

THE ROHR FAMILY EDITION

חומש קורן מקראות הדורות
THE KOREN MIKRAOT HADOROT

THE ZAHAVA AND MOSHAEL STRAUS EDITION OF PARASHAT SHEMOT

פרשת שמות עם מפרשים
PARASHAT SHEMOT WITH COMMENTARIES



TORAH TRANSLATION BY
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The Rohr Family Edition of
The Koren Mikraot HaDorot
pays tribute to the memory of

Mr. Sami Rohr ז"ל
ר' שמואל ב"ר יהושע אליהו ז"ל

who served his Maker with joy
and whose far-reaching vision, warm open hand, love of Torah,
and love for every Jew were catalysts for the revival and growth of
vibrant Jewish life in the former Soviet Union
and in countless communities the world over

and to the memory of his beloved wife

Mrs. Charlotte Rohr (née Kastner) ע"ה
שרה בת ר' יקותיאל יהודה ע"ה

who survived the fires of the Shoah to become
the elegant and gracious matriarch,
first in Colombia and later in the United States,
of three generations of a family
nurtured by her love and unstinting devotion.
She found grace in the eyes of all those whose lives she touched.

Together they merited to see all their children
build lives enriched by faithful commitment
to the spreading of Torah and *Ahavat Yisrael*.

Dedicated with love by
The Rohr Family
NEW YORK, USA

עֲטֹרַת זְקֵנִים בְּנֵי בָנִים
(משלי יז, ו)

*Grandchildren
are the crowning glory of the aged
(Proverbs 17:6)*

May the learning and traditions of our people
be strengthened by our future generations.
In honor of our wonderful grandchildren

Zahava and Moshael Straus

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FOR THE COMPLETE RASHI AND HAFTARAH
TURN TO THE OTHER END OF THIS VOLUME.

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

The genius of Jewish commentary on the Torah is one of huge and critical import. Jewish life and law for millennia have been directed by our interpretations of the Torah, and each generation has looked to its rabbinic leadership for a deeper understanding of its teachings, its laws, its stories.

For centuries, *Mikraot Gedolot* have been a core part of understanding the H̄umash; the words of Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Ramban, Rashbam, Ralbag, and other classic commentators illuminate and help us understand the Torah. But traditional editions of *Mikraot Gedolot* present only a slice in time and a small selection of the corpus of Jewish commentators. Almost every generation has produced rabbinic scholars who speak to their times, from Philo and Onkelos two thousand years ago, to Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Rabbi Aharon Kotler, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and Nehama Leibowitz in ours.

The Koren Mikraot HaDorot – Scriptures or Interpretations for the Generations – brings two millennia of Torah commentary into the hands and homes of Jews around the world. Readers will be able not only to encounter the classic commentators, but to gain a much broader sense of the issues that scholars grappled with in their time and the inspiration they drew from the ancient texts. We see, for example, how Philo speaks to an assimilating Greek Jewish audience in first-century Alexandria, and how similar yet different it is from Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's approach to an equally assimilating nineteenth-century German readership; how the perspectives of Rabbi Soloveitchik and Rabbi Kotler differ in a post-Holocaust world; how Rav Se'adya Gaon interpreted the Torah for the Jews of Babylonia. It is an exciting journey through Jewish history via the unchanging words of the Torah.

The text of the Torah features the exceptional new translation of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, together with the celebrated and meticulously accurate Koren Hebrew text. Of course, with the exception of Rashi – for whom we present an entirely new translation in full – the commentaries are selected. We offer this anthology not to limit our reader's exploration but rather as a gateway for further learning of Torah and its commentaries on a broader and deeper level than space here permits. We discuss below how to use this book.

We must thank **Pamela and George Rohr** of New York, who recognized the unique value of *The Koren Mikraot HaDorot* and its ability to communicate historical breadth and context to the reader. For my colleagues here at Koren, we thank you; for the many generations of users who will find this a continuing source of new learning, we are forever in your debt.

We also are indebted to **Zahava and Moshael Straus**, true leaders of this Jewish generation in so many fields, who have invested not only in *Parashat Shemot* but the entire book of Shemot. Together, we were thus able to launch this innovative and unique project.

We are honored to acknowledge and thank **Debra and David Magerman**, whose support for the Koren Humash with Rabbi Sacks's exemplary translation and commentary laid the foundation for the core English text of this work.

Finally, I must personally thank **Rabbi Marvin Hier**, with whom I had a special breakfast some years ago at the King David Hotel. During the meal, he raised the problem that so few people knew the writings of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Rabbi Aharon Kotler on the Torah; and I, who had just read some of Philo's work, had the same reaction. From that conversation came the seed for this project.

HOW TO USE THE KOREN MIKRAOT HADOROT

The Koren Mikraot HaDorot will be a fifty-five-volume edition of the Humash (one for each *parasha* plus a companion volume). Each of the fifty-four volumes of the *parashot* can be read from right to left (Hebrew opening side), and left to right (English opening side).

Opening from the Hebrew side offers:

- the full Torah text, the translation of Rabbi Sacks, and the full commentary of Rashi in both Hebrew and the new English translation
- all *haftarot* associated with the *parasha* of the volume, including Rosh Hodesh and special readings, both in Hebrew and English

Opening from the English side presents four sections:

- ▶ **THE TIME OF THE SAGES** – includes commentaries from the Second Temple period and the talmudic period
- ▶ **THE CLASSIC COMMENTATORS** – quotes selected explanations by Rashi as well as most of the commentators found in traditional *Mikraot Gedolot*
- ▶ **CONFRONTING MODERNITY** – selects commentaries from the eighteenth century to the close of the twentieth century
- ▶ **THE BIBLICAL IMAGINATION** – features essays surveying some of the broader conceptual ideas as a supplement to the linear, text-based commentary

The first three of these sections each feature the relevant verses, in Hebrew and English, on the page alongside their respective commentaries, in chronological order, providing the reader with a single window onto the text without excessive page turning.

In addition to being a valuable resource in a Jewish home or synagogue library, we conceived of these volumes as a weekly accompaniment in the synagogue. There is scope for the reader to study each *parasha* on a weekly basis in preparation for the reading on Shabbat. One may select a particular group of commentators for study that week, or perhaps alternate between ancient and modern viewpoints. Some readers may choose to delve into the text through verse-by-verse interpretation, while others may prefer a conceptual perspective on the *parasha* as a whole. The broad array of options for learning means this is a series which can be returned to year after year, always presenting new insights and new approaches to understanding the text.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The creation of this book was possible only thanks to the small but exceptional team here at Koren Jerusalem. We are grateful to:

- ▶ Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, שליט"א, who conceptualized the structure of the project and provides both moral and halakhic leadership at Koren
- ▶ Rabbi Shai Finkelstein, whose encyclopedic knowledge of Torah and its interpreters is equaled only by his community leadership, formerly in Memphis and today in Jerusalem
- ▶ Rabbi Yedidya Naveh, whose knowledge, organizational skills, and superb leadership brought the disparate elements together
- ▶ Rabbi Jonathan Mishkin, the principal translator of the commentaries and all of the Rashi, who crafted a fluent, accurate, and eloquent English translation

Our design, editing, typesetting, and proofreading staff, including Tani Bayer, Esther Be'er, Debbie Ismailoff, Estie Dishon, and Carolyn Budow Ben David, enabled an attractive, user-friendly, and accurate edition of these works.

“One silver basin” (Numbers 7:13) was brought as a symbol of the Torah, which has been likened to wine, as the verse states: “And drink of the wine which I have mingled” (Proverbs 9:5). Because it is customary to drink wine in a basin – as we see in the verse “that drink wine in basins” (Amos 6:6) – he therefore brought a basin. “Of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary” (Numbers 7:13). Why? Because just as the numerical value of “wine” [*yayin*] is seventy, so there are seventy modes of expounding the Torah. (Bemidbar Rabba 13:16)

Each generation produces exceptional rabbinic, intellectual leadership. It has been our purpose to enable all Jews to taste the wine of those generations, in the hope of expanding the breadth and depth of their knowledge. Torah is our greatest treasure, and we need the wisdom of those generations to better understand this bountiful gift from God. We hope that we at Koren can deepen that understanding for all who seek it.

Matthew Miller, Publisher
Jerusalem, 5780 (2019)

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Over the course of millennia, the Jewish people have watched while the surrounding society and its values have changed unceasingly. For the Jews, the steadfast response to an evolving world has always been the study of Torah, specifically engagement with the weekly *parasha*. Devotees of Jewish learning have always looked to the weekly Torah portion for spiritual and intellectual guidance through life's challenges. And in every generation, commentaries on the *Humash* have debated the precise interpretation of the verses therein. These scholars have continuously asked what message God is trying to convey to Israel and the world through the Torah's narratives and laws. Their explanations have struggled to identify the correct ways to apply its lessons to our daily lives.

Throughout, all these authors have approached the Torah text from their own unique perspectives, shaped in no small measure by the eras and environments they lived in. Naturally, the pantheon of commentaries present widely different styles in their writings. Occasionally the commentators will subject a particular verse to piercing scrutiny as a self-contained unit. At other times they present interpretations that seem to stray from the straightforward meaning of the text. Ultimately, all commentaries demand that a verse provide readers with theological meaning and direction for communal and social life.

Recognition of the wisdom embedded in the vast literature of commentary on the Torah spanning the various eras of Jewish history planted the seeds of the project whose fruit you now hold. We have called this publication *Mikraot HaDorot* – Readings of the Generations. This window into the world of Torah commentaries is not simply an upgrade of the classical *Mikraot Gedolot* collections, which give readers merely a handful of familiar

interpretations. *The Koren Mikraot HaDorot* instead presents a plethora of exegetical contributions, with more than forty scholars spanning Jewish teachings from the past two thousand years represented on its pages.

Each volume of the *Koren Mikraot HaDorot* series can be opened from both the right (Hebrew) side and left (English) side. The Hebrew opening side includes the Hebrew and a new English text of the *parasha*, translated by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, with a full, new translation of Rashi and the *haftarot*. The English opening side contains the bulk of the commentaries, and is divided into four parts: The first, **THE TIME OF THE SAGES**, comprises commentaries from antiquity – ranging from Philo to the Yalkut Shimoni. These figures lived mainly in the land of Israel, Egypt, and Babylonia. The second, **THE CLASSIC COMMENTATORS**, contains interpretations from the Middle Ages – starting from Rav Se'adya Gaon and Rashi and continuing through time to the work of Rabbi Shlomo Efrayim of Luntschitz, author of the *Keli Yakar*. The authors included here represent the rich traditions of both Sephardic (Spanish and North African) and Ashkenazic (central and eastern European) schools of exegesis. The third section, **CONFRONTING MODERNITY**, offers the work of both Old World and New World scholars who lived between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. Before each of these three sections we include a time line that specifies the chronological relationships between the commentators and the places they lived.

In the final section, **THE BIBLICAL IMAGINATION**, we provide three in-depth investigations of particular ideas through the writings of the various commentaries. There are several goals to these essays. First, we aim to reveal common threads weaving across the generations of Torah scholarship. Second, we hope to illustrate how the various authors were influenced by their lives and times, and that the lessons they transmitted to their communities reflected their environments. Finally, each essay highlights for the reader some central issues that the commentaries have grappled with. We trust that this tool will facilitate the reader's understanding of the words of the commentaries themselves.

Three principles have governed the decision making in our work on *The Koren Mikraot HaDorot*:

- Chronological order: We have striven to sketch out the historical development of Torah exegesis, an enterprise that has occupied innumerable communities of Jews in far-flung lands for centuries.

- Economy of selection: In compiling the excerpts used in this work, we have gone through the authors' works and isolated those sections which most directly address the particular question, issue, or difficulty that confronted the scholar.
- Objectivity of presentation: This book presents ideas of the commentaries authentically, never censoring them or smoothing them over in light of our own positions or perspectives. We always strove to faithfully transmit the legal, conceptual, social, and ethical messages of the commentators.

The modern world constantly challenges us as individuals, as a society, and as communal leaders, teachers, and parents. The values and culture of the society that surrounds us force thinking Jews to seriously consider and reconsider their ideas and priorities on a regular basis as we struggle to find the correct path through life. Furthermore, we constantly must ask ourselves what teachings we wish to transmit to future generations. It is our hope that the *Koren Mikraot HaDorot* project will help guide its readers as they grapple with these very real problems. The world of Torah commentary is wide and deep beyond measure. It contains innumerable answers to the questions that face the individual, the family, the generation, and indeed all of humanity.

Rabbi Shai Finkelstein, Editor-in-Chief
Jerusalem, 5780 (2019)

A NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

The terse writing style prevalent in Jewish scholarship over most of history can be difficult for the modern reader to decipher. Since our goal in the *Koren Mikraot HaDorot* series is to make thousands of years of Torah commentary accessible to a modern, English-speaking audience, we have opted for a relatively loose translation style that accurately presents the content of the Hebrew commentary while not necessarily mirroring its exact syntax. We have also resorted occasionally to paraphrase in instances where a literal translation would be opaque in English. As any student of Torah exegesis will recognize, draconian insistence on a word-for-word translation would result in an English text that was unreadable and that preserved neither the clarity nor the majesty of the original Hebrew.

Many of the commentaries' discussions focus on the meanings of words and phrases that are ambiguous in the Hebrew text of the *parasha*. The beautiful new translation of the Torah by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks that we include here often dispels these ambiguities in the interest of clarity, necessarily coming down on one side or the other of a disagreement between commentators. The reader of the commentaries should therefore view the Torah translation presented here as one possible reading of the often-cryptic Hebrew original. In a similar vein, the significance of certain interpretations may seem unclear, or their points obvious, until one encounters another commentary with a starkly different read of the same verse. These contrasts, and the realization that themes and meanings we thought to be clear are actually ambiguous and multifaceted, are the essence of *The Koren Mikraot HaDorot*.

We have, as far as possible, allowed each text to speak for itself, and have left editorial comments to a minimum. Nevertheless, the commentaries

often assume the reader's knowledge of other biblical episodes, midrashim, or Hebrew grammar beyond what might be expected from the English-speaking public today. To ensure clarity, we have therefore interpolated brief editor's notes where we deemed it necessary, setting them off from the original text in square brackets.

Throughout Jewish history, the text of the Tanakh has been viewed as the apogee of the Hebrew language. For many commentators, especially those of the Middle Ages, it served as a fountain of language from which they drew numerous idioms and phrases. The result is that the Hebrew text of many commentaries is shot through with snippets of biblical prose or poetry to such an extent that almost every sentence can be viewed as a quote or allusion. Marking and citing all of these would make for a cluttered translation and would hinder rather than enhance the reader's understanding. We have therefore opted to cite only those quotes which are brought by the author as explicit evidence to further the point being made, and not those that supply only a turn of phrase.

The Hebrew side of this volume contains a complete and unabridged translation of Rashi's commentary. For those who wish to follow the *parasha* on the English side of the book, we have also reprinted many of Rashi's explanations alongside those of the other classic commentators. This will allow the reader to compare Rashi's interpretation to those of Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, and others, as well as appreciate how Rashi's commentary often serves to define the issues that will be addressed by later exegetes.

The text of the commentaries is of course abridged. We have not included ellipses to mark every point where text has been omitted, to maintain a clutter-free translation. However, we have included ellipses at points where the subject of discussion would otherwise appear to have changed abruptly and inexplicably, to save the reader confusion. We have also not adhered strictly to the original heading, or *s.v.* (*dibbur hamat-hil*) of every text, changing it in instances where it would help to focus the reader on those words that are the actual subject of discussion, and adding it to texts that did not originally have it.

Most of the commentaries that we quote in this series were originally organized by chapter and verse. Therefore, anyone who wishes to consult the original Hebrew text of a given commentary can simply open to the verse in question. However, not all sources are organized this way. The midrashim in particular are often ordered loosely; an important interpretation of a verse in Exodus might be found in a midrash on Deuteronomy. For the reader's convenience in locating the original Hebrew source, we have

provided citations for those works not organized sequentially, as well as for commentaries originally composed on verses other than the one under discussion. These citations can be found outside of the final punctuation at the end of the excerpt in question.

Our translation has generally relied upon the Hebrew text found in the Bar-Ilan Responsa Project and the online compendium AlHatorah.org, as well as the standard printed editions of commentaries not found in either of these. The Responsa Project contains more than one edition of several midrashim (Midrash Tanḥuma, Midrash Rabba, and Avot DeRabbi Natan). For these works, our citations should be understood as referring to the standard editions published in Vilna and Warsaw unless otherwise indicated. Aside from this, please note:

- Excerpts from Ibn Ezra are almost always taken from his Long Commentary on Exodus, and we have marked those instances where we quote from his Short Commentary.
- Passages from Philo are quoted with permission from *Torah from Alexandria: Philo as a Biblical Commentator*, edited by Rabbi Michael Leo Samuel (New York: Kodesh Press, 2015).
- Selected commentaries of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik are printed with permission from *Chumash Mesoras HaRav*, edited by Dr. Arnold Lustiger (New York: OU Press, 2017).
- The commentaries of the Lubavitcher Rebbe are quoted from *The Torah, with an Interpolated Translation and Commentary Based on the Works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe*, edited by Rabbi Chaim Nochum Cunin and Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky (New York: Kehot Publication Society, 2017).
- The commentaries of Nehama Leibowitz are translated, with generous permission, from the Hebrew *Iyyunim HaDashim BeSefer Shemot* (14th edition), published by the World Zionist Organization Department for Torah Education and Culture in the Diaspora.

While we have thus done our best to aid the reader in finding and consulting the original Hebrew text of the commentaries we have translated, we emphasize that this is not a critical edition, and the scope and readership of the series do not permit us to fully cite every allusion and internal reference that authors make to midrashim and other commentaries. Still, we have made a supreme effort to provide citations of talmudic passages, and of course biblical verses, quoted or referred to in the material included here.

This volume is the result of the prodigious and protracted efforts of many talented and learned individuals. I would like to extend a special thanks to **Rabbis Dov Karoll, David Strauss, and Eliezer Kwass**, all of whom contributed translations for this book, complementing the greater part of the work performed by the articulate and indefatigable Rabbi Jonathan Mishkin.

Yedidya Naveh, Managing Editor
Jerusalem, 5780 (2019)

1ST CENTURY BCE

1ST CENTURY CE

2ND CENTURY

3RD CENTURY

4TH CENTURY

5TH CENTURY

6TH CENTURY

7TH CENTURY

8TH CENTURY

9TH CENTURY

10TH CENTURY

11TH CENTURY

12TH CENTURY

13TH CENTURY

PHILO, 25 BCE – 50 CE

TARGUM ONKELOS, 35 – 120

TARGUM YERUSHALMI, 3RD – 4TH CENTURY

HALAKHIC MIDRASHIM
(MEKHILTA, SIFRA, SIFREI)

TALMUD YERUSHALMI, 3RD – 5TH CENTURY

TALMUD BAVLI, 3RD – 6TH CENTURY

MIDRASH TANḤUMA, 5TH CENTURY

MIDRASH RABBA, 5TH – 12TH CENTURY

AVOT DERABBI NATAN, 7TH – 9TH CENTURY

MIDRASH MISHLEI, 7TH – 11TH CENTURY

MIDRASH LEKAḤ TOV, 11TH CENTURY

MIDRASH SEKHEL TOV, 1139

MIDRASH AGGADA, 12TH – 13TH CENTURY

YALKUT SHIMONI, 13TH CENTURY

פרשת שמות
PARASHAT SHEMOT

THE **TIME**
OF THE **SAGES**

א וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּאִים מִצְרֵימָה אֶת יַעֲקֹב אִישׁ אֶ
 בְּ וּבֵיתוֹ בָּאוּ: רְאוּבֵן שְׁמֵעוֹן לֵוִי וַיהוּדָה: יִשָּׁשׁכָר זְבוּלֹן
 ג וּבְנֵימֶן: דָּן וְנַפְתָּלִי גַד וְאָשֵׁר: וַיְהִי כָּל־נַפְשׁ יִצְחָק יָרְדְּ-יַעֲקֹב

CHAPTER 1, VERSE 1

PHILO

הַבָּאִים מִצְרֵימָה – *Who came to Egypt*: The sons of Yisrael were immigrants who journeyed to Egypt to seek food for their families because of a famine that affected all the northern countries of the Mesopotamia region. Soon they received sanctuary, and in return they all pledged allegiance to the king because of

the pity he and the inhabitants felt for them in their time of need. At first, the Egyptians treated them as settlers and friends, whose civil rights differed little from the country's original inhabitants. They had even come over time to regard Egypt as a second fatherland and lived there in perfect security.

TANHUMA

הַבָּאִים מִצְרֵימָה – *Who came to Egypt*: Did the sons of Yisrael come just now to Egypt? Had they not been there for some time? Rather, what the text means is that so long as Yosef was alive, the Egyptians refrained from imposing the burden of oppression upon Israel. When he died, however, they immediately did so. Therefore the text introduces the slavery as if Yaakov's family had just entered the

land. אֶת יַעֲקֹב – *With Yaakov*: All of Yaakov's sons entered with their father's values. אִישׁ אֶ – *Each with his household*: Rabbi Huna said: Peretz [Yehuda's son] had already been married at one year of age and produced a family, and so had Hetzron [Reuven's son] been married at two years of age and produced his own family. Thus all of those listed [in Genesis 46] immigrated with his children. (Shemot 3)

YALKUT SHIMONI

וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּאִים מִצְרֵימָה – *And these are the names of the sons of Yisrael who came to Egypt*: Now consider the following. Yishmael and Yitzhak were brothers, as were Yaakov and Esav. Why then did neither Yishmael nor Esav go down to Egypt? Rabbi Elazar said: To what might this be compared? To a borrower who took money from the king and then died, leaving two sons. One of the sons stayed to serve the king while the other one fled. To the remaining son the king declared: "I intend to collect from you all of your father's debts that he incurred before his death."

Replied the hapless son: "Is it fair that because I stood loyal to you that I should lose?" But the king promised him: "I swear by your life that I will reward you handsomely, and when I catch your brother I will hand him over to you in servitude." As the verse declares: *And they of the Negev shall occupy the mountain of Esav* (Obadiah 1:19). And it is further written: *And you [Esav] shall serve your brother* (Genesis 27:40). In fact, not only has Esav not served Yaakov, on the contrary – he has tormented him with all means of trouble. Still, as he has acted so will he eventually be punished. (Shemot 162)

1 ¹ And these are the names of the sons of Yisrael who came to
 2 ² Egypt with Yaakov, each with his household: Reuven, Shi-
 3 ³ mon, Levi and Yehuda; Yissakhar, Zevulun and Binyamin; Dan
 4 ⁴
 5 ⁵ and Naftali; Gad and Asher. The descendants of Yaakov were

VERSE 2

MEKHILTA DERABBI YISHMAEL

רְאוּבֵן שְׁמֵעוֹן – *Reuven, Shimon*: How do we know that the Israelites kept their Hebrew names during their sojourn in Egypt? We know this because in describing their arrival there, the verse states: *Reuven, Shimon, Levi, and Yehuda*. After their departure, the Torah

also gives the names of Reuven, Shimon, and Levi, explaining that they *declared their pedigrees after their families, by the houses of their fathers, according to the number of names* (Numbers 1:18). (Massekhta DeFisḥa 5)

TALMUD BAVLI

רְאוּבֵן שְׁמֵעוֹן – *Reuven, Shimon*: The names of the tribes do not appear on the stones of the ephod (see 28:9–12) in the same sequence

that they are listed in the book of Numbers, but as they are given [here] in the second book of the Torah. (Sota 36b)

TANḤUMA

רְאוּבֵן שְׁמֵעוֹן – *Reuven, Shimon*: The names of all of the tribes allude to the future redemption of Israel. Reuven's name recalls God's declaration: *I have seen [rao ra'iti] My people's suffering* (3:7). Shimon's name evokes the verse: *God heard [vayishma] their groaning* (2:24). Rabbi Yehoshua of Sikhnin said in the name of Rabbi Levi: The names of the tribes are never presented in the same sequence; sometimes some individuals are listed first, while in other texts different personalities are so honored. Why is the Torah not consistent? Lest the reader think that the sons of

the mistresses [Leah and Raḥel] were more important than those of the maidservants [Bilha and Zilpa]. Another interpretation: The tribes represent the supporting beams of the world, and when one installs joists, he does so one at a time, laying the end of one against the girth of another at a different height. So too were some sons named before others. And from where do we learn that the sons were the supporting beams [*tikra*] of the world? From the verse: *Hear Me, Yaakov and Yisrael, whom I called [mekora'i]* (Isaiah 48:12). (Shemot 3)

YALKUT SHIMONI

רְאוּבֵן שְׁמֵעוֹן לְוִי וְיְהוּדָה – *Reuven, Shimon, Levi, and Yehuda*: Why does the Torah list the tribes' names over and over again? This can be compared to a king who built himself a citadel which collapsed. He came and rebuilt it, but it eventually fell apart again. The king erected some of the structure's pillars and stood there rejoicing and celebrating his building's

construction. This is similar to Avraham, who fathered Yishmael and the sons of Ketura (see Genesis 25:2–4), and Yitzḥak whose son Esav produced chieftains (see Genesis 36). But along came Yaakov and he formed a family of twelve tribes, all of whom were righteous. God rejoices in them and mentions them repeatedly. (Shemot 162)

שְׁבַעִים נֶפֶשׁ יוֹסֵף הָיָה בְּמִצְרַיִם: וַיָּמָת יוֹסֵף וְכָל-אָחָיו וְכָל
הַדּוֹר הַהוּא: וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל פָּרוּ וַיִּשְׁרְצוּ וַיִּרְבוּ וַיַּעֲצְמוּ בְּמֵאֹד
מְאֹד וַתִּמְלֹא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם:

VERSE 5

SIFREI DEVARIM

יוֹסֵף הָיָה בְּמִצְרַיִם – *Yosef was already in Egypt:* as ruler over Egypt, he was still the same Yosef
 Even though the reader surely knows this fact, that had herded his father's flocks. (Haazinu
 the text is teaching us about Yosef's righteous- 334)
 ness, for even though he had risen to power

VAYIKRA RABBA

כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ – *In all:* [Literally, "all the souls."] When however, the description of Jacob's family re-
 the Torah lists the genealogy of Esav, it uses fers to seventy people using the singular term
 the word "souls" [*nefashot*] in the plural, as *nefesh*, as it is written: *The descendants of Yaa-*
 it is written: *And Esav took his wives, and his kov were seventy in all [kol nefesh].* This signifies
sons, and his daughters, and all the persons that whereas Esav worshipped multiple dei-
 [*nefashot*] of his house (Genesis 36:6). Here, ties, Yaakov served only one God. (Vayikra 4:6)

SEKHEL TOV

שְׁבַעִים נֶפֶשׁ – *Seventy in all:* These seventy cor- and the seventy sages of the Great Sanhedrin.
 respond to the seventy nations of the world

VERSE 6

TALMUD BAVLI

וַיָּמָת יוֹסֵף וְכָל-אָחָיו – *Then Yosef died, and all his* As Rabbi Ḥama bar Ḥanina said: We know that
brothers: Rav Yehuda said: Three things cause a person who acts in a haughty manner will
 a person's days and years to be cut short. If one die young, since Yosef behaved in such a way
 is asked to read from the Torah and refuses, or and he died before all his brothers. (Berakhot
 is given a cup of wine to recite the Grace after 55a)
 Meals and refuses, or acts in a haughty manner.

TANḤUMA

וַיָּמָת יוֹסֵף – *Then Yosef died:* The prophet de- Egyptians. Once the Holy One, blessed be He,
 clared: *They have dealt treacherously against saw this, He let lapse the love that He had felt*
 the LORD: for they have begotten strange children: for them, as the verse states [regarding the
 now shall a month devour them with their por- Egyptians]: *He turned their heart to hate His*
 tions (Hosea 5:7). This means that Israel bore people (Psalms 105:25). "Now shall a month
 children but did not circumcise them. Indeed, [*hodesh*] devour them" – the word should
 we learn that once Yosef died, the Hebrews be read "new" [*hadash*], indicating that a new
 violated the covenant of circumcision, an- king took power, who instituted fresh decrees
 nouncing their intention to be just like the against them. (Shemot 5)

SHEMOT RABBA

וְכָל הַדּוֹר הַהוּא – *And all that generation:* This teaches that as long as one of the original

6 seventy in all, and Yosef was already in Egypt. Then Yosef died,
 7 and all his brothers, and all that generation. But the Israelites
 were fruitful and burgeoned; they multiplied and became ex-
 ceptionally strong, until the land was filled with them.

SHEMOT RABBA (cont.)

clan that descended to Egypt still lived, the Egyptians did not enslave Israel. (Shemot 1:8)

YALKUT SHIMONI

וּבְלֵ הַדּוֹר הַזֶּה – *And all that generation: We find that from the death of Levi until the exodus was 116 years. Israel's subjugation to Egypt cannot have been longer than that, nor shorter than eighty-six years, which was Miriam's age at the exodus, since she was named after the bitterness [maror] of the toil. Reuven was born on 14 Kislev and lived for 155 years. Shimon was born on 28 Tevet and died at age 120. Levi's birthday was 16 Nisan, and he died after 137 years. Yehuda was born on 15 Sivan and lived for 119 years. Dan was born*

on 9 Elul and lived for 125 years. Naftali was born on 5 Tishrei and died 133 years later. Gad was born on 10 Marḥeshvan and died after 125 years. Asher was born on 20 Adar and lived for 123 years. Yissakhar was born on 10 Av and lived for 122 years. Zevulun was born on 7 Tishrei and died 110 years later. Binyamin was born on 11 Marḥeshvan and lived for 115 years. None of the brothers was born in the months of Iyyar or Shevat. These months were left for the births of Efrayim and Menashe. (Shemot 162)

VERSE 7

MEKHILTA DERABBI YISHMAEL

וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל פָּרוּ וַיִּשְׁרְצוּ – *But the Israelites were fruitful and burgeoned: Only one in five Israelites actually left Egypt, while some claim it was only one in fifty. Still another assessment is that it was just one in five hundred. Rabbi Nehorai said: I swear by the Temple service, not one in five hundred Israelites left Egypt, for the verse states: I will cause you to increase like the plant of the field (Ezekiel 16:7), and it is written: But the Israelites were fruitful and*

burgeoned. For each Hebrew woman gave birth to six children at a time, and you say that one in five hundred left? And when did they all die? During the three days of darkness, as the verse states: For three days, no one could see anyone else (Exodus 10:23). It was in those days that the Israelites buried their dead while offering thanks and praise that their enemies were oblivious and could not rejoice at their downfall. (Massekhta DeFis-ḥa 12)

SHEMOT RABBA

וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל פָּרוּ וַיִּשְׁרְצוּ – *But the Israelites were fruitful and burgeoned: Even though Yosef and his brothers had died, their God had not died, and the Israelites were fruitful and burgeoned. Another interpretation: Each Hebrew woman gave birth to six children at once, as the verse states: But the Israelites were fruitful and burgeoned. Some claim that every woman had a*

pregnancy of twelve children, as it is written: The Israelites were fruitful, suggesting two babies; and burgeoned, indicating another two; multiplied, another two; became exceptionally, another two; strong, another two; and the land was filled with them, a final two. That signifies twelve children altogether. וַיִּעֲצְמוּ בְּמֵאֹד בְּמֵאֹד – They became exceptionally strong: This

וַיִּקַּם מֶלֶךְ-חָדָשׁ עַל-מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדַע אֶת-יוֹסֵף:
 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-עַמּוֹ הַזֶּה עִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל רַב וְעֲצוּם מְמֹנּוּ:
 הַבָּה נִתְחַפְמָה לוֹ פֶּן-יִרְפָּה וְהָיָה כִּי-תִקְרָאנָה מִלְחָמָה

SHEMOT RABBA (cont.)

means that each woman carried sextuplets. [sheratzim, like vayishretzu here] gives birth to seventy offspring at a time. (Shemot 1:8)
 And do not be shocked by this, for the scorpion, which is one of the crawling creatures

VERSE 8

TARGUM ONKELOS

וַאֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַע אֶת יוֹסֵף – *Who had not known Yosef: Who did not preserve Yosef's decrees.*

TARGUM YERUSHALMI

וַיִּקַּם מֶלֶךְ-חָדָשׁ עַל-מִצְרַיִם – *Then a new king arose over Egypt: Who started anew: he neither knew Yosef nor followed his ways.*

TALMUD BAVLI

וַיִּקַּם מֶלֶךְ-חָדָשׁ עַל-מִצְרַיִם – *Then a new king arose over Egypt: Rav and Shmuel debated the meaning of this verse. One sage argued that this was literally a new king, while the other claimed that it was the same Pharaoh who merely issued new decrees. The first approach is backed by this verse which refers to*

a new king; the second finds support in the absence of any report of death of the first king. But according to the second opinion, is it not written: Who had not known Yosef? What that means is that he pretended not to know who Yosef was at all. (Eruvin 53a)

TANHUMA

וַיִּקַּם מֶלֶךְ-חָדָשׁ עַל-מִצְרַיִם – *Then a new king arose over Egypt: It was the same Pharaoh as before, whose advisors said to him: "Come, let us dominate this people." He said to them: "Fools! All of this time we have survived because of them, and now you suggest that we subjugate them? If it had not been for Yosef,*

we would all be dead." Since Pharaoh ignored their advice, his ministers removed him from office for three months. Finally, he said, "I will go along with whatever plan you devise," whereupon they reinstated him. Hence it is written: *Then a new king arose over Egypt.* (Buber, Shemot 7)

LEKAH TOV

וַיִּקַּם מֶלֶךְ-חָדָשׁ עַל-מִצְרַיִם – *Then a new king arose over Egypt: When the Egyptians saw the prodigious rate at which Israel was proliferating, they immediately imposed decrees against them. This is expressed by David in the verse: He turned their heart to hate His people (Psalms 105:25). What does the verb "arose"*

mean? He rose up as an enemy against Israel, as in the verse: *The murderer rising with the light* (Job 24:14), and the statement: *For false witnesses have risen up against me* (Psalms 27:12). וַאֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַע אֶת-יוֹסֵף – *Who had not known Yosef: He pretended not to know Yosef. After all, Yosef had filled Pharaoh's coffers with*

8 Then a new king arose over Egypt, who had not known Yosef.
 9 And he said to his people, “You see that the Israelite people
 10 are many and more powerful than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them in case they increase, and if war breaks out they

LEKAH TOV (cont.)

fortunes of money, had acquired all of Egypt’s land for him, and had levied taxes for the king, as the verse states: *You shall give the fifth part to Pharaoh* (Genesis 47:24). That is why it is written: *Who had not known Yosef*. And just as Pharaoh renounced Yosef, he was later to deny the Creator of everything. For Yosef had originally

told the king: *God has declared to Pharaoh what he is about to do* (Genesis 41:25), but Pharaoh later exclaimed: *I do not know the LORD* (Exodus 5:2). Cursed be the wicked who are ungrateful, rejecting those who have benefited them.

VERSE 9

PHILO

רַב וְעִצִּים כְּמִנּוּ – *Many and more powerful than we*: The Egyptian ruler treated his Jewish immigrant population as slaves captured in war, or as anyone specifically bred for slavery by their masters. By ignoring their human

rights as free people, Pharaoh showed no shame or fear for the God who guarantees liberty, hospitality, and justice. All the while, God observed Pharaoh’s behavior.

TALMUD BAVLI

וַיִּאְמַר אֱלֹהֵי-עַמּוֹ – *And he said to his people*: It was taught: Because it was Pharaoh who initiated the oppression, he was the first to be punished. It was his idea to enslave Israel, as

it is written: *And he said to his people*. Therefore he was smitten first, as it is written: *The frogs shall climb up onto you and your people and all your officials* (7:29). (Sota 11a)

LEKAH TOV

עַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *The Israelite people*: Until this point the Hebrews were referred to merely as “Israel,” but here Pharaoh called them “the Israelite people.” רַב וְעִצִּים – *Many and more powerful*: Many more individuals, and more powerful in their property holdings.

Another interpretation: *Wiser than we, and greater in strength*. כְּמִנּוּ – *Than we*: Read this as “from Him.” [The word *mimmennu* can have both meanings.] For the Israelites’ fertility comes from their God; He brings them success.

VERSE 10

TARGUM YERUSHALMI

הִבָּהּ – *Come*: Come, let us now deliberate regarding Israel: What laws should we impose over them to reduce them before they

overrun us? For in the event of war, they will join our enemies and completely wipe us out, at which point they will escape from the land.

TALMUD BAVLI

וְאִי – *With them*: [Literally, “with him.”] Should

the text not read “with them” [*ahem*]? Rabbi

וְנֹסֵף גַּם־הוּא עַל־שְׂנְאֵינוּ וְנִלְחַם־בָּנוּ וְעָלָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ׃
 וַיִּשְׂמוּ עָלָיו שָׂרֵי מִסֵּים לְמַעַן עֲנֹתוֹ בְּסַבְּלָתָם וַיִּבְּן עַרְיָ׃

TALMUD BAVLI (cont.)

Hama son of Rabbi Hanina said: Pharaoh was saying: "Let us outsmart Israel's Savior. Now, how shall we oppress Israel? If we attempt to use fire or the sword against them, it is written: *For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with His chariots like a storm, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire will the LORD execute judgment and with His sword, upon all flesh* (Isaiah 66:15–16). Rather, let us attack them with water, for the Holy One, blessed be He, has already vowed not to visit another flood upon the world, as the verse states: *For this is as the waters of Noah to Me* (Isaiah 54:9)." But the Egyptians erred, for although God had promised not to inundate the entire planet with water, He still reserved the right to bring a deluge upon an

individual nation. Alternatively, God vowed to not bring a flood to the world, whereas He made no guarantee that people would not come to the water and fall into it, as the verse states, *The Egyptians fled at its approach but the LORD swept them into the sea* (14:27). This is how Rabbi Elazar explained the verse: *For He brought upon them what they schemed against others* (18:11) – the Egyptians were cooked in the very pot in which they had cooked others. (Sota 11a) וְנִלְחַם־בָּנוּ וְעָלָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ – *Fight against us and escape from the land*: Should the text not read: "They will drive us from the land"? Rabbi Abba bar Kahana said: This is akin to a person who utters a curse about himself but expresses his fear as applying to someone else. (Sota 11a)

LEKAH TOV

וְנִלְחַם־בָּנוּ וְעָלָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ – *Let us deal wisely with them*: Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to them: "You opened with the term 'let us' [hava], similar to how the generation of the Tower of Babylon spoke, as the verse states: *And they said, Come [hava], let us build us a city and a tower* (Genesis 11:4). Know that just as I exacted punishment from them, so will I demand a penalty

from you. They had proposed their structure *lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth* (Genesis 11:4). Yet *the LORD scattered them abroad from there upon the face of all the earth* (Genesis 11:8). Now, you fear their increase – watch: *The more they were oppressed, the more they increased and spread* (1:12)."

VERSE 11

PHILO

וְנִלְחַם־בָּנוּ וְעָלָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ – *To oppress them*: Pharaoh appointed savage and furious men as overseers; their cruelty was indistinguishable from

vipers or carnivorous animals. You could even say they resembled wild animals in human form.

TALMUD BAVLI

וַיִּשְׂמוּ עָלָיו שָׂרֵי מִסֵּים – *So they placed slave masters over them*: [Literally, "over him."] Should the text not have read "over them"? The school of Rabbi Elazar son of Rabbi Shimon taught:

This teaches us that a brick mold was hung around Pharaoh's neck, and if any Israelite complained of being too frail to work, he would be told, "Are you then weaker than

may join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the
 11 land.” So they placed slave masters over the Israelites to oppress
 them with forced labor; they built supply cities for Pharaoh:

TALMUD BAVLI (cont.)

Pharaoh?” “Slave masters” [*sarei missim*] refers to a thing that compels [*mesim*] the manufacture of bricks. לְמַעַן עֲנֹתוֹ בְּסִבְלֹתָם – *To oppress them with forced labor*. [Literally, “oppress him.”] Should the text not have read: “oppress them”? What this means is that Pharaoh himself was oppressed because of Israel’s labor [by having to bear the brick mold]. וַיִּבְנוּ עָרֵי מִסְכָּנוֹת. לְפָרְעֹה – *They built supply cities for Pharaoh*: Rav and Shmuel debated the interpretation of this clause. One of them argued that the term supply cities [*miskenot*] implies that the structures endangered [*mesakkenot*] the lives of

their owners, whereas the other claimed they impoverished [*memaskenot*] their owners. אֶת־פִּתּוֹם וְאֶת־רַמֶּסֶס – *Pitom and Ramesses*: Rav and Shmuel debated the interpretation of these names. One of them argued that there was but one city, which was called Pitom, but it was also referred to as Ramesses since its buildings would collapse [*mitroses*] one after the other. The other claimed that the place was called Ramesses, but was also referred to as Pitom, signifying the mouth of the abyss [*pi tehom*], which swallowed up each of its buildings. (Sota 11a)

TANHUMA

וַיִּבְנוּ עָרֵי מִסְכָּנוֹת – *They built supply cities*: At that time Pharaoh gathered all the Israelites together and said to them: Would you please just do me this one little favor today? Hence it is written: *The Egyptians imposed backbreaking labor [avodat parekh] on the Israelites* (1:13), where the word *parekh* can be read: *peh rakh* [meaning “soft mouth”], for Pharaoh smooth-talked them. Here is how the king did it: He took hold of a basket and a rake and got to work. Now, who would feel comfortable watching Pharaoh wield a basket and a rake and fashion bricks, and not begin to work

himself? The Israelites immediately hurried to join Pharaoh in his efforts that first day, hustling with all their strength, for they were strong and able-bodied men. When darkness fell, Pharaoh set taskmasters over them who ordered them to count the bricks they had produced. So Israel counted their handiwork, whereupon Pharaoh commanded: “You will now prepare a similar quota of bricks every single day.” He appointed Egyptian taskmasters over Israelite foremen, who in turn directed the labors of the rest of the people. (Behaalotekha 13)

SEKHEL TOV

שָׂרֵי מִסִּים – *Slave masters*: [Literally, “tax officers.”] The Egyptians collected a tax [*mas*] in the form of human labor for the king. This is similar to the verse: *And King Shlomo raised a levy [mas] out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men* (I Kings 5:27). So did Pharaoh conscript the males of every household to work for him. In other words, they were no longer free to go home and be with their

wives. לְמַעַן עֲנֹתוֹ – *To oppress them*: They did so by refusing them marital relations, and thereby stopping them from reproducing. The term *annoto* used in this verse corresponds to one of the five deprivations [*innuyim*] of Yom Kippur, which is abstinence from sexual relations.

יב מִסְפָּנוֹת לַפְּרֹעָה אֶת־פָּתָם וְאֶת־רַעְמָסִים: וְכֹאֲשֶׁר יַעֲנֶנּוּ
 יג אֹתוֹ כֵּן יִרְבֶּה וְכֵן יִפְרֹץ וְיִקְצוּ מִפְּנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיַּעֲבְדוּ
 יד מִצְרַיִם אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּפָרֶךְ: וַיִּמְרְדוּ אֶת־חַיֵּיהֶם
 טו בַּעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה בַחֲמֹר וּבִלְבָנִים וּבְכָל־עֲבֹדָה בַשָּׂדֶה אֵת
 כו כָּל־עֲבֹדָתָם אֲשֶׁר־עָבְדוּ בָהֶם בְּפָרֶךְ: וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם
 לַמַּיִלֹדֹת הָעִבְרִית אֲשֶׁר שָׂם הָאֱחָת שְׂפָרָה וְשֵׁם הַשְּׂמִית

VERSE 12

TALMUD BAVLI

כֵּן יִרְבֶּה וְכֵן יִפְרֹץ – *The more they increased and spread:* [Literally, “the more they will increase and spread.”] Should the text not have read: “The more they increased and spread”? Reish Lakish said: The Divine Spirit foretold the future and said to them: “The more they will increase

and spread!” *בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* – *Came to dread the Israelites:* The term “came to dread” [*vayakutzū*], teaches that the sight of Israel was like thorns [*kotzim*] in their eyes. (Sota 11a)

DEVARIM RABBA

וְיִקְצוּ מִפְּנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *Came to dread the Israelites:* Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish interpreted the verse as follows: An Egyptian seeking his friend would have to search through a crowd of a thousand Hebrews to find him. The Egyptian would hold his nose and pray for death, saying: “Gracious! This people has increased beyond all normal limits!” As the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Yehezkel: *I will cause*

you to increase like the plant of the field (Ezekiel 16:7). And when Israel left Egypt they marched in separate camps and flew different flags. Moshe saw them and declared: *The LORD your God has multiplied you* (Deuteronomy 1:10). Remember that the Holy One, blessed be He, increased you in Egypt, just like He promised your ancestor Avraham He would. (Lieberman, Devarim 15)

VERSE 13

SHIR HASHIRIM RABBA

בְּפָרֶךְ – *Backbreaking labor:* Rabbi Yehuda son of Rabbi Shimon said in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi: There once was a king who had two daughters, an older and a younger one, whom he did not marry off. Once, the king left them for several years while he traveled abroad. During his absence, the princesses took matters into their own hands and found themselves husbands, each one taking her husband’s kerchief and seal. After a time, the king returned home to hear his people gossiping about his daughters, claiming that they had been acting promiscuously.

What was the king’s response? He issued a proclamation for his nation to gather in the stadium and positioned himself in the anteroom. The king then asked his daughters, “Are the rumors I have heard about you true? Have you truly dishonored yourselves?” Whereupon the daughters produced their husbands’ seals and kerchiefs. The king had his son-in-law brought to him and asked, “To whom are you married?” Said he, “I am your son-in-law, married to your eldest daughter.” Holding up the items his daughter had given him, the king then asked, “And what are these?” “Those,” the

12 Pitom and Ramesses. But the more they were oppressed, the
 13 more they increased and spread; and the Egyptians came to
 14 dread the Israelites. The Egyptians imposed backbreaking la-
 15 bor on the Israelites, embittering their lives with harsh work in
 mortar and brick and all field labors; all the work they forced
 upon them was intended to break them. Then the king of Egypt
 said to the midwives of the Hebrews (one named Shifra, the

SHIR HASHIRIM RABBA (cont.)

son-in-law responded, “are my ring and kerchief.” The same exchange was repeated with the second son-in-law. The king proclaimed: “Although my daughters have behaved morally, you have maligned and disparaged them! By your lives – you will be punished!” So did the nations of the world mock Israel, saying: *The Egyptians imposed backbreaking labor upon the Israelites* – if the Egyptians could compel Israel to perform their labor for them, they must have had similar control over their bodies and their wives! At that moment the Holy One, blessed be He, said: A

garden enclosed is my sister, my bride (Song of Songs 4:12). What is meant by an enclosed garden? Said the Holy One, blessed be He: “Even though my garden is enclosed, it is still disparaged!” Rabbi Pinḥas said: At that moment, the Holy One, blessed be He, summoned the angel in charge of procreation and said: “Go to them and give them children that will resemble their ancestors.” And whom did those ancestors look like? Like the founders of each family. And thus it is written (Numbers 26:7): *These are the families of Reuven.* (4:12)

VERSE 14

TALMUD BAVLI

אֵת כָּל־עֲבֹדָתָם אֲשֶׁר־עָבְדוּ בָהֶם בְּפָרֶךְ – *All the work they forced upon them was intended to break them:* Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said

in the name of Rabbi Yonatan: They forced women to perform men’s labor and men to do women’s work. (Sota 11b)

VERSE 15

PHILO

לְמִיּוֹלְדֹת הָעִבְרִיּוֹת – *To the midwives of the Hebrews:* The midwives were Egyptians and not Jewish. Pharaoh and his counselors raised an immoral idea that all the baby boys would be murdered. Pharaoh gave an order to keep the

female babies, as the gentle nature of the females prevents them from being soldiers. Pharaoh felt that a large male Jewish population would be an advantage to Egypt’s enemies.

TARGUM ONKELOS

לְמִיּוֹלְדֹת הָעִבְרִיּוֹת – *The midwives of the Hebrews:* The Hebrew midwives.

TALMUD BAVLI

לְמִיּוֹלְדֹת הָעִבְרִיּוֹת – *The midwives of the Hebrews:* Rav and Shmuel debated this verse: One of them argued that these were a woman and her daughter, while the other claimed that

they were in fact a woman and her daughter-in-law. According to the first approach, the women were Yokheved and Miriam, whereas the second understanding identified them as

טו פועה: וַיֹּאמֶר בְּיַלְדֶּךָן אֶת־הָעִבְרִיּוֹת וְדֹאִיתָן עַל־הָאֲבָנִים
 י" אֶס־בֶּן הוּא וְהַמְתֵּן אֹתוֹ וְאֶס־בַּת הוּא וְחַיָּה: וְתִירָאן
 הַמְיֻלְדֹת אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים וְלֹא עָשׂוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֲלֵיָּהן
 י"ה מִלֶּךְ מִצְרַיִם וְתַחֲיִין אֶת־הַיְלָדִים: וַיִּקְרָא מִלֶּךְ־מִצְרַיִם שני
 לַמְיֻלְדֹת וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶן מְדוּעַ עֲשִׂיתֶן הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה וְתַחֲיִין

TALMUD BAVLI (cont.)

Yokheved and Elisheva [the wife of Aharon]. There is a *baraita* that supports the first approach, as it was taught: Shifra is the same as Yokheved, but she is referred to as Shifra due to her practice of beautifying [*mesha-pereh*] the babies she midwived. Another interpretation: Yokheved was called Shifra because during her lifetime Israel was fruitful

[*sheparu*] and multiplied, while Miriam was known as Puah because she would call [*po'a*] and coo to the child as she helped it emerge. Another interpretation: Puah was so named because she was roused through divine inspiration to call out [*po'a*], "My mother will soon give birth to the savior of Israel!" (Sota 11b)

TANHUMA

וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לַמְיֻלְדֹת – *Then the king of Egypt said to the midwives: What did he tell them? Look on the birthstool* (1:16). Why did Pharaoh issue this command? It was because his royal astrologers had warned him, "Israel's redeemer is to be born on this day, but we cannot tell if he is to be Egyptian or Israelite." At that point

Pharaoh summoned his entire people together and requested, "Lend me your newborns for a day," as the verse states: *Every boy that is born you shall throw into the Nile* (1:22). The text does not read, "every Israelite boy" but "every boy" – both the Israelite and Egyptian boys were drowned. (Buber, *Vayak-hel* 5)

VERSE 16

TALMUD BAVLI

הָאֲבָנִים – *The birthstool*: What is meant by *ovnayim*? Rabbi Hanan said: Pharaoh provided the midwives with a sign. He said to them, "When a woman crouches to give birth, her thighs turn cold as stones [*avanim*]." Another interpretation: It is written: *Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he was at work on the wheels [ovnayim]* (Jeremiah 18:3). The design of a potter's wheel corresponds to a birthing woman. A potter's tool has a thigh

on one side, a thigh on the other side, and a wooden block in the middle. Similarly, a woman has a thigh on one side, a thigh on the other side, and a child in the middle. אֶס־בֶּן הוּא וְהַמְתֵּן אֹתוֹ – *If it is a boy, kill him*: Rabbi Hanina said: Pharaoh provided the midwives with a sign: A newborn boy emerges with his face turned downward, but a girl is born with her face pointing upward. (Sota 11b)

SHEMOT RABBA

בְּיַלְדֶּךָן אֶת־הָעִבְרִיּוֹת – *When you help a Hebrew woman give birth*: Said the Holy One,

16 other Puah), “When you help a Hebrew woman give birth,
 look on the birthstool. If it is a boy, kill him, and if it is a girl,
 17 let her live.” But the midwives feared God, and did not do as
 18 the king of Egypt ordered them. They let the babies live. Then ^{SHEMI}
 the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and demanded,
 “Why have you done this; why have you let the children live?”

————— SHEMOT RABBA (cont.) —————

blessed be He, to Pharaoh: “Villain! Whoever gave you that advice is a fool. It would have been wiser for you to kill the girls, for if the nation had no women, the males would

have nobody to wed. Now, a woman cannot marry two husbands, but a man can marry ten women, or even a hundred.” (Shemot 1:14)

VERSE 17

————— TALMUD BAVLI —————

וְדָבַר אֱלֹהִים – *Ordered them:* [Literally, “ordered to them.”] Should not the text have read simply “ordered them”? Rabbi Yosei son of Rabbi Hanina said: This teaches that Pharaoh petitioned them for sexual favors but

they spurned him. וַתַּחַיֵּינָם אֶת־הַיְלָדִים – *They let the babies live:* A *tanna* taught: Not only did the women not kill the babies; they sustained them with water and food. (Sota 11b)

————— SHEMOT RABBA —————

וַתַּחַיֵּינָם אֶת־הַיְלָדִים – *They let the babies live:* Why does the text add that the midwives let the babies live [having already stated that they disobeyed Pharaoh]? To add further praise for these women, who not only refused to kill their charges but took care to treat the babies properly as well. If there were poor mothers, the midwives would approach the homes of the rich women to collect water and food for them, which they would then deliver. They thereby actively sustained the children. Another interpretation: The midwives knew that some children are born lame, blind, or

crippled. In some cases, a child’s limb must be amputated in order for him to survive his own birth. As such, the midwives turned to God, petitioning Him as follows: “You are well aware that we have not collaborated with Pharaoh and his evil decree; instead it is Your desire that we wish to fulfill. Master of the Universe! Make the children be born in health lest the community have cause to accuse us of intentionally maiming its children in an effort to kill them.” Immediately, the Holy One, blessed be He, granted their request, and the babies were born safe and sound. (Shemot 1:15)

————— LEKAH TOV —————

וַתִּירָאן הַמִּילָדִים אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים – *But the midwives feared God:* Come and see how great fear of God is, for the text makes sure to mention the reverence the midwives held.

Furthermore, Moshe tells his nation: *And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God?* (Deuteronomy 10:12).

ט את־הילָדִים: ותֹאמְרֵן הַמִּילָדֹת אֶל־פְּרֻעָה כִּי לֹא כְנָשִׁים
 הַמְצַרִּית הָעֵבֶרִית כִּי־חַיֹּת הִנָּה בְטָרִם תָּבוֹא אֱלֹהֵן
 כ הַמִּילָדֹת וּלְדֹו: וַיִּטֵּב אֱלֹהִים לְמִילָדֹת וַיִּרְבֶּה הָעָם וַיַּעֲצְמוּ
 כא מְאֹד: וַיְהִי כִי־רָאוּ הַמִּילָדֹת אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם
 כב בְּתָיִם: וַיַּצֵּן פְּרֻעָה לְכָל־עַמּוֹ לֵאמֹר כָּל־הַבֶּן הַיְלֹוֹד הַיְאֻדָּה
 תִּשְׁלִיכֶנּוּ וְכָל־הַבֵּת תִּתְחַיֵּן:

VERSE 19

TARGUM YERUSHALMI

בְטָרִם תָּבוֹא אֱלֹהֵן הַמִּילָדֹת וּלְדֹו – *Have already given birth by the time the midwife arrives: By the time the midwife arrives, they have prayed*

before their father in heaven, He has answered them, and they have given birth.

TALMUD BAVLI

הַנָּה כִּי־חַיֹּת הִנָּה – *They are full of vigor: What exactly did the midwives mean by referring to the Hebrew women as hayyot? If they meant that these women were actually midwives [hayyot] themselves, that would imply that a midwife who gives birth does not herself require a midwife. Rather,*

what they told Pharaoh was that the Israelite women give birth unassisted like wild beasts [hayyot]. For the tribes are compared to animals: *Yehuda is a lion's whelp* (Genesis 49:9); *Dan shall be a serpent* (Genesis 49:17); *Naftali is a hind let loose* (Genesis 49:21). (Sota 11b)

SEKHEL TOV

לֹא כְנָשִׁים הַמְצַרִּית – *Not like Egyptians: Because the Israelite women are righteous, they are not subject to the curse of Eve, who was*

told: *In sorrow you shall bring forth children* (Genesis 3:16). They therefore have no need of our services.

VERSE 20

SHEMOT RABBA

וַיִּטֵּב אֱלֹהִים לְמִילָדֹת – *God was good to the midwives: Rabbi Berekhya said in the name of Rabbi Abba: Consider the verse: And to man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom* (Job 28:28). What is the reward for fear of God? Torah. Because Yokheved [Shifra] feared God, she merited giving birth to Moshe, as the verse states: *She saw that he was a fine [tov] child* (Exodus 2:2). Moshe would later represent the people in receiving the Torah, which is also called tov, as in the verse: *For I give you good [tov] doctrine, forsake not my*

Torah (Proverbs 4:2). Indeed, the Torah itself is called by Moshe's name, as the verse states: *Remember the Torah of Moshe My servant* (Malachi 3:22). And Miriam [Puah] was rewarded by being the ancestor of Betzalel, who was suffused with wisdom, as it is written: *And I have filled him with a divine spirit, with wisdom* (31:3), and Betzalel constructed the Ark to hold the Torah, which is called tov. This is what the verse means when it states: *God was good [vayeitev] to the midwives*. (Shinan, Shemot 1:16)

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא־תִגְדְּעוּ מִלְּבַיְנֵיכֶם דְּבַר־יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ: וַיִּפְגְּעוּ
 אֶת־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶת־אַהֲרֹן נֹצְבִים לִקְרַאתָם בְּצֵאתָם
 מֵאֵת פְּרַעֲה: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶיֶם יְרֵא יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם
 וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אֲשֶׁר הִבְאִשְׁתֶּם אֶת־רִיחֲנוּ בְּעֵינַי פְּרַעֲה
 וּבְעֵינַי עֲבָדָיו לְתַת־חֶרֶב בַּיָּדָם לְהַרְגֵנוּ: וַיֹּשֶׁב מֹשֶׁה
 אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי לְמָה הִרְעַתָּה לְעַם הַזֶּה לְמָה
 זֶה שְׁלַחְתָּנִי: וּמֵאִזְ בָּאתִי אֶל־פְּרַעֲה לְדַבֵּר בְּשִׁמְךָ
 הִרַע לְעַם הַזֶּה וְהִצַּל לֹא־הִצַּלְתָּ אֶת־עַמְּךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר
 יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה עֲתָה תִרְאֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לְפְרַעֲה
 כִּי בְיַד חֲזָקָה יִשְׁלַחֶם וּבְיַד חֲזָקָה יִגְרָשֶׁם מֵאֶרְצוֹ:

מפטיר

כג | הִרַע. לשון הפעול הוא, הקצה
 קצה עליהם. ותרגמו "חכביאש":

23 | הִרַע – *He has dealt worse*: The verb *hera* appears here in the causative *hifil* construction, meaning that Pharaoh has "caused their condition to worsen." So too in the Targum, which translates the verb as "worsened" [*aveish*].

ו א | עֲתָה תִרְאֶה וגו'. ההקדמת על
 מדותי, לא כחברתם שחמרתני
 לו: "כי בניחוק יקרח לך זרע"
 (בראשית כח, יב) וחסד כן חמרתני
 לו: "העלהו... לעלה" (סם כב, ט) ולא
 הקהר חרבי לפיכך – עתה
 תראה, העשוי לפרעה תראה,
 ולא העשוי למלכי סבעה חמות
 כחכביאש לחך:

6 | עֲתָה תִרְאֶה – *Now you are about to see*: God said to His emissary: "Moshe, you have questioned My methods and thereby deviated from the example of your ancestor Avraham. For initially I said to him: *For in Yitzhak shall your seed be called* (Genesis 21:12), and yet when I subsequently instructed him: *Take now your son Yitzhak... and offer him there for a burnt offering* (Genesis 22:2), he still did not question My methods. Therefore, although you will soon see what befalls Pharaoh, you will not witness the fate of kings of the seven Canaanite nations when I bring the people into the land of Israel.

כ | בְּיַד חֲזָקָה יִשְׁלַחֶם. מפני ידי
 שתחזיק עליו שלחם:

כ | בְּיַד חֲזָקָה יִשְׁלַחֶם – *By a mighty hand he will send them forth*: Due to the force of My hand against him, he will send them forth.

וּבְיַד חֲזָקָה יִגְרָשֶׁם מֵאֶרְצוֹ. על
 כרחם של ישראל יגרשם ולא
 יספיקו לנעושות להם ידה, וכן
 הוא חומך: "ותחזק מנבים על
 העם" וגו' (להלן יב, לג):

וּבְיַד חֲזָקָה יִגְרָשֶׁם מֵאֶרְצוֹ – *And by a mighty hand he will drive them from his land*: Pharaoh himself will drive the Israelites out by force, because the Hebrews will be reluctant to leave. They will be driven out with no opportunity to prepare food for their journey. This is what we see later: *The Egyptians too urged the people to make haste and leave the land* (12:33).



saw that they were not to reduce each day's quota, they knew
 20 that harm was coming to them. Leaving Pharaoh, they met
 21 Moshe and Aharon, who stood awaiting them. They said to
 them, "May the LORD look on you and judge, because you
 have made us repellent in the eyes of Pharaoh and his officials;
 22 you have put a sword in their hands to kill us." Then Moshe re-
 turned to the LORD and said, "Why, Lord, have You brought
 23 harm to this people? Is this why You sent me? Ever since I
 came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has dealt worse
 with this people; and You have done nothing to deliver Your
 6 1 people." But the LORD said to Moshe, "Now you are about to
 see what I will do to Pharaoh. By a mighty hand he will send
 them forth, and by a mighty hand he will drive them from his
 land."

MAFTIR

יט | וַיֵּדְאוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל.
 חַת חֲבָרִיהֶם הַנְּדָדִים עַל יָדָם,
 "בָּרָע" - רָחוּ חוֹתֶם בְּרָעָה וְנָקָה
 הַמְנוּצִיחַת חוֹתֶם בְּהַכְבִּידֶם הַעֲבוּדָה
 עֲלֵיהֶם "לְחַמְד: לֹא תִגְדְּעוּ" וגו':

19| וַיֵּדְאוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל – *The Israelite foremen saw:* [The verse is cryptic. Taken literally, it seems to mean: The Israelite foremen saw them in a bad way, saying: "You may not reduce each day's quota." Rashi explains:] The foremen "saw" their brothers, whose work they supervised, in a bad way, i.e., suffering due to the extra burden of labor they were forced to perform, and being told *that they were not to reduce each day's quota.*

כ | וַיִּפְגְּעוּ. חֲנָשִׁים מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל, 'חַת
 מִנְּשָׁה וְחַת חֲהָרָן' וגו'. וְכַבּוּתֵנוּנוּ
 חֲמָרָה, כָּל 'נָעִים' וְנִצְבִּים דָּתָן
 וְחִירָבִים הֵיוּ, שְׁנַחֲמַר בָּהֶם: "יָצְאוּ
 נִצְבִּים" (במדבר טו, כז):

20| וַיִּפְגְּעוּ – *They met:* The encounter that this verse describes was not between Moshe and Aharon and the foremen [who were righteous and would not have attacked them]; it was other individuals who *met Moshe and Aharon*. Now our Sages have identified these people as Datan and Aviram, informing us that wherever the Torah uses the term "quarreling" [*nitzim*] or "standing" [*nitzavim*, as in this verse] it hints that this duo was involved. This is because the text states later: *And Datan and Aviram came out and stood [nitzavim] in the door of their tents* (Numbers 16:27).

כב | לָמָּה הִרְעַתָּה לְעַם הָאָדָּה. וְחַס
 תַּחֲמַנָּה, מִה חֲכַפְתָּ לָךְ? קוֹבֵל חָנִי
 עַל שְׂשֻׁלְחַתְּנִי:

22| לָמָּה הִרְעַתָּה לְעַם הָאָדָּה – *Why have You brought harm to this people:* And should You respond to this complaint: What business is it of yours, Moshe? I should answer: Then I object that *You sent me.*



יא אֱמַר כֹּלֹ מַעֲשֵׂיכֶם דְּבַר-יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר בְּהִיּוֹת
 יב הַתְּבִין: וַיְכּוּ שֹׁטְרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר-שָׂמוּ עֲלֵהֶם
 נִגְשֵׁי פִרְעֹה לְאֹמֶר מִדּוּעַ לֹא כִלִּיתֶם חֻקֵּם לְלֶבֶן
 טו כִּתְמוֹל שֶׁלֶשׁ גַּם-תְּמוֹל גַּם-הַיּוֹם: וַיָּבֹאוּ שֹׁטְרֵי
 טז בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּעֲקוּ אֶל-פִּרְעֹה לְאֹמֶר לְמָה תַעֲשֶׂה
 טז כֹּה לַעֲבָדֶיךָ: תִּבֶן אֵין נִתֵן לַעֲבָדֶיךָ וּלְבָנִים אֹמְרִים
 יז לָנוּ עֲשׂוּ וְהִנֵּה עַבְדֶּיךָ מִפִּים וְחֲטָאת עַמְּךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר
 יח גִּרְפִּים אַתֶּם גִּרְפִּים עַל-כֵּן אַתֶּם אֹמְרִים נִלְכֶה נִזְבַּחַה
 יח לַיהוָה: וְעַתָּה לָכוּ עֲבָדוּ וְתִבֶן וְתִבֶן לָכֶם וְתִכֶן
 יט לְבָנִים תִּתְּנוּ: וַיֵּרְאוּ שֹׁטְרֵי בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתֶם בְּרַע

שְׁלֹפְנֵי חֲתָמוֹל, וְהוּא הָיָה בְּהִיּוֹת
 הַתְּבִין נִתֵן לָהֶם:

וַיְכּוּ. לִשְׁוֹן וַיִּפְעֵלוּ, הַכּוּ מִיַּד
 חֲחָרִים, הַנּוֹגְשִׁים הַפּוֹסִים:
 טו | וּלְבָנִים אֹמְרִים לָנוּ. הַנּוֹגְשִׁים,
 "עֲשׂוּ" כַּמֶּנֶן הַדְּרָשׁוֹן:

וְחֲטָאת עַמְּךָ. חָלוּ הָיָה נְקוּדַת פִּתּוּחַ
 הַיִּתְיָ חֹמֶר שֶׁהוּא דְבִיחַ – וְדָבַר
 זֶה חֲטָאת עַמְּךָ הוּא. עַבְדֵּי הוּא
 קָמָן, שֶׁסְ דָּבַר הוּא, וְכָךְ פִּרְשׁוּ,
 וְדָבַר זֶה מְבִיחַ חֲטָאת עַל עַמְּךָ,
 כְּחֵלֶו כְּתוּב: 'וְחֲטָאת לְעַמְּךָ, כְּמוֹ:
 "כְּבוֹחָהּ בֵּית לָחֶם" (דְּוֵת י"ט) שֶׁהוּא
 כְּמוֹ לְבֵית לָחֶם, וְכֵן הַדְּבָר:

יח | וְתִכֶן לְבָנִים. חֲשֶׁבוֹן הַלְּבָנִים,
 וְכֵן: "חֵת הַכֶּסֶף הַמִּתְכֶּן" (מַלְכִים ב'
 י"ג, י"ד) הַמֶּנֶן, כְּמוֹ שְׁחִמּוֹד כְּעַנְיָן:
 "וַיִּגְדּוּ וַיִּמְנְנוּ חֵת הַכֶּסֶף" (שֶׁס פְּסוּק י"ח):

you the day before yesterday [*kitmol shilshom*], when you were still being given straw?

וַיְכּוּ – *They were flogged*: This word is in the passive *hufal* form. The foremen were beaten by the taskmasters.

16 | – *Yet they tell us, "Make bricks"*: The taskmasters insist that we produce the same number of bricks as before.

וְחֲטָאת עַמְּךָ – *For your people's failing*: Were the word *hatat* vocalized with a *patah* [under the *tet*], it would represent the construct state [in which one noun is possessed by the following noun], and this phrase would mean "your people's failing." However, since the word is written with a *kamatz*, it is not a possessed noun, and the claim here is actually that the affair has brought "a sin to your people" [who are unfairly punishing us. Although the preposition "to" does not appear here explicitly, it can be implied in Biblical Hebrew,] as in the verse *So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem [kevoana Beit Lehem] (Ruth 1:19)*. There are many such cases.

18 | – *Your count of bricks*: [The phrase *tokhen lev-enim* means] "quota of bricks." The same root is used in the verse *And they gave the money that was counted [hametukan] (II Kings 12:12)*. [The meaning of *metukan* there is clear from context,] as it is stated in the same passage: *And they tied it in bags and counted the money (II Kings 12:11)*.



them, saying, “Complete your daily work quota just as when
 14 there was straw.” And the Israelite foremen whom Pharaoh’s
 slave drivers had appointed were flogged. “Why have you not
 fulfilled your quota of bricks,” they were asked, “either yester-
 15 day or today as you did before?” The Israelite foremen came
 and protested to Pharaoh, “Why are you treating your ser-
 16 vants like this? Your servants are given no straw, yet they tell
 us, ‘Make bricks!’ We are being flogged for your people’s fail-
 17 ing.” But he said, “Lazy, that is what you are – lazy! That is why
 18 you keep saying, ‘Send us forth to sacrifice to the LORD.’ Now
 go. Get to work. Straw will not be given you, and you must
 19 complete your count of bricks.” When the Israelite foremen

דְּבַר־יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ. חֶשְׁבֹן סֵל כֶּל יוֹם
 כָּל־יוֹמוֹ, פָּחַד עַשְׂיָתָם בְּהוֹיֹת
 הַתֵּבָן מוֹכָן:

דְּבַר־יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ – *Your daily work quota:* [The phrase *devar yom beyomo* denotes] a daily quota of production, which had been established earlier when the straw had been provided to the slaves.

יָד | וַיְכּוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.
 הַשּׁוֹטְרִים יִשְׂרָאֵלִים הָיוּ וְחָסִים
 עַל חֲבֵרֵיהֶם מִלְּחָקָם, וְכִשְׁהָיוּ
 מִשְׁלִימִים הִלְבִּיטוּ לְנוֹשְׂאֵי שָׂהָם
 מִצָּרִיִּים וְהָיָה חֶסֶד מִן הַסְּבוּס, הָיוּ
 מִלְּחִין חוֹתָם עַל שְׁלַח דְּחָקוֹ חֵת
 עוֹשֵׂי הַמְּלָאכָה. לְפִיכֵךְ זָכוּ חוֹתָן
 שׁוֹטְרִים לְהוֹיֹת סַנְהֶדְרִין וְנִיחָצַל
 מִן הַדִּיחַ חָסֵד עַל מַשָּׂה וְהוֹשֵׁם
 עֲלֵיהֶם, שֶׁנִּחְמַד “חֶסֶדָּה לִי שְׁבַעִים
 חַיִּים מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, מִחוֹתָן שִׁדְעֵתָ
 הַטּוֹבָה שֶׁעָשָׂה בְּמִצְרַיִם” כִּי הֵם יִקְנִי
 הָעָם וְשִׁטְרֵי־וֹ” (במדבר יח, טז):

14 | וַיְכּוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *The Israelite foremen were flogged:* The foremen were Israelites themselves, and because they took pity on their compatriots, they were loath to pressure them to fulfill Pharaoh’s impossible demands. When these middlemen later delivered the bricks that their workers had produced, the totals of course fell short. And so the taskmasters beat the foremen for not forcing their charges to work harder. And because they were willing to bear the brunt of the Egyptians’ wrath, God rewarded the foremen by appointing them as Israel’s Sanhedrin. When that body was formed, God channeled some of Moshe’s prophetic spirit to them. That these men made up the assembly is evidenced by the verse *And the Lord said to Moshe, Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to have been their benefactors in Egypt, being the elders of the people, and foremen over them* (Numbers 11:16).

וַיְכּוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. חָסֵד שְׂמוֹ
 נָגַשׁ פְּרַעֲוֹ חוֹתָם לְשׁוֹטְרִים עֲלֵהֶם:

וַיְכּוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *The Israelite foremen were flogged:* Pharaoh’s taskmasters, who had placed the foremen in charge of the Israelites, beat them.

לְאִמּוֹר מִדּוֹעַ וְגו'. לָמָּה “וַיְכּוּ” שְׁהָיוּ
 חוֹמְרִים לָהֶם: מִדּוֹעַ לֹא כְלִיתָם גַּם
 תִּמְנוֹל גַּם הַיּוֹם חֵק הִקְטַב עֲלֵיכֶם
 לְכֶבֶן תִּתְמוֹל הַשְּׁלִישִׁי, שֶׁהוּא יוֹם

לְאִמּוֹר מִדּוֹעַ – *Why... they were asked:* Why were the foremen beaten? Because the taskmasters demanded of them: *Why have you not fulfilled your quota of bricks either yesterday or today? Why have you not achieved the total that was set for*

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא־תִגְדְּעוּ מִלְּבַיְנֵיכֶם דְּבַר־יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ: וַיִּפְגְּעוּ
 אֶת־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶת־אַהֲרֹן נֹצְבִים לִקְרַאתָם בְּצֵאתָם
 מֵאֵת פְּרַעֲה: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָהֶם יְרֵא יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם
 וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אֲשֶׁר הִבְאִשְׁתֶּם אֶת־רִיחֲנוּ בְּעֵינַי פְּרַעֲה
 וּבְעֵינַי עֲבָדָיו לְתַת־חֶרֶב בַּיָּדָם לְהַרְגֵנוּ: וַיֹּשֶׁב מֹשֶׁה
 אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי לְמָה הִרְעַתָּה לְעַם הַזֶּה לְמָה
 זֶה שְׁלַחְתָּנִי: וּמֵאֵז בְּאֵתִי אֶל־פְּרַעֲה לְדַבֵּר בְּשִׁמְךָ
 הִרַע לְעַם הַזֶּה וְהִצַּל לֹא־הִצַּלְתָּ אֶת־עַמְּךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר
 יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה עֲתָה תִרְאֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לְפְרַעֲה
 כִּי בְיַד חֲזָקָה יִשְׁלַחֶם וּבְיַד חֲזָקָה יִגְרָשֶׁם מֵאֶרְצוֹ:

מפטיר

כג | הִרַע. לשון הפעול הוא, הקצה
 קצה עליהם. ותרגמו "חכביש":

23 | הִרַע – *He has dealt worse*: The verb *hera* appears here in the causative *hifil* construction, meaning that Pharaoh has "caused their condition to worsen." So too in the Targum, which translates the verb as "worsened" [*aveish*].

ו א | עֲתָה תִרְאֶה וגו'. הִקְהַתָּ עַל
 מְדוּתִי, לֹא כִּפְרָהֶם שְׁאִמְרָתִי
 לו: "כִּי בִיחָק יִקְרַח לְךָ זִרְעֵי"
 (בְּרַחֲשִׁית בַּח, יב) וְחִסַּד כֶּן אִמְרָתִי
 לו: "הֵעֲלֵהוּ... לְעֹלָה" (סס כב, ג) וְלֹא
 הִקְהַר אֲחֵרֵי לְפִיכֶךָ – עֲתָה
 תִּרְאֶה, הַעֲשֵׂי לְפְרַעֲה תִּרְאֶה,
 וְלֹא הַעֲשֵׂי לְמַלְכֵי שֶׁבַע אֲמֹת
 כְּשִׁחְבִּיחֶם לְחֻץ:

6 | עֲתָה תִרְאֶה – *Now you are about to see*: God said to His emissary: "Moshe, you have questioned My methods and thereby deviated from the example of your ancestor Avraham. For initially I said to him: *For in Yitzhak shall your seed be called* (Genesis 21:12), and yet when I subsequently instructed him: *Take now your son Yitzhak... and offer him there for a burnt offering* (Genesis 22:2), he still did not question My methods. Therefore, although you will soon see what befalls Pharaoh, you will not witness the fate of kings of the seven Canaanite nations when I bring the people into the land of Israel.

כ | בְּיַד חֲזָקָה יִשְׁלַחֶם. מִפְּנֵי יָדֵי
 שְׁתַּחֲזִיק עֲלָיו יִשְׁלַחֶם:

כ | בְּיַד חֲזָקָה יִשְׁלַחֶם – *By a mighty hand he will send them forth*: Due to the force of My hand against him, he will send them forth.

וּבְיַד חֲזָקָה יִגְרָשֶׁם מֵאֶרְצוֹ. עַל
 כְּרַחֶם שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל יִגְרָשֶׁם וְלֹא
 יִסְפְּקוּהוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהֶם יְדָה, וְכֵן
 הוּא חוֹמֵר: "וְתַחֲזִק מִנְּכֵימִים עַל
 הָעָם" (ג'ג' (להלן יב, לג):

וּבְיַד חֲזָקָה יִגְרָשֶׁם מֵאֶרְצוֹ – *And by a mighty hand he will drive them from his land*: Pharaoh himself will drive the Israelites out by force, because the Hebrews will be reluctant to leave. They will be driven out with no opportunity to prepare food for their journey. This is what we see later: *The Egyptians too urged the people to make haste and leave the land* (12:33).



saw that they were not to reduce each day's quota, they knew
 20 that harm was coming to them. Leaving Pharaoh, they met
 21 Moshe and Aharon, who stood awaiting them. They said to
 them, "May the LORD look on you and judge, because you
 have made us repellent in the eyes of Pharaoh and his officials;
 22 you have put a sword in their hands to kill us." Then Moshe re-
 turned to the LORD and said, "Why, Lord, have You brought
 23 harm to this people? Is this why You sent me? Ever since I
 came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has dealt worse
 with this people; and You have done nothing to deliver Your
 6 1 people." But the LORD said to Moshe, "Now you are about to
 see what I will do to Pharaoh. By a mighty hand he will send
 them forth, and by a mighty hand he will drive them from his
 land."

MAFTIR

יט | וַיֵּדְאוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל.
 חַת חֲבֵרֵיהֶם הַנִּגְדִים עַל יָדָם,
 "בָּרָע" - רָחוּ חוֹתָם בָּרָעָה וְנָקָה
 הַמְנוּצִיחַת חוֹתָם בְּהַכְבִּידָם הַעֲבוּדָה
 עֲלֵיהֶם "לְחַמְד: לֹא תִגְדְּעוּ" וגו':

19| וַיֵּדְאוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל – *The Israelite foremen saw:* [The verse is cryptic. Taken literally, it seems to mean: The Israelite foremen saw them in a bad way, saying: "You may not reduce each day's quota." Rashi explains:] The foremen "saw" their brothers, whose work they supervised, in a bad way, i.e., suffering due to the extra burden of labor they were forced to perform, and being told *that they were not to reduce each day's quota.*

כ | וַיִּפְגְּעוּ. חֲנָשִׁים מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל, "חַת
 מִנְשֶׁה וְחַת אַהֲרֹן" וגו'. וְכַבּוּתֵנוּנוּ
 חֲמָרוֹ, כֹּל 'נָעִים' וְנִצְבִים דָּתָן
 וְאִבְרָם הֵיוּ, שֶׁנֶּחְמָר בָּהֶם: "וַיֵּצְאוּ
 נִצְבִים" (במדבר טו, כ):

20| וַיִּפְגְּעוּ – *They met:* The encounter that this verse describes was not between Moshe and Aharon and the foremen [who were righteous and would not have attacked them]; it was other individuals who *met Moshe and Aharon*. Now our Sages have identified these people as Datan and Aviram, informing us that wherever the Torah uses the term "quarreling" [*nitzim*] or "standing" [*nitzavim*, as in this verse] it hints that this duo was involved. This is because the text states later: *And Datan and Aviram came out and stood [nitzavim] in the door of their tents* (Numbers 16:27).

כב | לָמָּה הִרְעַתָּה לְעַם הַזֶּה. וְחַס
 תְּחַמְדָּה, מִה חֲכַפְתָּ לָךְ? קוֹבֵל חֲנִי
 עַל שְׂשֻׁלְחַתְּנִי:

22| לָמָּה הִרְעַתָּה לְעַם הַזֶּה – *Why have You brought harm to this people:* And should You respond to this complaint: What business is it of yours, Moshe? I should answer: Then I object that *You sent me.*



יא אֱמַר כֹּלֹ מַעֲשֵׂיכֶם דְּבַר-יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר בְּהִיּוֹת
 יב הַתְּבִין: וַיִּכּוּ שֹׁטְרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר-שָׂמוּ עֲלֵהֶם
 נִגְשֵׁי פִרְעֹה לְאֹמֶר מִדּוּעַ לֹא כָלִיתֶם חֲקֻכֶם לְלֶבֶן
 טו כִּתְמוֹל שֶׁלֶשׁ גַּם-תְּמוֹל גַּם-הַיּוֹם: וַיָּבֹאוּ שֹׁטְרֵי
 טז בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּעֲקוּ אֶל-פִּרְעֹה לְאֹמֶר לָמָּה תַעֲשֶׂה
 טז כֹּה לְעַבְדֶּיךָ: תִּבֶן אֵין נִתֵן לְעַבְדֶּיךָ וּלְבָנִים אֲמָרִים
 יז לָנוּ עֵשׂוּ וְהִנֵּה עַבְדֶּיךָ מִפִּים וְחֲטָאתָ עִמָּךְ: וַיֹּאמֶר
 יח גִּרְפִּים אַתֶּם גִּרְפִּים עַל-כֵּן אַתֶּם אֲמָרִים נִלְכֶה נִזְבַּחַה
 יח לִיהוָה: וְעַתָּה לָכוּ עֲבְדוּ וְתִבֶן לֹא-יִנָּתֵן לָכֶם וְתִכֶן
 יט לְבָנִים תִּתְּנוּ: וַיֵּרְאוּ שֹׁטְרֵי בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתֶם בְּרַע

שְׁלֹפְנֵי חֲתָמוֹל, וְהוּא הָיָה בְּהִיּוֹת
 הַתְּבִין נִתֵן לָהֶם:
 וַיִּכּוּ. לִשְׁוֹן וַיִּפְעֵלוּ, הַכּוּ מִיַּד
 חֲחָרִים, הַנּוֹגְשִׁים הַפּוֹסִים:
 טו | וּלְבָנִים אֲמָרִים לָנוּ. הַנּוֹגְשִׁים,
 "עֲשׂוּ" כַּמִּנְיָן הַדְּרָשׁוֹן.

וְחֲטָאתָ עִמָּךְ. חָלוּ הָיָה נְקוּדַת פִּתּוּחַ
 הַיִּתְיָ חֹמֶר שֶׁהוּא דְבִיחַ – וְדָבַר
 זֶה חֲטָאתָ עִמָּךְ הוּא. עֲבָשׂוּ שֶׁהוּא
 קָמָן, שֶׁסְ דָּבַר הוּא, וְכָךְ פִּרְשׁוּ,
 וְדָבַר זֶה מְבִיחַ חֲטָאתָ עַל עִמָּךְ,
 כְּחֹלוּ כְּתוּב: 'וְחֲטָאתָ לְעַמֶּךָ, כְּמוֹ:
 "כְּבֹוֹחָהּ בֵּית לָחֶם" (דְּוֵת י"ט) שֶׁהוּא
 כְּמוֹ לְבֵית לָחֶם, וְכֵן הַדְּבָר.

יח | וְתִכֶן לְבָנִים. חֲשֵׁבוֹן הַלְּבָנִים,
 וְכֵן: "חֵת הַכֶּסֶף הַמִּתְּכֵן" (מַלְכִים ב'
 י"ג, י"ד) הַמִּנְיָן, כְּמוֹ שְׁחָמוֹר כְּעִנְיָן:
 "וַיִּגְדּוּ וַיִּמְנְנוּ חֵת הַכֶּסֶף" (שֵׁם פְּסוּק י"ח):

you the day before yesterday [kitmol shilshom], when you were still being given straw?

וַיִּכּוּ – *They were flogged*: This word is in the passive *hufal* form. The foremen were beaten by the taskmasters.

16 | – *Yet they tell us, "Make bricks"*: The taskmasters insist that we produce the same number of bricks as before.

וְחֲטָאתָ עִמָּךְ – *For your people's failing*: Were the word *hatat* vocalized with a *patah* [under the *tet*], it would represent the construct state [in which one noun is possessed by the following noun], and this phrase would mean "your people's failing." However, since the word is written with a *kamatz*, it is not a possessed noun, and the claim here is actually that the affair has brought "a sin to your people" [who are unfairly punishing us. Although the preposition "to" does not appear here explicitly, it can be implied in Biblical Hebrew,] as in the verse *So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem [kevoana Beit Lehem] (Ruth 1:19)*. There are many such cases.

18 | – *Your count of bricks*: [The phrase *tokhen lev-enim* means] "quota of bricks." The same root is used in the verse *And they gave the money that was counted [hametukan] (II Kings 12:12)*. [The meaning of *metukan* there is clear from context,] as it is stated in the same passage: *And they tied it in bags and counted the money (II Kings 12:11)*.



them, saying, “Complete your daily work quota just as when
 14 there was straw.” And the Israelite foremen whom Pharaoh’s
 slave drivers had appointed were flogged. “Why have you not
 fulfilled your quota of bricks,” they were asked, “either yester-
 15 day or today as you did before?” The Israelite foremen came
 and protested to Pharaoh, “Why are you treating your ser-
 16 vants like this? Your servants are given no straw, yet they tell
 us, ‘Make bricks!’ We are being flogged for your people’s fail-
 17 ing.” But he said, “Lazy, that is what you are – lazy! That is why
 18 you keep saying, ‘Send us forth to sacrifice to the LORD.’ Now
 go. Get to work. Straw will not be given you, and you must
 19 complete your count of bricks.” When the Israelite foremen

דְּבַרְיֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ. חֶשְׁבֹן סֵל כֵּל יוֹם
 כָּלֹּו בְּיוֹמוֹ, פֶּחָשֶׁר עֲשִׂיתֶם בְּהִיּוֹת
 הַתֵּבָן מוֹכָן:

דְּבַרְיֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ – *Your daily work quota:* [The phrase *devar yom beyomo* denotes] a daily quota of production, which had been established earlier when the straw had been provided to the slaves.

יָד | וַיְכּוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.
 הַשּׁוֹטְרִים יִשְׂרָאֵלִים הָיוּ וְחָסִים
 עַל חֲבֵרֵיהֶם מִלְּחָקָם, וְכִשְׁהָיוּ
 מִשְׁלֵימִים הִלְבִּיטוּ לְנוֹשְׂאֵי שָׂהָם
 מִצָּרִיִּים וְהָיָה חֶסֶד מִן הַסָּבוּס, הָיוּ
 מִלְּחִין חוֹתֵם עַל שְׁלַח דְּחָקוֹ חֵת
 עוֹשֵׂי הַמְּלָאכָה. לְפִיכֵךְ זָכוּ חוֹתֵן
 שׁוֹטְרִים לְהִיּוֹת סַנְהֶדְרִין וְנִיחָצַל
 מִן הַדִּיחַ חֶשֶׁר עַל מִשָּׁה וְהוֹשִׁיעַ
 עֲלֵיהֶם, שֶׁנִּחְמַד “חֶסֶדָּה לִי שְׁבַעֲנִים
 חַיִּים מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, מִחוֹתֵן שִׁדְרֵתָהּ
 הַטּוֹבָה שֶׁעָשָׂה בְּמִצְרַיִם” כִּי הֵם יִקְנִי
 הָעָם וְשִׁטְרֵיָו” (במדבר יח, טו):

14 | וַיְכּוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *The Israelite foremen were flogged:* The foremen were Israelites themselves, and because they took pity on their compatriots, they were loath to pressure them to fulfill Pharaoh’s impossible demands. When these middlemen later delivered the bricks that their workers had produced, the totals of course fell short. And so the taskmasters beat the foremen for not forcing their charges to work harder. And because they were willing to bear the brunt of the Egyptians’ wrath, God rewarded the foremen by appointing them as Israel’s Sanhedrin. When that body was formed, God channeled some of Moshe’s prophetic spirit to them. That these men made up the assembly is evidenced by the verse *And the Lord said to Moshe, Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to have been their benefactors in Egypt, being the elders of the people, and foremen over them* (Numbers 11:16).

וַיְכּוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. חֶשֶׁר שְׂמוֹ
 נָשָׂה פְרַעֲוֹה חוֹתֵם לְשׁוֹטְרִים עֲלֵהֶם:

וַיְכּוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *The Israelite foremen were flogged:* Pharaoh’s taskmasters, who had placed the foremen in charge of the Israelites, beat them.

לְאִמּוֹר מְדוּעַ וְגו'. לָמָּה “וַיְכּוּ” שֶׁהָיוּ
 חוֹמְרִים לָהֶם: מְדוּעַ לֹא כָלִיתֶם גַּם
 תַּמְנוּל גַּם הַיּוֹם חֵק הַקָּעֵב עֲלֵיכֶם
 לְכַבֵּן תַּמְנוּל הַשְּׁלִישִׁי, שֶׁהָיוּ יוֹם

לְאִמּוֹר – *Why... they were asked:* Why were the foremen beaten? Because the taskmasters demanded of them: *Why have you not fulfilled your quota of bricks either yesterday or today? Why have you not achieved the total that was set for*

ט תִּכְבַּד הָעֶבֶדְהָ עַל־הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־בָהּ וְאֶל־יִשְׁעוּ
 י בְּדַבְרֵי־שָׁקֶר: וַיֵּצְאוּ נְגִשֵׁי הָעַם וּשְׂטָרְיוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ
 אֶל־הָעַם לֵאמֹר כֹּה אָמַר פִּרְעֹה אֵינְנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם
 יא תֶּבֶן: אַתֶּם לָכוּ קָחוּ לָכֶם תֶּבֶן מֵאֲשֶׁר תִּמְצְאוּ
 יב כִּי אֵין נִגְרַע מֵעֲבַדְתֶּם דָּבָר: וַיִּפֶן הָעַם בְּכַל־
 יג אָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְקֹשֶׁשׁ קֹשׁ לְתֶבֶן: וְהַנְּגִשִׁים אָצִים

וַחֲהַרְגוּ בַמִּשְׁחָה (במדבר יב, ח) "הַמְלַחֵךְ
 הַלֶּבֶת בֵּי" (זכריה ה, ח) "לְדַבֵּר בְּסִי
 (דברים יח, יט) "וַחֲדַבְּרָה בְּעַל־תִּנְךָ"
 (תהלים קיט, טו) חֶף בָּחוּן, "חַל יִשְׁעוּ
 בְּדַבְרֵי שָׁקֶר" – חַל יִהְיוּ נִגְדָּרִים
 בְּדַבְרֵי שׂוֹף וְהַבְּחִי:

But they look not to [velo sha'u al] the Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 31:1) and the verse And he shall not look to [velo yisheh el] the altars (Isaiah 17:8). I have not found a single case where the verb shaa, used in the sense of "to turn to," is followed by the prepositional letter bet [as in our verse]. On the other hand, the verb of speech [dibbur] is often accompanied by such a preposition, as in these instances: The children of your people who talk against you [hanidbarim bekha] (Ezekiel 33:30); And Miriam and Aharon spoke against Moshe [vatedaber... beMoshe] (Numbers 12:1); And the angel that talked with me [hadover bi] (Zechariah 4:1); And you shall teach them to your children, speaking of them [ledaber bam] (Deuteronomy 11:19); and I will also speak of Your testimonies [vaadabera vedotekha] before kings (Psalms 119:46). And here as well, al yishu bedivre shaker means "do not speak empty words and nonsense."

יא | אַתֶּם לָכוּ קָחוּ לָכֶם תֶּבֶן.
 וְצִיְרִיכֶם חֲתָם לִילֵךְ בְּזָרְחֹת "כִּי
 חֵין נִגְרַע" דָּבָר מִכָּל סְכוּם לְבִנְיָם
 שֶׁיִּיָּתֵם עוֹשִׂים לְיוֹם בְּהִיוֹת הַתֶּבֶן
 נֶתֶן לָכֶם מִזְמַן מִבֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ:

11 | You must go and get your own straw: You must go quickly, because your production must not fall short of what it was. You must continue to produce the same number of bricks you were able to fashion back when the straw was provided by the government, but now you must procure your own raw materials.

יב | לְקֹשֶׁשׁ קֹשׁ לְתֶבֶן. לְחֹסֶךְ
 חֲסִיפָה, לְלָקֵט לְקֵט לְעוֹרֵךְ תֶּבֶן
 הַטֵּיט:

12 | To collect stubble for straw: The phrasing here, lekoshesh kash, literally means "to gather the gathering; to collect the collecting," for the straw to be incorporated into the clay.

קֹשׁ. לָשׁוֹן לְהוֹט, עַל שֵׁם שְׂדֵבֶר
 הַמִּתְפָּזֵר הוּא וְצִיְרֵךְ לְהוֹשֵׁטוּ הוּא
 קָרוי "קֹשֶׁ" בְּשָׂחַר מִקוֹמוֹת:

– Stubble: The term kash literally suggests something that is gathered. Since straw is a material that is scattered and must be collected, it is always called by this name, even in other contexts.

יג | אָצִים. דוֹחֲקִים:

13 | Kept pressuring them: [The word atzim means] "pressuring."



they are crying out, ‘Send us forth to sacrifice to our God.’

- 9 Make the work harder for the people; and make sure they do
- 10 it instead of listening to lies.” So the taskmasters and foremen went out and told the people, “This is what Pharaoh says: I
- 11 will no longer give you straw. You must go and get your own straw wherever you can find it. Your production must not fall
- 12 short of what it was.” So the people spread out all over Egypt
- 13 to collect stubble for straw. The taskmasters kept pressuring

מִתְכַנְנֶתָּ. וְיִתְּנֶךָ לְכֶנֶס׃ (להלן פסוק יח.) וְיִתְּנֶךָ נִתְּנֶנּוּ עַל־לוֹת׃ (סמואל ח' ב, ג.) וְיִתְּנֶךָ הַפֶּסֶף הַמֵּתְכָן׃ (מלכים ב' יב, יג.) כֹּלֶם לְשׂוֹן חֶשְׂבֹן הֵם׃ (יב.)

נִרְפִים. הַמְלִיכָה רְפוּיָה בִידָם וְעֲזוּבָה מֵהֵם וְהֵם נִרְפִים מִמֶּנָּה, רַטְרִי׃ גַּלְעָד׃

ט | וְאַל־יִשְׁעוּ בְדַבְרֵי־שָׁקֶר. וְחַל יִהְיֶה וְיִדְבְּרוּ תַמִּיד בְּדַבְרֵי רוּחַ לֹא־מֵר: ״גִּלְכָה נִתְּכָה״. וְדוּמָה לוֹ: ״וְחִשְׁעָה בְּחִקְיָךְ תַּמִּיד״ (תהלים קיט, קיז.) ״לִמְשָׁל וְלִשְׁנִיָּה״ (דברים כז, לו) – ״וְלִשְׁאֵעִי״; ״וְיִסְפֵּר״ (להלן יח, ט) – ״וְחִשְׁתַּעֲנִי״. וְחַי חֶפְשָׁר לֹמַר יִשְׁעוּ לְשׂוֹן ״וְיִשַׁע ה' חַל הַבַּל... וְחַל קִוּ וְחַל מִנְחַתוֹ לֹא שְׁעָה״ (בְּרַחֲשִׁית 7, 7-ה) וְלִפְתָּשׁ יִחַל יִשְׁעוּ – חַל יִפְנוּ שָׂחָם בֶּן הַיָּה לֹא לְכַתְּבֵ: ״וְחַל יִשְׁעוּ חַל דְּבַרֵי שְׁקָרִי חֹז לְדַבְרֵי שְׁקָרִי כִּי בֶן גְּזֵרֵת פֶּלֶם׃ ״יִשְׁעָה הַחֶדֶם עַל עֲשָׂוִי״ (ישעיה ז, ז.) ״וְחַל שְׁעוּ עַל הַדֹּשׁ יִשְׁרָחֵל״ (סם לח, ח.) ״וְחַל יִשְׁעָה חַל הַמְזַבְּחֹתַי״ (סם יח, ח.) וְחַל מִנְחַתֵי שְׂמוֹשׁ שֶׁל בְּיַת סְמוּכָה לֹא־חִיָּהֶם. חֶבֶל אַחַר לְשׂוֹן דְּבוּר כְּמַתְעַשֶּׂק לְדַבֵּר בְּדַבֵּר נֹפֵל לְשׂוֹן שְׂמוֹשׁ בְּיַת, כְּגוֹן: ״הַנְּדַבְּרִים בְּךָ״ (יחזקאל לג, לו) ״וְיִתְּדַבֵּר מִרְגִים

מִתְכַנְנֶתָּ – Quota: The term *matkonet* derives from the same root as *tokhen* [the quota of bricks mentioned in verse 18], and also appears in the verse *By Him actions are weighed [nitkenu]* (I Samuel 2:3). We also see it here: *And they gave the money that was counted [hametukan]* (II Kings 12:12). In all these cases the root denotes a tally or measurement.

נִרְפִים – Lazy: The term *nirpim* means that the work is being neglected and going undone. For Israel has reneged and withdrawn from their responsibilities. In Old French the word would be translated as *retrait* [“retreat” in English].

9 | וְאַל־יִשְׁעוּ בְדַבְרֵי־שָׁקֶר – *Instead of listening to lies:* [The meaning of the verb *yishu*, translated here as “listening,” is unclear. Rashi argues:] This phrase means that they ought not waste their breath “speaking” of sacrifice to their God. The verb appears with a similar meaning in the verse *I will speak of [ve’esha] Your statutes continually* (Psalms 119:117). And in the verse *And you shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations into which the Lord shall lead you* (Deuteronomy 28:37), the Aramaic translation of the term “byword” [something that is the subject of discussion], is *sho’ei*. Later, when Moshe describes the events of the exodus to Yitro, the Aramaic rendering of the verb “told” (18:8) is *ve’ishata*. Now one should not link the verb in question to the language of the verse *And the Lord had respect [sha’a] for Hevel and to his offering: but for Kayin and to his offering He had not respect [lo sha’a]* (Genesis 4:4–5). One might be tempted to make this link and thereby explain our case as Pharaoh cautioning the people not to pay attention to Moshe’s declarations. But if that were the verse’s intention, it would have used the preposition *el* [meaning “to”] in conjunction with the verb. For such is the customary syntax in all instances where the verb denotes paying attention, such as the verse *On that day shall a man look to [yisheh...al] his Maker* (Isaiah 17:7) and the verse

אֱלֹהֵינוּ פָּן־יִפְגַּעֵנוּ בְּדַבָּר אֹו בְּחָרֵב: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים
 מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לָמָּה מִשָּׂה וְאַהֲרֹן תִּפְרָיעוּ אֶת־הָעַם
 מִמַּעֲשָׂיו לְכוּ לְסַבְּלֵיכֶם: וַיֹּאמֶר פִּרְעֹה הִין־רַבִּים
 עֲתָה עַם־הָאָרֶץ וְהִשְׁבַּתֶם אֹתָם מִסַּבְּלֵתָם: וַיֵּצֵא
 פִּרְעֹה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־הַנְּגִישִׁים בָּעַם וְאֶת־שֹׁטְרֵי
 לֵאמֹר: לֹא תֵאסְפוּן לָתֵת תְּבֹן לָעַם לְלַבֵּן הַלְּבָנִים
 בְּתַמּוֹל שְׁלֹשׁ הֵם יִלְכוּ וְקִשְׁשׁוּ לָהֶם תְּבֹן: וְאֶת־
 מִתְּפַנֵּת הַלְּבָנִים אֲשֶׁר הֵם עֹשִׂים תַּמּוֹל שְׁלֹשׁ
 תִּשְׁימוּ עֲלֵיהֶם לֹא תִגְרְעוּ מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי־נִרְפִים הֵם
 עַל־כֵּן הֵם צִעֲקִים לֵאמֹר גִּלְכָּה גִזְבַּחָה לֵאלֹהֵינוּ:

ו | הַנְּגִישִׁים. מַצְרַיִים הָיוּ וְהַשֹּׁטְרִים
 הָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל. הַנְּגִישׁ מִמֶּנָּה עַל כַּמָּה
 שֹׁטְרִים, וְהַשֹּׁטֵר מִמֶּנָּה לְרִדּוֹת
 בְּעוֹשֵׂי הַמְּלָאכָה:

ז | תְּבֹן. חֲטוּבֹלִיא, הִי גֹבְלִין חוֹתֵן
 עֵם הַטִּיב:

ח | הַלְּבָנִים. טִיּוּל־שׁ, שְׁעוֹשִׂים מִטִּיט
 וּמִיִּבְשֵׁין חוֹתֵן בַּחֲפָה, וְיֵשׁ שְׁשׁוֹרְכִין
 חוֹתֵן בַּכֶּבֶשׂ:

ט | בְּתַמּוֹל שְׁלֹשׁ. כִּפָּשֶׁר הַיִּיטֵם עוֹשִׂים
 עַד הַעַתָּה:

י | וְקִשְׁשׁוּ. וְלָקְטוּ:

יא | וְאֶת־מִתְּפַנֵּת הַלְּבָנִים. סְכּוּם חֲשׁוֹן
 הַלְּבָנִים שְׁהִיָּה כָּל חֶדֶד עוֹשֶׂה לְיוֹם
 כְּשִׁהִיָּה הַתְּבֹן נֶתָן לָהֶם, חוֹתֵן סְכּוּם
 "תִּשְׁימוּ עֲלֵיהֶם" גַּם עֲתָה, לְמַעַן תִּכְבֵּד
 הָעֲבֹדָה עֲלֵיהֶם:

יב | כִּי־נִרְפִים הֵם. מִן הָעֲבֹדָה הֵם, לָכֵן
 לָבָס פּוֹנֶה חַל הַבְּטָלָה וַיִּצְעֲקוּ
 לְחַמֵּר גִּלְכָּה" וְגו':

6 | הַנְּגִישִׁים – *Taskmasters*: The taskmasters, who oversaw groups of foremen, were Egyptians, while the foremen they commanded were Israelites. These in turn directly oversaw the Hebrew workers.

7 | תְּבֹן – *Straw*: This refers to *estoble* in Old French ["stubble" in English], which was kneaded with the clay.

8 | הַלְּבָנִים – *Bricks*: Out of the clay, the Israelites made *tuiles* [in Old French; "tiles" in English]. These were dried in the sun or fired in a furnace.

9 | בְּתַמּוֹל שְׁלֹשׁ – *As before*: [The phrase *kitmol shilshom*, literally, "like yesterday and the day before," really means] "as was the case up till now."

10 | וְקִשְׁשׁוּ – *And gather*: [This verb means to] "gather."

11 | וְאֶת־מִתְּפַנֵּת הַלְּבָנִים – *The same quota of bricks*: Each individual slave must produce the same number of bricks that he was able to fashion back when the straw was given to him. This will have the effect of intensifying the Israelites' workload.

12 | כִּי־נִרְפִים הֵם – *They are lazy*: Israel is indifferent about their work. Their minds are not focused on their labor, and they are lapsing into idleness. *That is why they are crying out, "Send us forth to sacrifice to our God."*



LORD our God, or He may strike us with the plague or with
 4 the sword.” The king of Egypt said to them, “Why, Moshe
 and Aharon, would you take the people from their work?
 5 Get back to your labor! Look,” said Pharaoh, “how numer-
 ous the people of the land have become; and yet you would
 6 have them rest from their labors.” That day, Pharaoh gave or-
 7 ders to the people’s taskmasters and foremen: “Do not give
 the people straw for bricks as before. Let them go and gather
 8 their own straw. But require them to make the same quota of
 bricks as before. Do not reduce it. They are lazy. That is why

ג | פְּנֵי־יִפְגְּעֵנוּ. פֶּן יִכְפְּעֵנִי הַיָּה
 לְהֵם לֹמְרָה חֲלָא שְׁחִלְקוּ פְּגוּד
 לְמַלְכוּת. פְּגִיעָה זוֹ לְשׁוֹן מִקְרָה
 מִיַּת הַיָּה:

3] פְּנֵי־יִפְגְּעֵנוּ – Or He may strike us: Surely it would have been more accurate for them to warn Pharaoh that God would strike *him* for refusing to release Israel. But Moshe and Aharon spoke respectfully to the sovereign, not wishing to threaten him directly. The term *yifga’enu* here denotes a death blow.

ד | תִּפְרִיעוּ אֶת־הָעָם מִמְעֻשָׁיו.
 תִּבְדִּילוּ וְתִרְחִיקוּ חוֹתֶם מִמְלַחְכֶתֶם,
 שְׁזוֹמְעֵין לְכֶם וּסְבוּרִים לְגַיַח מִן
 הַמְלַחְכָה. וְכֵן: “פְּרָעִיהוּ חַל תַּעֲבֹד
 פֹּ” (משלי ה, טו) – רַחֲקוּהוּ וְכֵן:
 “וְתִפְרִעוּ כָל עֲצִיתִי” (שם ח, כה). “כִּי
 פְרָע הַיָּה” (להלן לב, כה) – נִרְחַק
 וְנִתְעַב:

4] תִּפְרִיעוּ אֶת־הָעָם מִמְעֻשָׁיו – Would you take the people from their work: Pharaoh accused Moshe and Aharon of turning the Israelites away from their responsibilities with all their talk of a respite. The people would hear of their leaders’ plans and would believe that they would soon be granted a furlough. The verb “turn away from” [*tafriu*] is used similarly in another verse: *Do not enter into the path of the wicked, and do not go in the way of evil men. Turn away from it [para’ei hu], do not pass by it, avoid it, and pass on* (Proverbs 4:14–15), meaning “take care to distance yourself from such influence.” A different verse states: *But you have turned away [vatifre’u] all my counsel* (Proverbs 1:25). Finally, at the debacle of the golden calf, *Moshe saw that the people were running wild [parua] (32:25) – they had turned astray and become perverted.*

ו | לָבוֹ לְסִבְלָתְהֵיכֶם. לָבוֹ לְמַלְחַתְכֶם
 שְׂיֵשׁ לְכֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת פְּדִינְכֶם. חֲבַל
 מְלַחְכָת שְׁעֵבֹד מִנְּרִים לֹא הִיְתָה
 עַל שְׁבוּטוֹ שֶׁל לֵוִי וְתִדַע לָהּ שְׁהִרִי
 מִנְּרֵי וְהָרֵן יוֹצֵאִים וּבָאִים:

ו | לָבוֹ לְסִבְלָתְהֵיכֶם – Get back to your labor: Return to the chores waiting for you at home. Pharaoh could not have been ordering Moshe and Aharon back to their slave labor because the tribe of Levi had not been conscripted into Egypt’s slave force. This is proved by the fact that Moshe and Aharon came and went as they pleased.

ז | הַיָּה רַבִּים עֲתָה עִם־הָאָרֶץ.
 שְׁהַעֲבֹדָה מְטֹלָת עֲלֵיהֶם, וְחֹתֶם
 מִשְׁבִּיתִים חוֹתֶם מִסְכְּלוֹתֶם, הַפְּסָד
 גָּדוֹל הַיָּה זֶה:

5] הַיָּה רַבִּים עֲתָה עִם־הָאָרֶץ – How numerous the people of the land have become: Your nation is so multitudinous, and the labor they perform is so extensive, that if you cause them to cease working it will constitute immeasurable loss to the state.



וַתִּכְרַת אֶת-עַרְלַת בְּנֵהּ וַתַּגַּע לְדַגְלֵיוֹ וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי
 כו חֲתַן-דָּמַיִם אַתָּה לִי: וַיֵּרָף מִמֶּנּוּ אִזּוֹ אַמְרָה חֲתַן
 דָּמַיִם לַמּוֹלֵת:

כז וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵךְ לַקְרָאת מֹשֶׁה הַמְדַבֵּר
 כח וּלְךָ וּפְגִשֶׁהוּ בְּהַר הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּשְׁקְלוּ: וַיַּגֵּד מֹשֶׁה
 לְאַהֲרֹן אֵת כָּל-דִּבְרֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח וְאֵת כָּל-
 כט הָאֵתוֹת אֲשֶׁר צִוָּהוּ: וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן וַיֵּאֲסֹפוּ אֶת-
 ל כָּל-זִקְנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיְדַבֵּר אַהֲרֹן אֶת כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים
 אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיַּעַשׂ הָאֵתוֹת לְעֵינֵי
 לא הָעָם: וַיֵּאֱמֹן הָעָם וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כִּי-פָקֵד יְהוָה אֶת-בְּנֵי

ה א יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכִי רָאָה אֶת-עַנְיָם וַיִּקְדּוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ: וְאַחַר
 באו מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-פְּרֹעֶה כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה
 אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שַׁלַּח אֶת-עַמִּי וַיַּחֲזֹו לִי בַמִּדְבָּר:
 ב וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרֹעֶה מִי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר אֲשַׁמְעַ בְּקִלּוֹ לְשַׁלַּח
 אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָדַעְתִּי אֶת-יְהוָה וְגַם אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל
 ג לֹא אֲשַׁלַּח: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים נִקְרָא עֲלֵינוּ
 נִלְכְּהָ-נָא דְרֹךְ שְׁלִשֵׁת יָמִים בַּמִּדְבָּר וְנִבְחַחָהּ לִי-יְהוָה

(להלן יד, ט). [ואינן לוקים תרגום 'דמייס';
 על דם המילה:]

think that the Israelites [livnei Yisrael] are lost (14:3). [Here Pharaoh was thinking about the Israelites.] Onkelos understands the word "blood" as referring to the blood of the circumcision [and not to the threat of Moshe's blood being spilled].

ה א | וְאַחַר באו מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן וַיֵּאֲמְרוּ
 חֲבֵל הַזִּקְנִים נִשְׁמְעוּ חֶדְדִּי חֶדְדִּי
 מִיֵּאֲחַר מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן עַד שֶׁנִּשְׁמְעוּ
 כָּל־סֵדֶר הַדָּבָר וְהָיָה לְפָנֵינוּ, לְמִי
 שֶׁיִּדְבַּר לְלִבֵּנוֹ. וְכֵן נִפְדַּע לָהֶם:
 "וְנִשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה לְבַדּוֹ וְהָס לֹא יִשְׁאוּ"
 (להלן כד, ט). [החזיקם לאחוריהם:]

5 | – After this, Moshe and Aharon came:
 The two leaders went by themselves to confront Pharaoh. The
 elders, who had set out toward the palace together with them,
 grew afraid and slipped away one by one during the delega-
 tion's approach, until they had all abandoned the mission. Later,
 at Mount Sinai, God punished them for their cowardice. The
 verse states: Moshe alone shall approach the LORD, whereas the
 elders were turned back: The others must not come close (24:2).

a flint knife and cut off her son's foreskin, throwing it down at
 26 his feet, and said, "You are a bridegroom of blood to me." So
 He let him go. Then "A bridegroom of blood," she said, "be-
 cause of circumcision."
 27 The LORD said to Aharon, "Go and meet Moshe in the wil-
 derness." And he went and met him at God's mountain, and
 28 kissed him. And Moshe told Aharon all that the LORD had
 said about his mission, and all the miraculous signs He had
 29 commanded him to perform. So Moshe and Aharon went
 30 and gathered all the elders of Israel. Aharon told them ev-
 erything the LORD had said to Moshe, and he performed the
 31 signs before the people. And the people believed. When they
 heard that the LORD was watching over the Israelites, and
 that He had seen their misery, they bowed their heads and
 5 1 prostrated themselves. After this, Moshe and Aharon came ^{SHVET}
 to Pharaoh; they said, "Thus says the LORD, God of Israel:
 Send My people forth so that they may hold a festival for
 2 Me in the wilderness." But Pharaoh said, "Who is this LORD
 that I should obey Him and send Israel forth? I do not know
 3 the LORD, and I will not send Israel forth." "The God of the
 Hebrews has revealed Himself to us," they said. "Let us take
 a three-day journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the

כה | וַתַּגַּע לְרַגְלָיו. הַשְׁלִיכְתָּנוּ לְפָנָי
 רַגְלָיו שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה:

וַתֹּאמֶר. עַל פְּנֵיהֶּי. "כִּי חָתַן דְּמַיִם חָתַתָּ
 לִי" – חָתַתָּ הַיִּיתָ גֹּדֵם לְהַיּוֹת הַחֲתָן
 שְׁלִי נִרְצַח עֲלֶיךָ, הוֹרֵג חֹשֵׁי חָתַתָּ לִי:

כז | וַיִּרְף. הַמַּלְאָךְ "מִמֶּנּוּ," חָזַ" הַבְּיָנָה
 שְׁעַל הַמַּיְלָה פָּח לְהַרְגוֹ, "חָמְרָה: חָתַן
 דְּמַיִם לְמוֹלַתִּי – חָתַתָּ הָיָה נִרְצַח עַל
 דְּבַר הַמַּיְלָה:

לְמוֹלַת. עַל דְּבַר הַמוֹלוֹת, שֶׁס דְּבַר
 הוּא, וְהַלְמֵ"ד מְשַׁמֵּשֶׁת פֶּלֶשׁוֹן עֲלֵי,
 כְּמוֹ: "וְחָמְרָה פְּרָעֹה לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל"

25 | וַתַּגַּע לְרַגְלָיו – *Throwing it down at his feet:* Tziphora cast
 the foreskin at Moshe's feet.

וַתֹּאמֶר – *And said:* To her son: *You are a bridegroom of blood
 to me.* You would have been the cause of my husband's
 death. In my eyes, you are my husband's killer.

26 | וַיִּרְף – *So he let him go:* At that point the angel of death
 released Moshe. This confirmed Tziphora's suspicion that he
 had come to kill Moshe because of the circumcision. She
 said: *A bridegroom of blood because of circumcision.* Had I
 not circumcised my son, my husband would have been
 murdered over his neglect.

לְמוֹלַת – *Because of circumcision:* The word *lamulot* means
 "because of circumcision." The term *mulot* is not a verb here,
 but a noun, and the prefix letter *lamed* here means "regard-
 ing." This is similar to the phrasing in the verse *Pharaoh will*



הַמִּפְתִּים אֲשֶׁר-שָׁמַתִּי בְיָדְךָ וְעִשִּׂיתָם לִפְנֵי פְרֹעֶה
 כב וְאֲנִי אַחֲזִק אֶת-לְבָבוֹ וְלֹא יִשְׁלַח אֶת-הָעַם: וְאָמַרְתָּ
 אֶל-פְּרֹעֶה כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה בְּנִי בְכָרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
 כג וְאָמַר אֵלֶיךָ שְׁלַח אֶת-בְּנִי וְיַעֲבֹדֵנִי וְתִמְאַן לִשְׁלַחוֹ
 כד הֲיֵה אֲנֹכִי הֵיג אֶת-בְּנֶךָ בְּכַדְךָ: וַיְהִי בַדְרֹךְ בַּמָּלֹךְ
 כה וַיִּפְגְּשׁוּהוּ יְהוָה וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַמִּיתוֹ: וַתִּקַּח צַפְרָה צֹד

ודם המבקש להנקם מחברו מעולם
 את דבריו, שלא יבקש הצלה. חבל
 הקדוש ברוך הוא יאצב בכחו ויחן
 יכלת להמלט מידו כי אם בשגבו חלו,
 לפיכך הוא מוכהו ומתרה בו לשגב:

כד | וַיְהִי מִשָּׁה, "בְּכַדְךָ בַּמָּלֹךְ":

וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַמִּיתוֹ. לְמִי שֶׁלֹּא מֵל חַת
 חֲלִיעֵזֶר בְּנֵו, וְעַל שֶׁנִּתְרַשֵּׁל נַעֲנֵשׁ
 מִיָּתֶה. תַּנְיָא, חָמַר רַבִּי יוֹסֵי: חַס
 וְשָׁלוֹם, לֹא נִתְרַשֵּׁל, חֲלָא חָמַר: חָמוּל
 וְחָזַח לְדָרְךָ - סַפְּנָה הֵיא לְתִינוּק עַד
 שְׁלֵשָׁה יָמִים! חָמוּל וְחָשָׁה שְׁלֵשָׁה
 יָמִים - הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא צִנֵּי: "לֵךְ
 עָב מִצְרַיִם!" וּמִתְּנֵי מַה נַּעֲנֵשׁ? לְמִי
 שֶׁנִּתְעַסַּק בַּמָּלֹךְ תַּחֲלָה. בְּמַסְכֵּת
 נִדְרִים (דף ל"ח ע"ב). וְהֵיא הַמְּלֹאךְ נַעֲנֵשׁ
 כְּמִין חַס וּבֹלְעוֹ מֵרֹאשׁוֹ וְעַד רַגְלָיו
 וְחוֹזֵר וּבֹלְעוֹ מִרַגְלָיו וְעַד חֹתוֹ מִקּוֹם.
 הַבְּיָה עֲפוּרָה שֶׁשָּׂבִיב הַמִּלָּה הוּא:

beings are not so magnanimous. When they have a mind to exact vengeance on someone, they conceal their intention to prevent him from fleeing. But there is no escape from God's omnipotence; the only way to mollify His anger is to repent. This is why God teaches the sinner what punishment awaits him, warning him to return to the right path.

24 | וַיְהִי בַדְרֹךְ בַּמָּלֹךְ – *At a lodging place on the way*: [Literally, "It was at...". The verb *vayhi*, meaning "he/it was," often opens biblical episodes, with the sense of "It happened that...". Rashi explains that here, however, the verb should be understood as having a specific subject:] It was Moshe who was *at a lodging place on the way*.

וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַמִּיתוֹ – *And was about to kill him*: The following explanation appears in tractate Nedarim (31b): "Moshe's capital offense was that he had neglected to circumcise his son Eliezer. Rabbi Yosei objected: Heaven forbid that Moshe was negligent! Rather, he reasoned that if he were to circumcise the baby in Midian it would be irresponsible to then take the child on a journey, since his health would be in danger for the subsequent three days. On the other hand, were he to delay his departure for three days while the child recovered from his operation, he would be remiss in following God's order *Go, return to Egypt* (4:19). Why then did Moshe deserve death? Because once the family arrived at the lodging place, he first dealt with securing their lodging [when the circumcision should have been his first order of business]." The angel that was dispatched to kill Moshe appeared in the form of a snake that proceeded to swallow him live from his head to his thighs. The serpent then swallowed him again from his feet up to his place of circumcision. It was Tzipora who understood the message: Moshe was being attacked on account of her uncircumcised son.

Pharaoh all the wonders I have placed in your power. But still I will strengthen his heart and he will not send the people forth.

- 22 Tell Pharaoh: This is what the LORD says, ‘Israel is My son,
- 23 My firstborn. I have told you: Send forth My son, so that he may serve Me. If you refuse to let him go, I will kill your son,
- 24 your firstborn.’” At a lodging place on the way, the LORD con-
- 25 fronted Moshe and was about to kill him. But Tziphora took

אֲשֶׁר־שָׂמֵתִי בְיָדְךָ. לֹא עַל שְׁלֵשׁ
 חֹתָמוֹת הַחֲמוּדוֹת לְמַעַלְהָ, שֶׁהָיָה
 לֹא לְפָנֵי פַרְעֹה עֲוֵה לְעֵשׂוֹתָם
 חֲלָף לְפָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׂיחַמְיֵנו לוֹ, וְלֹא
 מִנְעֵנו שְׁעֵצָאֵם לְפָנֵינוּ, חֲלָף מוֹפְתֵים
 שְׁחָנִי עֲתִיד לְשֹׂם בְיָדְךָ בְּמִצְרַיִם,
 כְּמוֹ: ”כִּי יִדְבַר חֲלֶכֶם פְּרַעֲוֹה וְגו’
 (לֵהֲלוֹ א, ו). וְחָל תִּתְמַנֶּה עַל חֲשֵׁךְ
 פְּתָבֶךָ: ”חֲשֵׁךְ שְׂמִתִּי”, שְׂבָן מִשְׁמַעֲנוּ:
 כְּשֶׁתִּדְבַר עִמּוֹ כְּבָר שְׂמִתִּים בְּיָדְךָ:

אֲשֶׁר־שָׂמֵתִי בְיָדְךָ – *I have placed in your power:* God does not refer here to the three signs mentioned above [in 4:2–9], because Moshe was not commanded to perform those wonders to impress Pharaoh, but rather the potentially skeptical Israel. Furthermore, the text does not report that Moshe displayed these signs to the ruler of Egypt at all. Rather, in this verse, God alludes to the wonders that He planned on instructing Moshe to execute in Egypt. This comes to pass in the verse *When Pharaoh says to you, “Perform a miracle,” tell Aharon: Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh and it will become a snake (7:9).* Now do not be bothered by the fact that our text employs the phrase “I have placed” [indicating that the signs in question were already conveyed to Moshe]. The phrase actually means that God “will have placed” the signs at Moshe’s disposal by the time he speaks with Pharaoh.

כֹּבֵד וְאַמְרַת אֶל־פְּרַעֲוֹה. כְּשֶׁתִּשְׁמַע
 שְׂבָבוֹ חִזָּק וַיִּמְחַן לְשַׁלַּח חָמוֹד לוֹ
 כֵּן:

כֹּבֵד וְאַמְרַת אֶל־פְּרַעֲוֹה – *Tell Pharaoh:* Here is what you should tell Pharaoh after it becomes clear that his heart has hardened and he refuses to release Israel.

בְּנִי בְּכֹרִי. לְשׁוֹן גְּדֻלָּה, כְּמוֹ: ”חַךְ
 חָנִי בְּכוֹר חֲתָנְיָהוּ” (תהלים פט, כח) זֶהוּ
 פְּשׁוּטוֹ. וּמִדְּרָשׁוֹ, כִּי אִין חֲתָם הַקְּדוֹשׁ
 בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל מְכִירַת הַבְּכוֹרָה
 שְׁלָחַח יַעֲקֹב מִעֵשָׂו:

בְּנִי בְּכֹרִי – *My son, My firstborn:* The term “firstborn” can denote importance, as in the verse referring to David: *Also I will make him firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth (Psalms 89:28).* That is the straightforward meaning of this description of Israel as firstborn. But a homiletic interpretation is that here God validated Yaakov’s purchase of the firstborn status from Esav [described in Genesis 25:29–34].

כֹּבֵד וְאַמְרַת אֶלֶיךָ. כְּשֶׁלִּיחִיתָנוּ שָׁלַח
 מִקּוֹם: ”שְׁלַח חֵת בְּנִי”:

כֹּבֵד וְאַמְרַת אֶלֶיךָ – *I have told you:* I, Moshe, have told you in God’s name: *Send forth My son.*

הַיָּה אֲנֹכִי הַיָּה גְּדוֹל וְגו’. הַיָּה מְכַהֵ
 חֲרוֹנָה, וְכֵה הַתְּדָהוּ תַחֲלָה מִפְּנֵי
 שֶׁהוּא קָשָׁה. וְזֶה הוּא שְׁחָמַר חַיִּיבוֹ:
 ”כֵּן חָל גְּשָׁעִב בְּכָחוֹ” (חִיבֹב לו, כב),
 לְפִיכֵן ”מִי כְמוֹהוּ מוֹדֵה” – בְּשָׂר

הַיָּה אֲנֹכִי הַיָּה – *I will kill:* Although this was the final plague of the ten that God visited upon Egypt, He warned Pharaoh about it first because of its severity. This approach demonstrates the message of the verse *Behold, God is exalted by His power: who teaches like Him? (Job 36:22).* [That verse indicates that God is so powerful that He can “teach,” i.e., forewarn, his enemies.] Human

אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים בְּפִיו וְאַנְלִי אֶהְיֶה עִם־פִּיךָ וְעִם־פְּהִיּוֹ
 וְהוֹרִיתִי אֶתְכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשׂוּן: וְדַבַּר־הוּא לְךָ
 אֶל־הָעַם וְהִיּהּ הוּא יִהְיֶה־לְךָ לְפִהּ וְאַתָּה תִּהְיֶה־
 לוֹ לֵאלֹהִים: וְאַתָּה־הַמַּטֵּה הַזֶּה תִקַּח בְּיָדְךָ אֲשֶׁר
 תַעֲשֶׂה־בוֹ אֶת־הָאֹתוֹת:

יח וְיֵלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיָּשָׁב וְאֶל־יִתְרֹ חֹתָנּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֵלֶיכָה־
 ג שָׂא וְאִשׁוּבָה אֶל־אֲחֵי אֲשֶׁר־בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֶרְאֶה הָעוֹדִים
 יט חַיִּים וַיֹּאמֶר יִתְרוֹ לְמֹשֶׁה לֵךְ לְשָׁלוֹם: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה
 אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְיָן לֵךְ שָׁב מִצְרַיִם כִּי־מִתּוֹ כָּל־
 כ הָאֲנָשִׁים הַמְּבַקְשִׁים אֶת־נַפְשְׁךָ: וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת־
 אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת־בָּנָיו וַיֵּרָכְבּוּ עַל־הַחֲמֹר וַיָּשָׁב אֶרְצָה
 כא מִצְרַיִם וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת־מַטֵּה הָאֱלֹהִים בְּיָדוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר
 יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּלָכְתְּךָ לָשׁוּב מִצְרַיִם רְאֵה כָּל־

מַנְכָּסִיהֶם, וְהֵעֵנִי חֲשׁוֹב כְּמֵת:

Numbers 16], but had merely become impoverished. For a destitute person is akin to a dead one [see Nedarim 64b].

כ | עַל־הַחֲמֹר. חֲמֹר הַמֵּינִה. הוּא
 הַחֲמֹר שֶׁכָּבֵשׁ אֶבְרָהָם לְעִקְרַת
 יִצְחָק, וְהוּא שֶׁעֲתִיד מֶלֶךְ הַמָּשִׁיחַ
 לְהִזְלוֹת עָלָיו, שֶׁנֶּחֱמַר: "עֵנִי וְרַכְבֵּן
 עַל חֲמֹר" (זכריה ט, ט):

20 | – *On a donkey*: [Literally, "the donkey."] This was a special donkey. For it was the same animal that Avraham had saddled up to go bind his son Yitzhak [in Genesis 22:3], and it is the same beast that the Messiah will ride on when he reveals himself to the world, as the verse states: *Behold, your king comes to you: he is just, and victorious, humble, and riding upon a donkey* (Zechariah 9:9).

וַיָּשָׁב אֶרְצָה מִצְרַיִם וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה
 אֶת־מַטֵּה. חֵיּוֹן מִקֶּדֶם וּמֵאַחֵר
 מִדְּקָדְקִים בְּמִקְרָא:

– *And he set out to return to Egypt, taking the staff*: The Torah does not insist on presenting events precisely in the sequence that they occurred [for Moshe first took his staff and then departed for Egypt].

כא | בְּלָכְתְּךָ לָשׁוּב מִצְרַיִם וְגו'.
 דַּע שֶׁעַל מְנַת כֵּן תִּלְךָ, שֶׁתִּהְיֶה גָבוּר
 בְּשִׁלְחוֹתִי לַעֲשׂוֹת כָּל מוֹפְתַי לְפָנֶיךָ
 פְּרַעֲוֵה וְלֹא תִירָח מִמֶּנּוּ:

21 | – *When you return to Egypt*: God said to Moshe: Appreciate that the success of your mission relies on you being bold when performing My wonders before Pharaoh; you must not be afraid of him.

