of the phrase, *הַבָּאִים מִצְרַיִם*, *ke'ilu ba'u hayom*, as if *Bnei Yisrael* had come that very day. The term *הַבָּאִים* suggests that the people of Egypt did not consider the Israelite nation as part of their state, society and culture; they looked upon them as if they had just entered Egypt.

How long must one remain in a country to be considered a citizen? The words of Pharaoh to his advisors suggest that he considered *Bnei Yisrael* as having just arrived. Indeed, the name for the Israelites, *Ivri*, means completely separated—being on one bank of the river while everyone else is on the other. Even though *Bnei Yisrael* came many years earlier, Egypt still viewed them as strangers.

This belief in the otherness of the Jew repeats itself through history. Jews lived in Germany even before the Dark Ages. During the Middle Ages, the Jews supported Germany from within; they were an integral part of society. Yet, many centuries after they arrived, these Jews were wiped out in the Holocaust. They were charged with being strangers, not counted among society.

The essence of anti-Semitic doctrine throughout history always depicted the Jew as a stranger. They charge that we are strangers, *ivrim*. We never assimilate ourselves into any community; we are outsiders.

There is another implication to the use of the present tense. Chazal say: *Because of four qualities, Bnei Yisrael were redeemed from Egypt: they did not change their names, they did not change their language, they did not change their clothing, and they did not change their God* (*Shemos Rabbah* 1). The Midrash states beautifully: *Reuben descended [to Egypt], Reuben came up [from Egypt]* (*Tanchuma Balak* 25). The Jew was conscious of his identity. When the Jews left, they spoke *Lashon HaKodesh* as fluently as they had when they came to Egypt.

There are certain ideals to which a Jew is committed that can never be forfeited. There is a special relationship between God and Jew as well as a relationship between God and mankind in general. In certain areas of human endeavor, such as healing and helping each other, the Jew is part of the relationship between God and man, and we participate and are part of society. But whenever society tries to terminate our individual identity, to tell us how to live and to be like the rest of society, we are very stubborn.

Pharaoh charged that the Jew was uninterested in the welfare of the land. Pharaoh was wrong, for *הַבָּאִים מִצְרַיִם* has two meanings: we have a special, eternal identity, but nevertheless, we participate in society. When he said that Jews must abandon their identity and join a society whose ideals

כל נפש־תא נפשי יִרְבָּא דִּיעֲקֵב שְׁבָעִין נֶפֶשׁ  
וְיוֹסֵף דִּהְוָה בְּמִצְרַיִם: וְיָמִית יוֹסֵף וְכָל  
אֲחֵיו וְכָל דְּרָא תְּהוּא: וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נִפְשִׁיו  
וְאֲתִילְדוּ וּסְגִיאוּ וְתִקְפוּ לְחֵדָא לְחֵדָא  
וְאֲתִמְלִיאת אֲרַעָא מִנְהוֹן: חֲקִים מִלְכָּא  
חֲדָתָא עַל מִצְרַיִם דְּלֹא מְקִים גְּזֵרַת יוֹסֵף:  
ט וְאִמְר לְעַמִּיהָ הָא עָמָא בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל סְגִי  
וְתִקְפִּין מִנְנָא: י הָבוּ נִתְחַכְּמוּ לְהוֹן דְּלִמָּא  
יִסְגוּ וְיִהְיֶה אֲרִי יַעֲרַעֲנָא קֶרֶב וְיִתְוַסְפוּ אִפּ  
אֲנוּ עַל סְנַאֲנָא וְיִגְדוּן בְּנָא קֶרֶב וְיִסְקוּן מִן  
אֲרַעָא: יא וּמִנְיָאוּ עֲלִיהוֹן שְׁלֹטוֹנִין מִבְּאִישִׁין  
בְּדִיל לְעֻנְיָהוֹן בְּפִלְחָהוֹן וּבְנֵי קְרָוִי בֵּית  
אוֹצָרָא לְפָרְעָה יֵת פִּיתוּס וְיֵת רַעְמֶסֶס:  
יב וּכְמָא דְמַעֲנֵן לְהוֹן מִן סְגִי וְכִן תִּקְפִּין  
וְעַקְרָת לְמִצְרַאִי מִן קֶדֶם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
יג וְאֲפִלְחוּ מִצְרַאִי יֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִשְׁיוֹ:  
יד וְאִמְרִיו יֵת חִיְהוֹן בְּפִלְחָנָא קִשְׁיָא

כל־נפש יצאי ירד־יעקב שבעים נפש ויוסף היה  
במצרים: וימת יוסף וכל־אחיו וכל הדור ההוא:  
ובני ישראל פרו וישרצו וירבו ויעצמו במאד מאד  
ותמלא הארץ אתם: פ ח ויקם מלך־חדש על־  
מצרים אשר לא־ידע את־יוסף: ט ויאמר אל־עמו  
הנה עם בני ישראל רב ועצום ממנו: י הבה נתחכמה  
לו פן־ירבה והיה כִּי־תקראנה מלחמה ונוסף גם־  
הוא על־שנאינו ונלחם־בנו ועלה מן־הארץ:  
יא וישימו עליו שרי מסיים למען ענתו בסבלתם ויבן  
ערי מספנות לפרעה את־פתם ואת־רעמסס:  
יב וכאשר יענו אתו כן ירבה וכן יפרץ ויקצו מפני  
בני ישראל: יג ויעבדו מצרים את־בני ישראל בפרך:  
יד וימררו את־חיייהם בעבדה קשה בחמר ובלבנים

עֲמָנוּ וּתּוֹלָה קִלְלָמוּ בְּחִמְרִים, וְהִרִי הוּא כְּאִילוֹ כְּתֹב וְעֲלִינוּ מִן  
הָאֶרֶץ וְהִסְרֵנוּ יִירָשׁוּהָ: (י) עֲלִיו. עַל הָעַם: מִסִּים. לְשׁוֹן מַס, שְׂרִים שְׂגוּבִין מֵהֶם הֵמָּה. וּמֵהוּ הֵמָּה, שִׁבְעִין עָרֵי מִסְכְּנוֹת לַפְּרָעָה: לְמַעַן עֲנִתוּ בִּסְבָּלָתָם. שֶׁל מִצְרַיִם: עָרֵי מִסְכְּנוֹת. כְּתִירוֹמִי. וְכֵן לֹא הָאֶרֶץ הָיָה (יִשְׁעִיָּה כב טו), גִּזְרֵי הַמִּמּוֹנָה עַל הַאֲזֵרוֹת: אֵת פֶּתֶם וְאֵת רַעְמֶסֶס. שֶׁלֹּא הָיוּ רְאוּיִים מִתְחִלָּה לֵכֶךְ, וְעַשְׂאוֹס חֻקוֹת וְצִוּוֹת לְאוֹרִי: (יב) וְכַאֲשֶׁר יַעֲנֵנו אֲתוֹ. צִלֵּם מֵהֶם נִתְּנִין לִצְלוּתָם, כֵּן לִצְלוּתָם צִדִּיק הוּא לְהִרְצֹת וּלְהַפְרִיךְ: כֵּן יִרְבֶּה. כֵּן רַבָּה וְכֵן פֶּרֶךְ [וְהוּא פִּשְׁטוֹן]. וּמִדְּרָשׁוֹ, רוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ אוֹמֵרֵת כֵּן, אֲתָם אוֹמְרִים כֵּן יִרְבֶּה וְאִי אוֹמֵר כֵּן יִרְבֶּה: וְיִקְצוּ. קִצּוֹ בְּחִיָּהֶם. (וַיֵּשׁ מִפְּרָשִׁים הַמִּצְרַיִם צִעִינֵיהֶם: צִעִינֵיהֶם עֲמָם וְקִצּוֹ). וְרַצוֹתֵינוּ דְרָשׁוּ, כְּקוֹלֵים הָיוּ צִעִינֵיהֶם: (יג) בַּפֶּרֶךְ. צִעֲזוּדָה קִשָּׁה הַמִּפְרָכָה אֵת הַגּוֹף וּמִשְׁצִרְתּוֹ:

(ה) ויוסף היה במצרים. והלא הוא וצניו היו בכלל שבעים, ומה צא ללמדנו וכי לא היינו יודעים שהוא היה צמרים, אלא להודיען דקדקו של יוסף, הוא יוסף הרועה את לאן אציו, הוא יוסף שהיה צמרים ונעשה מלך ועומד בצדקו: (ו) וישרצו. שהיו יולדות ששה צמרים אחד: (ז) ויקם מלך חדש. רב ושמואל, חד אמר חדש ממך, וחד אמר שנתחדש גזירותיו: אשר לא ידע. עשה עֲמָנוּ כאלו לא ידע: (י) הבה נתחכמה לו. כל הבה לשון הכנה והזמנה לדבר הוא, כלומר הזמנינו עֲמָנָם לכן: נתחכמה לו. לעם, נתחכמה מה לעשות לו. ורצותינו דרשו, נתחכם למושיעם של ישראל, לדונם צמים, שכבר נשבע שלא יביא מצול לעולם (והם לא הבינו שעל כל העולם אינו מביא אצל הוא מביא על אומה אחת. דרש"י ישן): ועלה מן הארץ. על כרחנו. ורצותינו דרשו, כאדם שמקלל

differ from those that Jacob brought with him to Egypt, the Jews removed themselves from society, as if they had just entered Egypt.

The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni 176) tells us that many Jews in Egypt had scrolls (probably consisting of Genesis), and every Shabbos, they would read these scrolls. The redemption did not start with Moses. The Jewish belief in the promise of redemption was nurtured by their reading of these scrolls. These scrolls helped maintain their unique identity—the Israelites considered themselves as if they had just entered Egypt. (Aton Holzer Summary)

descended from Jacob were seventy souls, and Joseph, [who] was in Egypt. 6 Now Joseph died, as well as all his brothers and all that generation. 7 The children of Israel were fruitful and swarmed and increased and became very very strong, and the land became filled with them. 8 A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know about Joseph.\* 9 He said to his people, "Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more numerous and stronger than we are. 10 Get ready, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they increase, and a war befall us, and they join our enemies and depart from the land." 11 So they appointed over them tax collectors to afflict them with their burdens, and they built store cities for Pharaoh, namely Pithom and Raamses. 12 But as much as they would afflict them, so did they multiply and so did they gain strength, and they were disgusted because of the children of Israel. 13 So the Egyptians enslaved the children of Israel with back breaking labor.\* 14 And they embittered their lives with hard labor, with clay and with bricks and

וַיָּקָם מֶלֶךְ-חָדָשׁ עַל-מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדַע אֶת-יֹסֵף - A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know about Joseph. In a sense, Pharaoh indeed did not know what Joseph did for Egypt. Earlier, we read that Joseph settled his father and his brothers...as Pharaoh had maintained (Gen. 47:11). Pharaoh instructed that the family be fed no matter how long the family remained. Now a new king appears who did not honor the agreement, who did not appreciate what Joseph did. In Vayigash, we find: And take your father and your households...for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours (Gen. 45:18,20). Pharaoh wanted the entire family to come because he appreciated Joseph and recognized him as a genius who foresaw the future. He believed that if one brother was a genius, then the entire family may exhibit the same quality.

In Parashas Vayechi, we learn of a multitude of Egyptians who went to bury Jacob. It is remarkable to note the extent to which Egyptians mourned Jacob. The place of mourning was called Avel Mitzrayim (Gen. 50:11)—Egyptian mourning. Egypt was in despair because they sensed that Jacob's death heralded the decline of Egypt as a world power. Chazal say that as long as Jacob was in Egypt the Nile River used to rise to water the land, and with his death, it stopped rising. Later, upon Joseph's death, there was no one qualified to guide the destiny of the Egyptian nation. The decline of Egypt was signaled by Pharaoh's desire to let us deal shrewdly with them (verse 10), which further precipitated Egypt's decline. A similar decline took place in Germany in the wake of German persecution of the Jews. (Boston, 1980)

וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָפֶד - So the Egyptians enslaved the children of Israel with back breaking labor. The enslavement of the Israelites took place in three stages. In the first stage, Pharaoh demonized the nation, arguing that they constituted a potential fifth column that threatened Egypt from within: lest they increase, and a war befall us, and they join our enemies (verse 10). The second step was to enlist them into a sort of national service to build storage cities (see Rashi on verse 11) so they could prove their loyalty to the Egyptian state. This phase evolved into servitude so abject that women were forced to submit to the hard labor normally relegated to men, while men were relegated to work that involved the fine manual dexterity typically performed by women. This role reversal resulted in profound demoralization, the work so ill-suited to the slaves that there was no sense of accomplishment. (R. Steven Weil)

בְּשִׂינָא וּבְלִבְנֵי וּבְכָל פְּלִחָנָא בְּחִקְלָא יֵת כָּל  
פְּלִחָנָהוּ דְּאִפְלָחוּ בְּהוּן בְּקִשְׁיוֹ: טו וְאָמַר  
מֶלֶכָא דְּמִצְרַיִם לְחִיטָא יְהוּדִיתָא דְּשׁוּם  
חֲדָא שְׂפָרָה וְשׁוּם תְּנִיתָא פּוּעָה: טז וְאָמַר  
כַּד תִּהְיוּ מוֹלְדוֹ יֵת יְהוּדִיתָא וְתַחְוּן עַל  
מִתְבָּרָא אִם בֵּר הוּא תִקְשְׁלֹן יִתִּיה וְאִם  
בְּרִיתָא הִיא וְתִקְיָמְנָה: יז וְדִחִילָא חִיטָא מִן  
קֶדֶם יי וְלֹא עֲבָדָא כְּמָא דְּמִלִּיל עֲמָהוּ  
מֶלֶכָא דְּמִצְרַיִם וְקִימָא יֵת בְּנִיָּא: יח וְקִרָא  
מֶלֶכָא דְּמִצְרַיִם לְחִיטָא וְאָמַר לָהּ מָה דִּין  
עֲבָדְתִּין יֵת פִּתְגָמָא חֲדוּ וְקִימְתִּין יֵת בְּנִיָּא:  
יט וְאָמַרָא חִיטָא לְפָרְעָה אֲרִי לֹא כְּנִשְׂיָא  
מִצְרִיתָא יְהוּדִיתָא אֲרִי חֲכִימָן אֲנִין עַד לֹא  
עֲלֵת לְוִתְהוֹן חִיטָא וְיִלְדוּ: כ וְאִשְׁטִיב יי  
לְחִיטָא וְסָגִי עֲמָא וְתִקְפּוּ לְחֲדָא: כא וְהוּהוּ  
כַּד דִּחִילָא חִיטָא מִן קֶדֶם יי וְעֲבָד לָהּ בְּתִין:

וּבְכָל-עֲבֹדָה בִּשְׂדֵה אֶת פְּלִעֲבֹדְתָם אֲשֶׁר-עֲבָדוּ  
בָּהֶם בְּפָרָה: טו וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְמִילְדַת הָעִבְרִית  
אֲשֶׁר שֵׁם הָאֵחָת שְׂפָרָה וְשֵׁם הַיִּשִּׁית פּוּעָה: טז וַיֹּאמֶר  
בְּיֻלְדָּכָן אֶת-הָעִבְרִיּוֹת וּרְאִיתִן עַל-הָאֲבָנִים אִם-בֵּן  
הוּא וְהַמֶּתֶן אֹתוֹ וְאִם-בַּת הוּא וְחִיָּה: יז וְתִירָאוּ  
הַמִּילְדַת אֶת-הָאֱלֹהִים וְלֹא עֲשׂוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וְתַחְוּיָן אֶת-הַיִּלְדִּים: שני יח וַיִּקְרָא מֶלֶךְ-  
מִצְרַיִם לְמִילְדַת וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מָדוּעַ עֲשִׂיתִן הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה  
וְתַחְוּיָן אֶת-הַיִּלְדִּים: יט וְתֹאמְרָן הַמִּילְדַת אֶל-פָּרְעָה  
כִּי לֹא כְנִשִּׁים הַמִּצְרִית הָעִבְרִית כִּי-חַיּוֹת הִנֵּה בְּטָרָם  
תָּבוּא אֲלֵהֶן הַמִּילְדַת וְיִלְדוּ: כ וַיִּשְׁטֹב אֱלֹהִים לְמִילְדַת  
וַיִּרַב הָעָם וַיַּעֲצֻמוּ מְאֹד: כא וַיְהִי כִּי-יִרְאוּ הַמִּילְדַת

וְתִפְדְּקֵנָה צְפִיכָס (ירמיה מד, כה) לִשׁוֹן דְּבִרְתָּן, כְּמוֹ וְתִדְּבָרוּ  
לְזָכְרִים. וְכֵן וְתִפְדְּקֵנָה אֲחֵי אֶל עַמִּי (יחזקאל יג, יט) לִשׁוֹן עֲבָר  
חִלְלָתָן, כְּמוֹ וְתִפְדְּקֵנָה לְזָכְרִים: (יט) כִּי חַיּוֹת הִנֵּה. צִקְיָאוֹת  
כְּמִילְדוֹת, תִּרְגֹּס מִילְדוֹת חַיִּיתָא. וְרִבּוּתֵינוּ דְּרִשׁוֹ, הִרִי הֵן  
מִשׁוּלוֹת כַּחֲסוֹת הַשְּׂדֵה שְׁאִינָן צְרִיכוֹת מִילְדוֹת, וְהִיכָן מִשׁוּלוֹת  
לְחַיּוֹת, גֹּדֵר אֲרִיָּה (צִרְאִשִׁית מֵט, ט) וְאֵלֶּךְ יִטְרֹף (שֵׁס שֵׁס, כו), צְכוֹר  
שׁוֹרֵי (דְּבָרִים לג, יז), אֲרִיָּה שְׁלֵקָה (צִרְאִשִׁית מֵט, כח), וְמִי שְׁלֵלָה נִכְתָּב  
צוֹ הִרִי הַכְּתוּב כּוֹלֵלֵן וְצִרְף אֹתָם (שֵׁס שֵׁס, כח), וְעוֹד כַּחֲצִי מֵה  
אֲקִיף לְצִיא (יחזקאל יט, צ): (כ) וַיִּשְׁטֹב. הַטִּיב לָהּ. וְהִיא חֲלוּקָה בְּחִינָה  
שִׁסְדוּדָה צ' אֲחִיּוֹת וְגַתָּן לֵה יו"ד צִרְאִשִׁית, כְּשֶׁהִיא צֹאֵה  
לְדָבָר צִלְשׁוֹן וַיַּעֲשִׂיל הוּא נִקְוֹד הַיּו"ד צִרְאִשִׁית, שְׁהוּא קִמְן קִטָּן  
(אוֹ צִרְאִשִׁית שְׁהוּא פִתְ"ח קִטָּן), כְּגוֹן וַיִּשְׁטֹב אֱלֹהִים לְמִילְדוֹת,  
וַיִּרַב צִבְתָּ יְהוּדָה (אִיכָה ב, ה) הַרְבֵּה תִלְמִינָה, וְכֵן וַיִּגְלֵל הַשְּׂאֲרִית  
(דְּבָרִי הַיָּמִים צ לו, כ) דְּנִצְחוֹרָדָן הַגִּלְגָּל אֶת הַשְּׂאֲרִית, וַיִּפֹּן וַיָּצֵב אֶל

(טו) לְמִילְדַת. הוּא לִשׁוֹן מוֹלִידוֹת, אֲלֵא שֵׁשׁ לִשׁוֹן קֵל וְשֵׁשׁ לִשׁוֹן  
כַּד, כְּמוֹ שׁוֹבֵר וּמִשְׁבֵּר, דּוֹבֵר וּמְדַבֵּר, כֵּךְ מוֹלִיד וּמִילֵד: שְׂפָרָה.  
זוֹ יוֹכֵדָה, עַל שֵׁשׁ שְׁמִשְׁפַּרַת אֶת הוֹלֵד: פּוּעָה. זוֹ מִרִּים, עַל שֵׁשׁ  
שְׁפּוּעָה וּמְדַבֵּרָה וְהוּגָה לִוְלָד כְּדֶרֶךְ הַנְּשִׁים הַמִּפְיִסוֹת חִינוּק  
הַצּוֹכֵה. פּוּעָה לִשׁוֹן זְעָקָה, כְּמוֹ פִּיּוּלְדָה אֲפִקָה (יִשְׁעִיה מֵב, יד):  
(טז) בְּיֻלְדָּכָן. כְּמוֹ צְהוּלִידָכָן: עַל הָאֲבָנִים. מוֹשֵׁב הָאֵשֶׁה  
הַיּוֹלֵדָה, וְצִמְקוֹס אַחֵר קוֹרְאוֹ מִשְׁבֵּר (יִשְׁעִיה לו, ג), וְכִמּוּהוּ עֲשֵׂה  
מְלָאכָה עַל הָאֲבָנִים (ירמיה יח, ג), מוֹשֵׁב כְּלִי אֲוִמָנוֹת יוֹזֵר חֶרֶס:  
אִם בֵּן הוּא וְגו'. לֹא הִיָּה מִקְפִיד אֲלֵא עַל הַזָּכְרִים, שְׁאִמְרוּ לוֹ  
אֲכַטְגִינִי שְׁעִתִּיד לְהוֹלֵד בֵּן מוֹשִׁיעַ אֹתָם: וְחִיָּה. וְחִיָּה:  
(יז) וְתַחְוּיָן אֶת הַיִּלְדִּים. מִסְפָּקוֹת לֵהֶם מִיָּם וּמִזֶּן. תִּרְגֹּס  
הַרְאָשׁוֹן וְקִימְתִּין, וְהַשְׂנִי וְקִימְתִּין, לְפִי שִׁלְשׁוֹן עֲבָרִית לְנִקְצוֹת  
רִבּוּת חִינָה זוֹ וְכִיּוֹלָה צֶה מִשְׁמַשֵּׁת לִשׁוֹן פִּעֵלוֹ וְלִשׁוֹן פִּעֻלָּתָן. כְּגוֹן  
וְתִפְדְּקֵנָה אֲחֵי מִזְרִי (לֵהֲלֵן ב, יט) לִשׁוֹן עֲבָר, כְּמוֹ וַיִּאֲמְרוּ לְזָכְרִים.

❧ *with all kinds of labor in the fields.* Egypt was an agricultural land; Egyptian society was technically advanced past the stage of a pastoral society. The Jew, a shepherd, went to Egypt and stayed there. In such cases the assimilation process usually is quick and effective: the people with a less-developed economy assimilate with great speed into the more advanced economic community. The Jews should have abandoned their pastoral traits and adopted the way of life of the agriculturist, the farming tradition. This is not what happened. The Jews continued to tend their flocks, and remained attached to an old tradition they had brought from Canaan many years before. The Egyptians tried to change the economy of the Israelites and make farmers out of shepherds. *And they embittered their lives with hard labor...with all kinds of labor in the fields.* They did

with all kinds of labor in the fields,\* all their work that they worked with them with back breaking labor. 15 Now the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one who was named Shifrah, and the second, who was named Puah. 16 And he said, “When you deliver the Hebrew women, and you see on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall put him to death, but if it is a daughter, she may live.”\* 17 The midwives, however, feared God; so they did not do as the king of Egypt had spoken to them, but they enabled the boys to live. 18 So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, that you have enabled the boys to live?” 19 And the midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are skilled as midwives; when the midwife has not yet come to them, they have [already] given birth.” 20 God benefited the midwives, and the people multiplied and became very strong. 21 Now it took place when the

not succeed. Reading about the conversation between Moses and Pharaoh, we get the impression that the main occupation of the Hebrews was raising cattle and sheep. Moses said, “With our youth and with our elders we will go, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our cattle we will go” (10:9). The cattle and sheep were the main components of the Hebrew economy.

Joseph’s instructions to his brothers before they were introduced to Pharaoh are noteworthy: *I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and I will say to him, “My brothers and my father’s household who were in the land of Canaan have come to me. The men are shepherds, for they have been cattlemen; their flocks and cattle—and everything they own—they have brought.” And it shall be, when Pharaoh summons you, and says, “What is your occupation?” Then you are to say, “Your servants have been cattlemen from our youth till now, both we and our forefathers,” so that you may be able to settle on the region of Goshen, since all shepherds are abhorrent to Egyptians* (Gen. 46:31-34). He told them to emphasize that they had been and still were shepherds, and that they intended to continue with the pastoral economy they had inherited from their ancestors. As shepherds, they would be assigned a special territory, Goshen, and they would not intermingle with the Egyptians, who cultivated a more advanced economy and disliked cattlemen and shepherds. (*Festival of Freedom*, pp. 126-127)

וְאִם־בֶּן הוּא יְהַמֶּתֶן אֹתוֹ וְאִם־בַּת הוּא יְחַיָּה - if it is a son, you shall put him to death, but if it is a daughter, she may live. Why did Pharaoh relegate the task of killing the male infants to the Jewish midwives? Why did he not order his own people to kill the Jewish males?

A tactic employed by our enemies to oppress the Jews through the generations has been to discredit them—to argue that this nation does not deserve the world’s sympathy. During the Holocaust, the Nazis forcibly took Jews to an elegant hotel in Warsaw, had them dress in festive clothing, loaded the tables with delicacies, hired an orchestra, and forced the Jews to dance. All the while a Nazi photographer took photos of them. Afterward, they were immediately sent to the death camps. After the war it was discovered that the Nazis had planned to disseminate these pictures to demonstrate how Jews callously ignored the suffering of their brethren, even celebrating while their coreligionists were being slaughtered.

This method was originated by Pharaoh. Pharaoh wanted to show the world that the Jews were not worthy of sympathy—see how their own midwives, whose job was to bring children into the world and alleviate the pain of the mothers, killed the children! He wanted to show that the world would be better off without such people. (*Aton Holzer Summary*)



אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם בָּתִּים: כִּב וַיַּצֵּן פְּרַעְה לְכָל־  
עַמּוֹ לֵאמֹר כָּל־חֶבֶן הַיְלֹוד הַיֹּאֲרָה תִשְׁלִיכֶהוּ וְכָל־  
הַבֵּת תַּחֲיוֹן: פ ב א וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לְוִי וַיִּקַּח אֶת־בֶּת־  
לְוִי: ב וַתַּהַר הָאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתֵּרָא אֹתוֹ כִּי־טוֹב הוּא  
וַתַּצְפְּנֶהוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה יָרְחִים: ג וְלֹא־יִכְלָה עוֹד הַצִּפְנִי  
וַתִּקַּח־לוֹ תִּבְת גִּמָּא וַתַּחֲמֶרָה בַּחֲמֶר וּבִזְפַּת וַתִּשֶׂם  
בָּהּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד וַתִּשֶׂם בְּסוּף עַל־שֵׁפֶת הַיָּאֵר: ד וַתַּתַּצֵּב  
אֶחָתוֹ מִרְחָק לְדַעַה מַה־יַּעֲשֶׂה לּוֹ: ה וַתֵּרָד בֶּת־פְּרַעְה  
לְרַחֵץ עַל־הַיָּאֵר וַנַּעֲרֶתֶּהּ הִלְכָת עַל־יַד הַיָּאֵר

הנקבות. דרש"י (שן) והחזירה ועשה בה לקומין שניים. ואף  
היא נהפכה להיות נערה, ובה ק"ל שנה היתה, שנולדה  
בצוה למצרים בין החומות, ומאחזים ועשר שנה נשתחו שם,  
וכשיצאה היה משה בן שמונים שנה, אם כן שנשתעברה ממנו  
היתה בת מאה ושלשים וקורא אותה בת לוי: (ב) כי טוב הוא.  
כשנולד נתמלא הבית כולו אורה: (ג) ולא יכלה עוד הצפניו.  
שמנו לה המצריים מיום שהחזירה, והיא ילדה לששה חדשים  
ויום אחד, שהיולדת לשבעה יולדת למקוטעין, והם צדקו  
אחריה לסוף תשעה: גמא. גמי בלשון משנה, ובלע"ז  
יונק"ו, ודבר כך הוא ועומד בפני רך ופני קשה: בהמר  
ובזפת. ופת מבחור וטיט מצפנים, כדי שלא ירחיק אותו לדיק  
רח רע של זפת: ותשם בסוף. הוא לשון אגס, רוש"י"ל  
בלע"ז, ודומה לו קנה וסוף קמלו (ישעיה יט, ו): (ה) לרחץ  
על היאור. סרס המקרא ופרשהו, ותרד בת פרעה על  
היאור לרחוץ בו: על יד היאור. אלל היאור, כמו קלל קלקל  
ויאבב קל ידי (שמואל ב יד, ג), והוא לשון יד ממש, שיד האדם  
סמוכה לו. ורבותינו דרשו, הולכות לשון מיתה, כמו הפה  
קלבי הולך למות (בראשית כה, ג), הולכות למות לפי שמיחו  
בה. והכתוב מסייע, כי למה לנו לכתוב ונערויתה הולכות:

ינב (שופטים טו, ד) הפנה הזנבות זו לזו, כל אלו לשון הפעיל  
את אחריים. וכשהוא מדבר בלשון ויפעל הוא נקוד היו"ד  
במיר"ק, כגון ויטב צעניו (ויקרא י, כ) לשון הוטב, וכן ויב  
קעם נחמדה העם, ויגל יהודה (מלכים ב כה, כא) הגלה יהודה,  
ויפן פה וכה (להלן ב, יב) הפנה לכאן ולכאן. ואל תשיגי וילך  
וישכ ויבד ויבא, לפי שאין מגזרתן של אלו, שהרי היו"ד יסוד  
בהן, ירד ילא ישכ ילך, יו"ד אות שלשית בו: ויישב אלהים  
למילדת. מהו הטובה: (כב) ויעש להם בתים. בתי כהונה  
ולויה ומלכות שקרוין בתיס, כמו שכתוב (ויצן) [אשר צנה]  
וגו' את בית ה' ואת בית המלך (מלכים א ט, י), כהונה ולויה  
מיוכדז ומלכות ממרים, כדאיתא במסכת סוטה (יא:):  
(כג) לכל עמו. אף עליהם גזר, יום שנולד משה אמרו לו  
אכטגנינו היום נולד מושיענו ואין אנו יודעים אם ממצרים  
אם מישראל ורואין אנו שסופו ללקות במים, לפיכך גזר אותו  
היום אף על המצריים, שנאמר כל הבן הילוד ולא נאמר הילוד  
לעצרים, והם לא היו יודעים שסופו ללקות על מי מריבה:  
(כד) ויקח את בת לוי. פרוש היה ממנה מפני גזירת פרעה  
(והזר ולקחה, והזר וילך שהלך בעצתו, שאלמה לו גזרתך  
קשה משל פרעה, אם פרעה גזר על הזכרים ואתה גם כן על

He made houses for them. These houses represent leadership. God turned the leadership of Israel over to these midwives. The authority to lead and teach Bnei Yisrael was transferred to them.

Chazal indicate that the midwives were Yocheved and Miriam (see Rashi). The Midrash tells us of Amram, the *Gadol HaDor*, the leader of Bnei Yisrael. When Pharaoh issued the decree to kill every Jewish baby boy, Amram divorced his wife Yocheved in despair, arguing that there is no use to having children, since all the males would die anyway. Miriam rebuked Amram: *Your prescription*

midwives feared God, that He made houses for them.\* <sup>22</sup> And Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, “Every son who is born you shall cast into the Nile, and every daughter you shall allow to live.”

<sup>2</sup> <sup>1</sup> A man of the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi.\* <sup>2</sup> The woman conceived and bore a son, and [when] she saw him that he was good, she hid him for three months. <sup>3</sup> [When] she could no longer hide him, she took [for] him a reed basket, smeared it with clay and pitch, placed\* the child into it, and put [it] into the marsh at the Nile’s edge. <sup>4</sup> His sister stood from afar, to know what would be done to him.\* <sup>5</sup> Pharaoh’s daughter went down to bathe, to the Nile, and her maidens were walking along the Nile,

is worse than Pharaoh’s. Pharaoh decreed that only the male infants must die—you are decreeing death to both male and female [infants]! With the birth of Moses, Miriam prophesied that he would become the redeemer of Israel.

When Moses was placed in the Nile, Amram became enraged with Miriam: *My daughter, my daughter, what happened with your prophecy? Why did you give me such advice?* (Sotah 12b). In fact, Amram was completely wrong, and Miriam’s optimistic approach was borne out. Immediately after the splitting of the Red Sea, after Moses’ song, the Torah records Miriam’s song as well, confirming the critical role she played in the Exodus from Egypt. When *Bnei Yisrael* left Egypt, their leader was Moses. Earlier, when Moses was in Midian, their ruler was Miriam. She earned this position because she was ready to sacrifice her life for the survival of *Bnei Yisrael*. (Aton Holzer Summary)

וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֵוִי וַיִּקַּח אֶת-בִּתּוֹ - *A man of the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi.* Through use of the term *בֵּית לֵוִי*, the Torah is referring to those members of the tribe of Levi who fought the historical struggle for Jewish identity and continuity in Egypt. The noun *בֵּית* carries the connotation of responsibility. For example, in the phrase *בֵּית אַהֲרֹן בִּשְׁחוֹ בָה'*, *Trust in the Lord, House of Aaron* (Ps. 115:10), the intent is to single out a national unit which bears a specific responsibility. When the Torah tells us *וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֵוִי וַיִּקַּח אֶת-בִּתּוֹ*, the reference is to active opposition to the policies of Pharaoh. Without these Jews, the Exodus from Egypt could never have taken place. (Divrei Hashkafah, pp. 53-54)

וַיִּשֶׂם - *and...placed.* It is interesting to note that all the verbs used in describing the hiding of Moses and his later being placed in the basket are in the feminine form: *vateireh*, *vatitzpineihu*, *yachla*, *vatikach*, *vatachmerah*, *vasatem*—everything was done by Yocheved and Miriam. Amram had no say in the matter; the leadership was taken away from him and given to the righteous midwives. וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם בָּתִּים—God made Yocheved and Miriam the leaders; decision-making was taken from Amram and turned over to these women. (Aton Holzer Summary)

וַתֵּצֵב אָחִיו מִרְיָם מֵרֶחֶק לִדְעָה מַה-יַּעֲשֶׂה לוֹ - *His sister stood from afar, to know what would be done to him.* Amram and Yocheved had given up on the fate of their little child. Miriam, however, intuitively felt that a strange, awesome drama was unfolding before her eyes. She was not merely watching a floating reed basket; she was observing Jewish historical destiny. Would the promises made to Abraham be fulfilled, or would, God forbid, the floating ark, filled with the fate and destiny of an unborn nation, collapse? Miriam stood from *afar*, trying to foresee how her actions would lead to the events that would ultimately result in redemption. (Boston, 1974)



וַתֵּרָא אֶת־הַיִּלָּד בְּתוֹךְ הַסּוּף וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת־אִמָּתָהּ וַתִּקְחָהּ: וַתִּפְתַּח וַתֵּרָאֶהוּ אֶת־הַיִּלָּד וְהִנֵּה־נֶעַר בְּכָה וַתַּחְמַל עָלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר מִי־לִי הָעֶבְרִים זֶה: וַתֹּאמֶר אֶחָתוֹ אֶל־בֶּת־פַּרְעֹה הָאֵלֶּךְ וַקְּרָאתִי לָךְ אִשָּׁה מִיִּנְקָת מִן הָעֶבְרִית וַתֵּינַק לָךְ אֶת־הַיִּלָּד: ח וַתֹּאמֶר־לָהּ בֶּת־פַּרְעֹה לָכִי וַתֵּלֶךְ הָעֹלָמָה וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־אִם הַיִּלָּד: ט וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ בֶּת־פַּרְעֹה הִילִיכִי אֶת־הַיִּלָּד הַזֶּה וְהִינֵקְהוּ לִי וְאֲנִי אֶתֶּן אֶתְּךָ וַתִּקַּח הָאִשָּׁה הַיִּלָּד וַתִּנְקֵהוּ: י וַיִּגְדַּל הַיִּלָּד וַתִּבְאֶהוּ לְבֶת־פַּרְעֹה וַיְהִי־לָהּ לִבָּן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מֹשֶׁה וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי מִן־הַיָּמִים מִשִּׁיתָהוּ: שְׁלִישִׁי יָא וַיְהִי | בְּיָמִים הָהֵם וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּצֵא אֶל־אָחָיו וַיֵּרָא בְּסַבְלָתָם וַיֵּרָא אִישׁ מִצְרִי

וַתֵּרָא אֶת־הַיִּלָּד בְּתוֹךְ הַסּוּף וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת־אִמָּתָהּ וַתִּקְחָהּ: וַתִּפְתַּח וַתֵּרָאֶהוּ אֶת־הַיִּלָּד וְהִנֵּה־נֶעַר בְּכָה וַתַּחְמַל עָלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר מִי־לִי הָעֶבְרִים זֶה: וַתֹּאמֶר אֶחָתוֹ אֶל־בֶּת־פַּרְעֹה הָאֵלֶּךְ וַקְּרָאתִי לָךְ אִשָּׁה מִיִּנְקָת מִן הָעֶבְרִית וַתֵּינַק לָךְ אֶת־הַיִּלָּד: ח וַתֹּאמֶר־לָהּ בֶּת־פַּרְעֹה לָכִי וַתֵּלֶךְ הָעֹלָמָה וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־אִם הַיִּלָּד: ט וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ בֶּת־פַּרְעֹה הִילִיכִי אֶת־הַיִּלָּד הַזֶּה וְהִינֵקְהוּ לִי וְאֲנִי אֶתֶּן אֶתְּךָ וַתִּקַּח הָאִשָּׁה הַיִּלָּד וַתִּנְקֵהוּ: י וַיִּגְדַּל הַיִּלָּד וַתִּבְאֶהוּ לְבֶת־פַּרְעֹה וַיְהִי־לָהּ לִבָּן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מֹשֶׁה וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי מִן־הַיָּמִים מִשִּׁיתָהוּ: שְׁלִישִׁי יָא וַיְהִי | בְּיָמִים הָהֵם וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּצֵא אֶל־אָחָיו וַיֵּרָא בְּסַבְלָתָם וַיֵּרָא אִישׁ מִצְרִי

וימוש אלא מגזרת משה, ולשון הולאה הוא, וכן ימשני ממנים רצים (שמואל ב כב יז). שאלו היה ממחצרת מש, לא יתכן לומר משיתוהו אלא המישותיהו, כאשר יאמר מן קס הקימות, ומן שז השיבות, ומן צא הביאות. או משפיהו, כמו ומשפתי את עון הארץ (זכריה ג ט). אבל משיתי אינו אלא מגזרת מיצה שפעל שלה מיוסד צה"א בסוף התיצה, כגון משה צנה עשה צנה פנה, כשיבוא לומר צהם פעלמי מצא היו"ד צמקום ה"א, כמו עשימי צניתי פניתי צויתי: (יב) ויגדל משה. והלא כבר כתב ויגדל הילד, אמר רבי יהודה צה"א, הראשון לקומה והשני לגדולה, שמינהו פרעה על ציתו: וירא בסבלתם. נתן ענינו ולבו להיות מיצר עליהם: איש מצרי. נוגש היה ממונה על שוטרי ישראל, והיה מעמידם מקרות הגצר למלאכתם:

את אמתה. את שפחמה. ורבותינו דרשו, לשון יד. אבל לפי דקדוק לשון הקודש היה לו להנקד אמתה מ"ס דגושה, והם דרשו את אמתה את ידה, ונשמרצצה אמתה אמות הרצה: (א) ותפתח ותראהו. את מי ראתה, הילד, זהו פשוטו. ומדרשו, שראתה עמו שכינה: והנה נער בכה. קולו כנער: (ב) מן העבריות. מלמד שהחזירנו על מצריות הרצה לניק ולא ינק, לפי שהיה עמיד לדבר עם השכינה: (ג) ותלך העלמה. הלכה מצריות ועלמות כעלם: (ד) חיליכי. נתנצחה ולא ידעה מה נתנצחה, הי שליכי: (ה) משיתוהו. כמרגומו שחלמיה, והוא לשון הולאה בלשון ארמי, כמשחל צימתא מחלצא. ובלשון עברי משיתוהו לשון הסירותיו, כמו לא ימש (להלן יג, כב), לא משו (צמדצד יד, מד), כך חזרו מנחם. ואני אומר, שאינו ממחצרת מש

~ and she saw him, the child. According to Rashi, the added pronoun *him* suggests that Pharaoh's daughter saw something other than just the child: she saw the Divine Presence beside him. She was indeed Pharaoh's daughter, although she was not influenced by him. She apparently had the rare ability to perceive signs of greatness at first glance. The earlier Pharaoh who had appointed Joseph as prime minister had this same ability. When Pharaoh's daughter opened the box, she saw the Divine Presence alongside the baby—she sensed the great potential of Moses. She immediately questioned her father's motives: how could he condemn this type of child to death and call him sub-human? She refused to comply with her father's decree. (*Divrei Hashkafah*, pp. 55-56)

~ and behold, he was a weeping lad. The Talmud (*Sotah* 12b) initially suggests

and she saw the basket in the midst of the marsh, and she sent her maidservant, and she took it. <sup>6</sup> She opened [it], and she saw him, the child,\* and behold, he was a weeping lad,\* and she had compassion on him, and she said, "This is [one] of the children of the Hebrews." <sup>7</sup> His sister said to Pharaoh's daughter,\* "Shall I go and call for you a wet nurse from the Hebrew women, so that she shall nurse the child for you?" <sup>8</sup> Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go!" So the girl went and called the child's mother. <sup>9</sup> Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse him for me, and I will give [you] your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. <sup>10</sup> The child grew up, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became like her son. She named him Moses, and she said, "For I drew him from the water." <sup>11</sup> Now it came to pass in those days that Moses grew up\* and went out to his brothers and looked at their burdens,\* and he saw an Egyptian man

that Moses' voice had a deeper pitch than was typical for a baby, and Rabbi Nechemiah argues that, if so, Moses would be a *ba'al mum*, someone with a blemish who would be disqualified for serving as a *levi* in the Temple. According to Maimonides (*Hilchos Klei Hamikdash* 3:8), the *levi* is disqualified from singing in the Temple if his voice has aged or otherwise degraded, but he is still qualified to open and close the gates of the Temple. The fact that Maimonides finds it necessary to explicitly note that the *levi* is allowed to perform the gate function suggests that a *levi* with a damaged voice is indeed considered a *ba'al mum*; otherwise, it would have been obvious that his inability to sing would have no bearing on opening and closing the gates. Rabbi Nechemiah's question regarding Moses being a *ba'al mum* is therefore consistent with Maimonides' wording. As a response to Rabbi Nechemiah's objection, Nachmanides indicates that Moses' voice did not have a deeper pitch than a baby's; it was simply louder and more robust, like that of an older child. (*Birkas Yitzchak*, p. 87)

The wail of this child pierced the air on the river bank. This was not to be Moses' only cry. Every time Moses fell in supplication before God, the cry of a child was heard. Who other than a child can fall completely in supplication before a father, to throw one's burden upon him, to lift his eyes to his father alone? The adult cannot pour out his soul with such absence of inhibition. The cry of the child accompanied the teacher of Israel from the bank of the Nile through Sinai, from the tent of meeting until the mountain bordering the Land of Israel. (*Divrei Hagut Vaha'aracha*, p. 160)

וַתֹּאמֶר אֶחָתוֹ אֶל־בֶּת־פָּרְעֹה - His sister said to Pharaoh's daughter: Miriam is responsible for the emergence of Moses as a leader and redeemer of his people. If not for her, he would have never been imbued with great passionate love for his poor brethren. She suggested to the princess that a Hebrew wet-nurse be employed for the infant, preventing Moses from disappearing in anonymity and ignorance. The destiny of mankind and of the covenantal people was shaped by the woman. (*Family Redeemed*, pp. 118-119)

וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה - Moses grew up. The term *יִגְדַּל* has the connotation of greatness. Moses' greatness is reflected in the simple fact that he no longer limited himself to his parochial concerns: he was concerned about the welfare of his brothers. (*Harerei Kedem* Vol. 2, p. 223)

וַיֵּצֵא אֶל־אֶחָיו וַיֵּרָא בְּסִבְלָתָם - and went out to his brothers and looked at their burdens. Even before he was chosen as Israel's redeemer, Moses experienced something surprising, yet characteristic. The dear son of the house of Pharaoh leaves the palace and goes out to his brothers

מִכָּה אִישׁ-עִבְרִי מֵאֲחִיו: יֵב וַיִּפֶּן כָּה וְכֵה וַיֵּרָא כִּי אֵין  
אִישׁ וַיִּךְ אֶת-הַמִּצְרִי וַיִּטְמְנֵהוּ בַחֹל: יג וַיֵּצֵא בַיּוֹם  
הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וְהָנִיחַ שְׁנֵי-אֲנָשִׁים עִבְרִים נָצִים וַיֹּאמֶר לְרִשָּׁע  
לָמָּה תִכֶּה רַעְדָּה: יד וַיֹּאמֶר מִי שְׁמֶךָ לְאִישׁ שֶׁר וְשִׁפְטָ  
עָלֵינוּ הִלְהַרְגֵנִי אֵתָּה אָמַר כְּאִשֶּׁר הָרַגְתָּ אֶת-הַמִּצְרִי  
וַיֵּירָא מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אָכֵן נֹדַע הַדָּבָר: טו וַיִּשְׁמַע פְּרַעֲה  
אֶת-הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וַיִּבְקֹשׁ לַהֲרֹג אֶת-מֹשֶׁה וַיִּבְרַח מֹשֶׁה

רשע כמוסך: (יד) מי שמך לאיש. והרי עודך נער: הלהרגני  
אתה אומר. מכלן אנו למדים שהרגו נשם המפורש: וירא  
משה. כפשוטו. ומדרשו, לאג לו על שראה ישראל רשעים  
לדורו, אמר, מעתה שמא אינם ראויין להגאל: אכן נודע  
הדבר. כמשמעו. ומדרשו, נודע לי הדבר שהייתי חמה עליו  
מה חטאו ישראל מכל שצעים אומות להיות נרדים צעודת  
פך, אבל רואה אני שהם ראויים לכך: (טו) וישמע פרעה. הם  
הלשינו עליו: ויבקש להרוג את משה. מסרו לקוסטיגר  
להרגו ולא שלטה צו החרב, הוא שאמר משה (להלן יד, טז) וַיִּלְלֵנִי

מכה איש עברי. מלקהו ורודהו, וצעלה של שלומית צה דברי  
היה, ונתן עיניו צה, וצלילה העמידו והואליו מצמו, והוא חזר  
ונכנס לבית וצא על אשתו, כסצורה שהוא צעלה, וחזר האיש  
לציתו והרגיש צדצ, וכשראה אותו מזרי שהרגיש צדצ היה  
מכהו ורודהו כל היום: (יג) ויפן כה וכה. ראה מה עשה לו  
צבית ומה עשה לו צסדה. ולפי פשוטו, כמשמעו: וירא כי אין  
איש. שאין איש עמיד לנאח ממנו שחגייר: (יג) שני אנשים  
עבריים. דמן ואצרים, הם שהותירו מן המן: נצים. מריצים:  
למה תכה. אף על פי שלא הכהו נקרא רשע צהרמת יד: רעד.

to better get to know them. Although Moses was reared in Pharaoh's home he had feelings of brotherhood with the enslaved Hebrews.

Not only did he witness their pain: the words וַיֵּרָא בְּסִבְלָתָם mean that he experienced the difficulty of the enslavement along with them. The one whose destiny was to become the redeemer of Israel quickly helped and identified with his downtrodden brethren. When Maimonides lists those who will not merit the world-to-come, he includes *those who withdraw from the community: even though he committed no sin but separates himself from the Congregation of Israel, and does not do mitzvos among them, and does not identify with its travails and does not participate in their fasts* (Hilchos Teshuvah 2:11). If the Jew feels no sense of solidarity with his Jewish brothers, no feelings of a joint fate and destiny, he has no share in the world-to-come. It is insufficient for this sense of identification to be solely in the intellectual realm. This solidarity must include identifying with the nation's pain and suffering, as well as the rejoicing and good times. (*Ha'adam Ve'olamo*, pp. 76-78)

וַיֵּרָא אִישׁ מִצְרִי מִכָּה אִישׁ-עִבְרִי מֵאֲחִיו. וַיִּפֶּן כָּה וְכֵה וַיֵּרָא כִּי אֵין אִישׁ וַיִּךְ אֶת-הַמִּצְרִי - and he saw an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man of his brothers. He turned this way and that way, and he saw that there was no man; so he struck the Egyptian. Many Jews were assimilated in Egypt, a state of affairs which repeated itself in subsequent exiles. These Jews thought that there were liberals among the Egyptians, representatives of Egyptian culture who saw themselves first as human beings. They therefore felt that the Jewish nation should first and foremost be like everyone else; be progressive and assimilate among the Egyptians. Yet here Moses witnesses a liberal, acculturated Egyptian, an איש with a fine personality, striking someone who no longer identifies with his own religion, himself remaining only

striking a Hebrew man of his brothers. <sup>12</sup> He turned this way and that way, and he saw that there was no man; so he struck the Egyptian\* and hid him in the sand. <sup>13</sup> He went out on the second day, and behold, two Hebrew men were quarreling, and he said to the wicked one, “Why are you going to strike your friend?” <sup>14</sup> And he retorted, “Who made you a man, a prince, and a judge over us? Do you plan to slay me\* as you have slain the Egyptian?” Moses became frightened and said, “Indeed, the matter has become known!”\* <sup>15</sup> Pharaoh heard of this incident, and he sought to slay Moses; so Moses

an איש. Though the Jew may be an איש-עברי מאהי, identifying with his Egyptian “brothers,” when the Egyptian taskmaster smites, he does not differentiate between the Jew who observes the Torah and one who is acting as מאהי, as if he is himself an Egyptian. Moses saw that as far as the Egyptian was concerned, כי אין איש: when it comes to the Jews, the Egyptian maintained no sense of human kinship. Therefore, וַיִּדְּ אֶת-הַמִּצְרִי, Moses smote the Egyptian. No longer was there any pretense of a common humanity—he was not an איש but only a מִצְרִי, an Egyptian. (Divrei Harav, p. 271)

There is a distinct difference between Abraham and Moses. Abraham, upon discovering the moral law and severing himself from society, discovers also the God of morality. His anarchic outcry against a ruthless state leads him to a free, lonely God, without suddenly encountering a transcendent deity. Moses discovered the moral law when he went out to his brethren and defended a helpless slave against the brutal attack of an Egyptian master. Yet this morality did not disclose to him new historical horizons. We are not aware of any personal metamorphosis in Moses due to his bitter experience with his mother civilization. In spite of that episode, he remained the elegant courtier. As the daughters of Jethro tell their father, *An Egyptian man rescued us from the hand[s] of the shepherds* (verse 19)—Moses did not renounce his affiliation with Egyptian society. Not until he was well engrossed in his mission, which resulted from the majestic scene of the burning bush, did our redeemer realize the change which had come upon him. (*The Emergence of Ethical Man*, p. 182)

וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הָעִיפְתִּי אֶתְּךָ אֶתְּךָ אֶתְּךָ - *Do you plan to slay me?* Rashi understands this phrase as, “Are you going to kill me by saying (i.e. by speaking)?” Based on this understanding, he suggests that the Egyptian was killed by Moses through his uttering God’s explicit Name. Why did Moses choose to kill the Egyptian in this way? Maimonides (*Hilchos Melachim* 10:6), based on a Gemara in *Sanhedrin* 58b, indicates that an idolater who strikes a Jew is worthy of death. However, this injunction is not one of the seven Noahide laws. Non-Jewish courts can only prosecute crimes that are limited to these seven laws, while Jewish courts do not have jurisdiction over non-Jews. Therefore, a death sentence in such a case cannot be actively carried out. However, because speaking is not a physical act as such, uttering the Divine Name is not an act of killing. Moses could legally effect a death sentence on the Egyptian through making such an utterance. (*Iggerot Hagrid*, pp. 272-274)

וַיִּירָא מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶתְּךָ אֶתְּךָ אֶתְּךָ - *Moses became frightened and said, “Indeed, the matter has become known!”* According to the Midrashic interpretation, the incident of the two feuding Jews depressed Moses to such a degree that he gave up hope that the redemption would ever come: *Moses became frightened—When he saw that among Israel there were wicked informers, he said: Perhaps now they are unworthy of redemption.* Rashi quotes this Midrash and continues: [Moses said:] “Indeed, the matter has become known”—*The matter I was wondering about is now known: what sin did Israel, alone*

מִפְּנֵי פֶרְעָה וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּאֶרֶץ־מִדְיָן וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל־הַבְּאֵר׃  
טז וַלְכָהּן מִדְיָן שִׁבְעַת בָּנוֹת וַתִּבְאֶנָּה וַתְּדַלְּנָה  
וַתִּמְלֶאנָה אֶת־הָרֶהָטִים לְהִשְׁקוֹת צֹאן אֲבִיהֶן׃  
יז וַיָּבֹאוּ הָרָעִים וַיִּגְרְשׁוּם וַיִּקֶּם מֹשֶׁה וַיּוֹשְׁעֵן וַיֵּשֶׁק  
אֶת־צִאֲנָם׃ יח וַתִּבְאֶנָּה אֶל־רְעוּאֵל אֲבִיהֶן וַיֹּאמֶר  
מִדּוּעַ מִתְּהַרְתֶּן בָּא הַיּוֹם׃ יט וַתֹּאמְרֶנּוּ אִישׁ מִצְרִי  
הִצִּילָנוּ מִיַּד הָרָעִים וְגַם־דָּלָה דָּלָה לָנוּ וַיֵּשֶׁק אֶת־  
הַצֹּאן׃ כ וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־בְּנֹתָיו וְאִיזוֹ לָמָּה זֶה עֲזַבְתֶּן  
אֶת־הָאִישׁ קְרָאֵן לוֹ וַיֹּאכַל לֶחֶם׃ כא וַיֹּאֶל מֹשֶ�ה  
לְשִׁבְתָּ אֶת־הָאִישׁ וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־צִפְרָה בָּתּוֹ לְמִשְׁחָה׃  
כב וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ גִּרְשֵׁם כִּי אָמַר

שהוא מזרעו של יעקב, שהמים עולים לקראתו: ויאכל  
לחם. שמה ישא אחת מכס, כמה זאת אמר (בראשית לט, ו)  
פי אם הלָקֵס הָאִשֶּׁר הוּא אֹכֵל: (כא) ויואל. כתרנומו (ס"א  
כמשמעו), ודומה לו הוֹאֵל גַּם וְלִין (שופטים יט, ו), וְלוֹ  
הוֹאֵלָנוּ (שופטים ז, י), הוֹאֵלָתִי לְדָפַר (בראשית יט, לא). ומדרשו,  
לשון אֵלֶּה, נשבע לו שלא יזוז ממדין כי אם צרשמו:

מִקְרָב פֶּרְעָה: [וישב בארץ מדין. נתעכז שם, כמו וַיֵּשֶׁב  
יַעֲקֹב (בראשית לו, ה):] וישב על הבאר. לשון ישיבה למד  
מיעקב שמדווג לו זוונו על הצֹאן: (טז) ולכהן מדין. רב  
שנה, ופירש לו מעבודה זרה ונידוהו מאללס: את  
הרהטים. את צריכות מרוחות המים העשויות צֹאן: (י)  
ויגרשום. מפני הנידוי: (כ) למה זה עזבתן. הכיר צו

among the seventy nations, commit so as to be worthy of hard labor? But now I see that they were deserving of it. Moses was afraid, Rashi explains, because he believed there was no hope for the slaves; they had stooped so low, they had sunk so deeply in the abyss of degradation and inhumanity that they would never be deserving of freedom and redemption. Moses began to believe that the Egyptians were to some extent right; the Jew is a slave because he does not deserve to be a master. Indeed, the matter has become known—their destiny is known.

Moses was wrestling with a tremendous problem: Why were the Jews enslaved in such a cruel and ruthless way? Why were the Jews less deserving than any other nation? Now Moses thought he understood: the Jews were informers! They displayed no devotion to one another; they lacked commitment. After all, Moses had killed an Egyptian in order to defend a Hebrew—no one else would have done it. He could do it only because he was a member of the royal family. And the Jews went and informed the authorities! Such a people did not deserve salvation and the help of God.

Moses' attitude may seem strange, but it apparently was overpowering; the experience cast a fierce spell upon him. Moses left Egypt with no hope and a broken spirit. The dark night of slavery, he believed, would continue forever. Moses thought that the centuries-long slavery had left

fled from before Pharaoh.\* He stayed in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well.\*  
 16 Now the chief of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew [water], and they filled the troughs to water their father's flocks. 17 But the shepherds came and drove them away; so Moses arose and rescued them and watered their flocks. 18 They came to their father Reuel, and he said, "Why have you come so quickly today?" 19 They replied, "An Egyptian man rescued us\* from the hand[s] of the shepherds, and he also drew [water] for us and watered the flocks." 20 He said to his daughters, "So where is he? Why have you left the man? Invite him, and let him eat bread." 21 Moses consented to stay with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses. 22 She bore a son, and he named

its mark; it had corrupted the people. They had lost their dignity, thereby forfeiting their claim and their right to be a covenantal community. There is no hope for such a people. The Torah conceals Moses' thoughts and tells us only that *Moses fled from before Pharaoh*, but he really ran from his own brethren as well. He fled Egypt discouraged, disenchanted, and in despair. (*Vision and Leadership*, pp. 73-74)

וַיִּכְרַח מֹשֶׁה מִפְּנֵי פַרְעֹה - so Moses fled from before Pharaoh. The Torah recorded four incidents about Moses' early years: his birth, his encounter with the Egyptian, the subsequent persecution and flight from Egypt, and his joining with Yisro. What occurred between the time that Moses fled Egypt and his giving birth to Gershom sixty years later? We must learn to decipher a story from missing information. We have to read and interpret not only the text but the time gap.

By not telling us what took place, the Torah has in fact conveyed important information in a clear, unequivocal manner. During this time gap, God covered His face: *hester panim*—hiding His face. He turned His back on Israel. This was the tragic historical experience which the Jew underwent in that period. We find in *Deuteronomy* 31:17: *And My fury will rage against them on that day, and I will abandon them and hide My face from them, and they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will befall them, and they will say on that day, "Is it not because our God is no longer among us, that these evils have befallen us?"* This is exactly what happened at that time. (Boston, Undated)

וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּאֶרֶץ-מִדְיָן וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל-הַבְּעָר - He stayed in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well. The repeated use of the term *וַיֵּשֶׁב* suggests that Moses attempted to completely sever his relationship with Israel and remain in Midian as a permanent resident, not just a temporary sojourner (see Rashi on *Gen.* 37:1). (Boston, 1979)

אִישׁ מִצְרִי הִצִּילָנוּ - An Egyptian man rescued us. When God later refused Moses' request that he be allowed to pass over the Jordan River to Israel, Moses argued that at the very least he should be buried there. Since he carried Joseph's casket in the desert for forty long years to be buried in Israel, why should God not afford him the same privilege? God's answer was: "Joseph acknowledged his land and you did not acknowledge the land" (*Devarim Rabbah* 2). In captivity, Joseph's very identity was tied to the land of Israel, as he proclaimed: *For I was stolen from the land of the Hebrews* (*Gen.* 40:15). In contrast, when Jethro's daughters mistakenly identified Moses as an Egyptian, Moses did not correct them. As a result of this omission, he did not merit burial in the Land of Israel. (*Derashot Harav*, p. 198)



גַּר הָיִיתִי בְּאֶרֶץ נִכְרִיָּה: פ כַּג וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָרַבִּים  
הָהֵם וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּאנְחוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן־  
הָעֲבָדָה וַיִּזְעְקוּ וַתַּעַל שׁוֹעַתָּם אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים מִן־  
הָעֲבָדָה: כד וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת־נַאֲקָתָם וַיִּזְכֹּר  
אֱלֹהִים אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם אֶת־יִצְחָק וְאֶת־

הָיִיתִי בְּאֶרֶץ נִכְרִיָּה: כג וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָרַבִּים  
הָהֵם וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּאנְחוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן־  
הָעֲבָדָה וַיִּזְעְקוּ וַתַּעַל שׁוֹעַתָּם אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים מִן־  
הָעֲבָדָה: כד וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת־נַאֲקָתָם וַיִּזְכֹּר  
אֱלֹהִים אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם אֶת־יִצְחָק וְאֶת־

(כג) וידי בימים הרבים ההם. שהיה משה גר צמדין, וימת  
מלך מצרים והוארכו ישראל לתשועה, ומשה היה רועה וגו',  
מלך מצרים והוארכו ישראל לתשועה, ומשה היה רועה וגו',  
וצאת תשועה על ידו, ולכן נסמכו פרשיות הללו. (ברש"י  
(שן): וימת מלך מצרים. נטרע, והיה שומע חינוקות  
ישראל ורוחן דמס: (כד) נאקתם. נעקתם, וכן משיר ממים  
ינאקו (איוז כד, יג): את בריתו את אברהם. עם אברהם:

~ I was a stranger in a foreign land. After the Torah tells us that Zipporah gave birth to Gershom, there is a *pesuchah* in the Torah scroll, a blank space followed by a new paragraph or section. The *pesuchah* signifies that a new reality is about to emerge. The bondage in Egypt had been a time of *hester panim*, the hiding of God's face, a period when man feels completely alienated from God. During *hester panim*, man becomes like any other living organism, like a brute in the field or forest. He is no longer under the unique, individual protection of the Almighty. During the time of *hester panim*, the Jews' suffering becomes routine. Survivors of the Nazi concentration camps relate that after a time, they began to think their lives had to be like this, that it was useless to complain, ridiculous to cry, pointless to scream. *Hester panim* is a time of silence. But after many days (verse 23), they began to groan, and God heard their cry, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob (2:24). (Vision and Leadership, p. 71)

~ Now it came to pass in those many days. Our Torah has a method of telling a story through silence. The story of complete forgetfulness and extreme despair is related by not saying anything. The detail behind those days of despair, of *hester panim*, was not recorded. People who suffer greatly can lose track of the concept of time: days, nights, and hours become monotonous and boring. Time becomes abstract and we cease to feel it; sometimes it goes quickly and sometimes slowly. A slave and one who experiences fear or danger have no appreciation of time. It becomes a collection of minutes, hours or days. *Those many days* were many days of silence marked by the same humiliation and ridicule. The days in German concentration camps were similar: they accumulated without any significance. The Jews who endured Egyptian slavery and the Jews who suffered the Holocaust had this harrowing experience of time in common. (Boston, 1979)

The idea of the covenant inherently denotes two separate stages: a great promise and vision, and a realization of that promise in a distant future. Promise lies at the threshold of the historical interval, fulfillment at the end. The two are separated by an interim period, after which the covenant finds its conclusion.

What is the characteristic of the interim, of the long "between?" The apparent deterioration of the covenant.

The covenant is a revolutionary force that collides with the existing order. There is a perennial conflict between the historical-covenant motivation and historical immediacy. The concrete historical

him Gershom, for he said, "I was a stranger in a foreign land."\* 23 Now it came to pass in those many days\* that the king of Egypt died,\* and the children of Israel sighed from the labor,\* and they cried out, and their cry ascended to God\* from the labor. 24 God heard their cry, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with

situation contradicts the great promise and stamps it as absurd and illogical. The covenant appears to oppose historical regularity and continuity. The paradoxical nature of the promise, its logic of the absurd, comes to the surface during the interim. The vision of the great fulfillment recedes into the shadow of absurdity, and concrete historical forces triumph over a prophecy and a testament.

The antithesis is inherent in the covenant itself; the self-negation of the covenant must precede its fulfillment. We may characterize the covenant in almost Hegelian terms by speaking of a historical triad: *thesis*—promise and the formation of the God-man confederacy; *antithesis*—the interim, at which the covenant negates and drives itself ad absurdum; *synthesis*—the release of historical tension and fulfillment. At the very moment at which the great message is about to lose its meaning, the fulfillment matures.

The emigration of Jacob's family to Egypt and its subsequent enslavement marked the full reversal of the covenant. All promises seemed to be refuted and the fellowship of man and God dissolved. At this point a new person emerges in the historical arena: Moses. With his coming, the drama of realization begins. (*The Emergence of Ethical Man*, p. 182)

וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם - *the king of Egypt died*. The new Pharaoh's succession portended an even worse time for the Jewish slaves. Nachmanides explains that often, when Jews confront hostility, they are inclined to attribute it to a particular ruler or leader. They interpret the hostility as coincidental and hope for the leader to be deposed. There were Jews in Nazi Germany who suffered from this thinking. When Hitler rose to power, they assumed that his anti-Semitism would ultimately wane. They were dreadfully and tragically mistaken. So too, in Egypt, Jews thought that a change in government would result in a new and progressive ruler. Instead, the new Pharaoh was much worse. The death of an Egyptian Pharaoh meant building an enormous new tomb to house his corpse, a task that the Jewish slaves now had to perform. Their lives became ever more unbearable. (*Darosh Darash Yosef*, p. 124)

וַיִּזְמַת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּאֲנְחוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן־הָעֲבָדָה - *the king of Egypt died, and the children of Israel sighed from the labor*. The implication is that before Pharaoh died, the children of Israel did not cry. It appears they thought that once Pharaoh died things would improve. They therefore felt there was no need to trust in God. However, once Pharaoh died and Israel saw that the slavery continued without letup, they immediately threw themselves upon God. (*Haggadat Hagrid*, p. 53)

וַתַּעַל שׁוֹעַתָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים - *and their cry ascended to God*. At this point in their slavery experience, Israel had no intention of formulating prayer as such. This initial stage of prayer was little more than a poorly articulated, instinctive cry. According to Nachmanides, God Himself "lifted" their groaning, allowing their cry to rise up before Him. (*Before Hashem*, p. 160)

Suffering is not pain. Though colloquially the two words are used as synonyms, they signify two different experiences. Pain is a natural sensation, a physiological reaction of the organism to any kind of abnormality or tissue pathology. It is, as Aristotle already knew, a built-in mechanical signal that warns man whenever his physical existence is menaced from within; it is an integral part of the body's security system. Pain, as instinctual reaction, is immediate and non-reflective. As such,

וַיֹּדְעוּ יַעֲקֹב: כִּי וְגַלְיָהּ מָדָם יִשְׁעִיבֹדָא דְבָנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל וַאֲמַר בְּמִימְרֶיהָ לְמַפְרָקְהוֹן יִי:  
א וּמִשָּׁה הָיָה רַעִי יָת עָנָא דִּיתְרוּ חֲמוּחֵי  
רְבָא דְמִדּוֹן וְדִבְרֵי יָת עָנָא לְבִתָּר שִׁפְרֵי רַעִיָא

(כה) וידע אלהים. נתן עליהם לב ולא העלים עיניו: (ח) אחר המדבר. להתרחק מן הגזל, שלא ירעו צעדות אחרים:

it is not restricted to humans: the beast is also exposed to and acquainted with pain. Suffering or distress, in contradistinction to pain, is not a sensation but an experience, a spiritual reality known only to humans (the animal does not suffer). This spiritual reality is encountered by man whenever he stands to lose either his sense of existential security (as in the case of an incurable disease) or his existential dignity (as in the case of public humiliation). Whenever a merciless reality clashes with the human existential awareness, man suffers and finds himself in distress.

The animal is exposed to pain; so is the slave. When the slave meets with pain he reacts like the animal, uttering a sharp shrill sound. However, the howl of the beast, like the shriek of the slave, lasts but a moment in the darkness and the hush of the night. In a split second all is silent again. There is no aftermath to the pain sensation of the animal or the slave; there follows no complaint, no request, no protest, no question of why and what. The slave does not know suffering—lacking, as he does, the very existential need awareness, which generates suffering.

Moses, by defending the helpless Jew, restored sensitivity to the dull slaves. Suddenly they realized that all that pain, anguish, humiliation, and cruelty is evil. This realization brought in its wake not only sharp pain, but a sense of suffering as well. With suffering came loud protest, the cry... The dead silence of non-existence was gone; the voice of human existence was now heard. It is in this second stage, with the awakening of the need-awareness, that prayer makes its entry.

This level of intermediate prayer is not yet *tefillah*, but *tze'akah*, a human outcry. There is not yet a clear understanding of what one is crying for. *Tze'akah* is primordial prayer, the voice restored, the word still lacking. (*Redemption, Prayer and Talmud Torah*, pp. 56-59)

וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת־נַאֲקָתָם וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם אֶת־יִצְחָק וְאֶת־יַעֲקֹב - *God heard their cry, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.* God sees and remembers everything. He is concerned simultaneously with the universe as a whole, as well as with each person individually, in spite of one's relative insignificance. The word נַאֲקָתָם, formulated in the plural and thus suggesting the groaning of many people, denotes that God responds to the cries of each individual. The word בְּרִיתוֹ, on the other hand, formulated in the singular and thus suggesting a single covenant, indicates that God upholds the covenant with the Jewish people as a single whole, as a communal entity. In Egypt, God was concerned with the people as a whole, since if He would not redeem the nation, the covenantal community would never arise. He was also concerned with the pain of each individual Jew. God's attention thus embraces the collective as well as the individual. (*Noraot HaRav*, Volume 15, pp. 32-33)

וַיַּדַּע אֱלֹהִים - *and God knew*. The word יָדַע has multiple meanings. In our context, it conveys the idea that God shared, that He became involved, that He participated in the suffering of His people.

Jacob.\* 25 And God saw the children of Israel, and God knew.\*

3<sup>1</sup> Moses was pasturing the flocks of Jethro,\* his father in law, the chief of Midian, and he led the flocks far away into the desert,\* and he came to the mountain of



This is the concept of *Shechinta begalusa*, the Divine Presence in exile. Until now, the people were strangers to Him; there was no involvement, only complete estrangement and alienation. Yet after *yamim rabbim*, many dark, silent years, God became involved in the destiny of His people. That is why this section is presented as a new paragraph; it represents a new situation. (*Vision and Leadership*, p. 71)

Genuine *geulah*, genuine redemption, always comes suddenly, unexpectedly, at a time when people are ready to give up hope. Sometimes historical situations keep deteriorating; people pray and cry, begging for mercy—but there is no answer to their prayer, only silence. At that moment, when the crisis reaches its maximum and threatens the very existence of the community, when people begin to give up, the *geulah* suddenly comes and takes them out of the land of affliction. It comes in the middle of the night and knocks on the door when no one expects it, when everybody is skeptical about it, when everybody laughs off the possibility of redemption. This is what happened in Egypt: *the children of Israel sighed from the labor, and they cried out, and their cry ascended to God from the labor* (verse 23). God did not answer at that moment, and the people had no knowledge that *God saw...and God knew*. When the crisis reached its climax and the Jewish people were on the verge of complete assimilation and disappearance, Moses came. (*Festival of Freedom*, p. 59)

וּמֹשֶׁה הָיָה רֹעֶה אֶת־צֹאן יִתְרוֹ - *Moses was pasturing the flocks of Jethro*. From the previous verse, it is clear that God was ready to bring about the redemption. Moses however was not yet ready for his mission, so God waited. That God functions primarily through man is a basic Jewish concept. Redemption is always achieved through an agent. In the Messianic era, the redemption will similarly come through the agency of an endowed human being. When Rabbi Hillel (not Hillel the Tanna) expressed the view that there will not be a human Messiah, but that God Himself will bring about the Messianic era, Rabbi Joseph denounced this view, declaring it to border on heresy (*Sanhedrin* 99a). The belief that redemption is always achieved through a human agent apparently is an article of faith. (*Reflections*, Vol. 1, pp. 184-185)

God was ready to act, but there was no Moses. There were two reasons for Moses' absence. First, the potential leader whom providence had selected for this historic role was humble; he did not believe that he could be more than a shepherd. Moreover, he had fled Egypt and had parted from his brethren with the intention of never returning; he had no thought of renewing the kinship or the friendship or the common destiny that bound him to his brothers. *And he led the flocks far away into the desert*—he wanted to get farther and farther away, away from thoughts about Egypt, away from his brethren and their suffering. (*Vision and Leadership*, p. 74)

וַיִּנְהַג אֶת־הַצֹּאן אֲחֵר הַמִּדְבָּר - *and he led the flocks far away into the desert*. God's revelation at times of crisis, from the depths of despair and distress, is a basic principle of Judaism. Sometimes God does not reveal Himself to the contented soul; He reveals Himself to the mute soul, battered by weariness and exertion. Sometimes God reveals Himself to one who grieves for the ruin of His Temple and the destruction of its altars, while avoiding one who dedicates His Temple and stands at the side of his offering; sometimes He does not reveal Himself to the rational individual, but

הַר הָאֱלֹהִים הָרָבָה: בַּיּוֹרָא מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה אֵלָיו בְּלִבָּת  
אִישׁ מִתוֹךְ הַסֵּנֶה וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה הַסֵּנֶה בַּעַר בָּאֵשׁ וְהַסֵּנֶה  
לְמַדְבָּרָא וְאַתָּא לְטוֹרָא דְאַתְגְּלִי עֲלוּהִי  
יִקְרָא דִּי לְחוּרְבַּ: בַּיּוֹרָא מַלְאָכָא דִּי לִיה  
בְּשִׁלְחוּבִית אִשְׁתָּא מְגוֹ אִסְנָא וְחוּזָא וְהָא

אל הר האלהים. על שם העמיד: (ב) בלבית אש. בשלהבת  
אש, לנו של אש, כמו לז השמים (דברים ז, יא), בלז האלה  
(שמואל ב יד). ואל תחמה על המי"ו, שיש לנו כיוולא בו, מה  
אמלה לזמך (יחזקאל טו, ל): מתוך הסנה. ולא אילן אחר, משום

to one who is confused about life, who is bankrupt and has lost track of his world. From time to time, man's salvation comes out of distress. Even the choicest members of the Jewish people first encountered their Lord at a time of raging fear, helplessness, and distraction, when they were not anticipating such an encounter but were thoroughly surprised by it. Jacob comes close to his God in a nocturnal dream, while sleeping on the cold *stones of the place* (Gen. 28:11). Moses encounters a burning bush at a time when he is pasturing Jethro's flock, entirely devoted to this simple everyday occupation (verses 1-2). Ezekiel sees visions of God in exile, on the river Kebar, at a time when the appearance of the present, full of quaking and horror, contradicts the vision of a glorious future (Ezek. 1:1). (*From There Shall You Seek*, p. 33)

וַיָּבֹא אֶל־הַר הָאֱלֹהִים הָרָבָה - *and he came to the mountain of God, to Horeb*. The phrase in the beginning of the verse, *וַיִּמְשֶׁה הָיָה רֹעֶה*, is in the grammatical form known as a participle. If it were to be simply translated as *and Moses shepherded*; that is, in past tense, the phrase would then read *וַיִּמְשֶׁה רֹעֶה*. The grammatical construction of the phrase provides information about Moses' occupation during those many silent years of *hester panim*. Moses was a *ro'eh tzon*, a shepherd for a period of many years.

In contrast, the next phrase, *וַיִּנְהֹג אֶת־הַצֹּאן אַחֲרֵי הַמִּדְבָּר*, does seem to be in past tense. The Torah seems to be describing a specific incident: at this point in the narrative, Moses led his sheep to the desert. However, Rashi indicates that this phrase should not be interpreted this way, but should be a continuation of the participle construction. Rashi explains that as a shepherd, Moses regularly led his sheep to the desert rather than stay in Midian so the sheep would not graze in others' fields. In the desert there are no property rights and anyone's animals are allowed to graze there.

If the first two phrases of the verse are interpreted as participles, the third phrase and final phrase must similarly be interpreted to remain consistent. *וַיָּבֹא אֶל־הַר הָאֱלֹהִים הָרָבָה*: over many years, as Moses led his flocks of sheep, he alone would regularly visit Mount Horeb. The word *צֹאן* suggests a large number of sheep (see Gen. 32:6), and Moses was certainly not the only shepherd of this flock. He had assistants. Yet, whenever he came into the desert he would leave the sheep in the charge of his assistants and go to the mountain of God.

What was the purpose of this lonely journey? What did Moses do at this mountain? He prayed for his people, for his brothers, whom he left when he fled from Egypt. Moses had lost faith in his brothers; they were not worthy of freedom. Moses likely prayed that his brothers should rise spiritually and psychologically, develop a sense of dignity, no longer to be informers who spy on their own brethren. Yet, as it was a time of *hester panim*, Moses received no answer until now. (*Boston*, 1979)

וַיֵּרָא מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה אֵלָיו - *An angel of the Lord appeared to him*. When the Torah speaks of the revelation of a *malach*, an angel, it sometimes uses the term *מַלְאָךְ אֱלֹהִים*, while at other times the Torah uses the substitute *יהוָה*. The name *אֱלֹהִים* represents that God is the *ba'al hakochos*, the source of

God, to Horeb.\* 2 An angel of the Lord appeared to him\* in a flame of fire from within the thorn bush,\* and behold, the thorn bush was burning with fire, but the thorn bush

the unlimited dynamics of the cosmos and the natural law that prevails everywhere. The opening *parashah* of the Torah, which describes the creation of the world, begins אֱלֹהִים—בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים is the Creator, the Architect, the Engineer, the all-powerful God. A מַלְאָךְ אֱלֹהִים is sent to exercise power, to intervene in the cosmic order.

In our context, a מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה appears in the fire of the burning bush, but it would seem that מַלְאָךְ אֱלֹהִים would be appropriate here. The entire purpose of the rendezvous between Moses and the *malach* was the announcement that God would intervene in the cosmic process in order to take the people out of Egypt. Why was a מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה used instead?

The purpose of the *malach* was to give a message to Moses. God wanted to reassure Moses regarding the people's worthiness of freedom. You gave up on them; I did not. When you encountered the two feuding Jews and became the target of informers, you gave up and ran away and assimilated yourself into the Midianite community. But I have not given up. That was the main message that God wanted Moses to receive.

For such a message, God did not send a מַלְאָךְ אֱלֹהִים. A מַלְאָךְ אֱלֹהִים comes with lightning and thunder, with plagues like blood and frogs, lice and pestilence. Here, God wished to give a message of hope and consolation to the people through Moses. At the same time, He reprimanded Moses for his skeptical approach to the people, for his losing faith in them. At the burning bush, God proclaims that He will protect His people because they are worthy of protection. Moses, said God, you are making a mistake. You gave up on them, but you are wrong. The מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה protects them; their identity will be preserved and they will not be assimilated into Egyptian society. The silent period, the period of anonymity when the Jew could not complain, would come to an end, and the Jew would emerge victorious. *An angel of the Lord [מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה] appeared to him in a flame of fire from within the thorn bush—they will survive because of the מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה.* (*Vision and Leadership*, pp. 78-81)

בְּלֶבֶת-אֵשׁ מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּבְיָה - in a flame of fire from within the thorn bush. Rashi (verse 2) cites and abridges the Midrash: Why did God appear from the midst of a bush and not some other tree? God chose to give His revelation in a primitive plant: *Because "I am with him in distress" (Ps. 91:15). I share their travail; I am with them in times of crisis. When Israel experiences life as if it were a thorny bush, when Israel lives a degraded, foul life, I am with her; I share her pain. In our text, we see God as the שֹׁכֵן סִבְיָה, He who dwelt in the bush, as Moses later referred to Him in his blessing to the tribe of Joseph: through the contentment of the One Who dwells in the thorn bush, וְיָרְצוֹן שֹׁכֵן סִבְיָה, let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph (Deut. 33:16). The fact that God dwelt in a thorn bush becomes an attribute of the Almighty, and He exhibits *ratzon* in the sense of love.*

Even when a man finds himself in the depths of disaster and tragedy, even when he has lost everything and is completely lonely, stripped of everything that he had, God does not desert him. All individuals experience darkness at some point, finding themselves in the whirlwind of unexpected troubles. *Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind (Job 38:1).* God resides even in that whirlwind. When Job finally stopped inquiring as to the metaphysics of evil, *the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10).* This is שֹׁכֵן סִבְיָה, God who resides in the thorn bush.

God's presence is the *Shechinah*, and it is with man not only during physical distress but in



אֵינְנוּ אֹכְלִים: ג וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶסְרֶה־נָּא וְאֶרְאֶה  
אֶת־הַמַּרְאֶה הַגָּדֹל הַזֶּה מִדּוּעַ לֹא־יִבְעַר הַסִּנֵּה:  
ד וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי סָר לִרְאוֹת וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו אֱלֹהִים  
אֶסְנֶא בְּעַר בְּאַשְׁתָּא וְאֶסְנֶא לִיתוּחִי  
מִתְאַכִּיל: ג וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶתְּפֹנִי כְעַן וְאֶחְיוּ  
יֵת חַוּוֹנָא רַבָּא הֲדִין מָא דִּין לֹא מִתּוֹקֵד  
אֶסְנֶא: ד וַחֲוֹא יֵי אַרִי אֶתְּפֹנִי לְמַחְוֵי וּקְרֵא

עמו אֱלֹהִים בְּנֶזֶק (תהלים נא, טו): אכל. נאכל כמו לא עבד צה (דברים כא, ג), חָשַׁר לָקַח מִשָּׁם (בראשית ג, כג): (ג) אסרה נא. חסרה

spiritual distress as well. Even when a person has been involved in sin, God never deserts him. He is in the thorn bush even though it is coarse, even though it bears no fruit and has no beauty, and even though all it can cause is pain. God is right there in the middle. (*Vision and Leadership*, pp. 81-86)

~ בְּלֶבֶת־אֵשׁ מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּנֵּה וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה הַסִּנֵּה בְּעַר בְּאַשׁ וְהַסִּנֵּה אֵינְנוּ אֹכְלִים - in a flame of fire from within the thorn bush, and behold, the thorn bush was burning with fire, but the thorn bush was not being consumed. Rashi interprets the phrase בְּלֶבֶת־אֵשׁ as *b'lev eish*. The bush was shaped like a circle with a fire in the center, and fire did not spread to the periphery. The word *lev* is used here in the same sense as in the phrase *lev hashamayim*: *lev* means the center. So when Moses asked הַסִּנֵּה לֹא יִבְעַר, he was not asking, “Why is the bush not consumed?” but, “Why does the fire not spread to the periphery?” The fire was confined to one dimensionless point in the center. Moses asked: what type of fire is limited to a point and does not spread?

This bush symbolizes the morality of Judaism. Many times the *Ribbono shel Olam* approaches man from infinity. From this transcendence God communicates with man, addresses Himself to man. God can also descend from infinity, from a transcendent world, and contract Himself. This movement is known as *midas hatzimtzum*. And this is the lesson He wanted Moses to teach *Bnei Yisrael*, which is why He revealed Himself as a dimensionless point. (*Boston*, 1979)

Cosmic man finds God (if ready for Him) in the vastness and boundlessness of the cosmic drama, in the heavenly galaxies billions of light years away. Home-bound, origin-minded man finds God in the limitedness and narrowness of finitude, in the smallness of the modest home into which man was born and to which he willy-nilly returns. He discovers God in the origin, in the source, in the center of the burning bush. Either infinity cannot contain God, or God, if He so wills it, addresses man from the dimensionlessness of a point—for what is the center of a bush, if not a point? And out of that point, God spoke to Moses. (*Majesty and Humility*, p. 31)

Moses had lost faith in his brothers in the aftermath of the fight between Dathan and Abiram. Through the appearance of the burning bush, whose fire in the center did not spread, God imparted the message that while the Jews in Egyptian slavery externally appeared cold, in their hearts they hid a fire. Though these Hebrews were נִצִּים, fighting (2:13), deep inside there was a נִיצוֹץ, a spark of holiness. (*Boston*, 1974)

~ אֶסְרֶה־נָּא - Let me turn now. Rashi comments on these two words: I will step aside from here to come close to there. What did Rashi add by that sentence? Rashi explains that Moses was not referring to moving his physical location. He was stepping aside from a worldview and embracing a new philosophy of life, into a different frame of reference. “Let me step aside from certain categories in which I used to think, and adopt other categories, other concepts, other ideas.” Similarly, at the *Akeidah*, Abraham told Eliezer and Yishmael: Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder

was not being consumed.\* <sup>3</sup> So Moses said, “Let me turn now\* and see this great spectacle\* why does the thorn bush not burn up?” <sup>4</sup> The Lord saw that he had turned to see,\* and God

(Gen. 22:5). Abraham was not referring to geographical distance; he was referring to a differing worldview. You remain with your philosophy, the philosophy of the donkey: materialism, practicality, mercantilism, pragmatism, everyday logic. But there is another worldview—the covenantal logic. This is exactly what Moses said. אָסְרָה־נָּא וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת־הַמַּרְאֶה הַגָּדֹל הַזֶּה—let me get away from the pragmatic logic of Jethro’s estate manager. Let me adopt another set of rules, another philosophy, another worldview. Let me examine this great sight. He instinctively felt that something unusual was transpiring in front of him.

God tested Moses to see how he would respond to this sight. Most people would not have responded. Great events have happened in our time: the Second World War, the Holocaust, the State of Israel, and the drama has not yet come to a close. Yet we don’t respond appropriately. We are not impressed. We lack sensitivity. (Boston, 1974)

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶסְרָה־נָּא וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת־הַמַּרְאֶה הַגָּדֹל הַזֶּה - So Moses said, “Let me turn now and see this great spectacle.” Apparently, Moses was intrigued not by the miraculous nature of the event, but by its greatness. It is not always necessary for an event to be miraculous in order to be great, and not every miraculous event is a great event. A unique event might not have any real significance. A “great” event, on the other hand, is an event that changes a person or ushers in a new era; it is great in its results, regardless of whether it was supernatural. Moses recognized that this was not just a strange fire, a phenomenon that had to be investigated. He immediately attributed great significance to it—it was a מַרְאֶה הַגָּדֹל. Moses felt this intuitively, before God revealed anything to him; his accelerated heartbeat told him that something great was happening. (Vision and Leadership, p. 88)

וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי סָר לְרֵאוֹת - The Lord saw that he had turned to see. When God sees how Moses responded to the sight of the bush, He removes the angel and He appears to Moses. God now resides in the bush, not the angel. Once Moses reacted to the bush appropriately, the Jews came under the supervision and protection not of an angel, but of God Himself. Nachmanides explains that, in contrast to other nations, Jewish historical destiny is guided directly by the Almighty. (Boston, 1974)

Earlier, the name אֱלֹהִים was used. Now it came to pass in those many days...they cried out, and their cry ascended to God [אֱלֹהִים] from the labor. And God [אֱלֹהִים] heard their cry...And God [אֱלֹהִים] saw the children of Israel, and God [אֱלֹהִים] knew (2:23-25). The name י-ה-ו-ה, the Tetragrammaton, does not appear in that previous chapter. When God suffered with them, when He shared in their distress, He was אֱלֹהִים. But they still had to wait for redemption; י-ה-ו-ה was not there yet. Only when Moses said, אָסְרָה־נָּא וְאֶרְאֶה, Let me turn now and see, do we read יְהוָה, The Lord saw. Now the Tetragrammaton appears. The time of the redemption has arrived.

אֱלֹהִים refers to God who requires that a Jew have faith, patience, and perseverance. It is very hard to wait. And yet the Jew waits and waits. Every day, he says the *Ani Ma’amin*—I believe in the coming of the Messiah, and even though he may tarry I will wait for him every day. The Jew who communicates with אֱלֹהִים, then, is greater than the Jew who communicates with י-ה-ו-ה, the fulfiller of promises. When God bestows grace upon the people, it is not so difficult to be a Jew. During the long, lonely night of exile, י-ה-ו-ה did not reveal Himself; nevertheless, the Jew did not lose his faith in אֱלֹהִים. The Jew who waits is great indeed.

When Moses said, *Let me turn now and see*, י-ה-ו-ה appeared; the time to fulfill promises was at

מִתּוֹךְ הַסֶּנֶה וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי ה וַיֹּאמֶר  
 אֶל־תִּקְרַב הָלֵם שְׁל־נַעֲלֶיךָ מֵעַל רַגְלֶיךָ כִּי הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר  
 אֲתָה עוֹמֵד עָלָיו אֲדַמַּת־קֹדֶשׁ הוּא: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי  
 אָבִיךָ אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב וַיִּסְתֵּר  
 מֹשֶׁה פָּנָיו כִּי יָרָא מֵהִבִּיט אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה

לֵיהּ יי מגו אסנא ואמר משה משה ואמר  
 הא אנא: ה ואמר לא תקרב חלקא שרי  
 סינך מעל רגליך ארי אתרא דאת קאים  
 עלוהי אתר קדיש הוא: ו ואמר אנא אלהא  
 דאבנך אלהא דאברהם אלהא דיצחק  
 ואלהא דיעקב וכבשנו משה לאפוחי ארי  
 דחיל מלאסתכלא בצית יקרא דיי: ו ואמר

מכאן להתקרב לשם: (ה) של. שלוף והוא, כמו וְנָשַׁל הַכַּהֲנִים (דברים יט, ה), כִּי יִשָּׁל יִסְדֶּךָ (שם כח, מ): אדמת קודש הוא. המקום:

hand. The redemption began not on the first night of Pesach, when the actual Exodus took place, but when Moses was confronted by God, even before he was convinced to accept his calling. (*Vision and Leadership*, p. 86-88)

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה מֹשֶׁה - and He said, “Moses, Moses!” God calls out to Moses by repeating his name: *Moses, Moses*. This phenomenon is seen elsewhere in the Bible. God summoned, *Abraham, Abraham* (Gen. 22:11), called out, *Jacob, Jacob* (Gen. 46:2). He called, *Samuel, Samuel* (I Sam. 3:10). (Samuel was the only one who did not immediately respond “Here I am,” because he did not realize who was calling him.)

But there is a difference between *Moses, Moses* and the other name repetitions. In all the other instances, there is a *pesik*, a line indicating a pause between the names—*Abraham, pesik, Abraham*; *Jacob, pesik, Jacob*. In the case of Moses, however, there is no pause. When God addressed Himself to Abraham, He called to *Abraham*, and He paused. When Abraham did not answer, He said *Abraham* a second time. God waited, perhaps for a fraction of a second. The same is true of Jacob. But when He called out to Moses, there was no pause; He said *Moses, Moses* in one breath, as it were. *Moses, Moses* is an expression of urgency. In the case of Moses, God was, so to speak, desperate. He tells Moses that if he accepts the mission, if he accepts the task of redeemer, everything will be all right; if not, everything will be wasted. (*Vision and Leadership*, pp. 89-90)

שְׁל־נַעֲלֶיךָ מֵעַל רַגְלֶיךָ - Take your shoes off your feet. The shoe is the symbol of vulgarity and uncouthness, of superficiality, of raw power: *upon Edom I cast my shoe* (Ps. 60:10). To understand holiness, to gain sensitivity, a person must “remove his shoes.” (*Droshos Un Ksovim*, p. 201)

אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב - I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” I made the community leave the land of Canaan and settle in Egypt—I caused the Egyptians to oppress and enslave the very Jews whom I want to liberate now. אֲנֹכִי, I am the same, ready to free them from the bondage and to make them return to the promised land from which I exiled them; and I am now charging you with the mission of taking them out of this land and returning them to the promised land. Moses, I know that you can't solve this historical enigma. I am the God of Jacob: The chain of events which was initiated by Jacob's coming to Egypt and now is about to culminate in the redemption and the nation's departure from there is incomprehensible. It is a mystery, Moses, a mystery you will never understand. I am the God of Abraham. I reached a covenant, but one with a stipulation: *your seed will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they will enslave them and oppress them, for four hundred years* (Gen.

called to him from within the thorn bush, and He said, "Moses, Moses!"\* And he said, "Here I am!" 5 And He said, "Do not draw near here. Take your shoes off your feet,\* because the place upon which you stand is holy soil." 6 And He said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."\* And Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look toward God.\* 7 And the Lord said, "I



15:13), I know you want to ask why it was necessary. If You called Abraham Your friend (Is. 41:8), why was it necessary for his children to spend hundreds of years in misery and agony? Do not ask this question. (Boston, Undated)

❧ כִּי יֵרָא מִהֶבֶשׁ אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהִים וַיִּסְתֵּר מִשְׁפָּנוּ - And Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look toward God. Chazal differ regarding whether Moses' refusal to see the *Shechinah* was praiseworthy or not (*Berachos 7a*). According to R. Yehoshua ben Korcha, Moses should not have turned away, while R. Yonasan maintains that it was Moses' fear of looking at the *Shechinah* which merited his becoming the greatest of the prophets. Initially, it is difficult to fathom R. Yonasan's opinion. Why was Moses' hiding his face considered such an exalted act?

The fire of the bush was burning. The infinite light called to him. The Master of the Universe waited, yet Moses' face remained hidden.

The Master of the Universe was ready to reveal himself to Moses in His true absolute entirety. Moses had the opportunity to experience all that was hidden, to understand with clarity the ways of God, His justice, and how He leads creation. All questions would be answered, every *teiku* (open question) resolved. Instead, Moses hid his face. He did not want all questions answered and all mysteries to disappear.

Moses trembled in the face of complete knowledge. What frightened him?

Moses was afraid that had he not turned away he would lose the attribute of *chesed*, the feeling of empathy and love regarding his fellow. He was afraid to delve too deeply into God's attribute of justice, because if he were to understand this attribute completely, he would recognize that in truth there was no evil in the world. He would know that the pain man experiences is only for his good. He would see clearly *the deeds of the [Mighty] Rock are perfect, for all His ways are just* (Deut. 32:4). The name אֱלֹהִים (justice) would transform to the name יְיָ-רַחֵם (mercy). Moses would then perceive the world in the same way that God looked at the world on the sixth day of creation: *And God saw everything that He made and behold it was very good* (Gen. 1:31)—and Chazal say *very good* refers to death (*Bereishis Rabbah* 9). Were Moses to see the world in its entirety, death, sickness, poverty, suffering and loneliness would all appear good, with purpose and significance.

If he had this knowledge, Moses could not perform *chesed* with a poor person, because he would understand why poverty was appropriate for the person. He could not have mercy on sick people, because he would have complete understanding of why God inflicts sickness and the objective of such pain. Under such conditions, he would have no understanding or sympathy with the sinner, and could not entreat God on their behalf. He would see with clarity the righteousness of God's judgment. Moses would not be able to pray on behalf of the people because he would perceive that the very request was absurd.

Mercy and love have their basis in man's lack of understanding, in his intellectual limits, in his childlike simplicity. The Torah commands, *he shall provide for his cure* (21:19): it is incumbent upon

רָאָה רָאִיתִי אֶת־עֲנִי עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֶת־  
צַעֲקָתָם שָׁמַעְתִּי מִפְּנֵי נַגְשָׁיו כִּי יָדַעְתִּי אֶת־מַכָּאֲבָיו:  
ח וְאֶרְדָּ לְהַצִּילוֹ | מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וּלְהַעֲלֹתוֹ מִן־הָאָרֶץ  
הַהִוא אֶל־אֶרֶץ טוֹבָה וְרַחֲבָה אֶל־אֶרֶץ זָבֶת חֶלֶב

(1) כִּי יָדַעְתִּי אֶת מַכָּאֲבָיו. כמו וַיֵּדַע אֱלֹהִים (לעיל ג, כה), כלומר כי שמתי לנצח להצונן ולדעת את מכאוביו, ולא העלמתי עיני ולא

us to heal the sick. Do not ask, "Why should I cure someone whom God smites with sickness?" For man, sickness is something evil, and evil must be fought. *Chesed* is bestowed on man with a heavy price—lack of understanding.

Moses had the choice to pursue knowledge and lose *chesed*, or remain without knowledge and merit *chesed*. He chose the latter. So great was his love for Israel that he sacrificed the most sublime of human strivings, the knowledge of God. (*Beit Yosef Shaul*, p. 97-98)

❧ כִּי יֵרָא מֵהֶבִּיט אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים - *because he was afraid to look toward God*. The more he approaches God, the more man negates his finite human status. Finitude is swallowed up by infinity and perishes in its labyrinth. Man's selfhood and self-confidence are annulled in confrontation with the greatness of God and His majesty. (*Worship of the Heart*, p. 149)

❧ רָאָה רָאִיתִי אֶת־עֲנִי עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר בְּמִצְרַיִם - *I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt*. The *Midrash Tanchuma* (*Shemos* 20) explains the duplicative phrase רָאָה רָאִיתִי: "You (Moses) see one sight, but I see two sights." After the incident of the two Israelites fighting, Moses saw a people whom he considered not worthy of redemption. The encounter with the burning bush was a revelation to Moses. In the center of the bush there was a fire burning. The bush reflects the Jews' commitment, a fire that had not been extinguished over hundreds of years in exile. Yet this commitment was internal, invisible. Moses could not understand: מִדּוּעַ לֹא־יִכָּעַר הַפֶּה—*if the interior was on fire*, why was the exterior cold? God saw "two sights." When one penetrates into the depths of the Jew, one recognizes that the Jew quests for freedom and quests for His God. (*Noraos Harav*, Vol. 8, pp. 77-78)

❧ כִּי יָדַעְתִּי אֶת־מַכָּאֲבָיו - *for I know their pains*. The term *da'as* implies more than cognitive awareness; it implies intimacy, closeness of association, sympathy with the other fellow. God saw the Israelites and became intimate with their suffering. The term denotes passionate knowledge, the I's sympathy with the Thou. *Da'as* implies intimacy; hence the sexual act in Hebrew uses the term *da'as* (see *Gen. 4:1*). (*The Emergence of Ethical Man*, p. 119)

❧ וְאֶרְדָּ לְהַצִּילוֹ - *I have descended to rescue them*. Holiness in Judaism can be broadly defined as maintaining separation. When God intervenes supernaturally, His holiness is diminished because His separateness is diminished. Since the redemption from Egypt required God's supernatural intervention, His involvement constituted a "descent," as it were, in His holiness, His separateness. For this reason, God labels the Exodus from Egypt as a descent.

God intervenes in nature and perform miracles when He has no choice; when He, so to speak, cannot accomplish His objectives through natural means. If God had not miraculously intervened in Egypt when He did, the Jewish people would have assimilated entirely, and the chosen people

have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt,\* and I have heard their cry because of their slave drivers, for I know their pains.\* 8 I have descended to rescue them\* from the hand[s] of the Egyptians\* and to bring them up from that land, to a good and spacious land,\* to a land flowing with milk and honey,

would have disappeared. Yet, as is evident from the following Midrash, such miraculous intervention is far from His preferred course of action: *The Exodus [from Egypt] is analogous to a kohen whose terumah falls into a graveyard. He says, "What can I do? To defile myself is impossible, and to abandon the terumah is impossible! It is better for me to defile myself once, return, and purify myself so that I not lose my terumah."* So were our forefathers the terumah of the Holy One Blessed be He, as it says: "Holy is Israel to God." The Holy One Blessed be He said: How can I [defile myself] to redeem them? [Yet, on the other hand,] to abandon them is impossible! It is preferable for me to descend and save them, as it says: "And I will descend to save them from the hands of Egypt" (*Shemos Rabbah* 16). (*Derashot Harav*, pp 155-156)

❧ מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם - from the hand[s] of the Egyptians. There are actually two exoduses. One is from the Eretz Mitzrayim, the land of Mitzrayim; the other is from the people of Mitzrayim, from their culture, their ideas, their philosophy, their way of life, their mores.

The Exodus from Eretz Mitzrayim took place on the fifteenth night of Nisan and was complete. But the Exodus from Mitzrayim itself is a long process. What took place in one night was only the liberation from Eretz Mitzrayim. Leaving Mitzrayim fully is a long road which the Jew has been traveling for 3,500 years without yet arriving at his destination. The messianic redemption is a continuation of the redemption from Egypt.

When Moses received the assignment to appear before Pharaoh and take the Jews out of Egypt, God said, *I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and I have heard their cry because of their slave drivers, for I know their pains; I have descended to rescue them from the hand[s] of the Egyptians* [מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם] (verses 7-8). My purpose is not just to save them *me'Eretz Mitzrayim*. My purpose, the final goal, the ultimate end of *geulah*, is מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם, from the whole spiritual complex which is called Mitzrayim, from its philosophy, from its world perspective. God appointed Moses to be not only the redeemer as far as the Exodus from Eretz Mitzrayim is concerned, but also the redeemer for the second Exodus: *miMitzrayim*.

Moses had a tough assignment. Had God given him the task of taking the Jews out *me'Eretz Mitzrayim*, he would not have argued at all; he would have accepted the assignment immediately, without any discussion. But there was a long debate between God and Moses—*Chazal* say the debate lasted seven days (*Shemos Rabbah* 3:14). Moses said: I cannot accept the assignment to take Israel *miMitzrayim*. You are insisting that I liberate the Jews not only physically but also spiritually, that I raise them to greater heights, to the highest level of a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. That I cannot do. (*Festival of Freedom*, pp. 107-109)

❧ אֶל-אֶרֶץ טוֹבָה - to a good...land. Although the land of Egypt was blessed with agricultural abundance (see *Gen.* 13:10), it could never be described as *טוֹבָה*. The adjective *טוֹבָה* means good in the moral sense; it does not relate to abundance. In this context, God is telling Moses that the Land of Israel is suitable for its specific role: allowing the nation of Israel to fulfill its historical destiny. (*Boston*, 1974; see commentary on *Gen.* 1:4)



וּדְבַשׁ אֶל-מָקוֹם הַפְּנִיעָנִי וְהַחֲתִי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהַפְּרִזִּי  
וְהַחֲוִי וְהַיְבוֹסִי: <sup>ט</sup> וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה צִעֲקַת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאָזְנִי  
אֵלַי וְגַם-רֵאִיתִי אֶת-הַלֶּחֶץ אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם לֹחֲצִים  
אֹתָם: <sup>י</sup> וְעַתָּה לֵכָה וְאֶשְׁלַחְךָ אֶל-פַּרְעֹה וְהוֹצֵא אֶת-  
עַמִּי בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם: יָא וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-  
הָאֱלֹהִים מִי אֲנֹכִי כִי אֵלֶךְ אֶל-פַּרְעֹה וְכִי אוֹצִיא אֶת-  
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם: יב וַיֹּאמֶר פִּי-אֶחָיָה עִמָּךְ

הסנה עושה שליחותי ואיננו אוכל כך תלך בשליחותי ואינך  
ניזוק. ושאלת מה זכות יש לישראל שיאלו ממזרים, דבר גדול  
יש לי על הוצאה זו, שהרי עמידים לקבל התורה על ההר הזה  
לסוף שלשה חדשים שיאלו ממזרים. דבר אחר, כי אהיה עמך,  
וזה שתכלית בשליחותך לך האות על הצטמח אחרת, שאני  
מבטיחך שכשתוציאם ממזרים תעבדון אותי על ההר הזה  
שתקבלו התורה עליו, והיא הזכות העומדת לישראל. ודוגמת  
לשון זה מצוינו וְהָיָה לְךָ הָאוֹת אֲכֹל הַשֶּׁנֶה סְפִיט וגו' (ישעיה ל, ל),  
מפלת סנחריב תהיה לך לאות על הצטמח אחרת, שארזכס

אטום אזני מנעקסם: <sup>י</sup> ועתה לכה ואשלחך אל פרעה.  
ואם תאמר מה תועיל, והוצא את עמי, יועילו דברך ותוציאם  
משם: <sup>יב</sup> מי אנכי. מה אני חשוב לדבר עם המלכים: וכי  
אוציא את בני ישראל. ואף אם חשוב אני, מה זכו ישראל  
שֶׁעָשָׂה (נ"א שחעשה) להם נס ואוציאם ממזרים: <sup>יג</sup> ויאמר  
כי אהיה עמך. השיבו על ראשון ראשון ועל אחרון אחרון.  
שאתרת מי אנכי כי אלך אל פרעה, לא שלך היא כי אם משלי,  
כי אהיה עמך, וזה המראה אשר ראית בסנה לך האות כי אנכי  
שלחתיך (ותכלית בשליחותי) וכדאי אני להציל, כאשר ראית

~ to the place of the Canaanites. God pointedly does not refer to the land as  
"the land of the Canaanites" but rather, "the place of the Canaanites." The Canaanites were tem-  
porary residents. The land did not belong to the Canaanites: the chosen land belongs only to the  
chosen people. God later warns the People of Israel: *Like the practice of the land of Canaan, to which I  
am bringing you, you shall not do...For the people of the land who preceded you, did all of these abomina-  
tions, and the land became defiled...And let the land not vomit you out for having defiled it, as it vomited  
out the nation that preceded (Lev. 18:3, 27-28).* The Israelites are in place of (בְּמָקוֹם) the Canaanite, in  
order to purge the land which the Canaanites defiled. (Boston, 1974)

~ and I have also seen the oppression. The word לֶחֶץ suggests that imme-  
diate action was imperative. The children of Israel were originally decreed to spend 400 years in  
Egypt, yet they were there but half the time. God accelerated the redemption because if God had  
not miraculously intervened in Egypt when He did, the Jewish people would have assimilated en-  
tirely, and the chosen people would have disappeared. (R. Ari Kahn Haggadah Commentary)

~ go. This term does not merely mean "go" but has the connotation of "go with me" (see,  
for example, Song 7:12: לָכֵה דוֹדִי נֵצֵא הַשָּׂדֶה, Come, my beloved, let us go out to the field). Here, God asked  
Moses for an unqualified commitment that excludes all private commitments. Moses must now be  
exclusively dedicated to his people. (Boston, 1974)

~ So now go, and I will send you to Pharaoh. Reflect for a moment on  
the paradoxical implications of this nondescript phrase. The Creator of worlds, the Master of the

to the place of the Canaanites,\* the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivvites, and the Jebusites. 9 And now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression\* that the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10 So now go,\* and I will send you to Pharaoh,\* and take My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”\* 11 But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should take the children of Israel out of Egypt?” 12 And He said, “For I will be with you,\*

Universe, the Infinite, appoints flesh and blood, temporal man, who is *today alive but tomorrow in the grave* (Berachos 28b) as His agent, *shaliach*. How can weak, finite man possibly act as the agent of the Infinite Creator of worlds? Although there is no sound resolution to this question, the imperative for man to accept the assignment remains.

When one acts as an agent on behalf of another, a well-known Talmudic dictum applies: *an agent is likened to the sender* (Mishnah Berachos 5:5). Since man, the agent, was created in His image—and thereby likened to the sender—he is compelled to accept the assignment despite his feeble capabilities and temporal nature.

Just like Moses, all of us have been appointed as God’s agents, sent to fulfill His assignments. Every Jew was sent to earth as an agent of the Creator. When a Jew sins, he violates not only the will of God but also the terms of his assignment. In *halachah*, a person’s role as agent disappears the moment the sender wishes to terminate the agent’s status. A person exists on earth only as long as he pursues his mission.

To better direct our individual talents and strengths towards carrying out our assignments, we were predestined to live in a specific time and place. If God appoints an agent, the agent must have been endowed with the ability to act in this capacity. The time, place, and circumstances in which each individual appears on earth were designated to allow him the best conditions to fulfill his assignment. (*Derashot Harav*, pp. 47-50)

וְהוֹצֵא אֶת-עַמִּי בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם - and take My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. Had we not been in Egypt, had we not felt the pain caused by the whip, we would not understand the divine law of not oppressing the stranger or the law of loving one’s neighbor. In the Egyptian bondage, a community of pain came into existence. The Israelites suffer not as individuals, a multitude of persons incidentally subject to the same destiny, but as an entity, a people linked together by awareness of solidarity. I want you to take out of Egypt, בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, so many individuals, as well as עַמִּי, My people, as a special entity. (*Festival of Freedom*, pp. 133-134)

וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי-אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ - And He said, “For I will be with you.” Here we encounter the paradoxical idea of a sender who appoints an agent, yet also accompanies him on his mission. God in effect said: “Moses, you are making a mistake. This is not a conventional assignment. I will not leave you alone to carry out the *shelichus*. I will not retreat into transcendence while you are left on your own, with the entire burden of freeing the nation resting on your shoulders. In this assignment, I, the sender, will not leave your side, not even for a moment. And this is the sign for you that it was I Who sent you. When you take the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain. The full realization that I have accompanied will strike you, Moses, when much later, at Mount Sinai, the Jews will proclaim: We will do and we will listen (24:7). You will wonder how a people can change so

וְהָלַךְ הָאוֹת כִּי אֲנֹכִי שְׁלַחְתִּיךָ בְּהוֹצִיאָךְ אֶת־הָעָם מִמִּצְרַיִם תַּעֲבֹדוּן אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים עַל הַחֵר הַזֶּה: יג וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי בֶּאֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַאֲמַרְתִּי לָהֶם אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם וַאֲמַרְוּ־לִי מַה־שֵּׁמוֹ מַה אֶמַּר אֲלֵהֶם: יד וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה

השי"ת, כי לא מחשבתו מחשבת השי"ת, שמאז כך היתה דעתו באומרו יחברך אהיה אשר אהיה למשה לבדו הגיד ולא שיגיד לישראל, והוא יפה אמרת, שגם דעתי מתחלה כך היתה שלא תגיד לבני ישראל כדברים האלה אלא כה תאמר לבני ישראל אהיה פעם אחת, וכן משמע במס' ברכות ודו"ק):

חרבה מפירות ואני אבצר הספיחים: (י"ד) אהיה אשר אהיה. אהיה עמם בצרה זאת אשר אהיה עמם בשעבוד שאר מלכויות. אמר לפניו, רבונו של עולם מה אני מזכיר להם צרה אחת, דייס בצרה זו, אמר לו יפה אמרת כה תאמר וגו' (לא שהשכיל חלילה משה ציומר, אלא שלא הבין דברי

completely, how a nation of lowly slaves can be transformed into a *kingdom of priests and a holy nation* (19:6). No human leader can accomplish such a metamorphosis; it can only be accomplished through My active participation. Therefore, Moses, you cannot argue that the assignment is too difficult for you. If the sender accompanies you, then even you, *the heavy of mouth*, the stutterer, can lead this people. On the other hand, were I not to accompany you, even Aaron, to whom I gave the gift of oratory, would not be up to the task: *And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth...* (4:15). Without My continuing, guiding Presence, neither of you could accomplish what is required. No mission is too difficult to accept, *for I will be with you.*" (*Derashot Harav*, pp. 55-56)

❧ כִּי אֲנֹכִי שְׁלַחְתִּיךָ - *it was I Who sent you*. Moses introduces a new motif into the God-man fellowship, namely, that of *shelichus*, agency. The role of agent was assigned for the first time to Moses. The apostolic idea is denotative of a new aspect in the covenant. The covenant not only involves God in the human historical occurrence of His chosen people but draws man into the historical divine performance. God wanders with His chosen friend or friends, and shares in their destiny. Man coordinates his activities with divine planning and co-participates in the realization of the great promise. There is no division of duties within the contractual bounds. There is a cooperative effort on both parts: divine and human. Man joins God in carrying out the historical task. God worked through Moses to introduce man into the sphere of historical creativeness. Let man himself attempt to realize the covenant. Let this realization occur within the bounds of human activity.

Why did God merge His task with the human? God acts not only under a dynamic aspect but under a pedagogical one as well. He delegates power and responsibility to man in order to raise him to a new level of personalistic existence. In the interim period between covenantal promise and fulfillment, the conflict between the natural human order and the charismatic historic order asserts itself. Under the impact of antithetic natural inevitability, the covenant is brought to a critical point; its fulfillment becomes almost impossible. The realization of the promise spells the great historical synthesis in the dialectical process, the reconciliation of the natural and historical orders. The logic

and this is the sign for you that it was I Who sent you.\* When you take the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”\* 13 And Moses said to God, “Behold I come to the children of Israel, and I say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?” 14 God said to Moses, “Ehyeh asher ehyeh (I am that I am),”\* and He said, “So shall you say



of the absurd that characterized the antithetic period of self-negation, when all seemed hopeless, becomes the logic of the reasonable during the synthesis performance. Man himself is chosen to carry out the task of harmonization of those two orders. (*The Emergence of Ethical Man*, pp. 186-187)

וַיֹּהֲלֵה הָאוֹת כִּי אֲנִכִּי שְׁלַחְתִּידָּהּ בְּהוֹצִיאָהּ אֶת־הָעָם מִמִּצְרַיִם תַּעֲבֹדוּן אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים עַל הָהָר הַזֶּה - and this is the sign for you that it was I Who sent you. When you take the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain. Moses asked the Almighty: Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should take the children of Israel out of Egypt? (verse 11). How did this reply answer Moses' query? The Almighty was stating: Know, Moses, that the purpose of the Exodus is not political and social freedom. I did not choose you to be a diplomat or a king. If political freedom were the objective, there are indeed better candidates than yourself; I would not have chosen you to lead the nation. Rather, the purpose of the Exodus is to create a holy nation, a Torah nation, based on what they will later hear upon this mountain. The goal of the Exodus is the later revelation at Sinai, to create a sacred people, the transformation of a subjugated people into *kingdom of priests and a holy nation*. For this purpose, I do not need a political leader but a *rebbe*, a teacher and mentor who will lead and guide the people. For this role, you are in fact the best candidate. (*Yeshiva University Haggadah*, 1984)

אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה - I am that I am. Immediate ontological awareness concedes that there is no reality without God. The metaphysics of the book of redemption [the *Book of Exodus*] is expressed in the phrase *I am that I am*. I necessarily exist, and wherever you find being, you will discern the illumination of My sole existence. Wherever someone or something “is” in the finite third person, the “I am” of the infinite “I” reveals itself. The Deity is the pure existent that brings everything into existence and encompasses everything. God's link to the world is not grasped only in the definition of cause and effect; it is embodied in the continuous profusion of the bestowal of being. The relative creature is hewn out of the rock of the absolute. There is no existence without God, and there is no reality without reliance on Him. God therefore draws after Him the creature who yearns for complete existence, who senses the emptiness of his world and the dependence of his concrete being.

If there is a world, if anything at all is real – and no one who has not been ensnared by vain sophistries has any doubt about this—then there is a God Who is the foundation and origin of everything that exists. If there is a self, if man exists—and this, too, all human beings know with certainty—then there is a living personal God Who fills the consciousness of the self. It is impossible to think, to speak, to discuss the reality of the world and the reality of man without living and sensing the source of being: *I am that I am*.

The religious sensibility does not offer decisive proofs, draw inferences, or make deductions. It senses and experiences God in its innermost ontological consciousness. Without Him, there is no reality. *Taste and see how good is the Lord; happy is the man who takes refuge in Him!* (Ps. 34:9). Just as someone who sees a tree does not deduce indirectly that there are roots under the ground—for

תֹּאמַר לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲהִיָּה שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם: טו וַיֹּאמֶר  
עוֹד אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה כֹּה תֹאמַר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה  
אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב  
שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם זֶה־שְּׁמִי לְעֹלָם וְזֶה זִכְרִי לְדֹר דֹּר: חמ"שי  
טז לֵךְ וְאַסְפַּתְּ אֶת־זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם יְהוָה  
אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם נִרְאָה אֵלַי אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב  
לֵאמֹר פְּקֹד פְּקֹדֵתִי אֶתְכֶם וְאֶת־הָעֲשׂוֹי לָכֶם בַּמִּצְרִים:  
יז וַיֹּאמֶר אֵעֲלֶה אֶתְכֶם מֵעֵנִי מִצְרַיִם אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי  
וְהַחֲתִי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהַפְּרָזִי וְהַחִוִּי וְהַיְבוֹסִי אֶל־אֶרֶץ זִבְתַּת  
חֶלֶב וּדְבָשׁ: יח וְשִׁמְעוּ לְקוֹלִי וּבֹאֲתָ אֵתְּהָ וְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
אֶל־מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וְאָמַרְתֶּם אֵלָיו יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרָיִים  
נִקְרָה עָלֵינוּ וְעַתָּה גִלְכַּה־נָּא דֶּרֶךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים  
בַּמִּדְבָּר וְנִזְבַּחָה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ: יט וְאַנִּי יֹדַעְתִּי כִּי לֹא־  
יִתֵּן אֶתְכֶם מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְחַלְּדָּה וְלֹא בִיד חֲזָקָה:

יוסף אמר להם פקד יפקד אלהים אתכם (שם טז, כה):  
(אלהי העבריים. יו"ד יתירה, רמז ל' מכות. כרש"י ישן):  
נקרה עלינו. לשון מקרה, וכן ויקר אלהים (פסוק כה, ד),  
ואנכי אקרה פה (שם טז, טו), אהא נקרה מאתו הלוס:  
(יט) לא יתן אתכם מלך מצרים להלך. אם אין אני מראה  
לו ידי החזקה, כלומר כל עוד שאין אני מודיעו ידי החזקה לא  
יתן אתכם להלך: לא יתן. [כחגורומו] לא ישבוק, כמו על פן  
לא נחסיף (בראשית כ' ו'), ולא נתנו אלהים להרע עמדי (שם לא, ז),

(טו) זה שמי לעלם. חסר וי"ו, לומר העלימהו שלא יקרא  
ככתבו: וזה זכרי. למדו היאך נקרא, וכן דוד הוא אומר  
(מהלל קלה, יג) ה' שמוך לעולם ה' וקרך לדר ודר: (טו) את  
זקני ישראל. מיוחדים לישיבה. ואם תאמר זקנים סתם, היאך  
אפשר לו לאסוף זקנים של ששים רבוא: (יט) ושמעו לקולך.  
מאליהם, מכיון שתאמר להם לשון זה ישמעו לקולך, שכבר  
סימן זה מסור בידם מיעקב ומיוסף שצלטון זה הם נגאלים,  
יעקב אמר להם ואלהים פקד יפקד אתכם (בראשית כ' כד),

in the very perception of the trunk there is knowledge of the roots—so too man has no need to draw conclusions about God, for he knows God directly through the world. The words of Isaiah (40:26), *Lift high your eyes and see: Who created these?* or the rabbinic statement that there cannot be an illuminated castle without an owner or leader (*Bereishis Rabbah* 39:1) are not meant to refer to abstract logical proofs or complicated demonstrations. On the contrary, they refer to the immediate awareness that overcomes man who sees God in the innermost essence of the world, as well as in its surroundings. (*From There Shall You Seek*, p. 12, 62)

וזה שמי לעלם - This is My name forever. The Master of the Universe obscures Himself. He conceals Himself behind a cloud. His actions are hidden. He does not act demonstrably, nor does He seek recognition. The word לעלם, spelled without a vav, has an alternate meaning: obscure. I am unobtrusive. Wherever you find [a reference to] God's greatness, there you will also find [a reference to] His modesty (*Megillah* 31a). God does not seek public acknowledgment.

to the children of Israel, 'Ehyeh (I will be) has sent me to you.' 15 And God said further to Moses, "So shall you say to the children of Israel, 'The Lord God of your forefathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever,\* and this is how I should be mentioned in every generation. 16 Go and assemble the elders of Israel, and say to them, 'The Lord God of your forefathers has appeared to me, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, "I have surely remembered you and what is being done to you in Egypt." ' 17 And I said, 'I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt, to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivvites, and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey.' 18 And they will hearken to your voice, and you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt,\* and you shall say to him, 'The Lord God of the Hebrews has happened upon us, and now, let us go for a three days' journey in the desert and offer up sacrifices to the Lord, our God.' 19 However, I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except through a mighty hand. 20 And I will stretch



Man is naturally inclined to strive for recognition, for honor. He wishes his efforts and actions to be appreciated by as many of his peers and with as much fanfare as possible. This instinct is relentless; it results in the authorship of books, erection of monuments, even in the affixing of memorial tablets. Rich or poor, great or small, everyone wishes to be remembered; some wish to be remembered in history, others by a simple *Kaddish* recitation.

Yet the greatest individuals in Jewish history reflect precisely the opposite tendency: a predisposition towards obscurity. Take, as one example, an august institution from thousands of years ago, the 120-member *Anshei Knesses Hagedolah*, the Men of the Great Assembly. This group of rabbis preserved the remnant of Israel through the first exile. They instituted the form of contemporary prayer as well as the standard formula for *berachos*. They instituted the laws of *muktzeh* and associated rabbinical prohibitions to safeguard the Sabbath. Their impact on our everyday lives is immeasurable.

Who exactly were the representatives of this noble body? How many of its members are identifiable, if only by name? Ezra, Nehemiah, Mordecai, Zerubavel, and Shimon Hatzaddik—those are all we know. The Gemara states that there were prophets among this group. Who were they? We don't know. Why did they not include their names in the Oral Law through which they made their greatest impact? Because they reflected the obscurity of God Himself as He hid behind a cloud on Mount Sinai. If the Master of the Universe hides from the very world that He leads, so too must the masters of our tradition.

Although the desire to bequeath a lasting legacy is compelling, the Torah calls for obscurity. This requirement that God exacts is indeed formidable. Yet, ultimately, there will be no permanent legacy in this world for man—we believe in permanence only in the World to Come. (*Derashot Harav*, pp. 27-28)

וְבֹאֶתְךָ אַתָּה וְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם - and you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt. The verb וְבֹאֶתְךָ is not a prediction, but rather a command; Moses and the elders of Israel were commanded to confront Pharaoh together. God did not promise that the elders would listen to Moses, and in fact the elders did not fulfill their obligation out of fear (see Rashi on 5:1 s.v. וַיִּזְכֹּר בָּאוּ). (Moriah, 1970)



כ וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־יָדִי וְהִפֵּיתִי אֶת־מִצְרַיִם בְּכָל־נִפְלְאוֹתַי  
אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה בְּקִרְבּוֹ וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יִשְׁלַח אֶתְכֶם: כֹּא וְנִתְּנָה  
אֶת־חֶן הָעַם־הַזֶּה בְּעֵינֵי מִצְרַיִם וְהָיָה כִּי תִלְכוּן לֹא  
תִלְכוּ רִיקָם: כב וַשָּׂאֵלָה אִשָּׁה מִשְׁכַּנְתָּהּ וּמִגֶּרֶת בֵּיתָהּ  
כָּל־כֶּסֶף וְכָל־זָהָב וּשְׁמֶלֶת וּשְׂמָתָם עַל־בְּנֵיכֶם וְעַל־  
בְּנִיתֵיכֶם וְנִצַּלְתֶּם אֶת־מִצְרַיִם: ד א וַיַּעַן מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר  
וְהָן לֹא־יֵאֱמִינוּ לִי וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ בְּקִלִּי כִּי יֹאמְרוּ לֹא־  
נִרְאָה אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה: ב וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה מִה־זֶּה בִּידֶךָ  
וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה: ג וַיֹּאמֶר הַשְׁלִיכֵהוּ אֶרְצָה וַיִּשְׁלַכְהוּ  
אֶרְצָה וַיְהִי לְנַחֵשׁ וַיִּגַּם מֹשֶׁה מִפְּנֵיו: ד וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה  
אֶל־מֹשֶׁה שְׁלַח יָדְךָ וְאַחֲזוּ בִּזְנֻבּוֹ וַיִּשְׁלַח יָדוֹ וַיַּחֲזֹק־בּוֹ  
וַיְהִי לְמִטָּה בְּכַפּוֹ: ה לְמַעַן יֵאֱמִינוּ כִּי־נִרְאָה אֵלֶיךָ  
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתָם אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹרָהֶם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי  
יַעֲקֹב: ו וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לוֹ עוֹד הִבֵּאתִי יָדְךָ בְּחִיקְךָ  
וַיָּבֵא יָדוֹ בְּחִיקוֹ וַיּוֹצֵאֶה וְהִנֵּה יָדוֹ מִצֵּרֶת כַּשָּׁלֹג:  
ז וַיֹּאמֶר הִשָּׁב יָדְךָ אֶל־חִיקְךָ וַיֵּשֶׁב יָדוֹ אֶל־חִיקוֹ  
וַיּוֹצֵאֶה מִחִיקוֹ וְהִנֵּה־שָׁבָה כַּבָּשָׂרוֹ: ח וְהָיָה אִם־לֹא  
יֵאֱמִינוּ לָךְ וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ לְקֹל הָאֵת הָרֹאשׁוֹן וְהָאֱמִינוּ

° מזה כתיב

כשהיא מדברת לשון ופעלתם תנקד בשו"א צטק, כגון  
וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־יָדִי וְהִפֵּיתִי אֶת־מִצְרַיִם בְּכָל־נִפְלְאוֹתַי  
וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יִשְׁלַח אֶתְכֶם: (בראשית מה, יט), וְנִתְּנָה אֶת  
הָעַם־הַזֶּה בְּעֵינֵי מִצְרַיִם וְהָיָה כִּי תִלְכוּן לֹא  
(בראשית י, יא), לכן אני אומר שזאת הנקודה צמיר"ק מן  
היסוד היא, ויסוד שם דבר נזול, והוא מן הלשונות הכבדים,  
כמו דבור כפזר למוד, כשידבר בלשון ופעלתם ינקד צמיר"ק  
כמו וְדִצְרָתָם אֶל הַסֵּלַע (צמדבר כ, ח), וְכִפְרָתָם אֶת הַצֵּיִת  
(יחזקאל מה, כ), וְלִמְדָתָם אֶתְּם אֶת צִיָּקָם (דברים יא, יט):  
(3) מזה בידך, לכך נכתב חיצה אחת, לדרוש מזה שצדך  
אחת חיצה ללקוח, שמשדת כששרים. ופשוטו, כלשם שאומר  
לחצירו מודה אחת שזו שלפניך אכן היא, אומר לו הן, אמר  
לו הריני עושה אותה עך: (4) ויהי לנחש. רמז לו שסיפר  
לשון הרע על ישראל לא יאמינו לי, ותפס אומנותו  
של נחש: (7) ויחזק בו. לשון אחיה הוא, והרבה יש במקרא,  
וַיִּחְזְקוּ הָאֱנָשִׁים צִדּוֹ (בראשית יט, יז), וְהִסְתַּקָּה צִמְצִימוֹ

וכולן לשון נמינה הם. ויש מפרש, ולא ציד חזקה, ולא צשציל  
שידו חזקה, כי מאז אשלח את ידי והכיתי את מצרים וגו',  
ומתרגמין אותו ולא מן קדם דחיליה תקיף. משמו של רבי  
יעקב צרבי מנחם נאמר לי: (33) ומגרת ביתה. מאותה  
שהיא גרה אתה צצית: ונצלתם. כתרומתו ומרוקנותו, וכן  
וַיִּנְגְּלוּ אֶת מַנְרֵיָם (להן יב, יז), וַיִּתְּנֻלּוּ צִי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת עֲדָיִם  
(להן לג, ו), והנו"ן צו יסוד. ומנחם חצרו צמחצרת כד"י עס  
וַיִּזַּל אֱלֹהִים אֶת מִקְנֵה אֲבִיכֶם (בראשית לא, ט), אֲשֶׁר הָיִל  
אֱלֹהִים מֵאֲצִינוּ (שם שם, טז), ולא יאמנו דבריו, כי אם לא היתה  
הנו"ן יסוד והיא נקודה צמיר"ק, לא תהא משמשת בלשון  
ופעלתם אלא בלשון ונפעלתם, כמו וְנִסְתַּקְּתֶם מֵעַל הָאֲדָמָה  
(דברים כה, סג), וְנִפְתַּח צִיד אוֹיֵב (ויקרא כו, כה), וְנִגְפָתָם לְפָנַי  
אֲבִיכֶם (שם שם, יז), וְנִפְתַּח צִמְצִימָה (יחזקאל כג, כה), וְאִמְרָתָם  
נִלְגְּנוּ (ירמיה ז, י), לשון נפעלנו. וכל נו"ן שהיא צאה צמיצה  
לפרכים ונפלת ממנה כנו"ן של נוגף נושא נותן נושך,

forth My hand and smite the Egyptians with all My miracles that I will wreak in their midst, and afterwards he will send you out. 21 And I will put this people's favor in the eyes of the Egyptians, and it will come to pass that when you go, you will not go empty handed.\* 22 Each woman shall borrow from her neighbor and from the dweller in her house silver and gold objects and garments, and you shall put [them] on your sons and on your daughters, and you shall empty out Egypt."

**4**<sup>1</sup> Moses answered and said, "Behold they will not believe me,\* and they will not heed my voice, but they will say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.' " <sup>2</sup> And the Lord said to him, "What is this in your hand?" And he said, "A staff." <sup>3</sup> And He said, "Cast it to the ground," and he cast it to the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses fled from before it. <sup>4</sup> And the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch forth your hand and take hold of its tail." So Moses stretched forth his hand and grasped it, and it became a staff in his hand. <sup>5</sup> "In order that they believe that the Lord, the God of their forefathers, has appeared to you, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." <sup>6</sup> And the Lord said further to him, "Now put your hand into your bosom," and he put his hand into his bosom, and he took it out, and behold, his hand was leprous like snow. <sup>7</sup> And he said, "Put your hand back into your bosom," and he put his hand back into his bosom, and [when] he took it out of his bosom, it had become again like [the rest of] his flesh. <sup>8</sup> "And it will come to pass, that if they do not believe you, and they do not heed

(דברים כה, יא), וְהִתְקַפִּי בְּעֵינֵי (שְׂמוּאֵל א י, לה). כל לשון חזק  
הדבוק לנ"ת לשון אחיזה הוא: (1) מצרעת כשלג. דרך  
נרעת להיות לנבנה, וְאִם צִהָרְתָּ לְבָנָה הוּא (ויקרא יג, ד). אף  
נאות זה רמז לו שלשון הרע סיפר באומרו לא יאמינו לי, מסיקו: (ב) והאמינו לקל האת האחרון. משמאמר להם

וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־חֵן הָעַם־הַזֶּה בְּעֵינֵי מִצְרַיִם וְהָיָה כִּי תֵלְכוּן לֹא תֵלְכוּן רִיקִם - And I will put this people's favor in the eyes of the Egyptians, and it will come to pass that when you go, you will not go empty handed. God reveals this detail to Moses well before the liberation has even commenced, because this promise was an integral part of the Israelites' liberation from slavery. A slave has no rights of acquisition—everything that the slave owns belongs to the master (see *Pesachim* 88b). The fact that the Egyptians would allow the Israelites to acquire their own possessions clearly demonstrates their newly freed status. Furthermore, the freeing of slaves is often a degrading experience for the slave, since he is penniless when he leaves his master. Gifts are given only to one who is respected. Not only will the Israelites be freed from slavery, but they will be respected by the Egyptians. (*Siach Hagrid Haggadah*, p. 47)

וַיַּעַן מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר וְהָיָה לֹא־אֲאִמִּינוּ לִי - Moses answered and said, "Behold they will not believe me." Moses remembered the circumstances that forced him to leave Egypt. Moses therefore repeatedly argued that the people would not believe him because they did not have sufficient belief to be redeemed. God replied that indeed, when Moses left Egypt the Israelite nation had little faith. However, in the years since he had left the people, Miriam had acted as leader; under her inspired leadership they were a different people. (*Aton Holzer Summary*; see commentary on 2:1)

לְקַל הָאֵת הָאֶחָד: ט וְהָיָה אִם-לֹא יֵאֱמִינוּ גַם לְשֵׁנִי  
הָאֲתוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּן לְקִלְךָ וּלְקַחַת מִיָּמִי  
הַיָּאֵר וְיִשְׁפְּכֶתָּהּ בַּיַּבֶּשֶׁה וְהָיוּ הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר תִּקַּח מִן-  
הַיָּאֵר וְהָיוּ לָדָם בַּיַּבֶּשֶׁת: י וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-יְהוָה בִּי  
אֲדֹנָי לֹא אִישׁ דְּבָרִים אֲנֹכִי גַם מִתְמוּל גַּם מִשְׁלֵשִׁם  
גַּם מֵאֵז דְּבָרְךָ אֶל-עַבְדְּךָ כִּי כְבֹד-פֶּה וְכְבֹד לִשׁוֹן  
אֲנֹכִי: יא וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלָיו מִי שֵׁם פֶּה לְאָדָם אוֹ מִי-  
יָשׁוּם אֵלִים אוֹ חֵרֶשׁ אוֹ פֶקֶח אוֹ עוֹר הֲלֹא אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה:  
יב וְעַתָּה לֵךְ וְאֲנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה עִם-פִּיךָ וְהוֹרִיתִיךָ אֲשֶׁר  
תְּדַבֵּר: יג וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי אֲדֹנָי שְׁלַח-נָא בְיָד-תְּשֻׁלָּח:  
יד וַיַּחֲרָאֵף יְהוָה בְּמֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלֹא אֶהְרֵן אֲחִידְךָ  
הָלֹוִי יִדְעָתִי כִּי-דַבֵּר יְדַבֵּר הוּא וְגַם הִנֵּה-הוּא יֵצֵא

גמין רצויין הם הרי ששה, והוא היה עומד ציוס השביעי כשומר לו זאת עוד, שָׁלַח נָא צִיד תְּשֻׁלָּח (להלן פסוק יג), עד שחנה צו וקבל עליו, וכל זה שלא היה רוצה לנטול גדולה על אהרן אחיו, שהיה גדול הימנו ונציא היה, שנאמר (הֲלֹא אֶהְרֵן אֲחִידְךָ הָלֹוִי וגו' (להלן פסוק יד), ועוד נאמר לעלי הכהן) הֲנִגְלָה נְגִלְתִּי אֶל צִית אֲצִיד צְהִיָּקִים צְמִזְרִים (שמואל א 3, כו) הוא אהרן, וכן ואודע להם בארץ מצרים וגו' וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ שְׁקוּצֵי עֵינָיו הִשְׁלִיכוּ (יחזקאל כ, יז), ואותה נצואה לאהרן נאמרה: כבד פה. צכידות אני מדבר, וצלשון לע"ז צלצ"א: (י"א) מי שם פה וגו'. מי למדך לדבר כשהיית נדון לפני פרעה על המצרי: או מי ישום אלה. מי עשה פרעה אלס שלא נחאמן צמנות הריגתך, ואת משרתי חרשים שלא שמעו צוומי עליך, ולאספקלטורין ההורגים

בשצילכס לקיתי על שספרתי עליכס לשון הרע יאמינו לך, שכבר למדו צכך שהמודווגין להרע להם לוקים צנגעים, כגון פרעה ואצימלך בשציל שרה: (ט) ולקחת מימימי היאור. רמוז להם שצמכה ראשונה נפרע מאלהותם (פירוש כשהקדוש צרוך הוא נפרע מן האזומות נפרע מאלהותם תחלה, שהיו עוצדים לנילוס המחיה אותם והפכס לדס. צרש"י יסן): והיו חמים וגו'. והיו והיו שני פעמים. נראה צעני, אילו נאמר והיו המים אשר תקח מן היאור לדס ציצשת, שומע אני שצידו הם נהפכים לדס (ואז) [ואף] כשירדו לארץ יהיו צהוייתן, אצל עכשיו מלמדנו שלא יהיו דס עד שיהיו ציצשת: (י) גם מתמול וגו'. למדנו שכל שצעה ימים היה הקדוש צרוך הוא מפתה את משה צסנה לילך בשליחותו, מתמול שלשום מאז דצרך הרי שלשה, ושלשה

for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue. God specifically wanted a person who was heavy of speech to confront Pharaoh. When Moses spoke to Pharaoh, Pharaoh responded derisively (see 5:2), a response which God specifically wanted to elicit. (Beshaim Omram, p. 41)

So now, go! After God told Moses that it was within His power to ultimately cure Moses of his speech impediment, God told Moses to go now, as he is now, with the speech impediment, and speak to Pharaoh. (Beshaim Omram, p. 41)

I beseech You, O Lord, send now [Your message] with whom You would send. The entire redemption of the Jewish people hinged on one immutable condition: that

the voice of the first sign, they will believe the voice of the last sign. 9 And it will come to pass, if they do not believe either of these two signs, and they do not heed your voice, you shall take of the water of the Nile and spill it upon the dry land, and the water that you take from the Nile will become blood on the dry land.” 10 Moses said to the Lord, “I beseech You, O Lord. I am not a man of words, neither from yesterday nor from the day before yesterday, nor from the time You have spoken to Your servant, for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue.”\* 11 But the Lord said to him, “Who gave man a mouth, or who makes [one] dumb or deaf or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? 12 So now, go!\* I will be with your mouth, and I will instruct you what you shall speak.” 13 But he said, “I beseech You, O Lord, send now [Your message] with whom You would send.”\* 14 And the Lord’s wrath was kindled against Moses, and He said, “Is there not Aaron your brother, the Levite?”\* I know that he will surely speak,\* and behold, he is coming forth

מי עשאים עורים שלא ראו כשצרחת מן הצימה וגמלעת: הלא אנכי. ששמי ה' עשיתי כל זאת: (יג) ביד תשלח. ציד מי שאתה רגיל לשלוח והוא אהרן. דבר אחר, ציד אחר שתרצה לשלוח, שאין סופי להכניסם לארץ ולהיות גואלים לעמדי, יש לך שלוחים הרבה: (יד) ויחר אף. רבי יהושע בן קרחה אומר, כל חרון אף שצמורה נאמר בו רושם, וזה לא

נאמר בו רושם ולא מצינו שצא עונש על ידי אותו חרון. אומר לו רבי יוסי, אף בו נאמר בו רושם, הלא אהרן אחיך הלוי, שהיה עמיד להיות לוי ולא כהן, והכהונה הייתי אומר לנאח ממך, מעתה לא יהיה כן אלא הוא יהיה כהן ואתה לוי, שנאמר (דברי הימים א כג, יד) ומשה איש האלהים קָנָיו יִקְרְאוּ על שִׁצְט הַלְוִי: הנה הוא יצא לקראתך. כשתלך למצרים:

Moses accept the mandate as the nation's leader and become the instrument of its redemption. Years before, he had fled to Midian to distance himself from them and their sufferings. Now he had to transform himself into a *shaliach*, a messenger of God. He had to change his opinion of the Israelites in order to become the instrument of their redemption. This is why God spent seven days convincing Moses to accept the mission. The divine mandate was not only that Moses must convince Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave, but that Moses rejoin his people. Only then could he begin his task as their redeemer. (*Darosh Darash Yosef*, p. 126)

Rashi identifies the person *whom You would send* as Aaron. Moses suggested that Aaron should assume the mantle of leadership in his place. However, according to the *Pirkei DeRabi Eliezer* (chapter 39), these words hint to the following exchange: Moses said, “Master of the Universe, send [the message] to that person whom in the future you are destined to send [that is, Elijah].” God replied, “I never said that I am sending you to Israel. I am sending you to Pharaoh. That person to whom you refer will be the one I send to Israel, as it is written, *Behold I am sending you [Israel] Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of God* (Mal. 3:23).” According to the *Pirkei DeRabi Eliezer*, Moses questioned his role in the redemption from Egypt, since ultimately the nation would be destined to experience other bitter exiles. Moses suggested that Elijah, the harbinger of the Messiah, should be sent in his place, so the permanent and complete redemption of Israel could happen immediately. (*Imrei Baruch*, Vol. 2, pp. 4-5)

וְהָיָה אֶהְרֹן אֶחָיו הַלְוִי - “Is there not Aaron your brother, the Levite?” Because Moses repeatedly refused the mission of redeeming Israel, God was angered and appointed Aaron to accompany Moses. To this point, Aaron was simply a levi. Later, however, he would be given the title of priesthood.

לְקַרְאֲתָךְ וּרְאֵךְ וְשִׁמְח בְּלִבּוֹ: טו וְדִבַּרְתָּ אֵלָיו וְשַׁמְתָּ אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים בְּפִיו וְאֶנְכִי אֶחֱיָה עִם־פִּיךָ וְעִם־פִּיהוּ וְהוֹרִיתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶת אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשׂוּן: טז וְדִבַּר־הוּא לָךְ אֱלֹהֶעַם וְהָיָה הוּא יִהְיֶה־לָּךְ לִפָּה וְאַתָּה תִּהְיֶה־לּוֹ לְאֱלֹהִים: יז וְאַתָּה־מִּטָּה הִזָּה תִּקַּח בְּיָדְךָ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה־בּוֹ אֶת־הָאֵתֶת: פ שִׁשִּׁי יח וְיִלְךָ מִשָּׁה וַיֵּשֶׁב אֶל־יֵתֶר חֲתָנּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֶלְכָה־נָּא וְאֲשׁוּבָה אֶל־אֲחִי אֲשֶׁר־בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאַרְאֶה הָעוֹדֶם חַיִּים וַיֹּאמֶר יֵתֶר לְמִשָּׁה לָּךְ לְשָׁלוֹם: יט וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מִשָּׁה בְּמִדְיָן לָךְ שֵׁב מִצְרַיִם כִּי־מָתוּ כָּל־הָאֲנָשִׁים הַמִּבְקָשִׁים אֶת־נַפְשְׁךָ: כ וַיִּקַּח מִשָּׁה אֶת־אֲשֶׁתּוֹ וְאֶת־בָּנָיו וַיֵּרָבֶם עַל־הַחֹמֶר וַיֵּשֶׁב אֶרְצָה מִצְרַיִם וַיִּקַּח מִשָּׁה אֶת־מִטָּה הָאֱלֹהִים בְּיָדּוֹ: כא וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מִשָּׁה בְּלִכְתְּךָ לָשׁוּב מִצְרַיִמָּה רֹאֵה כָּל־הַמִּפְתִּיחַ אֲשֶׁר־שַׁמְתִּי בְיָדְךָ וַעֲשִׂיתָם לִפְנֵי פְרַעֲה וְאֲנִי אֲחַזֵּק אֶת־לִבּוֹ וְלֹא יִשְׁלַח אֶת־הָעָם: כב וַאֲמַרְתָּ אֶל־פְּרַעֲה כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה בְּנִי בְּכָרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל: כג וַאֲמַר אֵלָיִךְ שְׁלַח אֶת־בְּנִי וַיַּעֲבֹדֵנִי וְתִמְאֵן לְשַׁלְּחוֹ הִנֵּה

לְקַדְמוֹתָהּ וַיַּחְזֹקֶה וַיַּחֲדִי כְּלִפְיָה: טו וְתִמְלֹל עֲמִיָה וְתִשְׁוִי יֵת פִּתְגָמִיָּא בְּפִוְמִיָּה וּמִיָּמְרִי יְהִי עִם פִּוְמָךְ וְעִם פִּוְמִיָּה וְאֵלָיִךְ יִתְכּוֹן יֵת דִּי תַעֲבָדוֹן: טז וַיִּמְלֹל הוּא לָךְ לַעֲמָא וַיְהִי הוּא יְהִי לָךְ לְמִתְרַגְמָן וְאַתָּה תִּהְיֶה לִי לְרֵב: יז וְיֵת חֲטָרָא הָדִין תִּסְבֵּי בְיָדְךָ דְּתַעֲבָד בֵּיהּ יֵת אֲתִיָּא: יח וְאַזְל מִשָּׁה וְתֵב לֹת יֵתֶר חֲטָוִיָּה וְאַמֵּר לִיָּהּ אֵיזִיל פֻּעַן וְאַיְתוֹב לֹת אֲחִי דִי כְּמִצְרַיִם וְאַחֲזִי הָעַד פֻּעַן קִיָּמִין וְאַמֵּר יֵתֶר לְמִשָּׁה אֵזִיל לְשָׁלוֹם: יט וַאֲמַר יְיָ לְמִשָּׁה בְּמִדְיָן אֵזִיל תוֹב לְמִצְרַיִם אֲרִי מִיתוּ כָּל גְּבָרִיָּא דִּבְעוּ לְמַקְטָלָהּ: כ וְדִבַּר מִשָּׁה יֵת אֶת־תִּיָּה וְיֵת בְּנוֹתָי וְאַרְפָּבְנוֹן עַל חֲטָרָא וְתֵב לְאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם וְנָסִיב מִשָּׁה יֵת חוֹטָרָא דְּאַתְעֵבִידוּ בֵּיהּ נַפְשׁוֹ מִן קָדָם יְיָ בְּיָדֶיהָ: כא וַאֲמַר יְיָ לְמִשָּׁה בְּמַחֲקָהּ לְמַתוֹב לְמִצְרַיִם חֲזִי כָּל מוֹפְתֵיָא דְּשׁוּיָתִי בְיָדְךָ וְתַעֲבָדוֹן קָדָם פְּרַעֲה וְאַנָּא אֶתְקִיף יֵת לְבִיָּה וְלֹא יִשְׁלַח יֵת עָמָא: כב וְתִיָּמֶר לֹת פְּרַעֲה בְּדָנּוֹ אָמַר יְיָ בְּרִי בּוֹכְרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל: כג וַאֲמַרְתִּי לָךְ שְׁלַח יֵת בְּרִי וַיִּפְלַח קָדְמִי וְאַם סְרִיב אֶת לְשַׁלְּחוֹתֶיהָ

רשומ, שהרי נשבע לו (שלא יזון ממדין כי אם ברשותו). ושבעה שמות היו לו, רעואל יתר יתרו קיני חוצצ חצר פוטאל: (יט) כי מתו כל האנשים. מי הם, דמן ואצירס חיים היו, אלא שירדו מנכסיהם והעני חשוד כמת: (כ) על החומר. חמור המיוחד, הוא החמור שחשש אצרהם לעקידת יחזק, והוא שעמיד מלך המשיח להגלות עליו, שנאמר

וראך ושמח בלב. לא כשאתה סבור שיהא מקפיד עליך שאתה עולה לגדולה. ומשם זכה אהרן לעדי החשן הנמון על הלז: (טז) ודבר הוא לך. כשצילך ידבר אל העם, וזה יוכיח על כל לך ולי ולו ולכם ולהם הסמוכים לדבור, שכולם לשון על הס: יהיה לך לפה. למליך, לפי שאתה כדל פה: לאלהים. לרצ ולשר: (יט) וישב אל יתר חתנו. ליטול

Had Moses become the *Kohen Gadol*, he would have crossed the Jordan with the Israelites, settled the land and built the Temple, a Temple that would never have been destroyed. (Aton Holzer Summary)

— *Is there not Aaron your brother, the Levite? I know that he will surely speak.* With this statement, Moses' and Aaron's roles were now split. Moses was still to speak directly to Pharaoh without Aaron as intermediary (see 5:22), while Aaron would be the one to speak to the people. (Beshaim Omram, p. 42)



toward you, and when he sees you, he will rejoice in his heart. 15 You shall speak to him, and you shall put the words into his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will instruct you [both] what you shall do. 16 And he will speak for you to the people, and it will be that he will be your speaker, and you will be his leader. 17 And you shall take this staff in your hand, with which you shall perform the signs.” 18 Moses went and returned to Jethro, his father in law, and he said to him, “Let me go now and return to my brothers who are in Egypt, and let me see whether they are still alive.” So Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.” 19 The Lord said to Moses in Midian, “Go, return to Egypt, for all the people who sought your life have died.” 20 So Moses took his wife and his sons, mounted them upon the donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt, and Moses took the staff of God in his hand. 21 The Lord said to Moses, “When you go to return to Egypt, see all the signs that I have placed in your hand and perform them before Pharaoh, but I will strengthen his heart, and he will not send out the people. 22 And you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘So said the Lord, “My firstborn son is Israel.”’\* 23 So I say to you, ‘Send out My son so that he will worship Me, but if you refuse to send him

(זכריה ט, ט) עָנִי וְרָכָב עַל פָּמֹר: וַיֵּשֶׁב אֶרֶצָה מִצְרַיִם וַיִּקַּח מִשָּׁה אֶת מִטָּה וְגו'. אֵין מוֹקֵדִם וּמֵאוֹתֵר מְדוּקָדִים צִמְקָרָא: (כב) בְּלִכְתֵּךְ לְשׁוּב מִצְרַיִמָּה וְגו'. דַּע שֶׁעַל מִנֵּה כֵן תֵּלֵךְ, שְׂחֵהָ גִצּוֹר צְשִׁיחוֹתֵי לַעֲשׂוֹת כָּל מוֹפְתֵי לִפְנֵי פִרְעֹה וְלֹא תִירָא מִמֶּנּוּ: אֲשֶׁר שְׂמִתִּי בִידְךָ. לֹא עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה אוֹתוֹת הָאֲמוּרוֹת לַמַּעֲלָה, שֶׁהִרִי לֹא לִפְנֵי פִרְעֹה וְזֶה לַעֲשׂוֹתֵם אֲלֵא לִפְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׂיאֲמִינוּ לוֹ, וְלֹא מִזִּינוּ שֶׁעֲשֵׂאֵם לִפְנֵינוּ, אֲלֵא מוֹפְתִים שֶׁאֵין עֲמִיד לְשׁוֹם צִדֵּךְ צִמְצִרִים, כְּמוֹ [שְׁנֹאֲמֵר] כִּי יִצְיָר אֶלְכֶם פִּרְעֹה (לֵהֲלֵן א, ט). וְלֹא תַחֲמָה עַל אֲשֶׁר כְּחִיצ אֲשֶׁר שְׂמִתִּי, שֶׁכֵּן מִשְׁמַעוֹ כְּשֶׁתִּדְבָּר עִמּוֹ כְּכֹר שְׂמִתִּים צִדֵּךְ: (כג) וְאִמְרַת אֵל פִּרְעֹה. כְּשֶׁתִּשְׁמַע שְׁלֹצוֹ חוֹק וַיִּמְאָן לְשַׁלּוֹת אֲמֹר לוֹ כֵּן: בְּנֵי בְכָרִי. לְשׁוֹן גְּדוּלָּה כְּמוֹ אִף אֲנִי צָכוֹר אֶתְנֶהוּ (תְּהִלִּים פט, כח), זֶהוּ פְּשׁוּטוֹ. וּמִדְרָשׁוֹ, כֹּאֵן חֲתָם הַקִּדּוּשׁ צִדֵּךְ הוּא עַל מַכִּירַת הַצְּכוּרָה שֶׁלְּכֹךְ יַעֲקֹב מַעֲשׂוֹ: (כג) וְאִמְרַת אֲלֵיךְ. צְשִׁיחוֹתֵי שֶׁל מִקּוֹם, שֶׁלֹּא אֵת צִנִּי וְגו': הִנֵּה אֲנִי חוֹרֵג וְגו'. הִיא מַכָּה אֲחֵרוּנָה, וְזֶה הַתְּרָהוּ תַחֲלָה מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהִיא קֶשֶׁה. וְזֶה הוּא שְׁנֹאֲמֵר צִאֲיוֹ (ל, כג) הֵן אֵל יִצְיָר צִכְסוֹ, לִפְיֵךְ מִי פְּמֹהוּ מוֹרָה. צִשֶׁר וְדֵם הַמִּצְנֵק

❧ *My firstborn son is Israel* - בְּנֵי בְכָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. This phrase implies that God had other children. Every nation is a child of God, for every human being was created in the divine image. At the moment that God revealed Himself to the Jewish people and gave us the Torah, we were chosen as the *am segulah*, a treasured nation; but God did not abandon the rest of the world. We are God's firstborn—and a critical task of a firstborn child is to be a role model and an effective teacher for the other children. This is accomplished not only through learning, but by setting an example in our daily lives of sanctifying the Divine Name: behaving honestly and treating others with dignity. A Jew who commits a crime violates the teaching of *My firstborn son is Israel*.

This is what God had in mind when he gave Moses the task of redeeming the Israelites from slavery. As long as he refused to let them go, Pharaoh prevented the firstborn nation from carrying out its task of redeeming humanity—and prevented God from adopting the other nations as his children as well. Therefore, Pharaoh sinned not only against the Jewish people, but also against his own people, the Egyptians, and against the entire world. His stubbornness ultimately led to the death of the Egyptian firstborn. (*Darosh Darash Yosef*, pp. 144-145)



הא אָנכי קטיל ית בְּרִדְךָ בְּכֶרֶךְ: כד וְהָיָה  
בְּאַרְחָא בְּבֵית מִכְתָּא וְעָרַע בֵּיהּ מְלָאכָא דִּי  
וּבְעָא לְמִקְטִילֵיהּ: כה וְנִסִּיבִת צְפוּרָה טַנְרָא  
וּנְזַרְתָּ ית עֶרְלַת בְּרָהּ וּקְרִיבִת לְקַדְמוּזֵי  
וְאַמְרַת אֲרִי בְּדָמָא דְּמַהֲלֵתָא הָדִין אֲתִיבָב  
חֲתָנָא לָנָא: כו וְנָח מִנִּיהּ בְּכוֹ אֲמַרַת אֱלֹוִי  
דְּמָא דְּמַהֲלֵתָא הָדִין אֲתִיבָב חֲתָנָא קְטוּל:  
כו וְאָמַר יי לְאַהֲרֹן אֱוִיל לְקַדְמוֹת מִשָּׁה  
לְמַדְבָּרָא וְאֵל וְעָרְעִיהּ בְּטוּרָא דְּאַתְגְּלִי  
עֲלוּזֵי יִקְרָא דִּי וְנִשְׁק לִיהּ: כז וְהָיָה מִשָּׁה  
לְאַהֲרֹן ית כָּל פְּתָגְמֵי דִּי דִּי שְׁלַחִיהּ וְיֵת כָּל  
אֲתִיָּא דִּי פְקָדִיהּ: כט וְאֵל מִשָּׁה וְאַהֲרֹן  
וּכְנִשׁוּ ית כָּל סְבִי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ל וּמִלִּיל אֲהֲרֹן  
ית כָּל פְּתָגְמֵי דִּי מִלִּיל יי עִם מִשָּׁה וְעַבְד  
אֲתִיָּא לְעִינֵי עַמָּא: לא וְהִימָן עַמָּא וְשִׁמְעוּ  
אֲרִי דְּכִיר יי ית בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֲרִי גְלִי קַדְמוּזֵי  
ית שְׁעִבּוּדָהּ וּכְרַעוּ וּסְגִידוּ: א וּבִתְרָן כֵּן עֲלוּ  
מִשָּׁה וְאַהֲרֹן וְאָמְרוּ לְפָרְעָה כְּדָנָן אָמַר יי  
אֱלֹהֵא דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלַח ית עַמִּי וְיַחְגּוּן קַדְמִי  
בְּמַדְבָּרָא: ב וְאָמַר פְּרַעְה שְׁמָא דִּי לֹא  
אֲתִגְלִי לִי דִּי אֶקְבֵּל לְמַמְרִיהּ לְשַׁלְחָא ית  
יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא אֲתִגְלִי לִי שְׁמָא דִּי וְאָף ית  
יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא אֲשַׁלַּח: ג וְאָמְרוּ אֱלֹהֵי

אֲנֹכִי הִרְגָּה אֶת־בְּנֶךָ בְּכֶרֶךְ: כד וְיָהִי בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּמִלּוֹן  
וַיִּפְגְּשׁוּהוּ יְהוָה וַיִּבְקֶשׁ הַמִּיתּוֹ: כה וַתִּקַּח צִפּוֹרָה צֹר  
וַתִּכְרַת אֶת־עֶרְלַת בְּנָהּ וַתַּגֵּעַ לְרַגְלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי  
חֲתָן־דָּמִים אַתָּה לִּי: כו וַיִּרְף מִמֶּנּוּ אִזּוֹ אֲמָרָה חֲתָן  
דָּמִים לְמוֹלַת: פ כו וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵךְ לְקַרְאֵת  
מִשָּׁה הַמַּדְבָּרָה וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּפְגְּשׁוּהוּ בְּתֵר הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּשְׁק־  
לוֹ: כז וַיַּגֵּד מִשָּׁה לְאַהֲרֹן אֵת כָּל־דִּבְרֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר  
שְׁלָחוֹ וְאֵת כָּל־הָאֵתָת אֲשֶׁר צִוָּהוּ: כט וַיֵּלֶךְ מִשָּׁה  
וְאַהֲרֹן וַיֵּאסְפוּ אֶת־כָּל־זִקְנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ל וַיִּדְבֹּר  
אֲהֲרֹן אֵת כָּל־הַדִּבְרִים אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל־מִשָּׁה  
וַיַּעַשׂ הָאֵתָת לְעֵינֵי הָעָם: לא וַיֵּאמֶן הָעָם וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כִּי־  
פָקֵד יְהוָה אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכִי רָאָה אֶת־עַנְלִים וַיִּקְדּוּ  
וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ: שביעי ה א וְאַחֲרֵי כֵן בָּאוּ מִשָּׁה וְאַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
אֶל־פְּרַעְה כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלַח אֶת־  
עַמִּי וְיַחְגּוּ לִי בַּמַּדְבָּר: ב וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרַעְה מִי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר  
אֲשַׁמְעַ בְּקִלּוֹ לְשַׁלַּח אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יֵדְעַתִּי אֶת־יְהוָה  
וְגַם אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא אֲשַׁלַּח: ג וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים

מקום, הצינה צפורה שנשצלה המילה הוא: (כא) ותגע לרגליו.  
השליכתו לפני רגליו של משה: ותאמר. על צנה: כי חתן  
דמים אתה לי. אתה היית גורם להיות החתן שלי נרצח עליך,  
הורג אישי אתה לי: (כו) וירף. המלאך ממנו. אז. הצינה שעל  
המילה בא להורגו: אמרה חתן דמים למולת. חתני היה נרצח  
על דבר המילה: למולת. על דבר המולות, שם דבר הוא,  
והלמ"ד משמשת כלשון על, כמו ואמר פרעה לגני יִשְׂרָאֵל  
(להלן יד, א). ואונקלוס תרגם דמים, על דם המילה: (ה) ואחר  
באו משה ואהרן וגו'. אבל הזקנים נשמטו אחד אחד מאחר  
משה ואהרן, עד שנשמטו כולם קודם שהגיעו לפלטיין, לפי

להנמס מחצירו מעלים את דבריו שלא יבקש הנלה, אבל הקדוש  
ברוך הוא ישגיב צחכו ואין יכולת להמלט מידו כי אם בשונו  
אליו, לפיכך הוא מורהו ומתרה צו לשונו: (כד) ויהי בדרך  
במלון. משה: ויבקש חמיתו. המלאך למשה, לפי שלא מל את  
אליעזר בנו, ועל שנחשף (נענש) עונש מיתה. תניא אמר רבי  
יוסי, חס וחלילה לא נחשף, אלא אמר אמואל ואזא לדרך, סכנה  
היא לתינוק עד שלשה ימים, אמואל ואשה שלשה ימים, הקדוש  
ברוך הוא צונו לך שצ מִקְרִים (לעיל פסוק יח). ומפני מה נענש  
מיתה, לפי שנחשף צמלון חללה. והיה המלאך נעשה כמין  
נחש, וצולעו מראשו ועד ירכיו, וחוזר וצולעו מרגליו ועד אוחיו

behold, I am going to slay your firstborn son. In the patriarchal society of antiquity, the father represented the law because he was the strongest. Tyranny reigned supreme. A family's oldest son was second only to his father. He had authority over his younger siblings. He could often be cruel and prey on the younger children, using his size to exploit his younger brothers and sisters.

out, behold, I am going to slay your firstborn son.' ”\* 24 Now he was on the way, in an inn, that the Lord met him and sought to put him to death.\* 25 So Zipporah took a sharp stone and severed her son's foreskin and cast it to his feet, and she said, “For you are a bridegroom of blood to me.” 26 So He released him. Then she said, “A bridegroom of blood concerning the circumcision.” 27 The Lord said to Aaron, “Go toward Moses, to the desert.” So he went and met him on the mount of God, and he kissed him. 28 And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord with which he had sent him and all the signs that He had commanded him. 29 So Moses and Aaron went, and they assembled all the elders of the children of Israel. 30 And Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses, and he performed the signs before the eyes of the people. 31 And the people believed, and they heard that the Lord had remembered the children of Israel, and they kneeled and prostrated themselves.

**5**<sup>1</sup> And afterwards, Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, “So said the Lord God of Israel, ‘Send out My people, and let them sacrifice to Me in the desert.’ ” <sup>2</sup> And Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord that I should heed His voice to let Israel out? I do not know the Lord, neither will I let Israel out.” <sup>3</sup> And they said, “The God of the Hebrews

In American youth gangs, young people join together to terrorize adults, although in earlier times the idea of a child robber or murderer was unheard of. The origin of this phenomenon is the parental home in which the oldest child used threats and violence to discipline his siblings. After a while, an organizational conspiracy developed.

Sociologists and historians speak of an ancient patriarchal slave society. The Israelites were not slaves to Pharaoh only, but were subject to the cruelty of every Egyptian who wielded power. The unifying element of that society was fear. One who would punish a nation must destroy their gods—in other words, their philosophy. The slaying of the firstborn destroyed the Egyptians' ability to use force and inspire fear. (*Darosh Darash Yosef*, pp. 143-145)

וַיְהִי בַדֶּרֶךְ בְּמִלּוֹן וַיִּפְגְּשֵׁהוּ יְהוָה וַיִּבְקֶשׁ הַמָּוֶת - Now he was on the way, in an inn, that the Lord met him and sought to put him to death. The ultimate goal of the impending struggle with Pharaoh and with Egypt was to replace the Egyptian conception of the firstborn, which involves the imposition of power and coercion, with the Jewish conception, which is based on sanctity and communal responsibility.

The infant firstborn child is a source of boundless pleasure. The joy that parents experience upon the birth of a first child exceeds the joy that they experience at the birth of the following children. God's claim is more encompassing regarding the firstborn because he is the most precious.

Whatever belongs to God carries *kedushah*. Moses could not become the instrument of this transformation until he had done his duty toward his own firstborn son. (*Darosh Darash Yosef*, pp. 142-144)

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים נִקְרָא עָלֵינוּ - And they said, “The God of the Hebrews has happened upon us.” When Moses invoked אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל two verses earlier, Pharaoh replied that he was not acquainted with this deity. Moses then replied to Pharaoh, referring to אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים. At the burning bush, God commanded Moses to invoke this latter name upon first confronting Pharaoh (3:18). Why then did Moses use אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל in his initial request to Pharaoh?

Nachmanides (5:3, s.v. פְּרִיפְנֵעָנוּ) explains that the term אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים refers to the God that

נִקְרָא עָלֵינוּ גִלְכַּה־נָּא דֶּרֶךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים בַּמִּדְבָּר  
וְנִבְחָה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ פְּוִי־פִגְעָנוּ בַּדֶּבֶר אוֹ בַּחֶרֶב:  
וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְמֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן  
תִּפְרִיעוּ אֶת־הָעָם מִמַּעֲשֵׂיו לָכוּ לִסְבֹּלְתִיכֶם: ה וַיֹּאמֶר  
פֶּרַעַה הַרְרִבִּים עֲתָה עִם־הָאָרֶץ וְהִשְׁבַּתֶּם אֹתָם  
מִסְבֹּלְתָם: ו וַיֵּצֵא פֶּרַעַה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־הַנְּגִשִּׁים בָּעָם

וּמִפְּקִיד פֶּרַעַה בְּיוֹמָא הַהוּא יֵת שְׁלֹטוֹנִין  
וְנִבְחָה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ פְּוִי־פִגְעָנוּ בַּדֶּבֶר אוֹ בַּחֶרֶב:  
וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְמֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן  
תִּפְרִיעוּ אֶת־הָעָם מִמַּעֲשֵׂיו לָכוּ לִסְבֹּלְתִיכֶם: ה וַיֹּאמֶר  
פֶּרַעַה הַרְרִבִּים עֲתָה עִם־הָאָרֶץ וְהִשְׁבַּתֶּם אֹתָם  
מִסְבֹּלְתָם: ו וַיֵּצֵא פֶּרַעַה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־הַנְּגִשִּׁים בָּעָם

שִׂרְאָו לִלְכַּת, וּבִסְמִי נִפְרַע לֵהֶם, וּמִגַּשׁ מֹשֶׁה לַדָּו וְהֵם לֹא יִגָּשׁוּ  
(לֵהֲנִי כִּד, ג) הַחֲזִירִים לִחְמוּרִיָּהֶם: (א) פֶּן יִפְגְּעֵנוּ. פֶּן יִפְגְּעֵן הֵיוּ  
זִרְיָהִם לִוְמֶר, אֲלֵא שְׁחִלְקוּ כְּבוֹד לַמַּלְכוּת. פְּגִיעָה זוֹ לְשׁוֹן  
מִקְרָה מוֹת הוּא: (ד) תִּפְרִיעוּ אֶת הָעָם מִמַּעֲשֵׂיו. תַּזְדִּילוּ  
וּתְרַחֲקוּ אוֹתָם מִמַּלְכֻתָם, שְׁשׁוּמֵעִין לָכֵס וּסְבוּרִים לְנוֹחַ מִן  
הַמַּלְכָּה. וְכֵן פֶּרַעַהוּ אֵל פֶּרַעַר צוֹ (מִשְׁלִי ד, טו) רַחֲקָהוּ. וְכֵן

Abraham had widely promulgated. This reference to God was well known among the nations, including to Pharaoh. אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, on the other hand, was first introduced by God at the burning bush, a name which links God with the Nation of Israel, a link that had never been made before. As a result, Pharaoh was unfamiliar with this name.

Had the elders accompanied Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh, Moses would not have used this name, since it was not to be revealed to the elders until the Torah was received at Mount Sinai. Only after the revelation at Mount Sinai would they be granted permission to refer to God in this way. When Moses realized that only he and Aaron were going to appear before Pharaoh, he thought the absence of the elders gave him license to use the new name of God that had been revealed to him at the burning bush—this was, he surmised, why God had revealed that name to him. However, when Pharaoh indicated that he was unfamiliar with אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, Moses realized that God had commanded him to use the name of אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים so Pharaoh would immediately recognize it. The absence of the elders was not relevant. He therefore changed his next reference to God to אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהֵי as God had originally instructed. (Moriah, 1970)

Now let us go on a three-day journey in the desert and sacrifice to the Lord our God. Why did Moses make this request? If Pharaoh had granted permission for the Israelites to go the desert to sacrifice, God's Name would have been promulgated throughout Egypt. Pharaoh refused this request because he did not recognize the God of Israel, אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. As a result, Pharaoh was beset by the plagues, which forced this recognition upon Pharaoh. (Haggadah Siach Hagrid, p. 55)

lest He strike us with a plague or with the sword. Fate in the life of a people, as in the life of an individual, signifies an existence of compulsion. The individual, against his will, is subjected and subjugated to the national, fate-laden reality. The sense of a fate-laden existence of necessity gives rise to the historical loneliness of the Jew. With the appearance of the

*has happened upon us.\* Now let us go on a three day journey in the desert and sacrifice to the Lord our God,\* lest He strike us with a plague or with the sword.”\* 4 But the king of Egypt said to them, “Why, Moses and Aaron, do you disturb the people from their work? Go to your own labors.” 5 And Pharaoh said, “Behold, now the people of the land are many, and you are stopping them from their labors.” 6 So, on that day, Pharaoh commanded the*



first Jew—our father, Abraham—loneliness entered the world. He was called Abraham the Hebrew, *אַבְרָם הָעִבְרִי*, (Gen. 14:13) for *all the world was to one side, while he was to the other side*, *עִבְרִי אֲחֵר*.

In contrast to fate, destiny signifies a deliberate and conscious existence that the people have chosen out of its own free will. A life of destiny is a life with direction; it is the fruit of cognitive readiness and free choice. The Almighty revealed Himself to Moses not only as *אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים* but also as *אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* (verse 1), who awaits man and invites him to serve Him. Jacob was given the name Israel, *יִשְׂרָאֵל*, by the angel he had beaten, who proclaimed him the victor over his fate, a fate which Jacob had now elevated to destiny. (*Kol Dodi Dofek*, pp. 80-82, 90-91)

The Midrash states that when he first heard the unfamiliar name *אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* from Moses, Pharaoh entered his palace and reviewed each nation and its god and told Moses that he could not find *אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* among them. Pharaoh was only familiar with *אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים*, the God of the subjugated, fate-laden Hebrews. He had not yet encountered the God of a nation freely choosing their destiny.

Pharaoh, in effect, asked Moses: Do the Israelites in my country serve *אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* in whose name you are now prophesying? Do they know this God and make their existence subservient to Him? Do the Hebrew taskmasters and the lowly, degraded slaves recognize the authority of *אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל*? Tell me, Moses and Aaron, does *אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* dwell in the tents of your brothers, who now thirst for the pleasures of this world? Does God's presence hover over their private lives? Has God bestowed the glory of Godliness on their repulsive existence?

Moses and Aaron agreed with Pharaoh; they knew well the terrible tragedy of the nadir experienced by the Israelites, their lowliness and their spiritual degradation. Pharaoh was correct in asserting that the Jews of Egypt did not thirst and yearn for *אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל*. Moses and Aaron, therefore, did not continue prophesying in the name of *אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל*.

The Israelites, however, do relate to the name *אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים*. They still serve *אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים*, representing fate. Although Israel rebelled against *אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* and chased Him away, it is impossible to rebel against *אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים*. To disregard the commands of *אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים* will, in the end, result in calamity and destruction, *with a plague or with the sword*.

Moses and Aaron, in effect, replied to Pharaoh: were it not for *אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים*, you could not have decreed your wicked edicts against Israel, you could not have bathed in the blood of their children, and could not have oppressed them via brick and mortar. Were it not for the wrath of *אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים*, the Israelites would enjoy a this-worldly life, distracted from their destiny and their great obligations. Were it not for *אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים*, you could not have descended to the level of a bloodthirsty animal. Were it not for *אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים*, you would act as an enlightened, cultured and ethical monarch. Were it not for the wrath of *אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים*, the children of Israel would enjoy the goodness of this land and its blessings. *אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים* decreed that their assimilation in Egyptian society would not be realized, the desire to be absorbed in it not fulfilled. If the Hebrews forget *אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל*, *אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים* will indeed visit them *with a plague or with the sword*. (*Divrei Harav*, pp. 58-59)

דַּעֲמָא וְיֵת סְרֻכְהִי לַמִּימְרָ: ז' לֹא תוֹסֶפוּ  
לַמִּיתָן תִּבְנֶא לַעֲמָא לַמִּרְמִי לִבְנִי כְּמַתְמְלִי  
וּמִדְקָדְמוּהִי אֲנֹן יִחְבֹּן וַיִּגְבֹּן לַחֹן תִּבְנֶא:  
ח וְיֵת סָכּוּם לִבְנֵי דִי אֲנֹן עֲבָדִין מִתְמְלִי  
וּמִדְקָדְמוּהִי תִמְנֹן עֲלֵיהוֹן לֹא תִמְנֵנוּן מִינִיה  
אַרִי בִּשְׁלֵטִין אֲנֹן עַל כֵּן אֲנֹן צֻחִין לַמִּימְרָ  
נִיּוּל נִדְבַח קָדָם אֱלֹהֵנָּה: ט תִּתְקַף פִּלְחָנָא עַל  
גְּבִרָא וַיִּתְעַסְקוּן בֵּהּ וְלֹא יִתְעַסְקוּן בְּפִתְגָמִין  
בִּשְׁלִין: י וּנְפִקוּ שְׁלֹטִין עֲמָא וְסְרֻכְהִי וְאִמְרוּ  
לַעֲמָא לַמִּימְרָ כְּדָנָן אִמְרָ פִּרְעָה לִית אָנָּה  
יִתֵּב לִכּוֹן תִּבְנֶא: יא אֲתוֹן אֲזִילוּ סִיבֵי לִכּוֹן  
תִּבְנֶא מֵאַתֵּר דְּתִשְׁכְּחוּן אַרִי לֹא יִתְמַנֵּעַ  
מִפִּלְחָנִכוֹן מִדַּעֲס: יב וְאַתְבַּדַּר עֲמָא בְּכָל  
אַרְעָא דְּמַצָּרִים לִגְבָּא גִילִי לַתִּבְנֶא:  
יג וּשְׁלֹטֹנָא דְּחָקוֹן לַמִּימְרָ אִשְׁלִימוּ  
עוֹבְדֵיכֹן פִּתְגָם יוֹם בְּיוֹמִיה כְּמָא דְּהוּיֹתוֹן  
עֲבָדוֹן כִּד אֲתִיתֵּב לִכּוֹן תִּבְנֶא: ד וְלֹקוּ סְרָכִי  
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל דִּי מִנִּיא עֲלֵיהוֹן שְׁלֹטִין פִּרְעָה  
לַמִּימְרָ מָא דִּין לֹא אִשְׁלִמְתוֹן גִּזְרִתְכוֹן  
לַמִּרְמִי (לִבְנִי) כְּמַתְמְלִי וּמִדְקָדְמוּהִי אַף  
תְּמִלִי אַף יוֹמָא דִּין: טו וְאַתֹּן סְרָכִי בְּנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל וְצֻחוֹ (קָדָם) לְפִרְעָה לַמִּימְרָ לְמָא  
תַּעֲבַד כְּדִין לְעִבְדֵּי: טז תִּבְנֶא לֹא מִתְחֵיב  
לְעִבְדֵּי וּלְבִנָּא אִמְרוּן לָנָּה עֲבִידוּ וְהָא  
עֲבָדֵי לָקוּ וְחָסֹן עֲלֵיהוֹן עֲמָא: יז וְאִמְרָ  
בִּשְׁלֵטִין אֲתוֹן בִּשְׁלֵטִין עַל כֵּן אֲתוֹן אִמְרוּן נִיּוּל  
נִדְבַח קָדָם יי: יח וְכֵּן אֲזִילוּ פִלְחוּ וּתִבְנֶא לֹא

(1) הדגשים: מזריים היו, והשומרים היו ישראליים, הנוגס מממונה על כמה שומרים, והשומר ממונה לרדות צעוסי המלאכה: (1) תבן. אשטובל"א, היו גובלין אותו עם הטוט: לרביים. טיוול"ש צע"ו, שעושים מטוט ומינצין אותן צמח, יווש ששורפין אותן צכצכן: כתמול שלשים. כאשר הייתם עושים עד הנה: וקיששו ולקטו: (2) ואת מתכנת הרביים. כקוס חשבון הלצנים שהיה כל אחד עושה ליום כשהיה החבן מתמן להם, אותו קוס חשימו עליהם גם עמה, למען חכנד העבודה עליהם: כי גרפים. מן העבודה הם, לכד לצם פונה

taskmasters of the people and their officers, saying, 7 "You shall not continue to give stubble to the people to make the bricks like yesterday and the day before yesterday. Let them go and gather stubble for themselves. 8 But the number of bricks they have been making yesterday and the day before yesterday you shall impose upon them; you shall not reduce it, for they are lax. Therefore they cry out, saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' 9 Let the labor fall heavy upon the men and let them work at it, and let them not talk about false matters." 10 So the taskmasters of the people and their officers came out and spoke to the people, saying, "So said Pharaoh, 'I am not giving you stubble. 11 You go take for yourselves stubble from wherever you find [it], because nothing will be reduced from your work.' " 12 So the people scattered throughout the entire land of Egypt, to gather a gleaning for stubble. 13 And the taskmasters were pressing [them], saying, "Finish your work, the requirement of each day in its day, just as when there was stubble." 14 And the officers of the children of Israel whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had appointed over them were beaten, saying, "Why have you not completed your quota to make bricks like the day before yesterday, neither yesterday nor today?" 15 So the officers of the children of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh, saying, "Why do you do this to your servants? 16 Stubble is not given to your servants, but they tell us, 'Make bricks,' and behold, your servants are beaten, and your people are sinning." 17 But he said, "You are lax, just lax. Therefore, you say, 'Let us go, let us sacrifice to the Lord.'"

על חזריהם מלדחקם, וכשהיו משלימין הלצנים לנוגשים שהם מזריים והיה חסר מן הסכום היו מלקין אותם על שלא דחקו את עושי המלאכה, לפיכך זכו אותם שוטרים להיות סנהדרין, ונאלצו מן הרוח אשר על משה והושם עליהם, שנאמר (במדבר יא, טו) אֶסְפְּהָ לִי שְׂבָעִים אִישׁ מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, מאותן שידעת הטובה שעשו צמאים כי הם זקני העם ושוטרי: ויבן שוטרי בני ישראל אשר שמו נגשי פרעה. אותם לשוטרים עליהם: לאמר מדוע וגו'. למה ויכו, שהיו אומרים להם מדוע לא כליתם גם תמול גם היום חק הקצוב עליכם ללבוש [כתמול שלשם] כתמול השלישי שהוא יום שלפני אתמול והוא היה צהיית התבן נתן להם: ויכו. לשון ויפגעו, הוכו מיד אחריהם. הנוגשים הכוס: (טו) ולבנים אומרים לנו עשו. הנוגשים אומרים לנו עשו לצנים כמנין הראשון: וחטאת עמך. אילו היה נקוד פתח הייתי אומר שהוא דבוק, ודבר זה חטאת עמך הוא, עכשיו שהוא קמץ שם דבר הוא, וכך פירוש, ודבר זה מציא חטאת על עמך, כאלו כחוצו וקטאת לעמך, כמו קבצאָה צִית לָחֶם (רות א, יט) שהוא כמו לצית לחם, וכן הרבה: (יד) ותוכן לבנים. חשבון הלצנים, וכן אֶת הַקֶּסֶף הַמְתָּכָן

שָׁעָה (בראשית ד, ז), ולפרש אל ישעו אל יפנו, שאם כן היה לו לכתוב ואל ישעו אל דברי שקר, או לדברי שקר, כי כן גזרת כולם. יִשְׁעָה הָאֵדָם על עֲשָׂהוּ (ישעיה י, י), וְלֹא שָׁעוּ עַל קְדוּשָׁת יִשְׂרָאֵל (שם לא, ח), וְלֹא יִשְׁעָה אֶל הַמִּצְוֹת (שם י, ח). ולא מנאחי שמוש של צי"ת סמוכה לאחריהם, אבל אחר לשון דבור, כמתעסק לדבר דבר, נופל לשון שמוש צי"ת, כגון הַנְדָּבָרִים בָּךְ (יחזקאל לג, ז), וְהַדָּבָר מִיָּדִים וְהַדָּבָר מִמֶּנֶּה (במדבר יב, ח), הַמִּלְאָה הַדָּבָר בִּי (זכריה ד, ח), לְדָבָר בָּסִי (דברים יא, יט), וְהַדָּבָר בְּעֵדֶיךָ (תהלים קיט, מו), אף כאן אל ישעו דברי שקר אל יהיו נדברים דברי שוא והצאי: (יא) אתם לכו קחו לכם תבן. ואריכים אתם לילך צוריות: כי אין נגרע דבר. מכל סכום לצנים שהייתם עושים ליום צהיית התבן נתן לכם מוזמן מציית המלך: (יג) לקשש קש לתבן. לאסוף חסיפה, ללקוט לקט לזורך תבן הטיט: קש. לשון לקוט, על שם שדבר המתפור הוא וצריך לקוששו קריי קש בשאר מקומות: (יג) אצים. דוחקים: דבר יום ביומו. חשבון של כל יום כלו ציומו, כאשר עשיתם צהיית התבן מוכן: (יד) ויכו שוטרי בני ישראל. השוטרים ישראלים היו וחסים



יִתְּנֵנוּ: יֵט וִירָאוּ שׁוֹטְרֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֹתָם בְּרַע לֵאמֹר  
לֹא־תִגְרְעוּ מִלְּבַנֵּיכֶם דְּבַר־יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ: כ וַיִּפְגְּעוּ אֶת־  
מֹשֶׁה וְאֶת־אַהֲרֹן נֹצְבִים לִקְרַאתָם בְּצִאתָם מֵאֶת  
פְּרָעָה: כא וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֱלֹהִים יֵרָא יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם וַיִּשְׁפֹּט  
אֲשֶׁר הִבְאִשְׁתֶּם אֶת־רִיחָנוּ בְּעֵינֵי פְרָעָה וּבְעֵינֵי  
עַבְדָּיו לְתַת־חֶרֶב בְּיָדָם לְהַרְגֵנוּ: מפטיר כב וַיֵּשֶׁב מֹשֶׁה  
אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי לְמָה הִרְעַתָּה לְעַם הַזֶּה לְמָה  
זֶה שַׁלַּחְתָּנִי: כג וּמֵאֲזֵי בָאתִי אֶל־פְּרָעָה לְדַבֵּר בְּשִׁמְךָ  
הִרַע לְעַם הַזֶּה וְהֵצֵל לֹא־הֵצַלְתָּ אֶת־עַמְּךָ: ו א וַיֹּאמֶר  
יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה עֲתָה תֵרְאֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לְפְרָעָה כִּי  
בְיַד חֲזָקָה יִשְׁלַחֵם וּבְיַד חֲזָקָה יִגְרֹשֶׁם מֵאֶרְצוֹ: ס ס

יִתְּנֵהוּ לָכֵן וּסְכּוּם לִבְנֵי־אֵת תִּתְּנֵנוּ: יט וְחֹזֵן  
סְרִכֵּי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִתְּנוּ בְּבִישׁ לְמִימֶר לֹא  
תִמְנְעוּן מִלְּבַנֵּיכֶן פְּתָנָם יוֹם בְּיוֹמֵיהָ:  
כ וַעֲרֵעוּ יֵת מֹשֶׁה וְיֵת אַהֲרֹן קִנְיֹן  
לְקַדְמוֹתֵהוּן בְּמִפְקֵהוּן מִקֶּדֶם פְּרָעָה:  
כא וַאֲמָרוּ לְהוּן יִתְּנֵלִי יי עֲלִיכֹן וְיִתְּפָרַע דִּי  
אַבְאִשְׁתֵּנוּ יֵת רִיחָנָא בְּעֵינֵי פְרָעָה וּבְעֵינֵי  
עַבְדֵּיהּ לְמַתָּן חֶרֶבָא בְּיַדֵּיהוּן לְקַטְלוֹתֵנָא:  
כב וְתֵב מֹשֶׁה קָדָם יי וַאֲמָר יי לְמָא  
אַבְאִשְׁתָּא לְעַמָּא הַדִּין וְלְמָא דְגָן שַׁלַּחְתָּנִי:  
כג וּמַעֲדָן עֲלִית לְוֵת פְּרָעָה לְמַלְלָא בְּשִׁמְךָ  
אַבְאִשׁ לְעַמָּא הַדִּין וְשׁוּבָא לֹא שׁוּבָתָא יֵת  
עַמְךָ: א וַאֲמָר יי לְמֹשֶׁה קָעֵן תִּחְזִי דְאֶעֱבֹד  
לְפְרָעָה אֲרִי בִידָא תְקִיפָא יִשְׁלַחֵנוּ וּבִידָא  
תְקִיפָא יִתְרַכְנוּן מֵאֶרְעֵיהָ:

המונחאות אותם צהכצידים העצודה עליהם לאמר לא תגרעו  
וגו': (כ) ויפגעו. אנשים מישראל את משה ואת אהרן וגו'.  
ורצותינו דרשו כל נאים ונצבים דתן ואצרים היו, שנאמר צהם

(מלכים ז יב, יז) המנוי, כמו שאמר צענין (שם שם, יא) וְיָלְכוּ  
וַיִּמְנוּ אֶת הַכֶּסֶף: (יט) ויראו שוטרי בני ישראל. את  
חצריהם הנרדפים על ידם: ברע. ראו אותם צרעה וצרה

18 And now, go and work, but you will not be given stubble. Nevertheless, the [same] number of bricks you must give.” 19 The officers of the children of Israel saw them in distress, saying, “Do not reduce [the number] of your bricks, the requirement of each day in its day.” 20 They met Moses and Aaron standing before them when they came out from Pharaoh’s presence. 21 And they said to them, “May the Lord look upon you and judge, for you have brought us into foul odor in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of his servants, to place a sword into their hand[s] to kill us.” 22 So Moses returned to the Lord and said, “O Lord! Why have You harmed this people? Why have You sent me? 23 Since I have come to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has harmed this people, and You have not saved Your people.”

**6**1 And the Lord said to Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh, for with a mighty hand he will send them out, and with a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land.”

תראה, העשוי לפרעה תראה ולא העשוי למלכי שצעה אומות כשאציאם לארץ: כי ביד חזקה ישלחם. מפני ידי החזקה שתחזק על פרעה ישלחם: וביד חזקה יגרשם מארצו. על כרחם של ישראל יגרשם ולא יספיקו לעשות להם נדב. וכן הוא אומר (להלן יג, לג) וְפָתַח מִצְרַיִם עַל הָעָם לְמַהֵר לְשַׁלְּחָם וְגו': חסלת פרשת שמות

יֵצְאוּ נִפְצִים (במדבר טו, כז): למה הרעתה לעם הזה. ואם תאמר מה איכפת לך, קובל אני על ששלחתני: (כג) הרע. לשון הפעיל הוא, הרצה רעה עליהם. ותרגמו אצאיש: (ה) עתה תראה וגו'. הרהרת על מדותי, לא כאצרהם שאמרתי לו כי יֵצְתָק יִקְרָא לְךָ זֶרַע (בראשית כה, יג) ואחר כך אמרתי לו הֵעֵלֵהוּ לְעוֹלָה (שם כב, ג) ולא הרהר אחרי מדותי. לפיכך עתה