

SCHOTTENSTEIN EDITION

פירוש רש"י על התורה
THE ELUCIDATED
RASHI
ON CHUMASH



פרשת שמות

Parashas Shemos

א ואלֵּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל דְּעָלוּ
לְמִצְרַיִם עִם יַעֲקֹב גִּבְר וְאִנְשׁ
בֵּיתָה עָלוּ: ב רְאוּבֵן שְׁמוֹנוֹ לִי
וַיהוּדָה: ג יִשְׁשָׁכָר זְבוּלֹן וּבְנֵימִן:
ד דָּן וְנַפְתָּלִי גֵר וְאָשֶׁר: ה וְהִנֵּה
כָּל נַפְשָׁתָא נַפְשֵׁי יוֹסֵף יִרְבֵּא דִיעֲקֹב
שְׁבַעִין נַפְשֵׁי וַיֹּסֶף דִּהְיָה בְּמִצְרַיִם:
ו וּמִית יוֹסֵף וְכָל אַחֲוָיו וְכָל דְּרָא
הָהוּא: ז וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נִפְּשׁוּ
וְאֶתְיָלְדוּ וּסְגִיאוֹ וּתְקִיפּוֹ לַחֲדָא
לַחֲדָא וְאֶתְמַלִּיאת אֶרְעָא מְגֻדּוֹן:

[א] א ואלֵּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּאִים מִצְרַיִם
אֶת יַעֲקֹב אִישׁ וּבֵיתוֹ בָּאוּ: ב רְאוּבֵן שְׁמוֹנוֹ לִי
וַיהוּדָה: ג יִשְׁשָׁכָר זְבוּלֹן וּבְנֵימִן: ד דָּן וְנַפְתָּלִי גֵר
וְאָשֶׁר: ה וַיְהִי כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ יִצְאֵי יִרְבֵּי־עֲקֹב שְׁבָעִים
נֶפֶשׁ וַיֹּסֶף הָיָה בְּמִצְרַיִם: ו וַיָּמָת יוֹסֵף וְכָל־אֲחָיו
וְכָל־הַדּוֹר הַהוּא: ז וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל פָּרוּ וַיִּשְׁרְצוּ וַיִּרְבּוּ
וַיַּעֲצֻמוּ בְּמֵאד מְאֹד וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם: פ

רע"ו

הוא וּבְנָיו הָיוּ כְּכָל שְׁבָעִים, וּמָה צָא לְלַמְדָּנוּ, וְכִי לֹא הָיוּ
יודעים שֶׁהוּא הָיָה בְּמִצְרַיִם, אֲלֹא לְהוֹדִיעַ לְדַקְתּוֹ שֶׁל יוֹסֵף,
הוא יוֹסֵף הַרוּעֶה אֶת לֶאֱזוֹן אֲבִיו, הוּא יוֹסֵף שֶׁהָיָה בְּמִצְרַיִם
וְנִטְשָׁה מְלֶכֶד וְעוֹמֵד בְּלִדְקוֹ (ספרי דברים שלד: ז) וַיִּשְׁרְצוּ.
שֶׁהָיוּ יוֹלְדוֹת שָׁשָׁה צְבָרִים אֶחָד (שמות רבה א, ח; תנחומא ה:)

(א) ואלֵּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. אֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁמִּנְאֵן צִמִּיָּה
בְּשִׁמּוֹתָם חֲזַר וּמִנְאֵם בְּמִיתָתָם, לְהוֹדִיעַ חֵיבָתָם, שֶׁנִּמְשְׁלוּ
לְכּוֹכְבֵּים שְׁמוֹלִיָּאִים וּמִכְנִיסִים בְּמִסְפָּר וּבְשִׁמּוֹתָם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר
"הַמּוֹלִיָּאִים בְּמִסְפָּר לְכָל־שָׁמַיִם יִקְרָא" (ישעיה מ, כו; שמות
רבה א, ג; תנחומא ין צ: ד) וַיֹּסֶף הָיָה בְּמִצְרַיִם. וְהֵלֵךְ

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1.

1. ואלֵּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל — AND THESE ARE THE NAMES OF THE CHILDREN OF YISRAEL WHO WERE COMING TO EGYPT.

The children of Yisrael (Yaakov) who came down to Egypt were already counted in detail in the Book of *Bereishis* (46:8-27). Rashi explains why the Torah repeats this count here:

אֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁמִּנְאֵן בְּחַיֵּיהֶם בְּשִׁמּוֹתָם — Although [the Torah] already counted [Yaakov's children] in their lifetime, and listed each one by name when it described their descent to Egypt, — חֲזַר וּמִנְאֵם בְּמִיתָתָם — it counts them again in this passage, which tells of their death^[1] (v. 6). — לְהוֹדִיעַ חֵיבָתָם — The Torah does this to tell us how beloved [the Jewish people] are to Hashem, — שְׁנִמְשְׁלוּ לְכּוֹכְבֵּים — for they are like the stars, — שְׁמוֹלִיָּאִים וּמִכְנִיסִים בְּמִסְפָּר וּבְשִׁמּוֹתָם — which [Hashem] takes out at night when they emerge, and gathers them up in the morning when they fade, with a count of each one and by calling them by their names, — שְׁנִמְשְׁלוּ לְכּוֹכְבֵּים — as it says (Yeshayah 40:26), *He brings forth their legions by number, He calls to each of them by name.*^[2] Similarly, Hashem counted the children of Yaakov when He “took them out,” i.e., when He brought them down to Egypt, and then again when He “gathered them in,” i.e., when recounting their deaths in this passage^[3] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:3; *Tanchuma Yashan* §2).

1. Here Rashi does not say the Torah counted them “by name,” because in the *Bereishis* passage, all seventy souls (including the children of Yaakov’s twelve children) were named, but here only Yaakov’s children themselves are named (*Mizrachi*; see *Gur Aryeh*).

2. “He brings forth their legions by number” refers to the emergence of the stars at night; “He calls to each

of them by name” refers to the fading of the stars in the morning, when they are “gathered in,” like one who calls to someone by name to come to him (*Gur Aryeh*).

3. Counting the stars demonstrates the importance of each one and its role to Hashem. Similarly, counting the Children of Israel conveys the importance of each individual Jew to Hashem (see *Kli Yakar*). See Insight.

§ “To Tell Us How Beloved They Are” Counting the Children of Israel at the time of their deaths conveys an important message: Just as we know that the stars that disappear from our view in the morning remain shining in the heavens, so too the righteous who pass away are merely disappearing from our view; their souls remain shining forever in Heaven (*Rash Almoshino*).

The Torah makes the point of comparing the Children of Israel to the stars specifically here, at the onset of their first exile, to demonstrate that the exile is not an abandonment of the Jewish people by Hashem; on the contrary, it is a sign of their closeness to Him. Hashem, in His love for His people, ensures that they achieve their unique mission, even within the darkness of exile (*Sfas Emes*, 5637 ברכ"י).

- 1 ¹ And these are the names of the children of Yisrael who were coming to Egypt; with Yaakov, each man and his household came. ² Reuven, Shimon, Levi, and Yehudah; ³ Yissachar, Zevulun, and Binyamin; ⁴ Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher. ⁵ And all the persons who emerged from Yaakov's loins were seventy souls, and Yosef was in Egypt. ⁶ Yosef died, and all his brothers and that entire generation. ⁷ The Children of Israel were fruitful, teemed, multiplied, and became mighty — very, very much so; and the land became filled with them.

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5. וְיוֹסֵף הָיָה בְּמִצְרַיִם — AND YOSEF WAS IN EGYPT.

The simple reading of this phrase would seem to be that Yosef is not counted in the seventy since he was in Egypt. Rashi addresses an obvious difficulty with this approach:^[4]

וְהֵלֵךְ הוּא וּבָנָיו הָיוּ בְּכֹלל שְׁבַעִים — But surely [Yosef] himself, as well as his two sons, were included in the count of **seventy** souls, as is clear from the earlier detailed count in the Book of *Bereishis*^[5] (46:27)? וְיֹסֵף בָּא לְלִמְדָנוּ — Clearly, the phrase, *and Yosef was in Egypt*, is unrelated to the count, and stands alone; but if that is the case, **what does it come to teach us?** — וְכִי לֹא הָיוּ יוֹדְעִים שֶׁהוּא הָיָה בְּמִצְרַיִם — Did we not already know that Yosef was in Egypt?

אֲלֵךְ לְהוֹדִיעַךְ צְדִקְתּוֹ שֶׁל יוֹסֵף — Rather, by saying that Yosef was in Egypt the verse is coming to tell you of the righteousness of Yosef. הוּא יוֹסֵף הָרוּעָה אֶת צֹאן אָבִיו — YOSEF WAS IN EGYPT means that the same Yosef who was righteous when he was a shepherd of his father's sheep as a young man in his father's house — הוּא יוֹסֵף שֶׁהָיָה בְּמִצְרַיִם וְנִעְשָׂה מֶלֶךְ — was the very same Yosef that was in Egypt and became king, — וְעוֹמֵד בְּצִדְקוֹ — and even in such vastly different circumstances, facing so many different challenges, he remained on his same level of righteousness throughout^[6] (*Sifrei, Devarim* §334).

7. וַיִּשְׂרְצוּ — THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL... TEEMED.

The root שרץ usually refers to movement, and in that sense, commonly refers to the movement of insects, who swarm on the ground or in the air (see Rashi and Ramban to *Bereishis* 1:20). It is used here in a borrowed sense to mean giving birth to abundant children. Rashi addresses this unusual expression: שֶׁהָיוּ יוֹלְדוֹת שֵׁשָׁה בְּכָרָס אֶחָד — This means that they would give birth to six children from one womb (i.e., from a single pregnancy), just as insects produce large numbers of offspring at a time^[7] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:8; *Tanchuma* §5).

4. *Sefer Zikaron*; see also *Gur Aryeh*.

5. Thus, the verse cannot mean that Yosef was not among the seventy souls. And if it means to say that Yosef is included in the count of the seventy souls *even though* he was in Egypt, it should have said, “and Yosef and his sons were in Egypt,” since the sons are also included in the count, as stated in the *Bereishis* verse (*Gur Aryeh*; see also *Nachalas Yaakov* and *Tzeidah LaDerech*).

6. When the Torah calls someone by his name, it is not simply identifying the person, but referring to his distinctive set of character traits. “Yosef” was first introduced to us (*Bereishis* 37:2) as a shepherd with his brothers by the flock and a youth with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, indicating that he was a righteous and humble member of his father's household. Thus, when our verse says the extra phrase, וְיוֹסֵף הָיָה בְּמִצְרַיִם, it means that he was the very same “Yosef” in Egypt, with the same degree of righteousness and

humility, even though he had been distanced from his father's house and had risen to prominence (*Mizrachi; Nachalas Yaakov; Maskil LeDavid*).

7. The number six is derived from the number of words in this verse describing the abundance: (1) פָּרוּ, *were fruitful*; (2) וַיִּשְׂרְצוּ, *teemed*; (3) וַיִּרְבוּ, *multiplied*; (4) וַיִּעֲצְמוּ, *became mighty*; (5) בְּמֵאֹד, *very*; (6) מְאֹד, *very much so* (*Gur Aryeh*; cf. *Sefer Zikaron*).

Gur Aryeh notes that the placement of the word וַיִּשְׂרְצוּ is significant here. Usually the terms פָּרוּ, *be fruitful*, and רָבוּ, *multiply*, are found together as a phrase (e.g., *Bereishis* 1:22; 1:28; 8:17). Here the verse inserts וַיִּשְׂרְצוּ between פָּרוּ and רָבוּ, indicating that וַיִּשְׂרְצוּ qualifies the nature of the fruitfulness just mentioned.

As for *why* the abundance consisted of specifically six children per birth, see *Gur Aryeh*, who sets out various reasons. He also discusses a conflicting opinion in the Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* and *Tanchuma* *ibid.*) which says that there were *twelve* children per birth.

ח וַיָּקָם מֶלֶךְ-חָדָשׁ עַל-מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדָע אֶת-יוֹסֵף: ט וַיֹּאמֶר לְעַמָּה הָאֵל עֲמָא בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל סָגְנוּ וַתְּקִיפִין (נ"א: וַתְּקִיפִין) מִנָּגָא: י הָבֹה נַתְחַכְמָה לְהוֹן דְּלִמָּא יִסְגֹּון וַיהִי אָרִי יַעֲרַעֲנָא קָרִב וַיְתוּסְפוּן אָף אַנְוֹן

ח וַיָּקָם מֶלֶךְ-חָדָשׁ עַל-מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדָע אֶת-יוֹסֵף: ט וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-עַמּוֹ הִנֵּה עִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל רַב וְעָצוּם מִמֶּנּוּ: י הָבָה נִתְחַכְמָה לוֹ פֶּן-יִרְבֶּה וְהָיָה כִּי-תִקְרָאנָה מִלְחָמָה וְנוֹסַף גַּם-הוּא

רש"י

לָטַס. נִתְחַכְמָה מֵה לַעֲשׂוֹת לוֹ. וְרַצוֹתֵינוּ דְרָשׁוּ: נִתְחַכְמָס לְמוֹשֶׁיֶטֶן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל לְדוֹנֵס צִמְמִים, שֶׁכָּבֹד נִשְׁבַּע שֶׁלֹּא יֵצִיא מִצּוּל לַעֲוֹלָם וְהָיָה לֹא הִבִּינוּ שֶׁעַל כָּל הָעוֹלָם חִינוּ מִצִּיא חֶבֶל הוּא מִצִּיא עַל חֲמִימָה אֶחָת (שְׁמוֹת רַבָּה טז ט; סוּטָה זס:)

(ח) וַיָּקָם מֶלֶךְ חָדָשׁ. רַב וְשִׁמוּאֵל, חֵד חֲמַר: חֲדָשׁ מִמֶּשֶׁ, וְחֵד חֲמַר: שֶׁנִּתְחַדָּשׁוּ גִזְרוֹתָיו (שְׁמוֹת רַבָּה א, ה; סוּטָה יא:). אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדָע. טָעָה עַלְמּוֹ פְּחִילוֹ לֹא יָדָעוּ (סס וסס:). (י) הָבָה נִתְחַכְמָה לוֹ. כָּל "הָבָה" לִשׁוֹן הִכְנָה וְהִזְמָנָה לְדַבֵּר הוּא, כְּלוּמַר, הִזְמִינוּ עַלְמָכֶם לִכְךָ: נִתְחַכְמָה לוֹ.

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8. וַיָּקָם מֶלֶךְ חָדָשׁ — A NEW KING AROSE OVER EGYPT.

If the verse would simply be describing a continuation of the same line of a monarchy, it would say, *And the king of Egypt died, and another king arose...* The words *a new king* indicate that this was not the standard event of one king taking the place of another.^[8] Rashi presents two opinions on how this event differed:

חֵד חֲמַר חָדָשׁ — Rav and Shmuel have different opinions on the interpretation of this verse. **חֵד חֲמַר** — One of them says that the word “new” in this verse means that it was **actually** a new king; the previous king died, and a different person arose who did not know Yosef.^[9] **וְחֵד חֲמַר שְׁנֵיתֵיהּ גִּזְרוֹתָיו** — And the other one says that, in fact, it was the same person on the throne;^[10] when the verse describes him as a “new” king, it means that **his decrees were new**, i.e., he began to pass new laws oppressing the Jewish people, as the following verses describe (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:8; *Sotah* 11a).

□ **אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדָע** — WHO DID NOT KNOW OF YOSEF.

According to the view (mentioned above) that the verse refers to a new king, this phrase is understood simply — the new king did not know Yosef. But according to the view that it was actually the same Pharaoh mentioned in the Book of *Bereishis*, what does this mean?

עָשָׂה עֲצָמוּ בְּאִילוֹ לֹא יָדָעוּ — He made himself as if he did not know him, i.e., Pharaoh acted as if he did not know Yosef and the invaluable service he had performed for Egypt^[11] (*Shemos Rabbah* *ibid.*; *Sotah* *ibid.*).

10. הָבָה נִתְחַכְמָה לוֹ — COME, LET US ACT WISELY TOWARD IT.

Rashi explains the word הָבָה:

כָּל "הָבָה" "הָבָה", havah, is used in Scripture, it is an expression of preparation and readying for the matter being discussed, — כְּלוּמַר, הִזְמִינוּ עַצְמְכֶם לִכְךָ — as if to say: ready yourselves for this. One uses this expression to introduce a plan of action and urge the listeners to prepare themselves for it.^[12]

8. *Eruvin* 53a; *Gur Aryeh*.

9. The reason for the unusual phrasing is that it was not simply another king who was the son of the previous one, but it was a new *line* of kings, with different views and approaches toward the populace than the previous one (*Gur Aryeh*; see note 11).

10. See next note.

11. According to both views, the purpose of the verse here is to describe how the new decrees of oppression began. The first view holds that it was through a new line of kings with a different outlook; the second view holds that the king was the same, but his outlook changed (*Gur Aryeh*).

[*Gur Aryeh* adds that even according to the view that it was the same king, this does not necessarily mean that it was the very same person who had appointed Yosef viceroy over Egypt, since almost a hundred years had passed since that time (see Rashi to 6:16 below). Rather, each *line of kings* is referred to as “the same king” (or monarchy). Thus, according to one view, a completely new line of kings arose, allowing for a new approach to the Jewish people; according to the other, it was the same line of kings, but although a monarch’s heir usually follows the policies of his predecessor, this king decided to ignore Yosef’s contribution to Egypt and adopt a new policy of oppression toward the Jewish people.]

12. As Rashi notes in *Bereishis* 38:16, the literal

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על סנאנא ויגיון בנא קרב
ויסקון מן ארעא יא ומנאיו עליהון
שלוטוני מבאשין בדיל לענואהון
בפלחנהון ובנו קרני בית אוצרא
לפרעה ית פיתם וית רעמסס:

על־שנאינו ונלחם־בנו ועלה מן־הארץ: יא וישימו
עליו שרי מסים למען ענתו בסבלתם ויבן
ערי מסכנות לפרעה את־פתם ואת־רעמסס:

רש"י

בסבלתם. של מלכים: ערי מסכנות. כתרגומי. וכן
"לך זא אל הסוכן הזה" (ישעיה כב, טו), גזר הממונה על
האזירות (שמות רבא טז י: °) את פתם ואת רעמסס. שלא
היו ראיות מתחלה לכך (ס; סוטה טז) וטעאוס תזקת
ובזירות לאזרי:

ועלה מן הארץ. על כרחנו. ורבותינו דרשו: כאדם
שמקלל עצמו ותולה קללתו באחרים, והרי הוא כאלו כתב
ועליו מן הארץ, והם יירשוה (ס וס): (יא) עליו. על
העם: מסים. לשון מס. שרי שגזין מהם המס. ומהו
המס, שייבנו ערי מסכנות לפרעה: למען ענתו

THE ELUCIDATED RASHI

□ ועלה מן הארץ — *AND WAGE WAR AGAINST US AND GO UP FROM THE LAND.*

If the Jewish people would, in fact, join the Egyptians' enemies in a war, then their leaving the land would seemingly be *good* for the Egyptians, as it would reduce the ranks of the opposing army. Why, then, was Pharaoh concerned that they might go up from the land?

על כרחנו — The simple explanation is that Pharaoh meant: They will leave Egypt **against our will** and we will lose our vassals.^[19]

But our Sages have expounded the verse to mean that Pharaoh was expressing himself — **like someone who "curses" himself** (i.e., mentions a misfortune that could happen to him), but does not want to verbalize it outright, **and therefore attributes the "curse" to others**. Pharaoh was actually afraid that the Jewish people would wage war against his people and force *them* out of the land, but he did not want to say this. והרי הוא כאלו כתב — **So**, when the verse quotes Pharaoh as saying, *and "he" will go up from the land*, referring to the Jewish people, **it is as if it said, and "we" will go up from the land**, meaning, והם יירשוה — **we will be driven out of Egypt by the Jewish people, and they will take possession of it** (*Shemos Rabbah* ibid.; *Sotah* ibid.).

11. עליו — *SO THEY APPOINTED TAX OFFICERS OVER IT.*

Rashi explains what the verse refers to with the singular עליו, *over "it"*:

על העם — They appointed officers **over the Jewish nation**. This continues the pattern of the previous verse, which refers to the Jewish people as the "nation," in the singular.^[20]

19. Although the Jewish people were not yet enslaved, from the time of Yaakov's passing they had been confined in Egypt and subjugated to Pharaoh (Rashi to *Bereishis* 47:28). Pharaoh was afraid that the Jewish people would take advantage of a war and leave the country against his will, and Egypt would lose a valuable source of labor (*Mizrachi*; *Rash Almoresh*; see also *Rashbam*; cf. *Ramban*).

20. This follows Rashi's simple approach in the previous verse, ד"ה נתחבמה לו. Following the Midrashic approach cited there, the singular form in our verse may also be interpreted Midrashically: עליו means "over him," referring to Pharaoh. The Egyptians hung a brick mold from Pharaoh's neck, as if they were tasking him with labor. Then, if any Jew said, "I am too delicate to work," they would tell him, "Are you more delicate than Pharaoh?"

below). *Ramban* (to 14:4) notes that it was completely irrational for the Egyptians to do this. Since the Splitting of the Sea was such an obvious miracle, and it was clear that only Hashem was enabling the Jewish people to walk on dry land in the midst of the Sea, for the Egyptians to think that they would survive this chase was the height of delusion. Indeed, says *Ramban*, they would not have done this out of their own choice. They entered the Sea only because Hashem miraculously forced them to do this, as He said to Moshe (ibid.), *I shall strengthen the heart of Pharaoh, and he will pursue them*.

It emerges that the Egyptians were punished *middah keneged middah* not only for throwing the Jewish babies into the water, but also for their arrogance in trying to outsmart Hashem. For the drowning of the Jewish children, they were drowned in the *Yam Suf*, and for deeming to be wiser than Hashem, they were caused to rush headlong in a fit of insanity to their well-deserved fate (*Zos LeYaakov* to 14:4).

may join our enemies, and wage war against us and go up from the land.”

¹¹ *So they appointed tax officers over it in order to afflict it with their burdens; it built cities of storage for Pharaoh, Pisom and Raamses.*

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□ **מָסִים — “MISSIM.”**

Rashi explains the meaning of the word מָסִים, which appears nowhere else in *Tanach*:

מָסִים — שָׂרִים שְׂגוּבֵינִי מֵהֶם הַמָּס — Thus, ^[21] — This is related to “מָס”, *tax*; “מָסִים” is the plural form of “מָס”. — שָׂרִים שְׂגוּבֵינִי מֵהֶם הַמָּס — And what is the “tax” that is referred to here? שְׂרֵי מָסִים means, **officers that collect the tax from them.** — וְמָהוּ הַמָּס — That they should build storage cities for Pharaoh. ^[22]

□ **לְמַעַן עֲנֹתוֹ בְּסִבְלָתָם — IN ORDER TO AFFLICT IT WITH THEIR BURDENS.**

If “*afflict it*” (singular) refers to the Jewish people, to whom does “*their burdens*” (plural) refer?

שָׁל מִצְרַיִם — This refers to the burdens of the Egyptians; i.e., the burdens with which the Egyptians would afflict them. ^[23]

□ **עָרֵי מִסְכְּנוֹת — “MISKENOS” CITIES.**

Rashi identifies the meaning of מִסְכְּנוֹת:

מִסְכְּנוֹת — As Targum Onkelos renders it: cities of storage. — וְכֵן בָּא אֶל הַסּוֹכֵן הַזֶּה — There is a similar usage in the verse (Yeshayah 22:15), **Go, approach that “סוֹכֵן”... who is in charge of the house,** — גִּזְרָה מִמּוֹנָה עַל הָאוֹצְרוֹת — where the term סוֹכֵן refers to the official appointed to oversee the houses of storage ^[24] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:10).

□ **וְאֵת פֶּתֶם וְאֵת רַעְמֶסֶס — IT BUILT CITIES OF STORAGE FOR PHARAOH, PISOM AND RAAMSSES.**

If these were new cities, the verse should have said that Pharaoh *named them* Pisom and Raamses. The way the verse is written, it implies that Pisom and Raamses were known places that existed beforehand. ^[25] Rashi therefore explains:

שֶׁלֹּא הָיוּ רְאוּיֹת מִתְחִלָּה לְכָךְ — Pisom and Raamses already existed earlier, but **they were not originally fit for this purpose of storage,** — וְעַתָּה הִזְקוּת וּבִצּוֹרֹת לְאוֹצָר — and now, by Pharaoh’s decree, **they made [these cities] strong and fortified** to serve as places for storage ^[26] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:10; *Sotah* 11a).

(*Shemos Rabbah* 1:10; *Sotah* 11a). For reasons why Rashi omits this Midrashic explanation, see *Mizrachi*, *Gur Aryeh*, *Sefer Zikaron*, and other commentaries.

21. Just as the plural of פֶּת, *bread*, is פֶּתִים [Vayikra 2:6] (*Mizrachi*). See Onkelos for another translation of the word.

22. These officers were not appointed to collect a monetary tax, since the verse speaks only of work. Rather, any levy imposed by a government is called a מָס, *tax*; here the imposed obligation was forced conscription of labor (*Mizrachi*).

23. Throughout this passage, the Jewish people are referred to in the singular, while the Egyptians are referred to in the plural (see *Maskil LeDavid*).

When one person places a burden upon another, it

can be described either as the burden of the one placing it (as in 6:7 below), or as the burden of the one upon whom it is placed (as in 2:11 and 5:4-5 below). Since our verse switches from the singular עֲנֹתוֹ, *to afflict “it,”* to the plural בְּסִבְלָתָם, *with “their” burdens*, Rashi explains that בְּסִבְלָתָם refers to the burdens of the Egyptians, i.e., the burdens with which they afflicted the Jewish people (*Rash Almoreshnino*; *Ri Kanizal*).

24. See also *Radak* and *Metzudos* to that verse; but see Rashi there, who gives a different interpretation of הִסְבִּיחַ.

25. *Tosafos HaShaleim*; *Meisiach Ilmim*.

26. Thus, the verse describes them by the names that they had been given when they were originally built (*Tosafos HaShaleim*; *Meisiach Ilmim*; see also *Mizrachi* and *Gur Aryeh*). See *Insight*.

☞ **The City Of Raamses** Some commentators say that Rashi explains the verse this way because the city of

Raamses *must have* existed earlier, as it is already mentioned in *Bereishis* 47:11 (*Tosafos HaShaleim*; *Sefer Zikaron*; *Devek Tov*; *Be’er Mayim Chaim*). Others, however, reject this approach for, as *Ibn Ezra* notes, the Raamses mentioned here is not the same as the one mentioned in *Bereishis*. Here the name is vowelized with a *patach* under the *ayin* (pronounced “Ra’amses”), whereas earlier it is vowelized with a *sheva* under the *ayin* (pronounced “Ra’me’ses”). רַעְמֶסֶס (with a *patach*) was a city of storage that the Jewish people built for Pharaoh, whereas רַעְמֶסֶס (with a *sheva*) was a region where the Jewish people resided. The latter is also mentioned below, 12:37, and in *Bamidbar* 33:3,5, as the place from which the Jewish people departed

יב וּבְאֲשֶׁר יַעֲנוּ אֹתוֹ בֶּן יִרְבֵּה וּבֶן יִפְרָץ וַיִּקְצוּ
מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: יג וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת־בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּפָרָךְ: יד וַיִּמְרְרוּ אֶת־חַיֵּיהֶם בַּעֲבֹדָה
קָשָׁה בַּחֲמֹר וּבִלְבָנִים וּבְכָל־עֲבֹדָה בַּשָּׂדֶה
אֶת כָּל־עֲבֹדָתָם אֲשֶׁר־עָבְדוּ בָהֶם בְּפָרָךְ:

יב וּבְאֲשֶׁר יַעֲנוּ אֹתוֹ בֶּן יִרְבֵּה וּבֶן יִפְרָץ וַיִּקְצוּ
מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: יג וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת־בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּפָרָךְ: יד וַיִּמְרְרוּ אֶת־חַיֵּיהֶם בַּעֲבֹדָה
קָשָׁה בַּחֲמֹר וּבִלְבָנִים וּבְכָל־עֲבֹדָה בַּשָּׂדֶה
אֶת כָּל־עֲבֹדָתָם אֲשֶׁר־עָבְדוּ בָהֶם בְּפָרָךְ:

רש"י

רבה שם יא; סוטה יא: וַיִּקְצוּ. קָצוּ צְחִיָּהֶם. וְרַצְוֵיהֶם
לְעֹמֶת פֶּן לֹא יִהְיֶה צָרוֹךְ הוּא לְהַרְצוֹת וּלְהַפְרִיץ: פֶּן
יִרְבֶּה. פֶּן רָבָה וְכֵן פֶּרֶץ. וּמִדְּרָשׁ, רִיחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ אוֹמֶרֶת
כֵּן, אֲתָם אוֹמְרִים "פֶּן יִרְבֶּה" וְאֲנִי אוֹמֵר "פֶּן יִרְבֶּה" (שמות
סוטה יא:)

(יב) וּבְאֲשֶׁר יַעֲנוּ אֹתוֹ. פֶּכַל מֵה שֶׁהֵם נוֹתְנִין לֹא
לְעֹמֶת פֶּן לֹא יִהְיֶה צָרוֹךְ הוּא לְהַרְצוֹת וּלְהַפְרִיץ: פֶּן
יִרְבֶּה. פֶּן רָבָה וְכֵן פֶּרֶץ. וּמִדְּרָשׁ, רִיחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ אוֹמֶרֶת
כֵּן, אֲתָם אוֹמְרִים "פֶּן יִרְבֶּה" וְאֲנִי אוֹמֵר "פֶּן יִרְבֶּה" (שמות
סוטה יא:)

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12. וּבְאֲשֶׁר יַעֲנוּ אֹתוֹ — BUT JUST AS THEY WOULD AFFLICT IT, SO WOULD IT INCREASE AND SO WOULD IT BURST FORTH.

The verse compares the “afflicting” and the “increasing,” but the comparison is difficult to understand, since there is no similarity between afflicting and increasing.^[27] Rashi explains in what sense the verse intends to compare the two:

— This means that as much as they would *put their minds to* afflicting the Jewish people, — so would the Holy One, blessed is He, *put His mind*, as it were, to increase the Jewish people and to make them burst forth.^[28]

□ בֶּן יִרְבֵּה — SO WOULD IT INCREASE AND SO WOULD IT BURST FORTH.

The terms *יִרְבֶּה* and *יִפְרָץ* are conjugated in the future tense. Rashi explains that they should not be understood that way:

— This means, *so did it increase and so did it burst forth*.^[29]

Having explained the simple meaning, Rashi presents a Midrashic approach to the verse:

— And its Midrashic interpretation is that — the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Hashem's Divine Spirit) is saying this to the Egyptians, in response to their wicked plan: אֲתָם אוֹמְרִים — You say that you must act wisely toward this nation “lest it become numerous” (v. 10), — and I say, “so shall it become numerous”; your evil plot will fail!^[30] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:11; *Sotah* 11a).

27. *Divrei David; Maskil LeDavid*. The term *וּבְאֲשֶׁר* cannot mean that *when* the Egyptians began to afflict them they began to increase, since the earlier verses teach that the increase came before the affliction. It must mean *just like*, but the comparison is unclear (*Maskil LeDavid; Be'er Yitzchak*).

28. The verse draws a comparison between the Egyptians' *plan* to afflict the Jewish people and Hashem's *plan* to increase them. The Egyptians thought that imposing harsh labor on the Jewish people would *diminish* their numbers (as stated in v. 10), but Hashem determined to *increase* their numbers (*Divrei David; Maskil LeDavid; Be'er Yitzchak*). [See

Mizrachi and *Gur Aryeh* for other approaches.]

29. The terms *יִרְבֶּה* and *יִפְרָץ* do not represent the future tense (“will increase”; “will burst forth”), but rather the continuous ongoing tense (“would increase”; “would burst forth”). The intent is that this *did* occur on an ongoing basis. Throughout the time that the Jewish people were in Egypt, their population increased explosively (*Be'er Yitzchak*; see *Mizrachi* and *Gur Aryeh*).

30. [Rashi to *Sotah* 11a.] This accounts for the future-tense conjugation of *יִרְבֶּה* and *יִפְרָץ*. Although the plain meaning is “it *did* increase and it *did* burst forth,” these words are written in future tense to allude to the meaning, “it *shall* increase and it *shall* burst forth”

when they left Egypt, meaning that it was their place of residence. Since the *רַעְמֶסֶס* of our verse is evidently not that place, Rashi's explanation must be based on the wording of our verse, which implies that both Pisom and Raamses (i.e., *this* Raamses) existed before the Jewish people were forced to make them into cities of storage for Pharaoh (see *Tzeidah LaDerech*).

¹² But just as they would afflict it, so would it increase and so would it burst forth; and they became disgusted on account of the Children of Israel. ¹³ The Egyptians enslaved the Children of Israel with crushing hardness. ¹⁴ They embittered their lives with harsh labor, with mortar and bricks and with every labor of the field; all their labor that they enslaved them [to do] was crushing.

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□ **וַיִּקְצוּ — AND THEY BECAME DISGUSTED ON ACCOUNT OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.**

The verse does not say that the Egyptians were disgusted by the Children of Israel, but rather, that they became disgusted *on account of* the Children of Israel — implying that they became disgusted with *something else*. With what did they become disgusted? Rashi explains:

קָצוּ בְחַיֵּיהֶם — They became disgusted with their own lives on account of the increase of the Children of Israel.^[31]

Rashi now cites a Midrashic interpretation, which interprets וַיִּקְצוּ as related to קֶץ, *thorn*:

וְרוֹבוּתֵינוּ דְרָשׁוּ — Our Sages expounded the verse to mean: **בְּקוֹצִים הָיוּ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם — Due to the increase of the Children of Israel, they were like thorns in [the Egyptians'] eyes**^[32] (*Shemos Rabbah* *ibid.*; *Sotah* *ibid.*).

13. בִּפְרָךְ — THE EGYPTIANS ENSLAVED THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL “BEFARECH.”

The root פֶּרַךְ relates to crushing or crumbling.^[33] Rashi explains what it means to enslave בִּפְרָךְ:

בַּעֲבוּדָה קָשָׁה הִמְפַּרְכֶּת אֶת הַגּוֹף וּמַשְׁבִּרָתוֹ — They enslaved them with hard work that crushes the body and breaks it (*Shemos Rabbah* *ibid.*; *Sotah* 11b).

(*Gur Aryeh*; see *Shemos Rabbah* and *Sotah* *ibid.*).

[Some suggest that according to this approach, כֵּן יִרְבֶּה is interpreted, “Indeed, it shall increase,” as כֵּן sometimes means “indeed” or “truly” (*Yefeh To’ar*; see Rashi to 10:29 below with note 59).] See first Insight.

31. This is an abbreviated verse, as it omits the object of their disgust (*Mizrachi*). There is no need to spell out the object, since it is self-understood (*Be’er Yitzchak*). See similarly, Rashi to *Bamidbar* 22:3.

32. וַיִּקְצוּ is interpreted, *they were “thorned,”* i.e., they

felt as if they were poked in the eyes, on account of the Children of Israel. According to this approach, the verse does not have to be interpreted as an abbreviated one, since the object is not missing (*Mizrachi*). See second Insight.

33. Something that crumbles is described as נִפְרָכָה (*Radak, Shorashim*, פֶּרַךְ; see *Chullin* 46b). [The Aramaic term פִּירְכָא, *refutation*, used in the Gemara, similarly connotes an attempt to “break” another’s opinion (*Aruch HaShaleim* (ע) פרך).]

⚡ **Who Was the Ruach HaKodesh Addressing?** Rashi presents this explanation as a declaration from the *Ruach*

HaKodesh to the Egyptians. The Midrash and Gemara (*ibid.*), however, introduce this with the phrase, וְכֵן יִרְבֶּה, *the Ruach HaKodesh gave them a good tidings*. This means that the message of וְכֵן יִרְבֶּה, *so shall they increase*, was told to the Jewish people, to inform them that the Egyptians’ wicked plan to diminish them would not work, and they would instead continue to increase. Rashi there (*Sotah* *ibid.*), however, explains it to mean that the message of the *Ruach HaKodesh* was delivered to both the Egyptians and the Jewish people. It was a rebuke to the Egyptians, as it informed them, “your plot is doomed to failure,” but this very message was also heard by the Jewish people for whom it was a good tidings.

Eitz Yosef (to *Shemos Rabbah*) explains that this tidings was not meant only for the Jewish people in Egypt, but is a message that the Torah imparts to the Jewish people of all generations who suffer at the hands of oppressors: Whenever your enemies hatch plans to afflict and diminish you, know that as a result of those very plans, “you will increase and burst forth.” The persecution will ultimately be to your benefit, as you will always rebuild and become even greater.

⚡ **They Were Like Thorns** *Meshech Chochmah* (to *Vayikra* 26:44) explains that beyond the simple meaning that the Egyptians were pained at the increase of the Jewish people, the metaphor of “thorns” conveys a specific message. Thorns do not grow or cast roots together with other plants, and in the same way, the Jewish people did not integrate into the Egyptian society. The Egyptians viewed them like thorns that stand apart from the rest of the plant life surrounding them, and this, in particular, aggrieved them.

Meshech Chochmah notes that this resistance to assimilation was an important part of the Jewish people’s survival as a nation in Egypt, and to this day, it remains the primary approach that the Jewish people must take to maintain their own identity while residing among foreign cultures. See there for his foundational essay on this topic.

טו ואמר מלכא דמצרים לחיתא יהודיתא די שום חדא שפּרה ושום תנינא פועה: טז ואמר בך תהיון מולדן ית יהודיתא ותחיון על מתברא אם בר הוא ותקטלן יתה ואם ברתא היא

טו וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְמִילְדַת הָעִבְרִית אֲשֶׁר שֵׁם הָאִחָת שִׁפְרָה וְשֵׁם הַשְּׁנִית פּוּעָה: טז וַיֹּאמֶר בִּילְדֶכָּן אֶת־הָעִבְרִיּוֹת וְרֵאִיתִן עַל־הָאֲבָנִים אִם־בֵּן הוּא וְהַמֶּתֶן אֹתוֹ וְאִם־בַּת הוּא

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מב, יד: (טז) °בילדכן. כמו צהלידכן: על האבנים. מושב האשה היולדת, ובמקום אחר קוראו "משבר" (ישעיה נב, ג). וכמוהו "עשה מלאכה על האבנים" (ירמיהו יח, ג), מושב כלי אומנות יוצר חרס (שמות רבה טז, י; סוטה טז:). אם בן הוא וגו'. לא היה מקפיד אלף על הזכרים, שאמרו לו אלטגניניו שעתיד להולד בן המושבי אוחס (שמות רבה טז, יח):

(טו) לְמִילְדַת. הוא לשון מולדות, חלף שיש לשון קל ויש לשון כבד, כמו שובר ומשבר, דובר ומדבר, כך מוליד ומילד: שפּרה. זו יוכד, על שם שמשפּרת את הולד (שמות רבה טז, יג; סוטה טז:). פועה. זו מרים, על שם שפועה ומדברת והוגה לולד כדרך הנשים המפייסות תינוק הבוכה (סוטה טז:). "פועה" לשון טעקה, כמו "פילדה חפעה" (ישעיה

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15. לְמִילְדַת — THE KING OF EGYPT SAID "LAMEYALEDOS."

Rashi explains the term מִילְדַת:

This has the same meaning as "מולידות", those who assist in childbirth, i.e., midwives, **but there is a "light" form of the word and an "intensive" form.**^[34] **כמו** — **אֵלֶּא שֵׁישׁ לְשׁוֹן קַל וְיֵישׁ לְשׁוֹן כָּבֵד** — **אֵלֶּא שֵׁישׁ לְשׁוֹן קַל וְיֵישׁ לְשׁוֹן כָּבֵד** — **This is similar to the root שבר, to break**, whose verb can take two forms: either the light form of "שובר" or the intensive form of "משבר"; **— דובר ומדבר** — **and the root דבר, to speak**, whose verb can take the light form of "דובר" or the intensive form of "מדבר". **— בן מוליד ומילד** — **So, too, with the root of ילד, to birth**, the verb can take either the light form of "מוליד" or the intensive form of "מילד".^[35]

□ שפּרה — SHIFRAH.

The Torah names the midwives but says nothing more about them. Rashi explains that these "names" are actually descriptive terms that reveal the midwives' praiseworthy deeds:

שפּרה — **"SHIFRAH": This is Yocheved**, the daughter of Levi and mother of Moshe. She is called שפּרה **— because in addition to helping the mother give birth, she would enhance the appearance of the child by cleaning it after birth**^[36] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:13; *Sotah* 11b).

□ פועה — PUAH.

פועה — **She is called שפועה ומדברת והוגה לולד** — **This is Miriam**, Yocheved's daughter. **— because she would cry and speak and coo to the newborn child,**

34. Both מוליד and מילד are verb forms of the root ילד ("birthing" or "newborn"), and both refer to causing or assisting childbirth. When the plural feminine suffix (ות) is added to either of these terms, it refers to women who assist in childbirth — midwives. Thus, both מולידות and מילדות mean "midwives." They are simply two forms of the same term.

With all such verbs, the "intensive" *pi'el* form is characterized by a *dagesh* (punctuation) in the middle letter of the root, in this case מִלֵּד, which gives the word a heavier (more intense) pronunciation. The "light" form is characterized by the absence of such a punctuation, in this case, מוליד (*Gur Aryeh*). This holds true as well in the other examples that Rashi will bring.

[Of the seven בְּנֵינִים (forms of verbal conjugation), four are called קל, "light," and three are called כבד, "heavy," or "intensive." The "light" forms are: קל, *kal*; נִפְעַל, *nifal*;

הִפְעִיל, *hifil*; and הִפְעַל (or הִפְעֵל), *hufal*. The "intensive" forms are: פִּעַל, *pi'el*; פָּעַל, *pual*; and הִפְעֵל, *hispa'el*.]

35. *Mizrachi* states that these two forms mean essentially the same thing; sometimes the verse will use one and sometimes it will use the other. Others point out that there is a difference in the nuance between the two forms: The לשון קל, *light form*, indicates a standard, or easier action; the לשון כבד, *intensive form*, indicates a more intense or strong action. For example, שובר would mean simply *to break*, whereas משבר would mean *to smash*, i.e., with energy or purposefully. In our case, מוליד would indicate assistance in a simple birth, whereas מילד would indicate assistance in cases of difficult birth (see *Be'er Rechovos* and *Malkah Shel Torah*).

36. *Mizrachi*, from *Shemos Rabbah* *ibid*. [Alternatively, she would straighten out those limbs of the children that had been dislocated by the trauma of childbirth (see Rashi to *Sotah* 11b משבר).]

¹⁵ The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the first was Shifrah and the name of the second was Puah — ¹⁶ and he said, “When you deliver the Hebrew women, you shall see on the birthstool; if it is a son, you are to kill him, and if it is a daughter,

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— in the manner of women who soothe a crying child (*Sotah* ibid.). — “פועה” לשון צעקה — In its literal sense, the term “פועה” is an expression of “crying out,” “בְּיֹלֶדָה אֶפְעָה” — as in the verse (*Yeshayah* 42:14), *I will cry out like a woman in childbirth*. It is used here in the sense of crying gently (and making similar noises) to soothe the child.^[37]

16. בְּיֹלֶדְכֶן — WHEN YOU DELIVER.

בְּיֹלֶדְכֶן — This is the same as “בְּהוֹלִידְכֶן”. The verse uses the “intensive” form of the verb.^[38]

□ עַל הָאֲבָנִים — ON THE “AVNAYIM.”

Rashi defines the term אֲבָנִים:

וּבִמְקוֹם — This refers to the seat designed for supporting a woman in childbirth; וּבִמְקוֹם — elsewhere (*Yeshayah* 37:3), it is called a “מִשְׁבֵּר”.^[39] — “עֲשֵׂה מְלָאכָה עַל הָאֲבָנִים” — There is a similar use of the term אֲבָנִים in the verse (*Yirmiyah* 18:3), *he was working on the “אֲבָנִים”*, — מוֹשֵׁב כְּלֵי אוּמָנוֹת יוֹצֵר חֶרֶס — which refers to the setting place for the tools of a potter^[40] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:14; *Sotah* 11b).

□ אִם בֶּן הוּא וְגו' — IF IT IS A SON, etc.

Why did Pharaoh command to kill only the males?^[41] Rashi explains:

שָׁאֲמְרוּ לוֹ אֲצִטְגִּינִי שְׁעִתִּיד — He was concerned only about the males — לֹא הָיָה מִקְפִּיד אֲלֵא עַל הַזָּכָרִים — because his astrologers had told him that a boy was destined to be born who would save [the Jewish people] from enslavement (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:18).

37. See Rashi to *Sotah* 11b לולד פועה לולד. See Insight.

38. See note 34 above.

39. Literally, *breakage*; the place where the child breaks out of the womb (see *Malbim* there).

40. There, too, it refers to a specific kind of support, in that case, the bench upon which the potter sets his tools as he works; in our case, אֲבָנִים is the specialized seat designed for childbirth (*Metzudos* there; see further, *Sotah* 11b).

[The verse calls the birthing stool אֲבָנִים (instead of מִשְׁבֵּר) to allude that Pharaoh instructed the midwives: Just as a potter can easily ruin a new vessel while it is on his workbench, so too shall you kill the boys while they are still on the birthing stool (i.e., at the moment of birth), before the mother can realize what you are doing (*Maharsha* to *Sotah* 11b; see *Maskil LeDavid*; *Nachalas Yaakov*; *Be'er Basadeh*).]

41. If he had been concerned only about the increase of the Jewish people's population, he would have decreed

☞ **Shifrah and Puah / Yocheved and Miriam** Rashi does not indicate on what basis the Sages identified Shifrah and Puah as Yocheved and Miriam. *Mizrachi* suggests that they may have known this through the Oral Tradition. He notes, however, that there is an indication to this identity in the passage itself. Verse 21 says that Hashem rewarded the midwives by making for them “houses,” which Rashi explains to mean “houses of Kehunah, Leviyah, and royalty.” Since these “houses” came from Yocheved and Miriam, as Rashi explains there, they must have been the midwives. Others add that this may be inferred from our verse itself. Since the verse refers to the two midwives as “the first one” and “the second one,” it indicates that they were related to each other, and one was older — the mother — while the other was her daughter. Since the only mother-daughter pair of that generation mentioned in the Torah is Yocheved and Miriam, the verse must mean to refer to them (*Gur Aryeh*; see also *Maskil LeDavid*; *Divrei David*; *Maharsha* to *Sotah* 11b).

As for why the Torah does not use the names Yocheved and Miriam here, the simple reason is that it wants to point out their extra dedication to the well-being of the children. *Kli Yakar* (to v. 19) adds that the use of these descriptive names here provides the basis for what the midwives told Pharaoh later, when he complained that they were letting the children live. They said (v. 19) that the Jewish women deliver their own children, so the children are already born by the time they arrive. But if this was true, Pharaoh might ask, what was the purpose of these “midwives”? What function did they serve? Their answer was that they served to care for the children after birth by cleaning (שִׁפְרָה) and comforting (פּוּאָה) them. [See *Gur Aryeh* for another reason why Yocheved and Miriam are not called by their names here.]

וְתִחְיֶינָהּ: יִי וְדָחִילָא חֵינָא מִן קֶדֶם יִי וְלֹא עֲבָדָא בְּמֵא דִּי מְלִיל עֲמֵהּ מִלְכָּא דְּמִצְרַיִם וְקִימָא יֵת בְּנִינָא: יח וְקִרָא מִלְכָּא דְּמִצְרַיִם לְחֵינָא וְאָמַר לְהֵן מָא דִּין עֲבַדְתִּין יֵת פִּתְגָמָא דִּדִּין וְקִימָתִין יֵת בְּנִינָא: יט וְאָמַרָא חֵינָא לְוֹת פִּרְעָה אָרִי לֹא כְּנִשְׂיָא מִצְרִינָא יְהוּדִינָא אָרִי חֲפִימָן אֲנִין עַד לֹא עֲלַת לְוֹתָהּ חֵינָא וְיִלְדִין:

וְחֵינָהּ: יי וְתִירָאן הַמִּילָדָת אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים וְלֹא עָשׂוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵיהֶן מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וְתִחְיִין אֶת־הַיְלָדִים: ❖ שני יח וַיִּקְרָא מֶלֶךְ־מִצְרַיִם לַמִּילָדָת וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶן מְדוּעַ עֲשִׂיתֶן הַדִּבָּר הַזֶּה וְתִחְיִין אֶת־הַיְלָדִים: יט וַתֹּאמְרֶן הַמִּילָדָת אֶל־פִּרְעָה כִּי לֹא כְנָשִׁים הַמִּצְרִית הָעֶבְרִית כִּי־חַיֹּת הֵנָּה בְּטָרִם תָּבוֹא אֲלֵהֶן הַמִּילָדָת וְיִלְדוּ:

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חַל עֲמִי" (יחזקאל יג, יט), לָשׁוֹן עֲבַר חֲלָלָתָן כְּמוֹ "וְתַחֲלֹלֶנּוּ" לְזָכְרִים: (יט) בִּי חַיֹּת הֵנָּה. צִקְאוֹת כְּמִילָדוֹת, פִּרְגוֹם "מִילָדוֹת" "חֵינָתָא" (נעיל פסוק טו). וְצוֹתֵינוּ דְּרָשׁוּ (שמות רבה ג טז, סוטה טז): הִרְיָ הֵן מְשׁוּלוֹת לְחַיֹּת הַשָּׂדֶה שְׁלִינִין לְרִיכוֹת מִילָדוֹת, וְהִיכֵן מְשׁוּלוֹת לְחַיֹּת, "גִּיר אֲרִיָּה" (בראשית מט, טז), "חֵינָא שְׁלֹחָה" (בראשית מט, כא), וְגַם שְׁלֹחַ נִקְצֵב צוֹ

וְחֵינָהּ. וְתִחְיֶינָהּ: (יז) וְתִחְיִין אֶת הַיְלָדִים. מִסְפָּקוֹת לָהֶם מִיֵּם וּמִזֶּן (שמות רבה א, טו; סוטה יא). פִּרְגוֹם הִרְאִישׁוֹ: "וְקִימָתִין". לְפִי שְׁלֹשׁ עֲבָר וְגַם: עֲבָרִין לְנִקְצוֹת רְצוֹת פִּיבָה זֹו וְכִיּוֹצֵא בָּהּ מְשֻׁמָּשֶׁת לָשׁוֹן פְּעֻלוֹ וְלָשׁוֹן פְּעֻלָּתָם. כְּגוֹן "וְתִחְמַרְךָ חֵינָא מִלְכִּי" (שמות ז, יט), לָשׁוֹן עֲבַר כְּמוֹ "וְיִחְמְרוּ" לְזָכְרִים. "וְתִדְצֹרְנָה צִפִּיכֶם" (ירמיה מד, כח), לָשׁוֹן דְּצִרְתָּם כְּמוֹ "וְתִדְצֹרוּ" לְזָכְרִים. וְכֵן "וְתַחֲלֹלְנָה חֲתִי

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□ וְחֵינָהּ — AND IF IT IS A DAUGHTER, "VACHAYAH."

וְחֵינָהּ — וְחֵינָהּ is the equivalent of "וְתִחְיֶינָהּ", *she shall live*.^[42]

17. וְתִחְיִין אֶת הַיְלָדִים — AND THEY KEPT THE BOYS ALIVE.

Pharaoh had commanded them to kill the boys; when saying that they did not listen to that command, the verse should have said, "and they did not kill the boys." Why does it say it in the positive form — *and they kept the boys alive*?^[43]

וְתִחְיִין אֶת הַיְלָדִים — The verse means that not only did they not kill the boys, but **they** also **provided them with water and nourishment to help** them live^[44] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:15; *Sotah* 11b).

Rashi now turns to discuss the grammatical form of the word וְתִחְיִין. This word appears here, as well as in the next verse, in Pharaoh's accusation to the midwives: וְתִחְיִין אֶת הַיְלָדִים, *you have kept the boys alive*. Rashi explains that although the two words are written identically, they have different meanings. Rashi demonstrates this first by citing Onkelos' translation of the two terms:

"וְקִימָא" — Targum translates the **first** instance of וְתִחְיִין, in our verse, as "וְקִימָא", and "they" kept alive (in the third person); "וְהַשְׁנִי: "וְקִימָתִין" — whereas Targum translate the **second** instance, in the next verse, as "וְקִימָתִין", and "you" kept alive (in the second person). Although both words are spelled identically, they have different meanings, depending on the context, לְפִי שְׁלֹשׁ עֲבָר לְנִקְבוֹת — **because** when speaking in the **past-tense about many women** (i.e., using the feminine plural form), **this word and those like it** (i.e., ones in the

for the girls to be killed, since they are the ones that bear children. There must have been some other reason for this decree (*Mizrachi*).

42. Grammatically, וְחֵינָהּ is the masculine form and means "he shall live" (as in *Esther* 4:11); the standard feminine form of "shall live" is וְחֵינָהּ. Our verse, however, omits the ת (*tav*) of וְחֵינָהּ and says וְחֵינָהּ even though it clearly refers to the *daughters*. The deficient spelling conveys that Pharaoh instructed the midwives to let the daughters live "deficiently." They should not *help* the daughters live, but should merely *let* them live — if

they are able to survive on their own — but if they die, so be it (*Gur Aryeh*; see *Shemos Rabbah* 1:14; see also *Nachalas Yaakov*; *Maskil LeDavid*).

43. Rashi, *Sotah* 11b ותחיון. [Alternatively, this entire clause seems unnecessary, for once the verse said, *and they did not do as the king of Egypt spoke to them*, it is obvious that they kept the boys alive (*Mizrachi*).]

44. They would provide food for those nursing mothers who could not afford proper food, thus providing nourishment for the babies (*Ayeles HaShachar*, citing *Maharzu* to *Shemos Rabbah* 1:15).

¹⁹ The midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are unlike the Egyptian women, for they are midwives; by the time the midwife comes to them, they have given birth.”

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כ וַיִּיטֹב אֱלֹהִים לְמִילְדַת וַיְרֹב הָעָם כ וַאֲוִיטִיב יִי לְחִיטָא וסְגִי עָמָא

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הַנְּזֻכֹּת זֶה לָזוֹ, כָּל אֶלֶף לָשׁוֹן הַפְּעִיל אֶת אֲחֵרִים. וְכִשְׁהוּא מְדַבֵּר בְּלָשׁוֹן וַיַּפְעֵל הוּא נְקֻדָּה הִי"ד בְּחִיר"ק, כְּגוֹן "וַיִּיטֹב בְּעֵינָיו" (ויקרא י, כ), לָשׁוֹן הוֹטֵב, וְכֵן "וַיְרֹב הָעָם" (להגן פסוק יט), נְקֻדָּה הָעָם, "וַיִּגַּל יְהוּדָה" (מלכים ב, כא), הַגִּלָּה יְהוּדָה, "וַיִּפֶן כֶּה וְכֶה" (שמות ב, יב), פָּנָה לְכָאן וּלְכָאן. וְאֵל תַּשְׁבִּיעַ "וַיִּלְד", "וַיִּשָּׁב", "וַיְרֹד", "וַיִּזָּא", לְפִי שְׁאִין מִזְמָרָתָן שֶׁל אֱלֹהִים הִי"ד יסוד צָהָן, יִרְדָּה, יִזָּא, יִשָּׁב, יִלְדָּה, יו"ד אֶת שְׁלִישִׁית צֶו: וַיִּיטֹב אֱלֹהִים לְמִילְדַת. מֵהוּ הַטּוֹבָה:

הָרִי הַכְּתוּב בְּלָלָן י"ו וַיְצַרְךָ אֹתָם" (סם כח), וְעוֹד כְּתִיב "מֵה אֶמְךָ לְבִנְיָא" (יחזקאל יט, ז): (ב) וַיִּיטֹב. הַטִּיב לָהֶן. וְזֶה חִלּוּק בְּתִיבָה שִׁיטוּדָה שְׁתֵּי אוֹתִיּוֹת וְנִפְתָּן לָהּ וַי"ו דְּצִרָאָה, כִּשְׁהוּא צָהָה לְדַבֵּר לָשׁוֹן וַיַּפְעֵל הוּא נְקֻדָּה הִי"ד בְּחִיר"ק שְׁהוּא קָמָן קָמָן אוֹ צָסָגוֹ"ל שְׁהוּא פִּשְׁתָּ קָמָן, כְּגוֹן "וַיִּיטֹב אֱלֹהִים לְמִילְדַת", "וַיְרֹב צֶבֶת יְהוּדָה" (איכה ב, ה), הַרְבֵּה תַּחֲנִיָּה, וְכֵן "וַיִּגַּל הַשְּׂחָרִית" (דברי הימים ב, לו, כ) דְּנִבְזָרָאָדָן, הַגִּלָּה אֶת הַשְּׂחָרִית, "וַיִּפֶן זָבַח אֶל זָבַח" (שופטים טו, ה), הַפָּנָה

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written, — they are also compared to beasts, as **the Torah incorporates all of [the tribes]** in all the blessings, meaning that the blessing of each tribe applies to the other tribes as well, "וַיְצַרְךָ אוֹתָם" — as it is stated (ibid. v. 28), *All these are the tribes of Israel — twelve — and this is what their father spoke to them, and he blessed them, each man according to his blessing he blessed them.*^[48] **And it is further written** about the Jewish people as a whole (Yechezkel 19:2), *Oh, how your mother was a lioness!*^[49] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:16; *Sotah* 11b).

20. וַיִּיטֹב — "VAYEITEV" ELOKIM TO THE MIDWIVES

The word וַיִּיטֹב is usually vowelized וַיִּטֵּב, and means "it was good" (e.g., *Bereishis* 41:37). This is the only place in *Tanach* where it is vowelized וַיִּטֵּב. Rashi explains what the meaning is in this form:

— This means **He did good to them.**^[50]

Rashi notes that there are two ways to vowelize this word and similar words, and he explains what determines the different vowelizations:

— **The following distinction exists in the vowelization of a word like this one, whose root is only two letters^[51] and it has a prefix consisting of the letters *vav* and *yud* (which makes it a past-tense verb).**^[52] There are two rules: **בְּשֵׁהִיא בָּאָה לְדַבֵּר — the *yud* is meant to speak in the *hifl* form** (denoting an action done or caused to another person or object; a *transitive* verb), **הוּא נְקֻדָּה הִי"ד בְּצִיר"י שְׁהוּא קָמָן קָמָן — the *yud***

48. As Rashi to that verse (ד"ה ברך אותם) notes, since the verse speaks of *each man* in the singular, it should have concluded, *he blessed "him."* Why does it say, *he blessed "them"* in the plural? To teach us that the blessing that Yaakov gave "each man" extended to *all of them*. Just as Yehudah was blessed with the qualities of a lion, so were all the other tribes; and so forth.

49. The simple meaning of the verses that compare the tribes to various beasts is that they are blessed with the good qualities of each of those beasts, such as the might of a lion and the swiftness of a hind (Rashi *ibid.*). However, the metaphor also conveys a general message, as *Maharsha* (*Sotah* *ibid.*) explains: The pain of childbirth is not part of the original order of Creation, but results from the decree imposed on Adam and Chavah at the time of their sin (*Bereishis* 3:16). The beasts of the field are not subject to this decree, and therefore experience a quicker and smoother process of childbirth. The message of the midwives is that when the Jewish people do the will of Hashem (and are deserving of the blessings given by Yaakov and Moshe), the punishment of a long, arduous birth is lightened,

and they give birth quickly, just like the beasts of the field. [See *Maharal*, *Chiddushei Aggados* to *Sotah* there, for another approach.]

50. וַיִּיטֵב is a transitive verb: God *did* good [to the midwives]. By contrast, וַיִּטֵּב is an intransitive verb: it *was* good. Rashi will now explain the grammatical rule that governs such words.

51. Rashi seems to align here with the French school of Hebrew grammarians who recognized both two and three-letter Hebrew roots. The Spanish grammarians of that time recognized only three-letter roots, but held that one or two of those letters could sometimes be dropped depending on the particular conjugation. Alternatively, Rashi may agree with the Spanish school, and here he refers to cases where one of the three root letters is dropped (due to conjugation) and only two of the root letters appear (*Mizrachi*).

52. [The *vav* prefix (with a *patach*, which makes it a יִיִּר *conversive vav*) makes the word past tense. The *yud* makes it a verb in masculine form.] Any two-letter-root verb with the *vav-yud* (וי) prefix has two possible vowelizations, as Rashi now explains.

²⁰ God did good to the midwives — and the people increased

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is vowelized with a *tzeirei*, which is also called a *kamatz katan*, או בקסגו"ל שהוא פתח קטן — or it is vowelized with a *segol*, which is also called a *patach katan*.^[53] כגון "וַיֵּטֵב אֱלֹהִים לַמִּיֻלֶּדֶת" — For example: In our verse, "וַיֵּטֵב" *Elokim to the midwives*, the *yud* of וַיֵּטֵב is vowelized with a *tzeirei* because the word means "did good" in *hifil* form. הָרָבָה תַּאֲגִיבָה — "וַיִּרְבֶּה בְּבֵת יְהוּדָה" — In the verse (*Eichah* 2:5), "וַיִּרְבֶּה" within the daughter of Yehudah agony and grief, the *yud* of וַיִּרְבֶּה is vowelized with a *segol* because it means "He increased agony," in *hifil* form. וְכֵן "וַיִּגְלַע הַגִּלְגָּל אֶת הַשְּׂאֲרִית" — Similarly in the verse (*II Divrei HaYamim* 36:20) that says about the Babylonian general Nevuzaradan, "וַיִּגְלַע" the survivors, the *yud* of וַיִּגְלַע has a *segol* vowel because it means "he exiled the survivors," in *hifil* form. וְיִפְּן זָנָב אֶל זָנָב — Finally, in the verse that says about Shimshon (*Shoftim* 15:4), "וְיִפְּן" tail to tail, the *yud* of וְיִפְּן has a *segol* vowel because it means "he turned the tails toward each other," in *hifil* form. כָּל אֵלֵינוּ לְשׁוֹן הַפְעִיל אֶת אֲחֵרִים — All of these verses use this vowelization because they have the grammatical form of *hifil*, doing something to another person or object.

The preceding is the rule for verbs with two-letter roots with a *vav-yud* prefix that are in *hifil* form (transitive). Rashi now presents the second rule for such verbs. This rule applies when the verbs are in *kal* form (intransitive):

וְכִשְׁהוּא מְדַבֵּר בְּלִשׁוֹן וַיִּפְעַל הוּא נְקִיד הַיּוֹד בְּחִירָק (2) — But when [the word] speaks in the "vayifal" form (i.e., the *kal* form, which denotes a state of being or an action done with oneself; an intransitive verb), it is vowelized with a *chirik* under the *yud*. כגון "וַיֵּטֵב בְּעֵינָיו" לְשׁוֹן הַטֵּב — For example:^[54] In the verse (*Vayikra* 10:20), "וַיֵּטֵב" in his eyes, the *yud* of וַיֵּטֵב is vowelized with a *chirik*, since it means it was good, in *kal* form.^[55] וְכֵן "וַיִּרְבֶּה הָעָם", נִתְרַבָּה הָעָם — Likewise, in the words "וַיִּרְבֶּה הָעָם" at the end of our verse, the *yud* of וַיִּרְבֶּה is vowelized with a *chirik* because it means the people increased — i.e., they themselves increased — so it is an intransitive verb, the *kal* form.^[56] וְכֵן "וַיִּגְלַע יְהוּדָה" — Likewise, in the verse (*II Melachim* 25:21), "וַיִּגְלַע יְהוּדָה", the *yud* of וַיִּגְלַע has a *chirik* vowel because it means Yehudah [itself] was exiled.^[57] וְכֵן "וַיִּפְּן כֹּה וְכֹה" פָּנָה לְכָאן וּלְכָאן — Similarly, in the verse (2:12 below), "וַיִּפְּן" this way and that way, the *yud* of וַיִּפְּן has a *chirik* vowel because it means that "he [himself] turned this way and that way."^[58]

Rashi anticipates a challenge to his explanation. He just said that a *kal* (intransitive) verb with a *vav-yud* prefix has a *chirik* vowel under the *yud*, but there seem to be many contradictions to this rule: וַיֵּצֵא, "וַיִּרְד", "וַיִּשָּׁב", "וַיֵּלֶךְ" — Do not attempt to refute me by citing the words "וַיֵּלֶךְ", he went, "וַיִּשָּׁב", he settled, "וַיִּרְד", he descended, and "וַיֵּצֵא", he went out, all of which are verbs in *kal* (intransitive) form that begin with the letters *vav-yud*, yet in each of them the *yud* has a *tzeirei* vowel! לִפְנֵי שְׂאֵינָן מְגֻרָתָן שֶׁל אֵלֵינוּ — This is not a refutation, because these words are not in the same category as those mentioned above; שְׂהָרִי הַיּוֹד יִסּוּר בָּהֶן — for in each of the earlier examples, the *yud* is merely a prefix and not part of the root, but in these latter examples the *yud* is a root letter. יֵרֵד יֵצֵא יִשָּׁב — In the cases just mentioned, the roots are "יֵרֵד" (descend), "יֵצֵא" (go out), "יִשָּׁב" (settle), and "יֵלֶךְ" (go); וְיִדֹּת אוֹת שְׁלִישִׁית בּוֹ — and in each of these cases the *yud* is the third letter of [the root]. The rule which I stated, that the *yud* of an intransitive verb is vowelized with a *chirik*, applies only when the *yud* is a prefix, not when it is part of a root.

□ וַיֵּטֵב אֱלֹהִים לַמִּיֻלֶּדֶת — GOD DID GOOD TO THE MIDWIVES.

מִהוּ הַטּוֹבָה — What is the good that He did for them? It is spelled out in the next verse...

53. The terms *kamatz katan* for *tzeirei* and *patach katan* for *segol* were familiar usages in Rashi's time, but are no longer used this way.

54. The four examples that Rashi provides are words with the exact same spelling as the four that he listed above, but with a different vowelization that reflects the different verb form.

55. This contrasts with the identically spelled word of our verse וַיֵּטֵב, *He did good*.

56. This contrasts with the identically spelled word וַיִּרְבֶּה that Rashi cited above, which means that Hashem increased something else (agony).

57. This contrasts with the word וַיִּגְלַע cited by Rashi above, which means that Nevuzaradan exiled others (the survivors).

58. This contrasts with the word וַיִּפְּן cited by Rashi above, which means that Shimshon turned other objects (the tails) toward each other.

ותקייפו לחדא: כא ויהנה כד
דחילא חיתא מן קדם יי ועבד
להון בתין: כב ופקיד פרעה לכל
עמה למימר כל ברא דיתיליד
ליהודאי בנהרא תרמונה וכל
ברתא תקימון: א ואיל גברא
מדבית לוי וגסיב ית בת לוי:

ויעצמו מאד: כא ויהי כיהנה ויהי
האלהים ויעש להם בתים: כב ויצו פרעה לכל-
עמו לאמר כל-הבן היולד היארה תשליכהו
וכל-הבת תחיון: פ
[ב] א וילך איש מבית לוי ויקח את-בת-לוי:

רש"י

אם ממלכים אם משראלי, ורואין אנו שסופו ללקות
במים, לפיכך גזר אותו היום חף על המלכים, שגומר
כל הבן היולד ולא נחמר הילוד לעבדים. והם לא היו
יודעים שסופו ללקות על מי מריצה (שמות רבה א, יח; תנחומא
ויקהל ד; סוטה יב): (א) ויקח את בת לוי. פרוש היה
ממנה מפני גזירת פרעה ויחזק ולקחה, והו וילך,

(כא) ויעש להם בתים. צפי כהונה ולויה ומלכות
שקרוין "בתים", כמו שפתיח ויבן "את בית ה' ואת בית
המלך" (מלכים א ט, י), כהונה ולויה מיוכד, ומלכות
ממרים, כדאיתא במסכת סוטה (ש; שמות רבה שם יז):
(כב) לכל עמו. חף עליהם גזר. יום שנולד משה
אמר לו אכטגניני: היום נולד מושיען ואין אנו יודעים

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21. **ויעש להם בתים — HE MADE THEM HOUSES.**^[59]

Certainly, the verse does not refer to literal houses. What kind of "houses" did Hashem make for the midwives as a reward?

This refers to the **"houses" of Kehunah** (the family of Kohanim), **of Leviyah** (the family of Leviim), **and of royalty** (the royal family of David). שְׁקָרוּיִן "בתים", כְּמוֹ שְׁכֻנוֹת, וַיִּבֶן אֶת — **These are called "houses," as it is written (I Melachim 9:1, 10) that [Shlomo] built "the house of Hashem and the house of the king."**^[60]

The houses of **Kehunah and Leviyah** came from **Yocheved**, whose son, Aharon, and his descendants were Kohanim and whose other son, Moshe, and his descendants were Leviim;^[61] **and the house of royalty** came from **Miriam**, since David HaMelech descended from her, **as explained in Tractate Sotah**^[62] (11b).

59. Rashi explains that the "good" referred to by the previous verse is not that which is mentioned at the end of that verse — *and the people increased and they became very mighty* — but that which is mentioned in this verse: *He made them houses* (*Sefer Zikaron; Tzeidah LaDerech*; see also *Gur Aryeh*; cf. *Daas Zekeinim*). As for why the previous verse interrupts with *and the people increased*..., it is because that is a necessary preface to this reward. It would not be plausible to reward the midwives with "houses" — which as Rashi will explain refers to the houses of Kehunah, Leviyah and royalty — unless there was a large and distinguished nation from which to form these houses. The reason the houses are prestigious is because the people increased and became very mighty (*Or HaChaim*).

60. "The house of Hashem" refers to the Beis HaMikdash, the place of service of the Kohanim and Leviim. "The house of the king" refers to the royal palace, the seat of the monarchy.

Yefeh To'ar wonders why Rashi cites this verse, which plainly speaks about *actual* houses — the Beis HaMikdash and Shlomo's palace. The fact that the Kohanim and Leviim served in the Beis HaMikdash and royalty resided in the palace does not prove

that the Kehunah, Leviyah and the monarchy are *themselves* called "houses." Rather, there are explicit verses that refer to these families as "houses." *Tehillim* 135:19-20 says: *O House of Aharon, bless Hashem; O house of Levi, bless Hashem*; and *Yeshayah* 7:13 says: *Hear now, O House of David*. Thus, we see that each of these prestigious families is called a "house."

[Some manuscripts and early editions of Rashi omit the proof from the *Melachim* verse (see *Sifsei Yesheirim* Appendix). However, *Sifrei* (*Beha'aloscha* §78; cited in *Yalkut Shimoni* here) does cite that verse as proof that the "houses" which Hashem made for the midwives were houses of Kehunah, Leviyah and royalty. See *Emek HaNetziv* there for discussion.]

61. The House of Kehunah descended exclusively from Aharon, but only part of the House of Leviyah descended from Moshe. Nevertheless, the fact that *any* Leviim came from Yocheved was a special merit, since she had been divorced from her husband Amram and gave birth to Moshe only after he remarried her. Thus, being the mother to even one branch of the House of Leviyah was a unique goodness that Hashem bestowed upon Yocheved (*Maharsha to Sotah* 11b).

62. The Gemara there shows that Miriam married

and they became very mighty.²¹ And it was because the midwives feared God that He made them houses.

²² Pharaoh issued a command for his entire people, saying, “Every son that is born — into the River shall you throw him! And every daughter shall you keep alive!”

2 ¹ A man from the house of Levi went and he took the daughter of Levi.

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22. לְכָל עַמּוֹ — PHARAOH ISSUED A COMMAND FOR HIS ENTIRE PEOPLE.

The words לְכָל עַמּוֹ can mean either “to his entire people” (meaning that all of them *were commanded*) or “regarding his entire people” (meaning that the command *applied to* all of them). Rashi explains that the latter is the true meaning:

אֶף עֲלֵיהֶם גֵּזֶר — [Pharaoh] issued this decree against [the Egyptians] as well; he commanded that even the newborn Egyptian boys be thrown into the Nile.^[63] יוֹם שֶׁנּוֹלַד מֹשֶׁה אָמְרוּ לוֹ אֲצִטְגִּינֵנוּ — The reason Pharaoh included the Egyptians is that on the day Moshe was born, his stargazers told him, וְאֵין אָנוּ יוֹדְעִים אִם מִמִּצְרַיִם — “Today the redeemer of the Jewish People was born, וְאֵין אָנוּ שְׂסוּפוֹ לִלְקוֹת — but we do not know if he is an Egyptian or an Israelite;^[64] לְפִיכָךְ גֵּזֶר אוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם אֶף עַל — and, in addition, we see that he will be struck down with water.” [Pharaoh] therefore decreed that for that day, the decree to cast newborn boys into the Nile should apply to the Egyptians as well. — שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר “כָּל הַבֶּן הַיְּלֹד” — This is reflected in the words of the verse, **for it states** that Pharaoh issued the decree against *EVERY SON THAT IS BORN*, וְלֹא נֶאֱמַר — not “every son that is born to the Hebrews.”

If the stargazers foresaw that Moshe would be struck down by water, why did Pharaoh’s decree fail?

וְהֵם לֹא הָיוּ יוֹדְעִים שְׂסוּפוֹ לִלְקוֹת עַל מִי מְרִיבָה — They did not realize that their vision meant that Moshe would eventually be struck down on account of the incident of the Waters of Strife (*Mei Merivah*).^[65] It did not refer to the waters of the Nile (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:18; *Tanchuma*, *Vayakhel* §4; *Sotah* 12a).

2.

1. וַיִּקַּח אֶת בַּת לֵוִי — A MAN FROM THE HOUSE OF LEVI WENT AND HE TOOK THE DAUGHTER OF LEVI.

The unnamed couple of this verse are Amram and Yocheved, the parents of Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam.^[1] Since the very next verse recounts Moshe’s birth, it would seem that he was the first child born to them. Yet his siblings, Miriam and Aharon, were both older than he was! Therefore, Rashi clarifies:

פְּרוּשׁ הָיָה מִמֶּנָּה מִפְּנֵי גְזִירַת פְּרֵעָה — This couple had already been married and had children, but [Amram] had separated from [Yocheved] because of Pharaoh’s decree to throw all newborn baby boys into the river. וְחָזַר וּלְקַחָהּ — Our verse tells us that he returned and remarried her, and shortly after, Moshe was conceived. — וְהָיוּ “וַיִּלְד” — This interpretation also sheds light on the seemingly superfluous

Calev son of Yephuneh, and David was their descendant.

63. The decree to throw the Jewish boys into the Nile was a long-standing decree. Our verse tell us that at a certain point it was expanded to include the Egyptian boys, as Rashi proceeds to explain (see *Sotah* 12a).

64. Since Moshe was raised by Pharaoh’s daughter, who was an Egyptian woman (below, 2:10), the astrologers could not see clearly whether he belonged to the

Hebrew or Egyptian nations (*Gur Aryeh*). [The vision of stargazers is a clouded one; they see, but they do not know exactly what it is that they are seeing (Rashi, *Bamidbar* 23:28).]

65. When Moshe struck the rock to draw out its water, instead of speaking to it, Hashem decreed that he would die without entering Eretz Yisrael (see *Bamidbar* 20:1-13).

1. For why the Torah does not mention their names, see *Ramban* here and *Gur Aryeh* to 1:15 above.

ב וַעֲדִינָה אֶתֶּמָּה וַיִּלְדֵּת בֶּרֶךְ וַחֲזַת
יָתָה אֲרִי טָב הוּא וְאַטְמָרְתָּה תִּלְמָה
יֶרְחִין: ג וְלֹא יָבִילֵת עוֹד לְאַטְמָרוֹתָהּ
וְנִסִּיבֵת לָהּ תְּבוּמָה דְּגָמָא וְחֻפְתָּהּ

ב וַתַּהַר הָאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתֵּרָא אֹתוֹ כִּי־טוֹב
הוּא וַתִּצְפְּנָהוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה יָרְחִים: ג וְלֹא־יִכְלָה
עוֹד הִצְפִּינוֹ וַתִּקְחֵהוּ תַּבַּת גָּמָא וַתַּחֲמָרָהּ

רש"י

(ב) בִּי טוֹב הוּא. כְּשֶׁנִּזְכָּר נִתְמַלֵּא הַצֵּית כָּלֹו חוֹרֶה (שְׁמוֹת
רַבָּה אֶס כ; סוּטָה אֶס: (ג) וְלֹא יִכְלָה עוֹד הִצְפִּינוֹ.
שָׁמָּה לֵּה הַמְּלָכִים מִיּוֹם שֶׁהִחְזִירָהּ, וְהָיָה יִלְדָּתוֹ לְשֵׁשׁ
חֳדָשִׁים וְיוֹם אֶחָד, שֶׁהִיִּלְדָּתָהּ לְשִׁבְעָה יוֹלְדֵת לְמִקְוֵיטֵין (נִדָּה
לֵח:), וְהָיָה בְּדָקוֹ אֲחֵרֶיהָ לְסוּף תִּשְׁעִים: גָּמָא. גָּמִי צִלְשׁוֹן
מִשְׁנָה (בִּיכּוּרִים ג, א; שָׁבָת עֵח:.) וְצִלְעָה "יֹנְקָה", וְדָבָר רַךְ הוּא
וְעוֹמֵד צָפְנִי רַךְ וְצָפְנִי קָשָׁה (שְׁמוֹת רַבָּה אֶס כֵּא; סוּטָה אֶס:)

שֶׁהָלַךְ צִטָּעַת צָתוֹ, שֶׁאֲמָרָה לוֹ: גִּזְרִיתְךָ קָשָׁה מִשֶּׁל פְּרָעָה,
אִם פְּרָעָה גִּזְרָה עַל הַזָּכָרִים וְאַתָּה גַּם בֶּן עַל הַנְּקִיבוֹת.
וְהִחְזִירָהּ וְעָשָׂה צָה לְקוֹחִין שְׁנִיִּים. וְאִךְ הִיא נִהְפְּכָה לִהְיוֹת
נִעֲרָה, וְצֵת ק"ל שָׁנָה הִיא, שֶׁנִּזְכָּרָה בְּבֹאֵם לְמִצְרַיִם בֵּין
הַחוּמוֹת, וּמֵאֲתָם וְעָשָׂר נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֶס, וְכִשְׁנִיִּלָּאוּ הִיא מִשָּׁה
בֵּין שְׁמוֹנִים שָׁנָה. אִם בֶּן כְּשֶׁנִּתְעַצְרָה מִמֶּנּוּ הִיא צֵת
ק"ל, וְקוֹרָא אֲתָה "צֵת לִוִּי" (שְׁמוֹת רַבָּה אֶס יט; סוּטָה אֶס:)

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statement, *A MAN WENT*, which appears at the beginning of our verse. **For by remar-**
rying his wife, **he “went” after the advice of his daughter**, Miriam, **שְׁאֲמָרָה לוֹ: גִּזְרִיתְךָ קָשָׁה מִשֶּׁל פְּרָעָה**
— **who said to him: Your decree** (i.e., your decision to divorce) **is worse than Pharaoh’s!** **אִם פְּרָעָה**
— **For Pharaoh decreed only against the newborn males, but you**
have effectively decreed **against the females as well**, by refraining from procreation.^[2] **וְהִחְזִירָהּ וְעָשָׂה**
— **So, he remarried [Yocheved] and performed a second wedding ceremony with**
her that was accompanied by the pomp and celebration which typically accompany a first marriage.^[3]

Continuing with this narrative, Rashi addresses another issue — although Moshe’s mother, Yocheved,
was not a young woman, our verse refers to her with the youthful title, *daughter of Levi*:^[4]
Fittingly, just as Amram had arranged a ceremony befitting a young couple
entering their first marriage, **[Yocheved] herself was miraculously transformed into a young woman**
in honor of the occasion.^[5] **For [Yocheved] was 130 years old** when this miracle
took place, **שֶׁנִּזְכָּרָה בְּבֹאֵם לְמִצְרַיִם בֵּין הַחוּמוֹת** — **as she was born as [the Jewish people] entered**
Egypt, between the walls of its border city,^[6] **וּמֵאֲתָם וְעָשָׂר נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה שָׁם** — **and [the Jewish people]**

2. Miriam referred to this as “your decree” because Amram was a leader of the generation, so when he divorced his wife, many other Jews followed suit (see *Sotah* 12a).

3. This is implied by the word וַיִּקַּח, which typically refers to a first marriage, as opposed to וַיִּחְזֶר, “he took back” or “he remarried.” Through this public ceremony, Amram reversed his “decree.” Since many had followed his lead and divorced their wives, when he reconsidered his position, it was important to remarry publicly so that others would do so as well (*Gur Aryeh*; see *Sotah* 12a).

4. An adult woman is generally referred to by her own

name, while a girl who has not yet reached maturity, and who remains under her father’s jurisdiction, is referred to by *his* name, e.g., *daughter of Levi* (*Gur Aryeh*). As Rashi will show, at the time of this marriage Yocheved was 130 years old.

5. Her menstrual cycle resumed, her facial features were transformed to resemble those of a young woman, and her wrinkled skin became smooth (Rashi to *Sotah* 12a; see also *Bava Basra* 120a). See Insight.

6. Egypt’s border city was surrounded by two walls, one inside the other. Yocheved was born after they had passed through the first wall, before they reached the

§ **Yocheved’s Youthful Appearance** Seemingly, the purpose of this miracle was to allow Yocheved to conceive and give birth despite her advanced age. However, Moshe’s brother Aharon was only three years his senior (see below, 7:7), and accordingly, she had already given birth at age 127 — before this miraculous transformation took place! Therefore, some commentators suggest that although the Torah alludes to this miracle immediately before Moshe’s birth, it had already occurred years earlier, before his older siblings were conceived (*Maharzu to Shemos Rabbah* 1:19). Alternatively, the purpose of this miracle was not merely to allow Yocheved to conceive, but rather to encourage others to remarry. For although Amram chose a public ceremony for this very purpose (see note 3), people may have suspected that the couple reunited only because Yocheved’s fertile years had passed, along with the possibility of bearing a child who would be subject to Pharaoh’s decree. Therefore, Hashem miraculously transformed Yocheved’s appearance — dispelling such suspicions, and demonstrating that she was as fertile as a young woman (*Iyun Yaakov to Sotah* 12a; *Ben Yehoyada to Bava Basra* 120a).

² *The woman conceived and gave birth to a son. She saw that he was good, and she hid him for three months.* ³ *She could not hide him any longer, so she took for him a reed basket and smeared it*

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remained there, in Egypt, for 210 years,^[7] וּבְשִׁינְאָו הָיָה מֹשֶׁה בֶּן שְׁמוֹנִים שָׁנָה — and when they left Egypt, Moshe was eighty years old.^[8] אִם בֶּן כְּשָׁנָה עֶבְרָה מִמֶּנּוּ הָיְתָה בֵּת ק"ל — Accordingly, when she conceived [Moshe] she must have been 130 years old (210-80=130). וְיָקָרָא אוֹתָהּ "בֵּת לֵוִי" — Yet [the verse] calls her *DAUGHTER OF LEVI*, as if she were a young girl! This is an allusion to the miracle of her restoration to a state of youth^[9] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:19; *Sotah* 12a).

2. בִּי טוֹב הוּא — SHE SAW THAT HE WAS GOOD AND SHE HID HIM FOR THREE MONTHS.

Every newborn is “good” in his mother’s eyes. What was unique about this one?^[10] Additionally, the verse implies that she hid him *because* he was good, but every mother seeks to protect her child. Rashi clarifies:

בְּשָׁנוֹלַד נִתְמָלֵא הַבַּיִת כְּלוֹ אוֹרָה — When he was born, the entire house was filled with light^[11] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:20; *Sotah* 12a). Therefore, Yocheved felt confident that Hashem would perform a miracle for him, so she hid him, despite the apparent impossibility of saving a child from Pharaoh’s decree.^[12]

3. וְלֹא יָכָלָה עוֹד הִצְפִּינוּ — SHE COULD NOT HIDE HIM ANY LONGER.

Why was Yocheved able to hide Moshe for three months, but not longer? Rashi explains:

שָׁמְנוּ לָהּ הַמִּצְרִיִּים מִיּוֹם שֶׁהִיחֲזוּרָה — The Egyptians counted nine months from the day that [Amram] remarried her, anticipating that she would give birth after the normal gestational period, וְהָיָא וְלָדָתוּ — and she instead gave birth to [Moshe] six months and one day after conceiving, allowing her to care for him in secret for three months. שֶׁהָיְתָה לְשִׁבְעָה יוֹלְדָת לְמִקְוָעִין — This accords with the teaching of our Sages that a woman who gives birth in the seventh month can give birth to viable offspring even if the seven months are incomplete, i.e., after six months and at least one day of the seventh month have passed (*Niddah* 38b). וְהָם בְּדָקוּ אַחֲרֶיהָ לְסוֹף תִּשְׁעָה — [The Egyptians] then began to investigate her at the end of the nine months, and she could no longer hide him.^[13]

□ גֹּמֵא — SO SHE TOOK FOR HIM A “GOMME” BASKET.

Rashi clarifies the meaning of the word גֹּמֵא:

גְּמִי בְּלָשׁוֹן מִשְׁנָה וּבְלָשׁוֹן יוֹנְקִי — This is the same as the word “גְּמִי” (reed) in Mishnaic Hebrew (*Bikkurim* 3:1; *Shabbos* 78a), and in Old French, it is translated “*jonc*.”^[14] וְדָבָר רַף הוּא וְעוֹמֵד בְּכָפֵי רַף וּבְכָפֵי קֶשֶׁה — She chose a reed basket because [reed] is a soft material, and it can therefore withstand impact from both soft and hard objects^[15] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:21; *Sotah* 12a).

entranceway of the second (*Radak* and *Divrei David* to *Bereishis* 46:15). See Rashi to *Bereishis* 46:15, where he shows how we know this.

7. See Rashi to 12:40 below.

8. See below, 7:7.

9. For discussion of why the Torah does not explicitly mention this miracle, see *Ramban* to *Bereishis* 46:15; *Gur Aryeh* here and to *Bereishis* 32:4.

10. *Devek Tov*.

11. The phrase, *she saw that he was good* [כִּי טוֹב], parallels the language in *Bereishis* 1:4, *God saw that the light was good* [כִּי טוֹב] (*Shemos Rabbah*; see *Maharzu* there for the source of the light that filled the house).

12. *Ramban*; *Mizrachi*. Alternatively, anyone attempting to hide a child from Pharaoh would themselves be put to death, but the miraculous light assured her that she would be spared that fate (*Gur Aryeh*).

13. The Gemara (*Sotah* 12a) explains differently: The Egyptians counted from the time that Amram and Yocheved remarried, but Moshe was born after only six months because they had already conceived him three months prior, before their initial divorce. Rashi’s explanation is based on a Midrashic work called *Sefar Aggadah Shel Diarei HaYamim* (*Mizrachi*, citing *Tosafos* in *Sotah* [missing in standard editions]; see also *Targum Yonasan* and *Midrash HaGadol*).

Mizrachi notes that Rashi’s approach follows the simple meaning of the verses, since v. 2 says *the woman conceived and gave birth to a son*, indicating that the conception occurred *after* the remarriage mentioned in v. 1. [For further discussion, see *Chizkuni*; *Daas Zekeinim*; *Tzeidah LaDerech*; *Kitzur Mizrachi*.]

14. This word means “reeds” or “rushes” in both Old and Modern French.

15. While a hard material, such as wood, might break if

בַּחֲמֹר וּבִזְפָּת וַתִּשֹּׂם בָּהּ אֶת־הַיֵּלֶד וַתִּשֹּׂם בְּסוּף
עַל־שִׁפְת הַיָּאֵר: וַתִּתְּצֵב אַחֲתוֹ מֶרְחָק לְדַעָה
מִה־יַּעֲשֶׂה לוֹ: וַתֵּרֶד בַּת־פַּרְעֹה לָרְחֹץ עַל־
הַיָּאֵר וַנַּעֲרִיתָהּ הַלֵּכֶת עַל־יַד הַיָּאֵר וַתֵּרָא אֶת־
הַתֵּבָה בְּתוֹךְ הַסּוּף וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת־אִמָּתָהּ וַתִּקְחָהּ:

בַּחֲמֹר וּבִזְפָּת וַתִּשֹּׂם בָּהּ אֶת־הַיֵּלֶד וַתִּשֹּׂם בְּסוּף
עַל־שִׁפְת הַיָּאֵר: וַתִּתְּצֵב אַחֲתוֹ מֶרְחָק לְדַעָה
מִה־יַּעֲשֶׂה לוֹ: וַתֵּרֶד בַּת־פַּרְעֹה לָרְחֹץ עַל־
הַיָּאֵר וַנַּעֲרִיתָהּ הַלֵּכֶת עַל־יַד הַיָּאֵר וַתֵּרָא אֶת־
הַתֵּבָה בְּתוֹךְ הַסּוּף וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת־אִמָּתָהּ וַתִּקְחָהּ:

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"רָאוּ חִלְקֵת יוֹאֵז חַל יָד" (שמואל-ב יד, ט). והוא לשון "יד"
מִשָּׁ, שֶׁיָּד הָאֵלֶּם סְמוּכָה לוֹ. וְצוּרֵינוּ דָּרְשׁוּ "הוֹלְכוֹת"
לְשׁוֹן מִיתָה, כְּמוֹ "הִנֵּה חֹלְכֵי הוֹלֵךְ לָמוּת" (בראשית כה,
לז), הוֹלְכוֹת לָמוּת לִפִּי שְׁמִיחוֹ צֶה, וְהַכְּתוּב מְסִיטָן, כִּי
לָמָּה לָנוּ לְכַתּוּב "וַנַּעֲרִיתָהּ הוֹלְכוֹת" (שמות רבה ש; סוטה
שס: אֶת אִמָּתָהּ. אֵת שֶׁפָּתְחָהּ. וְצוּרֵינוּ דָּרְשׁוּ לְשׁוֹן יָד,

בַּחֲמֹר וּבִזְפָּת. זָפַת מִצְחֹן וְטִיט מִצְפָּנִים כְּדֵי שֶׁלֹּא
יָרִיחַ אוֹתוֹ לְדִיק רֵיחַ שֶׁל זָפַת (שם ושם: וַתִּשֹּׂם בְּסוּף).
הוּא לְשׁוֹן אָגֶם, רוֹשִׁי"ל צִלְע"י, וְדוּמָה לוֹ "קִנְיָה וְסוּף
קָמְלוּ" (ישעיה יט, ו; שמות רבה ש; סוטה יב:). (ה) לָרְחֹץ
עַל הַיָּאֵר. סָרַם הַמֶּקְרָא וּפְרָשָׁהוּ: וַתֵּרֶד צֶת פְּרָעָה
עַל הַיָּאֵר לְרְחוֹץ צוֹ: עַל יַד הַיָּאֵר. חָלַל הַיָּאֵר, כְּמוֹ

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□ **בַּחֲמֹר וּבִזְפָּת — SHE TOOK FOR HIM A REED BASKET AND SMEARED IT WITH CLAY AND WITH TAR.**

Why did she use both tar and clay to waterproof the basket, when tar alone would have been more effective?^[16] Rashi explains:

□ **זָפַת מִבְּחוּץ וְטִיט מִבְּפְנִים — She smeared tar on the outside of the basket but used clay on the inside,**
□ **כְּדֵי שֶׁלֹּא יָרִיחַ אוֹתוֹ צְדִיק רֵיחַ רַע שֶׁל זָפַת — so that righteous individual (Moshe) should not be forced to**
□ **smell the unpleasant odor of tar**^[17] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:21; *Sotah* 12a).

□ **וַתִּשֹּׂם בְּסוּף — AND PLACED IT AMONG THE "SUF."**

□ **In this context, [סוף] connotes a marsh containing reeds,**^[18] which are called *rosel* in Old French.^[19] □ **וְדוּמָה לוֹ "קִנְיָה וְסוּף קָמְלוּ" — Similarly, we find in a verse (Yeshayah 19:6),**
□ **reeds and "סוף" withered, indicating that סוף are a type of reed**^[20] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:21; *Sotah* 12b).

5. לָרְחֹץ עַל הַיָּאֵר — PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER WENT DOWN TO BATHE BY THE CANAL.

One bathes *in* a canal, not *by* it! Therefore, Rashi clarifies:

□ **סָרַם הַמֶּקְרָא וּפְרָשָׁהוּ — We must explain the verse as if its words had been rearranged, as follows:** וַתֵּרֶד
□ **בַּת פַּרְעֹה עַל הַיָּאֵר לְרְחוֹץ בּוֹ — PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER WENT DOWN BY THE CANAL, TO BATHE in it.**^[21]

the waters were to thrust it forcefully against a rock, a reed basket would simply bounce away without breaking (*Maharik*; Rashi to *Sotah* 12a).

16. *Be'er Yitzchak*; *Devek Tov*; *Minchas Yehudah*.

17. Although clay is not as waterproof as tar, it offered some protection without producing an unpleasant smell. This degree of protection sufficed to keep out the relatively tranquil waters of the marsh (see *Mizrachi*). Alternatively, the clay was not intended to keep out the water, for the tar on the outside did that. Rather, the clay was there to prevent the tar's offensive odor from entering the basket (*Nachalas Yaakov*). See further, Rashi to *Bereishis* 6:14.

18. See Rashi to 13:8 below; *Divrei David* there.

19. Both the Old French term, *rosel*, and its modern French equivalent, *roseau*, connote the type of reeds that commonly grow in marshes (*Maayanei Agam*, p.

104; *Zechor LeAvraham*).

20. Thus, the סוף marsh is named after the plant species that grows there. Likewise, in his commentary to 13:18 below and to *Sotah* (12b), Rashi identifies a סוף as a marsh in which סוף plants grow. See 13:18 note 12.

Yocheved placed Moshe in the marsh hoping that its tall reeds would hide him from view and prevent him from being taken away by the current (*Nachalas Yaakov*; *Yefeh To'ar*).

21. The words עַל הַיָּאֵר, *by the River*, modify בַּת וַתֵּרֶד, *Pharaoh's daughter went down*, and tell us *where* she went down to (*Mizrachi*). Thus, the verse means: she descended to the riverbank, which is *by the canal* and prepared to bathe in the canal (*Meisiach Ilmim*; *Gevuros Hashem*, Ch. 17).

The word עַל means *by* or *near* (as in *Bamidbar* 2:20; see Rashi there). Alternatively, the word עַל is used here in the sense of *אֵל, to* (as in *I Shmuel* 2:11). The verse is

with clay and with tar; she placed the child into it and placed it among the marsh reeds at the bank of the Canal. ⁴His sister stationed herself at a distance to know what would be done to him.

⁵Pharaoh's daughter went down to bathe by the Canal and her maidens were walking alongside the Canal. She saw the basket in the midst of the reeds and she sent her maidservant, and she took it.

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□ על יד הַיָּאָר — AND HER MAIDENS WERE WALKING “AL YAD” THE CANAL.

Translated literally, על יד הַיָּאָר would mean “by the hand of the Canal,” but, of course, Canals do not have hands! Rashi explains the meaning of this idiomatic expression:

כְּמוֹ “יָאָר” — It means **alongside the Canal**, for the word יָד can mean “beside” or “next to,” **חֶלֶקֶת יוֹאָב אֶל יָדִי** — like it does in the verse (*II Shmuel* 14:30), **take note of Yoav's field that is next to mine** (אֶל יָדִי). **וְהוּא לְשׁוֹן “יָד” מִמֶּשׁ** — This idiom is derived from the literal meaning of “יָד” (hand), **שֵׁנִי הָאָדָם כְּמוֹכָה לוֹ** — for a person's hand is right beside him.^[22]

According to the preceding explanation, וְנַעֲרֹתֶיהָ הֹלְכֹת עַל יַד הַיָּאָר means simply, *and her maidens were walking alongside the Canal*. Rashi now cites a Midrashic interpretation of the term הֹלְכֹת, which leads to a different understanding of the phrase על יד הַיָּאָר:

וְרִבְתִּינוּ דְּרָשׁוּ: “הוֹלְכוֹת” (walking, or going) as an expression of drawing close to death, **כְּמוֹ “הִגָּה אֲנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ לָמוּת”** — like it is used in the verse (*Bereishis* 25:32), **look, I am going (הוֹלֵךְ) to die**. Thus, וְנַעֲרֹתֶיהָ הֹלְכֹת means, “and her maidens were going to die,” and the next phrase, על יד הַיָּאָר means *on account of the Canal*.^[23]

וְהוּא לְשׁוֹן “יָד” מִמֶּשׁ — Accordingly, our verse means, “**HER MAIDENS WERE GOING to die, ON ACCOUNT OF** a matter relating to **THE CANAL**; that is, they would soon die **because** when Pharaoh's daughter wished to rescue Moshe from the Canal, **they protested against her**, and the angel, Gavriel, came and killed them. **וְהָיְתָה הַלְכָתָהּ לָמוּת** — And while this is not the simple meaning of the verse, the very inclusion of **this verse** in the Torah **supports** the exposition of [the Sages], for otherwise, **why do we need the Torah to write** about the seemingly unimportant detail that **HER MAIDENS WERE WALKING ALONGSIDE THE CANAL**? Surely, this is mentioned to allude to the maidens' demise for opposing the initiative of Pharaoh's daughter to save the infant, Moshe^[24] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:23; *Sotah* 12b).

□ אֶת אֲמָתָהּ — AND SHE SENT “AMASAH” AND SHE TOOK IT.

Rashi offers two interpretations of the word אֲמָתָהּ:

אֶת שִׁפְחָתָהּ — The simple meaning is “**her maidservant**”;^[25] Pharaoh's daughter sent her maidservant to retrieve the basket.^[26] **וְרִבְתִּינוּ דְּרָשׁוּ לְשׁוֹן יָד** — Some of **our Sages**, however, **expounded** אֲמָתָהּ as an

thus translated, *Pharaoh's daughter went down to the River to bathe* (Ramban; *Ri Kanizal*).

22. See also Rashi to *Bamidbar* 2:17. [English speakers use a similar idiom, referring to something nearby as “at hand.”]

23. In Mishnaic Hebrew the term על יָדִי often means “on account of.” For example, the Mishnah (*Makkos* 2:3) says: הָאָב גּוֹלָה עַל יָדִי הָבֵן, “a father goes into exile on account of [killing] his son” (*Nachalas Yaakov*; see *Mizrachi* for a different approach).

24. *Nachalas Yaakov*. Alternatively, the Sages interpret our verse in this manner because its simple meaning is implausible. The maidens would certainly not have walked “alongside the river” and abandoned the bathing princess (*Gur Aryeh*).

There is also an allusion to this approach in the

spelling of הֹלְכֹת. For although this word is sometimes spelled alongside with two *vavs* (see, for example, *I Shmuel* 25:42), here it does not have even one *vav*, and consequently, it has the same *gematria* as מִיתָה, death: in הֹלְכֹת, ה=5; ל=30; כ=20; ת=400; 5+30+20+400=455; and in מִיתָה, מ=40; י=10; ת=400; ה=5; 40+10+400+5=455 (*Hadar Zekeinim*; *Gur Aryeh*).

25. For אֲמָה means “maidservant” (as in 21:7 below), so the possessive-form אֲמָתָהּ means “her maidservant.”

26. This fits even with the Midrashic approach in the previous Rashi. Although the maidens had perished, the angel, Gavriel, allowed one to remain alive because it is unfitting for a princess to be unattended. Accordingly, it was this last, remaining maiden who was sent to retrieve the basket (*Sotah* 12b).

וַתִּפְתָּח וַתֵּרָאֶהוּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד וְהִנֵּה־נָעַר בֶּכֶה
וַתַּחֲמֹל עָלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר מִי־לִדִּי הָעֶבְרִים זֶה:
וַתֹּאמֶר אַחֲתוֹ אֶל־בֶּת־פְּרֹעֶה הָאֵלֶךְ וְקִרְאתִי לָּהּ
אִשָּׁה מִיִּנְקָת מִן הָעֶבְרִיִּת וְתִינָק לָךְ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד:

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חָצַל לְפִי דְקָדִיק לִשְׁוֹן הַקּוֹדֵשׁ הִיָּה לוֹ לְהִנָּקֵד חֲמֶטָה, מִ"ם
דְּגוּשָׁה. וְהִם דָּרְשׁוּ "אֵת חֲמֶטָה" אֵת יָדָה, וְנִשְׁפָּרְצָה
חֲמֶטָה חֲמוּת הַרְבֵּה (סס וסס: ו) וּתְפַתַּח וּתְרַאֲהוּ.
אֵת מִי רָחֶטָה, אֵת הַיֶּלֶד, זֶה פָּשׁוּט. וּמִדְּרָשׁ, שֶׁרָחֶטָה

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expression for an “arm.”^[27] Accordingly, the verse means that she “sent forth” or extended her arm to retrieve the basket.

Rashi comments on the second interpretation:

However, according to the grammatical rules of the Holy Tongue (Scriptural Hebrew), if אַמְתָּה were to mean “her arm” then it should have been vowelized “אַמְתָּה”, with a *dagesh* in its *mem*.^[28] Since our Masoretic reading is אַמְתָּה without a *dagesh*, we must accept that the plain meaning of the word is “her maidservant.” וְהָם דָּרְשׁוּ אֶת וְנִשְׁתַּרְבְּבָה — [The Sages] nevertheless expounded “אֶת אַמְתָּה” to mean “her arm,”^[29] and since according to their approach, the term אַמְתָּה literally means *her “amah”* (cubit),^[30] it teaches that when Pharaoh’s daughter extended her arm to retrieve Moshe’s basket, **her “amah”** (arm) miraculously **extended many amos** so that she would be able to reach the basket^[31] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:23; *Sotah* 12b).

6. ותפתח ותראהו — SHE OPENED [IT] AND SAW HIM, THE CHILD.

The verse seems redundant, as *him* and *the child* both refer to the same person. Rashi offers two explanations of the phrase, “*and saw him, the child*”:

— The verse follows the style of first using a pronoun, “and saw *him*,” and then clarifying: **Whom did she see? THE CHILD.** ומדרשו, וזה פשוטו — This is its simple interpretation.^[32]

27. An arm can be called אַמָּה — literally, *a cubit (amah)* — because a cubit is the measure of an arm’s length. [See *Targum Yonasan*, who renders אַמָּה as גְּרִמְיָה, which is Aramaic for “her cubit.”]

Both interpretations (“her maidservant” and “her arm”) are cited in the Gemara (*Sotah* 12b) and Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:23). Rashi, however, considers the first to be the simple meaning (as he will explain) and the second to be an exposition in the style of *derush* (*Mizrachi*).

28. Likewise, it would have a *patach* under its *aleph* instead of a *chataf-patach*, just like the word אָרֶיֶה (*Gur Aryeh*).

29. Although the simple meaning of אִמָּה is “her maidservant,” the Sages saw an additional meaning in it. The basis of the Sages’ exposition is that since the verse could have referred to the maidservant as שִׁפְחָה (which *clearly* means *her maidservant*), but instead uses אִמָּה, which connotes an arm as well, it gives room for an additional interpretation (*Mizrachi*; see note 31 for another approach).

30. See note 27.

31. As has been mentioned, Rashi views this interpretation as *derush*, because the word אַמָּה is read without a *dagesh* in the *mem*, so its plain meaning must be “her maidservant.” *Rav Saadiah Gaon* (cited by *Gur Aryeh*), however, maintains that the word אַמָּה *does* have a *dagesh* in its *mem* (i.e., אַמָּה). Likewise, Onkelos translates the phrase וְתִשְׁלַח אֶת אַמָּתָהּ as וְתִשְׁטֵת יָד אַמָּתָהּ, “she stretched out her arm,” thereby indicating that he considers “her arm” to be the plain meaning of the word אַמָּה (*Minchas Shai*; see also *Targum Yonasan*, cited in note 27). *Gur Aryeh* (first approach) therefore asserts that the Sages who interpreted the word to mean “her arm” also read the word as אַמָּה with a *dagesh*. Thus, in their view, the *plain meaning* of this word is “her *amah* / arm.”

32. The Torah often uses a pronoun and then clarifies itself by openly naming the pronoun's subject. For another example, see below, 35:5 (*Mizrachi*).

[Although the verse could have said, *she opened it and saw the child*, without using any pronoun, this

⁶ *She opened [it] and saw him, the child, and behold! a youth was crying. She took pity on him and said, “This is one of the children of the Hebrews.”*

⁷ *His sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and call for you a wet nurse from the Hebrew women, who will nurse the child for you?”*

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וַיִּפְתָּהּ עָמוּ שְׂכִינָה — **But its Midrashic interpretation is** that there is no redundancy at all, for the word *Him* does not refer to Moshe, but rather to the *Shechinah*.^[33] Accordingly, the verse teaches **that she saw the *Shechinah* with [the child]** ^[34] (*Sotah* 12b; *Shemos Rabbah* 1:24).

□ **וַהֲיָה נֶעֶר בָּכָה** — **AND BEHOLD! A YOUTH WAS CRYING.**

Moshe was only three months old at this time. Why does the verse refer to him as *a youth* (נֶעֶר), a term that usually refers to a young man approaching adulthood?^[35] Rashi explains:

קוֹלוֹ כְּנֶעֶר — The Torah uses this term to indicate that when he cried, **his voice was powerful, like the voice of a youth**, i.e., a young adult^[36] (*Sotah* 12b; *Shemos Rabbah* 1:24).

7. מִן הָעִבְרִית — **“SHALL I GO AND CALL FOR YOU A WET NURSE FROM THE HEBREW WOMEN?”**

Why did Miriam specifically offer to call one of the *Hebrew* women? Was the wet nurse’s nationality significant to the princess?^[37] Rashi explains:

מִלְמַד שֶׁהַחֲזִירָתוֹ עַל מִצְרַיִם הָרַבָּה לִינֵק וְלֹא יִנֵּק — This teaches us **that Pharaoh’s daughter had already taken [Moshe] around to many Egyptian women to nurse, but he did not nurse** from any of them, **לִפִּי שֶׁהָיָה עֲתִיד לְדַבֵּר עִם הַשְּׂכִינָה** — as he refused their milk, **for he was destined to speak with the *Shechinah***.^[38] Therefore, Miriam specifically offered to call a Hebrew woman (*Sotah* 12b; *Shemos Rabbah* 1:25).

would imply that she was surprised to see a child in the basket, when, in truth, she retrieved the basket specifically because she suspected this was the case. Therefore, the verse says, *she saw him*, i.e., the child that she expected to find (*Or HaChaim*).]

33. *Hei* and *vav*, the final two letters of וַיִּרְאֶה (*she saw Him*), are also the last two letters of Hashem’s Four-letter Name (קִדְוָה), and are considered a Divine Name in their own right (see *Shabbos* 104a). Accordingly, וַיִּרְאֶה can be understood as two separate words (וַיִּרְאָה), meaning, *and she saw* (וַיִּרְאָה) Hashem’s *Shechinah* (הִדּוּ) (*Imrei Shefer*; *Be’er Mayim Chaim*; *Minchas Yehudah*).

34. According to this interpretation, the words הַיֶּלֶד אִתּוֹ should be translated, *with the child*, for the word אִתּוֹ sometimes means “with” (e.g., above 1:1; *Mizrachi*, *Sefer Zikaron*). [According to the first interpretation,

however, the word אִתּוֹ merely designates הַיֶּלֶד as the object of the verb, but has no translatable meaning.]

35. *Sifsei Chachamim*. Additionally, the verse appears self-contradictory, first referring to him as the “child” and then as a “youth” (*Sotah* 12b).

36. Hashem caused Moshe to cry with great force, thereby arousing Pharaoh’s daughter to take pity on him (see *Gur Aryeh*).

37. Although Miriam was planning on calling Moshe’s mother (see v. 8), she would not have mentioned that she intended to call a Hebrew woman unless she had reason to believe that Pharaoh’s daughter wanted her to do so (*Devek Tov*; *Yefeh To’ar*).

38. For Hashem declared, “shall the mouth that is destined to speak with Me nurse from [one who eats] non-kosher food?” (*Sotah* 12b with Rashi; *Shemos Rabbah* 1:25). See *Insight*.

☞ **The Spiritual Potential of a Jewish Child** *Rama* (*Yoreh Deah* 81:7) rules that although this is technically permissible, a Jewish infant should not nurse from a non-Jewish wet-nurse if a Jewish nurse is available, because her milk could have a negative effect upon him. As a source for this ruling, *Beur HaGra* (ibid. §31) cites Moshe’s refusal to nurse from the Egyptian women. But how can we derive a general rule from this incident? After all, Moshe was no typical child — he was destined to speak with the *Shechinah*!

Since *Rama* does rule based on this comparison, his ruling communicates a powerful and fundamental lesson: Every Jewish child has tremendous spiritual promise, which must be carefully guarded and fostered. Each one has the potential to rise to the greatest heights, and even to converse with the *Shechinah* — and it is the parents’ duty to raise their child with this aspiration (*Emes LeYaakov*).

וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ בַת פַּרְעֹה אֲנִי לִי
וְאֶלֶת עוֹלָמָתָא וְקֶרֶת יֵת אִמָּה
דְּרַבְיָא: ט וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ בַת פַּרְעֹה
אוֹבִילִי (נ"א: הַלִּיכִי) יֵת רַבִּיָּא הַדִּין
וְאוֹנִיקְיָה לִי וְאַנָּא אֶתָּן יֵת אֲגָרִיף
וְנִסִּיבַת אֶתְתָּא רַבִּיָּא וְאוֹנִיקְתָּה:
י וְרַבָּא רַבִּיָּא וְאוֹנִיקְתָּה לְבַת פַּרְעֹה
וְהָיָה לָהּ לְבָר וְקֶרֶת שְׁמָהּ מִשָּׁה
וַתֹּאמֶר אֲרִי מִן מִיָּא שְׁחֵלְתָה:

וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ בַת־פַּרְעֹה לָכִי וְתִלָּךְ הָעֹלָמָה
וְתִקְרָא אֶת־אִם הַיֶּלֶד: ט וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ בַת־פַּרְעֹה
הַלִּיכִי אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד הַזֶּה וְהִינֵקְהוּ לִי וְאֲנִי אֶתָּן
אֶת־שְׂכָרְךָ וְתִקַּח הָאִשָּׁה הַיֶּלֶד וְתִנִּיקְהוּ: י וַיִּגְדַּל
הַיֶּלֶד וְתַבְּאֵהוּ לְבַת־פַּרְעֹה וַיְהִי־לָהּ לְבֵן וְתִקְרָא
שְׁמוֹ מִשָּׁה וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי מִן־הַמַּיִם מְשִׁיתָהוּ:

רש"י

"מִשָּׁה", וְלָשׁוֹן הוֹצֵאָה הוּא, וְכֵן "יִמְשְׁנִי מִמַּיִם רַבִּים" (שמואל א-ב
כב, יז). שְׁחֵלְתָה הִיא מִמְחַצֶּרֶת מִשָּׁה לֹא יִתְכַּן לומר מְשִׁיתָהוּ חָלָף
"הַמִּשְׁוֹתִיָּהוּ", כְּאִשֶּׁר יֹאמֶר מִן קֶס הַקִּימוֹת, וּמִן שֶׁ הַשִּׁיבוֹתִי,
וּמִן זֶה הַצִּיּוֹתִי, אוֹ מְשִׁיתָהוּ, כְּמוֹ "וּמְשִׁיתִי אֶת עֵינֵי הָאֶרֶץ"
(וכריה ג, ט). אֶלֶל "מְשִׁיתִי" חִינוּ חָלָף מְגֻזְרֵת פְּצִיבָה שְׁפֻטָּל
שָׁלָה מִיוֹסֵד צֶה"ל צְסוּף הַפְּצִיבָה, כְּגוֹן מִשָּׁה, זִנָּה, עֲשָׂה,
לֹה, פִּנָּה, כְּשִׁיבָה לומר צֶה"ס פְּעֻלָּתִי פִּצָּח יו"ד צְמָקוֹס ה"ל,

(ח) וְתִלָּךְ הָעֹלָמָה. הִלְכָה צִזְרִיזוֹת וְעֹלָמוֹת כְּעָלָם
(שם ושם): (ט) הַלִּיכִי. כְּתִנְצָאָה וְלֹא יִדְעָה מֶה פְּתַנְצָאָה,
הִי שְׁלִיכִי (שם ושם): (י) מְשִׁיתָהוּ. כְּתִרְגוּמוֹ, "שְׁחֵלְתִּיהָ",
וְהוּא לָשׁוֹן הוֹצֵאָה צֶלָשׁוֹן אֶרְמִי: כְּמִשְׁחֵל צִנִּיתָא מְחֻלָּצָא
(וכריה ט). וְצֶלָשׁוֹן טַבְּרִי "מְשִׁיתָהוּ" לָשׁוֹן הַסִּירוֹתִיו, כְּמוֹ
"לֹא יִמּוֹשׁ" (ויהושע א, ח), "לֹא מִשּׁו" (במדבר יד, מד), כֶּךָ חֲצֵרוֹ
מִנְחָס. וְאִנִּי חֹמֶר שְׁחֵלְתָה מִמְחַצֶּרֶת "מִשָּׁה" וְיִמּוֹשׁ, חָלָף מְגֻזְרֵת

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8. וְתִלָּךְ הָעֹלָמָה — *THE GIRL WENT AND CALLED THE BOY'S MOTHER.*

Since the previous verse already identified this girl as the baby's sister, this verse could have simply said, "she" *went and called the boy's mother*. Why does it say, *the girl* (הָעֹלָמָה) *went*?^[39] Rashi clarifies: **הִלְכָה בְּרִירוֹת וְעֹלָמוֹת כְּעָלָם** — The Torah uses this term to indicate that **she went with alacrity and vigor, like a youth**, for the term *עֹלָמָה* connotes a strong and energetic young woman^[40] (*Sotah* 12b; *Shemos Rabbah* 1:25).

9. הַלִּיכִי — *PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER SAID TO HER, "TAKE THIS CHILD AND NURSE HIM FOR ME."*

Pharaoh's daughter could have simply said, *nurse this child for me*. Why did she add the word הַלִּיכִי, *take*?^[41] Rashi explains:

וְהוּא לָשׁוֹן הוֹצֵאָה בְּלָשׁוֹן — נְתַבְּאָה וְלֹא יָדְעָה מֶה נְתַבְּאָה — [Pharaoh's daughter] **prophesied without knowing what she prophesied**. — **הִי שְׁלִיכִי** — For הַלִּיכִי can also be interpreted as meaning **"here is that which is yours."**^[42] Thus, Pharaoh's daughter unwittingly acknowledged that she was handing the "wet nurse" her own child (*Sotah* 12b; *Shemos Rabbah* 1:25).

10. מְשִׁיתָהוּ — *"MESHISIHU."*

Rashi clarifies the meaning of this term:

וְהוּא לָשׁוֹן הוֹצֵאָה בְּלָשׁוֹן — כְּתִרְגוּמוֹ "שְׁחֵלְתִּיהָ" — Its meaning is as **Targum Onkelos renders it: "שְׁחֵלְתִּיהָ"**, **וְהוּא לָשׁוֹן הוֹצֵאָה בְּלָשׁוֹן** — **as in the expression (Berachos 8a), "like drawing out (בְּמִשְׁחָל) a hair from milk."** Thus, Pharaoh's daughter was saying, *"For I drew him from the water."*

39. *Kitzur Mizrahi*; *Be'er Yitzchak*; cf. *Meisiach Ilmim*; *Be'er Mayim Chaim*.

40. The root of עֹלָמָה is עלם, which connotes strength or energy (Rashi to *Sotah* 12b). Although Miriam was only six years old, she went with the vigor of a fully grown "youth" (*Nachalas Yaakov*).

[Rashi describes Miriam's vigor using the term כְּעָלָם, which literally means "like a young man." *Nachalas Yaakov* suggests that the text of Rashi should be emended to read כְּעָלְמָה, "like a young woman," which is the reading in *Sotah* 12b.]

41. *Imrei Shefer*, *Kitzur Mizrahi*.

42. Since the word הַלִּיכִי is extra, it is expounded as a contraction of the words הִי (*here*) and לִיכִי (*yours*), so Pharaoh's daughter was saying, "Here is yours" (*Imrei Shefer*; *Kitzur Mizrahi*; cf. *Mizrahi*; *Devek Tov*).

[Some explain that הַלִּיכִי is related to הוֹלֵךְ (*carry off*), and accordingly, the verse should have said הוֹלִיכִי (the feminine form of הוֹלֵךְ). Since it says הַלִּיכִי, it is understood as a combination of הִי and לִיכִי (*Ri Kanizal*; *Meisiach Ilmim*; *Maharsha* to *Sotah* 12b).]

⁸ The daughter of Pharaoh said to her, “Go.” The girl went and called the boy’s mother. ⁹ Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this child and nurse him for me, and I will give your pay.” So the woman took the child and nursed him. ¹⁰ The child grew and she brought him to the daughter of Pharaoh and he became a son to her. She called his name Moshe, as she said, “For I drew him from the water.”

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Rashi now analyzes the Hebrew root of the word מְשִׁיתָהּ. He first cites the opinion of a scholar who disagrees with the interpretation of Onkelos, and then offers his own opinion, which accords with Onkelos: וּבְלָשׁוֹן עֲבָרִי “מְשִׁיתָהּ” לָשׁוֹן הַסִּירוֹתָיו — **In the Hebrew language, “מְשִׁיתָהּ” literally means “I removed him,”** — כְּמוֹ “לֹא יָמוּשׁ” “לֹא מָשׁוּ” — **for it is similar to the word יָמוּשׁ in the phrase (Yehoshua 1:8), this book of the Torah shall not depart (יָמוּשׁ) from your mouth, and the word מָשׁוּ in the phrase (Bamidbar 14:44), the Ark of Hashem’s covenant and Moshe did not move (מָשׁוּ) from the midst of the camp.** Accordingly, Pharaoh’s daughter was saying, “For I removed him from the water.” — כֵּךְ חֲבָרוּ מִנֶּחֱם — **This is how Menachem ben Saruk classifies [the word מְשִׁיתָהּ].**^[43]

Rashi, however, differs with Menachem’s interpretation:

וְאֵנִי אֹמֵר שְׂאִינוּ מִמַּחְבֶּרֶת “מָשׁ” וְיָמוּשׁ — **But I say that [מְשִׁיתָהּ] does not belong in the same entry as “מָשׁ” and “יָמוּשׁ.”** — אֲלֵא מִגִּזְרֵת “מָשָׁה”, וּלְשׁוֹן הוֹצָאָה הוּא — **Rather, it is derived from the root “מָשָׁה”, and is literally an expression of “drawing out,”** as Onkelos renders it.^[44] — וְכֵן “יָמְשִׁנִּי מִמַּיִם רַבִּים” — **Likewise, the word יָמְשִׁנִּי, which appears in the verse (II Shmuel 22:17), He drew me out (יָמְשִׁנִּי) of deep waters, is derived from the root מָשָׁה.**

מִשְׁתִּירוֹ — שְׂאִילוֹ הִיָּה מִמַּחְבֶּרֶת מָשׁ לֹא יִתְבֵּן לומר מְשִׁיתָהּ — **Menachem’s approach cannot be correct, for if this verb were related to the word “מָשׁ” (depart), as he claims, then it would not be possible to conjugate it “מְשִׁיתָהּ”, as our verse does,** — אֲלֵא “הִמְשִׁיתָהּ” — **but rather, “הִמְשִׁיתָהּ”, for that is how the word מָשׁ is constructed in the causative (hifil) form;**^[45] — כְּאֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר מִן כֵּם הִקְמוֹתִי — **just as the causative form of the root “קָם” (to arise or stand up) is expressed as “הִקְמוֹתִי” (I have stood up, i.e., I have established), and the causative form of the root “שָׁב” (to return) is “הִשְׁיבוֹתִי” (I have returned [it]), and the causative form of the root “בָּא” (to come) is “הִבִּיאוֹתִי” (I have brought).** Similarly, a causative verb derived from מָשׁ should follow this same vowel pattern, i.e., “הִמְשִׁיתָהּ”. או — **Alternatively, the Torah could have said “מְשִׁיתָהּ” (I removed him), for that is how מָשׁ is conjugated in its basic (kal) form,** — כְּמוֹ “וּמִשְׁתִּי אֶת עֵץ הָאֲרֶץ” — **like in the verse (Zechariah 3:9), and I will remove (וּמִשְׁתִּי) the sin of that land.**^[46] — הִתִּיבָה — **However, the vowel pattern “מְשִׁיתָהּ”, which is the basis of מְשִׁיתָהּ,**^[47] **cannot occur unless it is derived from a word whose final root letter is a hei,** — כְּגוֹן מָשָׁה בָּנָה עָשָׂה צוּה פָּנָה — **such as “מָשָׁה” (to draw out), “בָּנָה” (to build), “עָשָׂה” (to do), “צוּה” (to command), “פָּנָה” (to turn).** — כְּשִׁיבָא לומר כֵּהָם — **For when one wishes to use [such roots] to say “I did such and such,”**^[48]

43. Menachem ben Saruk (Spain c. 920-980) compiled a dictionary of the Hebrew language called *Machberes Menachem*, which Rashi frequently cites. There, he includes all three of these terms — “מְשִׁיתָהּ”, “יָמוּשׁ”, and “מָשׁ” — in his entry for the root “מָשׁ.”

According to Menachem’s interpretation, Onkelos — who renders מְשִׁיתָהּ as *I drew him* — is not providing the literal translation of the word, but rather is conveying its meaning in the context of the verse (*Be’er Yitzchak*).

44. Unlike Menachem, Rashi maintains that Onkelos’ translation of this word is precise and literal (*Mizrachi; Gur Aryeh*).

45. The essential meaning of מָשׁ is “depart.” Now, Pharaoh’s daughter did not *herself* “depart from the

water”; rather, she removed Moshe from the water, meaning that she *caused* him to “depart from the water.” This is usually expressed with the causative grammatical form known as *hifil*. When the root מָשׁ is used in *hifil* form — saying, “I caused him to depart” — it is formulated as *הִמְשִׁיתָהּ* (see *Gur Aryeh*).

46. The term מָשׁ can be used in the *kal* (simple) form to mean “remove [someone or something],” without using the causative *hifil* construction, as in Rashi’s example.

47. The word מְשִׁיתָהּ is מְשִׁיתָהּ with an added masculine suffix (הוּ). מְשִׁיתָהּ means either “I removed” (according to Menachem) or “I drew out” (according to Rashi). So מְשִׁיתָהּ means either “I removed *him*,” or “I drew *him* out.”

48. I.e., first person past tense verbs, like מְשִׁיתָהּ.

יא וַיֵּהָרֶה בְּיוֹמָיָא הָאֵנוּן וַיִּרְבָּא מִשָּׁה
וַיִּפְקֹץ לָנוֹת אַחֲוָהִי וַחֲנוּא בְּפִלְחָנְהוּן
וַחֲנוּא גְבֵר מִצְרִי מְחִי לְגֵבֵר יְהוּדִי

שלישי יא | בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם וַיִּגְדֵּל מִשָּׁה וַיֵּצֵא אֶל-אָחִיו
וַיֵּרָא בְּסִבְלָתָם וַיֵּרָא אִישׁ מִצְרִי מִכָּה אִישׁ-עִבְרִי

רש"י

הַגִּבֹּר לְמִלְחָמָה (שם כח): מִכָּה אִישׁ עִבְרִי. מִלְקָהוּ
וְרוֹדֵהוּ. וּבְטֵלָה שֶׁל שְׁלוֹמִית בַּת דָּבָרִי הִיא, וְנָתַן טִיבָיו בָּהּ,
וּבְלִילָה הִעֲמִידוּ וְהוֹלִיאוּ מִצִּיתוֹ, וְהוּא חֲזוֹן וְנִכְנָס לְבֵית וְצָא
עַל אֶשְׁתּוֹ, בְּסִבְרָה שֶׁהוּא צֵעָה, וְחֲזוֹן הָאִישׁ לְבֵיתוֹ וְהִרְגִּישׁ
צָדָק, וּכְשֶׁרָאָה אוֹתוֹ מִצְרִי שֶׁהִרְגִּישׁ צָדָק הִיא מִכָּהוּ
וְרוֹדֵהוּ כָּל הַיּוֹם (שם):

כְּמוֹ "עֲשִׂיתִי", "צִנִּיתִי", "פָּנִיתִי", "לָוִיתִי": (יא) וַיִּגְדֵּל
מִשָּׁה. וְהָלֹא כָּבֵד כְּתֹב "וַיִּגְדֵּל הַיֶּלֶד", אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוּדָה
צִרְצִי אֲלֵעָא: הִרְאֵנוּן לְקוֹמָה וְהִשְׁנִי לְגִדּוּלָה, שְׁמִיעָהוּ פְרַעֲה
עַל צִיתוֹ (תַּנְחוּמָא יֶסֶן וְאֵרָא יוֹ): וַיֵּרָא בְּסִבְלָתָם. נָתַן טִיבָיו
וְלָצוּ לְהוֹיֹת מִלֵּךְ עֲלֵיהֶם (שְׁמוֹת רַבָּה שם כז): אִישׁ מִצְרִי.
נוֹגֵשׁ הִיא, מִמּוֹנָה עַל שׁוֹטְרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהִיא מַעֲמִידָם מִקְרָת

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a *yud* is inserted in place of the *hei*, — like in the words "עֲשִׂיתִי" (I did), "בִּנִּיתִי" (I built), "פָּנִיתִי" (I turned), "צִוִּיתִי" (I commanded), all of which have a *yud* after their first two root letters in place of their *hei*. Therefore, if מִשִּׁיתוֹ, which is based on the word מִשִּׁיתִי, as above, is derived from the root משה, as I (Rashi) say, it fits the expected pattern, for its first two root letters, *mem* and *shin*, are followed by a *yud* in place of the final root letter *hei*. But if it is derived from the root מ as Menachem says, it does not fit the expected pattern.

11. מִשָּׁה — MOSHE GREW.

Rashi addresses an apparent redundancy in our verse:

Has [the Torah] not already written, *the child grew* (above, v. 10)? Why does it tell us yet again, *MOSHE GREW*? — אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוּדָה בְּרַבִּי אֲלֵעָא הִרְאֵנוּן לְקוֹמָה וְהִשְׁנִי לְגִדּוּלָה — R' Yehudah the son of R' Il'ai said: The first verse (v. 10) means that Moshe grew in physical stature, and the second verse (i.e., our verse) means that he grew in status, — שְׁמִיעָהוּ פְרַעֲה עַל בֵּיתוֹ — for Pharaoh appointed [Moshe] over his household^[49] (*Tanchuma Yashan, Va'eira* 17).

□ וַיֵּרָא בְּסִבְלָתָם — MOSHE... WENT OUT TO HIS BRETHREN, AND HE PERCEIVED THEIR BURDENS.

וַיֵּרָא literally means "he saw," but this cannot simply mean that Moshe saw Jewish slaves working, for he had certainly seen that many times before. Rather, Rashi explains:

— נָתַן עֵינָיו וְלִבּוֹ לְהוֹיֹת מִצְרִי עֲלֵיהֶם — It means that [Moshe] dedicated his eyes and heart to their plight and their burdens, to be distressed about them^[50] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:27).

□ אִישׁ מִצְרִי — HE SAW AN EGYPTIAN MAN STRIKING A HEBREW MAN.

Why does the verse describe the Egyptian as an אִישׁ מִצְרִי, and not simply as a מִצְרִי, and the Hebrew as an אִישׁ עִבְרִי, and not simply as an עִבְרִי^[51] Rashi explains:

49. Moshe thus "grew" into a position of prominence. See Insight.

50. I.e., he intentionally observed them with his eyes and contemplated their suffering in his heart (*Imrei*

Shefer). When Moshe saw the plight of his brethren, he cried bitterly, assisted them in their work, and tried to improve their conditions (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:27).

51. *Amar N'kei; Maskil LeDavid; Be'er BaSadeh*.

¶ "Moshe Grew" While Rashi quotes the explanation of the Tanna, R' Yehudah, Ramban offers a simpler explanation of the repetition of "grew": The phrase *The child grew* in v. 10 means that he grew old enough to be weaned, so — as the verse continues — his mother, who had been nursing him, brought him to Pharaoh's daughter. And when our verse says, *Moshe grew*, it means that he grew to adulthood. *Nachalas Yaakov* wonders why Rashi does not follow this simple approach.

However, Rashi below (v. 14) indicates that at the time of this episode Moshe was not yet thirteen years old (this is the plain meaning of Rashi's words there; see note 67 below). Thus, "*Moshe grew*" cannot mean that he grew to adulthood, and Rashi must therefore explain our verse as meaning that he grew in stature. *Nachalas Yaakov*, though, understands Rashi there to mean that Moshe was twenty years old at this time, so he was an adult (see note 67). Accordingly, he wonders why Rashi here deviates from the simple meaning of the verse.

¹¹ *It happened in those days that Moshe grew and went out to his brethren, and he perceived their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man,*

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מִמּוֹנֶה עַל — The word אִישׁ implies a person of authority. [The Egyptian] was a taskmaster, שׁוֹטְרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל — who oversaw the Jewish officers who were responsible for the work quota,^[52] וְהָיָה מַעֲמִידָם מִקְרוֹת הַגָּבֶר לְמִלְאכָתָם — and he would wake them up for their work before dawn, when the rooster crows.^[53] And the Hebrew mentioned here, who was being beaten, was one of the foremen whom the Egyptian oversaw (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:28).

□ מָכָה אִישׁ עִבְרִי — HE SAW AN EGYPTIAN MAN STRIKING A HEBREW MAN... HE STRUCK THE EGYPTIAN.

Moshe had doubtlessly seen countless Egyptians striking the enslaved Jews. Why did he intervene specifically on this occasion?^[54] Rashi explains:

מִלְקָדוֹ וְרוֹדְדוֹ — Moshe reacted in this way because [the Egyptian] was lashing [the Hebrew] and punishing him with exceptional cruelty.

Rashi elaborates, providing the context and motive behind the taskmaster's sadistic behavior:

וּבְעֵלָה שֶׁל שְׁלוֹמִית בַּת דִּבְרִי הָיָה — [The Hebrew victim] was the husband of Shelomis the daughter of Divri,^[55] וַיִּתֵּן עֵינָיו בָּהּ — and the Egyptian had set his eyes upon her. וּבְלֵילָה הָעֲמִידוֹ וְהוֹצִיאוֹ — During the night, [the Egyptian] awakened [the Hebrew] and removed him from his house. — He then returned, entered the house, and had relations with [the victim's] wife. — In the darkness of night, she assumed that he was her husband and did not object.^[56] וְחָזַר הָאִישׁ לְבֵיתוֹ וְהִרְגִישׁ בְּדָכָר — Then, the Hebrew man returned to his house and became aware of the matter. — And when that Egyptian realized that [her husband] was aware of the matter, הָיָה מַכְדּוֹ וְרוֹדְדוֹ כָּל הַיּוֹם — he responded by striking and punishing him the entire day^[57] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:28).

52. When the Jewish people were enslaved in Egypt, their work was overseen by Jewish foremen who were, in turn, supervised by Egyptian taskmasters (see Rashi to 5:6 below).

53. Rashi mentions this detail here, because it provides context for the incident recounted in his next comment (*Torah U'Peirushah*).

54. The Egyptians surely beat their slaves often (*Yefeh To'ar*; *Gur Aryeh*). And as a rule, when the enslaved Jewish workers failed to meet their quota, the taskmasters would beat the foremen for not applying enough pressure on the workers (see below, 5:14, with Rashi).

55. In *Vayikra* 24:10-11, the Torah mentions a man who was born to an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father,

and identifies his mother as Shelomis, the daughter of Divri. There, Rashi explains that she was the only Jewish woman who engaged in forbidden relations in Egypt. Accordingly, this Hebrew man, whose wife had relations with the Egyptian taskmaster (as Rashi will soon explain) must be none other than the husband of Shelomis (*Mizrachi*; *Gur Aryeh*).

56. It was customary for the Jewish officers to return home after they had awakened the Jewish slaves whom they oversaw. Therefore, she assumed that it was her husband who had returned home (*Eitz Yosef*).

57. Rashi derives that the beating occurred over an extended period from the verse's use of the present tense, מָכָה (*striking*), as opposed to the past tense שָׁהָה, *who struck* (*Mizrachi*; *Maskil LeDavid*). See *Insight*.

✠ **In Praise of the Jewish People** Regarding the son of the Egyptian man and Hebrew woman, the Torah states in *Vayikra* (24:11), *his mother's name was Shelomis bas Divri*. Rashi there explains, "in praise of the Jewish people, Scripture publicizes her name, to declare that she alone was defiled through illicit relations." Rashi's comment to our verse greatly enhances that praise, for if Shelomis had willingly sinned, the implication would be that she alone engaged in forbidden relations *intentionally*, allowing for the possibility that others had done so by mistake or under duress. Since, however, Rashi clarifies that even Shelomis did not consent to such behavior, but rather mistook the Egyptian taskmaster for her husband, it emerges that no other Jewish woman engaged in forbidden relations at all — a testament to their modesty, and to the purity of their children's lineage. Similarly, in his commentary to *Bamidbar* (26:5) Rashi explains that the Torah attaches Hashem's Name (יְיָ) to the name of each Jewish family that was counted in the census, adding a *yud* to the end of each name and a *hei* to its beginning (e.g., מְשִׁפָּחַת הַחֲכִי, for Hashem Himself testifies to each family's purity (*Mizrachi* to *Vayikra* 24:11)).

מֵאֲחִיו: יב וַיִּפֶּן בָּהּ וַיֵּרָא כִּי אֵין אִישׁ וַיִּנָּח אֶת־
הַמִּצְרִי וַיִּטְמְנֵהוּ בַּחֹל: יג וַיֵּצֵא בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי וְהָנָה שְׁנֵי־
אֲנָשִׁים עִבְרִים נֹצִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָרָשָׁע לָמָּה תִּבָּה רַעְיָה:
תִּנָּנָה וְהָא תִּרְיִן גְּבִרִין יְהוּדָאִין נֹצֵן וַאֲמַר לְחִיבָא לָמָּה אַתָּה מַחִי לְחִבְרָה:

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(יב) וַיִּפֶּן בָּהּ וַיֵּרָא. רָאָה מָה עָשָׂה לוֹ צְדִיק וְיָמָה
עָשָׂה לוֹ צָעָקָה (סס). וּלְפִי פְשׁוּטוֹ כְּמַשְׁמָטוֹ: וַיֵּרָא כִּי
אֵין אִישׁ עָתִיד לָלֶאֱת מִמֶּנּוּ שְׁיִתְגַּיֵּיר (סס): (יג) שְׁנֵי
אֲנָשִׁים עִבְרִים. דָּתֵן וְאַבְרָם (תרגום יונתן; נדרים סד:), הֵם
שֶׁהוֹטִירוּ מִן הַמֶּן (שמות רבה טז; כה, י): נֹצִים. מְרִיצִים:
לָמָּה תִּבָּה. אֵלֶּךְ עַל פִּי שְׁלָל הִכְתּוּ נִקְרָא רָשָׁע צְהֻרָמַת
יְד (שמות רבה טז; סנהדרין נה:); רַעְיָה. רָשָׁע כְּמוֹתָהּ (שמות
רבה טז:)

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12. וַיִּפֶּן בָּהּ וַיֵּרָא — HE TURNED THIS WAY AND THAT WAY AND SAW THAT THERE WAS NO MAN, SO HE STRUCK THE EGYPTIAN.

This verse is seemingly redundant, for Moshe could only have seen *that there was no man* if he had first turned to look. What is the verse adding by explicitly saying, *he turned this way and that way*? Rashi explains:

— רָאָה מָה עָשָׂה לוֹ בְּבֵית וְיָמָה עָשָׂה לוֹ בַּשָּׂדֶה — These words imply that Moshe observed two things which made the Egyptian worthy of death.^[58] For with *Ruach HaKodesh* (Divine Inspiration), Moshe **saw what he had done to [the Jew] in the house** by violating his wife, and **he also saw what he had done to him in the field** by beating him the entire day (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:28). **According to its simple meaning**, however, the verse is to be understood **as it sounds**, i.e., Moshe looked around to make sure that nobody was watching him, as the verse commonly provides such standard details.

□ וַיֵּרָא כִּי אֵין אִישׁ — HE TURNED... AND SAW THAT THERE WAS NO MAN, SO HE STRUCK THE EGYPTIAN.

Seemingly, the verse should have said, “He turned... and *did not* see a man,” for one does not “see” the absence of a person (or anything else). Rather, when one does not see anyone, he *concludes* that no one is present.^[59] Therefore, Rashi explains that these words have an additional meaning:

— עָתִיד לֵצֵאת מִמֶּנּוּ שְׁיִתְגַּיֵּיר — Moshe prophetically gazed into the future and **SAW THAT THERE WAS NO MAN destined to descend from [this Egyptian] who would convert** to Judaism,^[60] **SO HE STRUCK THE EGYPTIAN** and killed him^[61] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:28).

13. שְׁנֵי אֲנָשִׁים עִבְרִים — TWO HEBREW MEN WERE QUARRELING.

The verse could have simply said, “two Hebrews were quarreling.” Why does it specify, *two Hebrew men* (אֲנָשִׁים) were quarreling? Rashi clarifies:

— דָּתֵן וְאַבְרָם — The Torah uses the term אֲנָשִׁים (*men*) to identify these two people as **Dassan and Aviram**,

58. Thus, the verse means that Moshe *turned* to consider *this* sin and *that* sin before killing the Egyptian. The taskmaster was deserving of death for violating the Hebrew’s wife, for one of the Seven Noahide Laws, incumbent on all of humanity, is a prohibition against illicit relations, including adultery with a married woman (*Sanhedrin* 56a), and any transgression of these laws is considered a capital offense (*ibid.* 57a). Additionally, he had been striking the Hebrew slave, and our Sages teach (*Sanhedrin* 58b) that an idolater who strikes a Jew is deserving of death (*Mizrachi*).

59. *Devek Tov*; *Meisiach Ilmim*.

60. In fact, this Egyptian did have a Jewish descendant, for the woman he had violated had conceived and would eventually give birth to a son (see note 55 above). Nevertheless, Moshe did not refrain from killing him, for he had looked into the future only to ensure that by killing this Egyptian he would not prevent a *future* convert from being born, and thus, since this child had already been conceived, there was no reason to let the Egyptian live (*Mizrachi* and *Gur Aryeh*; see there for alternative explanations).

61. The Egyptian was deserving of death, as explained above (see note 58). Nevertheless, had he been destined

of his brethren.¹² He turned this way and that way and saw that there was no man, so he struck the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

¹³ He went out the next day and behold! two Hebrew men were quarreling. He said to the wicked one, “Why would you strike your fellow?”

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who are elsewhere described as אֲנָשִׁים הָרָשָׁעִים, wicked “men”^[62] (Targum Yonasan; Nedarim 64b). הֵם שְׁהוּתִירוּ מִן הַמָּן — They were also the ones who left over some of the manna until morning, as it is stated (16:20 below), “men” (אֲנָשִׁים) left over from it until the morning^[63] (Shemos Rabbah 1:29; 25:10).

□ נִצְזִים — “NITZIM.”

מִרִיבִים — This means quarreling.

□ לָמָּה תִּכֶּה — HE SAID TO THE WICKED ONE, “WHY WOULD YOU STRIKE YOUR FELLOW?”

Moshe did not say, “Why *did* you strike (הִכִּיתָ),” in the past tense, but rather, Why “*would*” you strike (תִּכֶּה), indicating that the assailant had not yet struck his victim. Why, then, does the verse refer to him as wicked? Rashi explains:

אֶף עַל פִּי שְׁלֵא הִכְהוּ נִקְרָא רָשָׁע בְּהֶרְמַת יָד — Although he had not yet struck [his fellow], he is called “wicked” for lifting his hand to strike him^[64] (Shemos Rabbah 1:29; Sanhedrin 58b).

□ רָעָךְ — WHY WOULD YOU STRIKE YOUR FELLOW?

Since these two individuals were arguing with each other, the expression, *your fellow*, which connotes endearment and friendship, seems inappropriate. Rashi explains in what sense Moshe referred to the second one as “*your fellow*”:

רָשָׁע כְּמוֹתְךָ — He is a wicked person just like you^[65] (Shemos Rabbah 1:29).

to father a righteous descendant, Moshe would have spared him. But once Moshe saw that this was not the case, he executed the Egyptian for his crimes.

62. In Bamidbar 16:26, they are described as אֲנָשִׁים הָרָשָׁעִים הָאֵלֶּה, these wicked “men” (Mizrachi and Gur Aryeh, based on Shemos Rabbah 25:10). For an alternative approach based on Shemos Rabbah 1:29 and Nedarim 64b, see Amar N’kei and Nachalas Yaakov.

63. This was a violation of Moshe’s instructions, that one should eat his entire portion of manna each day rather than saving it for the following day (below 16:19). Since it says אֲנָשִׁים in that verse as well, we learn that the violators in that case were likewise the wicked Dassan and Aviram (see Maskil LeDavid). See Insight.

64. Based on this verse, the Gemara (Sanhedrin 58b)

rules that anyone who raises his hand at his fellow is called “wicked,” even if he does not actually strike him.

65. It is clear that the second person was also wicked, since the Torah says that *two* Hebrew men were quarreling, which implies that they were *both* fighting (Eitz Yosef). Thus, although only one of the men had gone so far as to raise his hand to strike the other, which made Moshe declare him “wicked,” his adversary was also considered “his fellow” in wickedness (Yefeh To’ar).

Rashi makes this point for it is only because *both* of the men were wicked that we may explain that these men were Dassan and Aviram, the notorious pair of evildoers. Had only one of these men been wicked, that explanation would be untenable (Yefeh To’ar; see Yerios Shlomo and Be’er BaSadeh for another explanation of why Rashi makes this point).

☞ Quarreling and Manna It might seem that Rashi mentions the incident of the manna merely as another example of the word אֲנָשִׁים referring to the wicked Dassan and Aviram, but there actually is a deeper connection between that event and their quarrel: Generally, the reason that people fight is that they believe that someone else has taken what is rightfully theirs, or has harmed them in some way. Ultimately, this is due to a lack of faith, for if one truly believes that Hashem provides him with all he needs and orchestrates all the events in his life, he will never blame others, fight, or quarrel. Similarly, the purpose of the manna, which miraculously fell from the Heavens each morning, was to train the Jewish people to rely on Hashem for each day’s sustenance, without needing to save for later. Accordingly, these two wicked men, who lacked such faith and left their manna for the next day, were also constantly fighting with one another (Pardes Yosef; Bei Chiya, Bamidbar 20:12).

יִדְּוֹאֲמַר מִי שְׁמֶךָ לְאִישׁ שֶׁר וְשִׁפְטָ עָלֵינוּ הִלְהָרְגֵנִי
 אַתָּה אֹמֵר בְּאִשֶּׁר הִרְגָתָ אֶת־הַמִּצְרִי וַיִּירָא
 מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אָכֵן נֹדַע הַדָּבָר: טו וַיִּשְׁמַע פֶּרְעָה

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(יד) מִי שְׁמֶךָ לְאִישׁ. וְהָרִי עוֹדֶךָ נֶעַר (תנחומא י'): הִלְהָרְגֵנִי אַתָּה אֹמֵר. מִכָּאֵן אֲנִי לְמַדִּים שֶׁהָרְגוּ בָשָׂם הַמְּפֹרָשׁ (סס; שְׁמוֹת רַבָּה טז): וַיִּירָא מֹשֶׁה. פֶּפֶשׁוּטוֹ. וּמִדְּרָשׁוֹ, דָּאֵג לוֹ עַל שֶׁרָאָה צִיָּרָאֵל רֶשָׁעִים דְּלִטּוּרִין, אִמֵּר: מִטְּפָה שָׁמָּה אִינִס רְחוּיִין לְהַגְלֵל (שס ושס): אָכֵן נֹדַע

הַדָּבָר. כְּמִשְׁמַעוֹ. וּמִדְּרָשׁוֹ, נֹדַע לִי הַדָּבָר שֶׁהִיִּיתִי תָמָּה עָלָיו, מִה חֲטָאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל שְׁבָעִים אֲדָמוֹת לְהִיִּיתִי נִרְדִּים צִיָּבֻדֹת פֶּרֶךְ, אֲבָל רֹאָה אֲנִי שֶׁהִם רְחוּיִים לְכַךְ (שס ושס): (טו) וַיִּשְׁמַע פֶּרְעָה. הִם הִלְשִׁינוּ עָלָיו (שְׁמוֹת רַבָּה טז לז; תנחומא שס):

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14. **WHO MADE YOU A MAN, A RULER AND A JUDGE OVER US?** — מי שְׁמֶךָ לְאִישׁ

The assailant could have simply said *who made you a ruler and judge over us*. What did he mean to convey by saying, *who made you “a man”*?^[66] Rashi clarifies:

— He meant, Who gave you the right to act with the authority of an older “man”? **Why, you are still a lad!**^[67] (*Tanchuma* §10).

□ **DO YOU INTEND TO KILL ME, AS YOU KILLED THE EGYPTIAN?** — הִלְהָרְגֵנִי אַתָּה אֹמֵר

Although the simple meaning of this verse is, “Do you *intend* to kill me?”, the literal translation is “Do you *say* to kill me.” Rashi explains why he worded it this way:

— **From here we learn that Moshe killed [the Egyptian] by pronouncing Hashem’s Unique Name.** For the assailant meant to ask, “Do you intend to say words in order to kill me, as you killed the Egyptian?” That is, “Will you kill me with speech, as you killed the Egyptian, by uttering Hashem’s Name?”^[68] (*Tanchuma* §10; *Shemos Rabbah*, 1:30).

□ **MOSHE WAS FRIGHTENED AND HE SAID, “INDEED THE MATTER HAS BECOME KNOWN.”** — וַיִּירָא מֹשֶׁה

Rashi presents two interpretations of this phrase:

— **This may be understood according to its plain meaning, i.e., he was afraid of being punished for killing the Egyptian.**

66. *Mizrachi*. Although the term איש often connotes a position of authority (see Rashi to v. 11 above), this cannot be its meaning here, for the assailant said explicitly, “*who made you a... ruler and a judge*,” meaning an authority (*Maskil LeDavid*).

67. From here we learn that Moshe was not yet thirteen years old, for when a boy reaches thirteen, he is considered a “man.” Indeed, the Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* 5:2) teaches that Moshe was only twelve years old when he was forced to flee from Egypt as a result of this episode (*Imrei Shefer; Rabbeinu Bachya*).

Nachalas Yaakov, following another opinion in the

Midrash (ibid. 1:30), explains that Moshe was *twenty* years old at this time. Nevertheless, one’s capacity for understanding is not fully developed until the age of forty (*Avos* 5:21), so the assailant argued that Moshe was a “lad” in the sense of being too young to serve as judge. See the Insight, “Moshe Grew,” to v. 11 above, at note 49.

68. Moshe had not mentioned Hashem’s Name in his conversation with the assailant. Nevertheless, the assailant was concerned that Moshe would conclude his rebuke by mentioning the Divine Name, which would lead to the assailant’s death (*Gur Aryeh*). See Insight.

☞ **Killing With the Name** How did this assailant know that Moshe was the one who killed the Egyptian? After all, he did not strike him physically, but merely pronounced Hashem’s Name. *Ramban* suggests that perhaps Moshe had placed his hand on the Egyptian’s head as he cursed him with the Name, making it obvious that he was the cause of the man’s demise. Alternatively, the assailant saw Moshe burying the body in the sand and thus concluded that he was responsible.

Gur Aryeh, however, maintains that although Moshe killed the Egyptian with the Divine Name, it was still

¹⁴ He replied, “Who made you a man, a ruler and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me, as you killed the Egyptian?” Moshe was frightened and he said, “Indeed, the matter has become known!” ¹⁵ Pharaoh heard about

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However, this approach is difficult, for Moshe did not flee immediately, as a frightened fugitive would. Rather, he remained in Egypt until Pharaoh heard about his actions and attempted to execute him (see below v. 15). Therefore, Rashi explains that Moshe was afraid of something else:^[69]

דָּאָג לוֹ עַל שְׂרָאָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל רְשָׁעִים דִּלְטוּרִין — But the Midrashic interpretation of [the verse] is — that he was troubled about the Jewish people’s fate. For, having seen that there were wicked men among the Jewish people who were prepared to act as informants,^[70] אָמַר מִעַתָּה שָׂמָא אֵינָם רְאוּיִין — he said to himself, “Perhaps, on account of this, they are not fitting to be redeemed”^[71] (Tanchuma §10; Shemos Rabbah 1:30).

□ אָבֵן נוֹדַע הַדָּבָר — MOSHE WAS FRIGHTENED AND HE SAID, INDEED THE MATTER HAS BECOME KNOWN.

Rashi explains how the end of the verse is to be understood according to each interpretation presented in his previous comment:

בְּמִשְׁמָעוֹ — According to its simple meaning, this phrase is to be understood **literally**: Moshe realized that his deed had become public knowledge. וּמִדְּרָשׁוֹ, נוֹדַע לִי הַדָּבָר שֶׁהָיִיתִי תָמִיד עָלָיו — According to its Midrashic interpretation, however, this phrase is to be understood as follows: Moshe said to himself, “THE MATTER which had until now perplexed me HAS BECOME KNOWN to me. מָה חֲטָאוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל — For I used to wonder, in what way have the Jewish people sinned more than any of the other seventy nations of the world that they should be subjected to such crushing labor?”^[72] אָבֵל רוֹאֶה אֲנִי שֶׁהֵם רְאוּיִים לָכֶךָ — However, I now see that they are worthy of this treatment, for there are informants among them^[73] (Tanchuma §10; Shemos Rabbah 1:30).

15. וַיִּשְׁמַע פַּרְעֹה — PHARAOH HEARD ABOUT THIS MATTER.

Why did Pharaoh hear about Moshe killing the Egyptian only after Moshe’s confrontation with the two quarreling Jews? Rashi explains:

הֵם הִלְשִׁינוּ עָלָיו — These quarreling Jews, Dassan and Aviram, were the ones who **informed on him** (Tanchuma §10; Shemos Rabbah 1:31). Although they were aware of Moshe’s actions earlier, they shared this information with Pharaoh only after Moshe interfered in their fight.

69. Maskil LeDavid.

70. For by declaring, “as you killed the Egyptian,” the attacker showed that he was willing to publicize what Moshe had done (Kitzur Mizrahi, based on Shemos Rabbah 1:30). Moshe’s suspicions were correct, for these quarreling Hebrews did eventually inform on him; see Rashi to v. 15.

71. See below, note 73.

72. Moshe was not surprised that the Jewish people had been enslaved in Egypt, for Hashem had already informed Avraham (Bereishis 15:13), Your descendants

shall be sojourners in a land not their own, and they will enslave them, and they will oppress them. However, Moshe had been perplexed by the “crushing labor” they endured, for Avraham’s prophecy did not allude to such harsh conditions (Imrei Shefer; Nachalas Yaakov; see Beurei Maharai for an alternative approach).

73. Although Moshe had seen only one individual who was willing to inform on him, he nevertheless ascribed the entire nation’s suffering to this issue, because one individual’s willingness to commit a sin often indicates

necessary to strike him. Similarly, our Sages teach (Mechilta, cited by Rashi below, 15:3), that David killed Golyas (Goliath) with the Divine Name, as he proclaimed (I Shmuel 17:45), “you come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin — but I come to you with the Name of Hashem...”, yet he also struck him with a stone (as stated there in v. 49). For one must perform a minimal physical action to express the power of Hashem’s Name in this world, much as Moshe was commanded to raise his staff over the Sea before its waters would split (below, 14:21).

יֵת פִּתְגָמָא הָדִין וּבָעָא לְמִקְטֵל יֵת
מֹשֶׁה וְעָרַךְ מֹשֶׁה מִן קִדְּם פְּרָעָה
וַיִּתֵּיב בְּאַרְעָא דְּמִדְיָן וַיִּתֵּיב עַל
בִּירָא: טו וּלְרַבָּא דְּמִדְיָן שְׁבַע
בָּנִין וַאֲחֵאָה וּדְלָאָה וּמִלְּאָה יֵת
רַהֲטִיָּא לְאַשְׁקָאָה עֲנָא דְּאַבוּהֶן:
יז וַאֲתוּ רַעֲיָא וְטִרְדוּנִין וְקָם מֹשֶׁה

אֶת־הַדִּבָּר הַזֶּה וַיִּבְקֹשׁ לַהֲרֹג אֶת־מֹשֶׁה וַיִּבְרַח
מֹשֶׁה מִפְּנֵי פְרָעָה וַיָּשֶׁב בְּאַרְץ־מִדְיָן וַיָּשֶׁב עַל־
הַבְּאֵר: טו וַלִּכְהֵן מִדְיָן שִׁבְעַ בָּנוֹת וַתִּבְאֵנָה
וַתְּדַלְּנָה וַתִּמְלֵאנָה אֶת־הָרְהָטִים לְהַשְׁקוֹת צֹאן
אֲבִיהֶן: יז וַיָּבֹאוּ הָרָעִים וַיִּגְרְשׁוּם וַיָּקָם מֹשֶׁה

רש"י

מִיַּעֲקֹב שְׁנֵי־זִוּוּג לֹא זִוּוּג מִן הַצָּדֵר (שמות רבה א, לז):
(טו) וַלִּכְהֵן מִדְיָן. רַב שָׂדֶה, וַיִּפְרֹשׁ לוֹ מִטְּבוּלָה
זָרָה וְיִידוּהִי מֵאֵלֶּס (סס): אֶת הָרְהָטִים. אֶת צְרִיכוֹת
מְרוּלוֹת הַמַּיִם הַטְּעוּיוֹת צָהָרִי: (יז) וַיִּגְרְשׁוּם. מִפְּנֵי
הַכִּידּוּי (סס):

וַיִּבְקֹשׁ לַהֲרֹג אֶת מֹשֶׁה. מָסְרוּ לְקוֹסְטִינֵר לַהֲרֹגוֹ
וְלֹא שָׁלְטָה צוֹ הַחֶרֶב (שמות רבה סס), הוּא שְׁאֵמֵר מֹשֶׁה
"וַיִּצְלֵנִי מִחֶרֶב פְּרָעָה" (להלן ית, ד; ירושלמי ברכות ט, א):
וַיָּשֶׁב בְּאַרְץ מִדְיָן. נִתְטַבַּע שָׁם, כְּמוֹ "וַיָּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב"
וְכַדִּישִׁית לוֹ, א): וַיָּשֶׁב עַל הַבְּאֵר. לְשׁוֹן שִׁיבָה. לְמַד

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□ **וַיִּבְקֹשׁ לַהֲרֹג אֶת מֹשֶׁה** — PHARAOH HEARD ABOUT THIS MATTER AND SOUGHT TO KILL MOSHE.

The verse cannot mean that Pharaoh sought to apprehend Moshe and then kill him, for it would then have said, "Pharaoh... sought Moshe to kill him."^[74] Rashi clarifies the actual meaning of the verse:

מָסְרוּ לְקוֹסְטִינֵר לַהֲרֹגוֹ וְלֹא שָׁלְטָה בּוֹ הַחֶרֶב — After Pharaoh had apprehended Moshe, **he delivered him to the executioner to be killed, but the executioner's sword had no effect on him**^[75] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:31). Accordingly, the verse says that he "sought to kill Moshe," i.e., he attempted to execute him, but failed to do so.

Rashi cites another verse that further supports this interpretation:

הוּא שְׁאֵמֵר מֹשֶׁה "וַיִּצְלֵנִי מִחֶרֶב פְּרָעָה" — **This is what Moshe meant when he said** (below, 18:4), *the God of my father came to my aid and He saved me from the "sword" of Pharaoh*^[76] (*Yerushalmi Berachos* 9:1).

□ **וַיָּשֶׁב בְּאַרְץ מִדְיָן** — MOSHE FLED FROM BEFORE PHARAOH "VAYEISHEV" IN THE LAND OF MIDYAN.

וַיָּשֶׁב can either mean "settled" or "sat." Rashi clarifies its meaning here:

נִתְעַבַּב שָׁם כְּמוֹ "וַיָּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב" — This means that Moshe **remained there**, for the word וַיָּשֶׁב means *he settled*, just **like** it does in the verse (*Bereishis* 37:1), **Yaakov settled** (וַיָּשֶׁב) *in the land of his father's sojournings*. However, when it says in the end of the verse...

a lack of sensitivity to its severity by the community at large (*Ayeles HaShachar*). See Insight.

74. *Rash Almoshnino; Sefer Zikaron; Meisiach Ilmim.*

75. For Moshe's neck became as hard as a marble pillar (Rashi to 18:4 below).

76. Had Moshe not escaped execution by sword he would not have specifically thanked Hashem for rescuing him

from Pharaoh's "sword," but rather from his "hand," just as David thanked Hashem for saving him from the *hand* of Shaul (*Tehillim* 18:10), for he would not have known from what type of death he had been spared (*Be'er BaSadeh; Divrei David* to Rashi below, 18:4).

For further discussion, see Rashi to 4:11 below and the Insight there, "The Miracles Through Which Hashem Had Saved Moshe."

§ **The Sin of Slander** How did this single incident, in which one Jew displayed a willingness to inform on another, explain the unique suffering of the entire Jewish people? Do the other seventy nations not have informants or slanderers among them? *Be'er BaSadeh* answers that while *lashon hara* is not a uniquely Jewish phenomenon, its destructive effects are most acutely felt by the Jewish people. For all other nations are merely collections of individuals, while the Jewish people are essentially one, as it is written (*II Shmuel* 7:23), *who is like Your people Israel, one nation on earth*. Accordingly, when we slander and inform on one another, we erode our defining characteristic — our unity. By doing so, we subject ourselves to terrible suffering. See *Gur Aryeh* for an additional approach.

this matter and sought to kill Moshe; so Moshe fled from before Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midyan. He sat by the well.

¹⁶ The minister of Midyan had seven daughters; they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flocks.

¹⁷ The herdsmen came and chased them away. Moshe got up

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□ וישב על הבאר — “VAYEISHEV” BY THE WELL,

לשון ישיבה — The term וישב connotes **sitting**, for Moshe did not settle next to the well, he simply sat there.

But why would Moshe sit near the well? Certainly, he did not merely wish to observe the activities of the local shepherds!^[77] Rashi explains:

למד מיצקב שגנדרוג לו וזוגו מן הבאר — [Moshe] learned from his forefather Yaakov, who became paired with his spouse (Rachel) as a result of an encounter by a well, as described in *Bereishis* 29:1-11. Therefore, he too sat by a well in hopes of finding a suitable match^[78] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:32).

16. ולכהן מדין — THE “KOHEN” OF MIDYAN HAD SEVEN DAUGHTERS.

The word כהן sometimes refers to a priest, and other times, to a person of authority or status.^[79] Rashi clarifies its meaning in this verse:

רב שבין — This refers to the **chief of the [Midyanites]**.^[80]

However, these verses require explanation, for whether the man in question was a priest or a political leader, one would expect that his daughters would be treated with respect. Yet, as described in the very next verse, herdsmen came and chased them away from the well!^[81] Rashi explains:

ופירש לו מעבודה זרה ונידוהו מאצלם — Although this man had once occupied a position of importance, he had subsequently **separated himself from idol worship**, and [the Midyanites] therefore **banned him from associating with them** (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:32).

□ את הרהטים — THEY CAME AND DREW WATER AND FILLED THE “REHATIM.”

What are הרהטים? Rashi clarifies:

את בריכות מרוצות המים העשויות בארץ — This refers to **channels of running water which were made in the ground**.^[82]

17. ויגרשו — THE HERDSMEN CAME AND CHASED THEM AWAY.

Why did the shepherds drive them away?

מפני הנידוי — They did this **because of the ban** against their father^[83] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:32).

77. *Mizrachi*. Alternatively, while newcomers who were unfamiliar with local roads would often sit near a well in hopes of being guided into a town by its residents, Moshe had already *settled in the land of Midyan*, as Rashi explained in his previous comment. Accordingly, he would already have known his way around, and his decision to sit by the well requires explanation (*Nachalas Yaakov*).

78. For at a well, one could more easily evaluate a prospective bride's character, generosity, and modesty, by observing how she treated her sheep as well as how she interacted with other shepherds. This would provide more insight than merely observing her in her father's house (*Be'er Yitzchak*; cf. *Gur Aryeh* and *Gevuros Hashem* §19 for an esoteric approach).

79. See Rashi to *Bereishis* 47:22.

80. Actually, in addition to his leadership position, he had initially served as Midyan's idolatrous priest, but retired from this position upon recognizing the one true

God (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:32; see Rashi to 6:25 and 18:11 below). Nevertheless, Rashi does not interpret the term כהן in our verse to mean *priest*, for the Torah would not disparage him with this title after he rejected idolatry (*Mizrachi*; *Gur Aryeh*).

81. Furthermore, this does not appear to be an isolated incident, for below, in verse 18, their father is surprised when they arrive home early, since the shepherds' harassment typically delayed their arrival (*Gur Aryeh*).

82. The term רהטים is derived from the Aramaic root רהט which means “to run” (*Mizrachi* to *Bereishis* 30:38; *Be'er Mayim Chaim*). [Rashi's interpretation of רהטים explains why it was necessary for Moshe to draw water for their sheep after they had already filled the troughs (below, v. 19), for the water that they had initially poured had drained from these flowing channels while the shepherds were chasing them away (*Leket Bahir*).]

83. See Rashi to the previous verse.

ויפרקנין ואשקי ית ענהו: יח ואתתא לות רעואל אבוהו ואמר מא דין אוחיתן למיתי וימא דין: יט ואמר גברא מצרא שיוכנא מיד רעיא ואף מדלא דלא לנא ואשקי ית ענא: כ ואמר לבנתיה ואן הוא למא דנן שבקתן ית גברא קרן לה ויכול לחמא: כא וצבי משה למתב עם גברא ויהב ית צפרה ברתה למשה: כב וילידת בר וקרא ית שמה גרשם ארי אמר דיר הויתי בארע נוכראה: כג והנה ביומיא סגיאני האנון ומית מלכא דמצרים

וַיִּוְשַׁעַן וַיִּשְׁק אֶת־צֹאנָם: יח וַתִּבְאֶנָּה אֶל־רְעוּאֵל אֲבִיהֶן וַיֹּאמֶר מִדּוּעַ מֵהֲרַתָּן בָּא הַיּוֹם: יט וַתֹּאמְרֵן אִישׁ מִצְרִי הִצִּילָנוּ מִיַּד הָרָעִים וְגַם־דָּלָה דָּלָה לָנוּ וַיִּשְׁק אֶת־הַצֹּאן: כ וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־בְּנֹתָיו וְאִיו לָמָּה זֶה עֹזְבֹתֶן אֶת־הָאִישׁ קְרָאֵן לוֹ וַיֹּאכַל לֶחֶם: כא וַיֹּאֶל מֹשֶׁה לְשִׁבְתָּ אֶת־הָאִישׁ וַיֵּתֶן אֶת־צִפְרָה בִּתּוֹ לְמֹשֶׁה: כב וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ גֶּרְשֶׁם כִּי אָמַר גֵּר הָיִיתִי בְּאֶרֶץ נִכְרִיָּה: כג וַיְהִי בַּיָּמִים הָרַבִּים הָהֵם וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם

רע"ו

ז, ו, "הואלתי לדבר" (בראשית יח, לא). ומדרשו, לשון חלה, נשבע לו שלא יזו ממדן כי חס צרכותו (שמות רבה טז ג; נדרים סה:). (כג) "וַיְהִי בַּיָּמִים הָרַבִּים הָהֵם. שְׁהִי מֹשֶׁה גֵּר צִמְדִּין, וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַהֲוֹרְכוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְתַשׁוּעָה, וַיָּמָשֶׁה הָיָה רוּעָה וְגו'" (להלן ג, ה) וזאת פשוטה על דיו,

(כ) למה זה עזבתו. הכיר בו שהוא מזרעו של יעקב, שהמים עולים לקראתו (סא:). ויאכל לחם. שמה ישא אחת מכם, כמה דאף אמר "כי חס הלחם אשר הוא אוכל" (בראשית לט, ו; סא:). (כא) ויאול. פתרגומו "א"א: כמשמטו, ודומה לו "הואל לא ולין" (שופטים יט, ו), "ולו הואלנו" (יהושע

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20. למה זה עזבתו. — *WHY DID YOU LEAVE THE MAN? CALL HIM AND HE SHALL EAT BREAD.*

As Rashi explains in his next comment, Re'uel did not merely wish to thank Moshe by hosting him for a meal, but also hoped that Moshe would marry one of his daughters. What did he hear that made him think that Moshe would be an appropriate son-in-law?^[84] Rashi explains:

הכיר בו שהוא מזרעו של יעקב — He realized that [Moshe] was a descendant of the righteous Yaakov,^[85] **שהמים עולים לקראתו — for his daughters had informed him that the well's waters had risen to greet [Moshe] as he approached the well,**^[86] just as the Nile's waters had risen for Yaakov^[87] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:32).

□ ויאכל לחם — "CALL HIM, AND HE SHALL EAT BREAD!"

Clearly, this was no ordinary meal invitation, for the next verse continues, *Moshe agreed to dwell with the man, and he gave his daughter Tzipporah to Moshe.*^[88] Rashi explains the connotation of "he shall eat bread" accordingly:

שמה ישא אחת מכם — With these words he suggested to his daughters, "perhaps he might marry one of you,"^[89] for "bread" euphemistically refers to a wife, **— כמה דאף אמר "כי אם הלחם אשר הוא אוכל" — as**

84. Re'uel would not have offered his daughters to just anyone who provided assistance (*Rash Almoshino*).

85. The wording of the verse itself indicates that Re'uel was aware of Moshe's lineage. For while his daughters mistook Moshe for "an Egyptian man" (v. 19), he corrected them by referring to him as "the man," intentionally omitting the word "Egyptian" (*Amar N'kei; Levush HaOrah*).

86. The previous verse also alludes to this miracle, for Re'uel's daughters did not say that Moshe watered "our flocks," but rather "the flocks," indicating that the waters overflowed as they rose to greet Moshe, allowing all the animals present to drink (see *Shemos Rabbah* 1:32).

87. Yaakov's blessing had caused the Nile's waters to rise

to greet Pharaoh (*Maharik*; see Rashi to *Bereishis* 47:10). Re'uel, who was also known as Yisro, knew about this miracle, for he had once served as an adviser to Pharaoh (*Levush HaOrah*; see *Sotah* 11a; *Shemos Rabbah* 1:9).

The descendants of Yaakov are uniquely qualified to bring such blessings, for Hashem assured Yaakov (*Bereishis* 28:14), *all the families of the earth shall be blessed through you and your offspring* (*Gur Aryeh*).

88. *Rash Almoshino; Ba'er Heitev; Tzeidah LaDerech*.

89. Accordingly, the verse is to be read, "call him," to join us for a meal, and as a result, "he shall eat bread," i.e., perhaps he will marry one of you. This explains why the verse did not simply say "call him to eat bread" [*לאכול לחם*] (*Yerios Shlomo*).

and saved them and watered their flocks.¹⁸ They came to Re'uel their father. He said, "How were you so quick to arrive today?"¹⁹ They replied, "An Egyptian man rescued us from the herdsmen, and he even drew water for us and watered the flocks."²⁰ He said to his daughters, "Then where is he? Why did you leave the man? Call him and he shall eat bread!"

²¹ Moshe agreed to dwell with the man; and he gave his daughter Tzipporah to Moshe.

²² She gave birth to a son and he named him Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."

²³ And it happened during those many days that the king of Egypt died,

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you find **stated** (*Bereishis* 39:6), [*Potiphar*] left all that he had in Yosef's custody... **except for the bread that he would eat**, meaning, his wife^[90] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:32). Accordingly, the connection between this invitation and the marriage in the next verse is well understood.

21. וַיֹּאֶל — "VAYO'EL" MOSHE TO DWELL WITH THE MAN.

Rashi offers two interpretations of the word וַיֹּאֶל:

וַיֹּאֶל — The simple meaning of the verse is as **Targum Onkelos renders it**: וַיִּבְרַח מֹשֶׁה לְמִיתָב עִם גִּבְרָא, *Moshe agreed to dwell with the man.*^[91] "וַיֹּאֶל לִי לְדָבָר" — Related words with **similar** meanings include: **please agree** [וַיֹּאֶל] **to stay overnight** (*Shoftim* 19:6), and **had we only consented** [וַיֹּאֶל] (*Yehoshua* 7:7), and **I desired** [וַיֹּאֶל] **to speak** (*Bereishis* 18:31).^[92]

וַיֹּאֶל — According to its **Midrashic interpretation, however**, וַיֹּאֶל is an expression of taking an oath.^[93] נִשְׁבַּע לוֹ שְׂלֹא יִזְוֶה מִמֶּדִּין בִּי אִם בְּרִשּׁוֹתוֹ — Accordingly, Moshe swore to [Re'uel] that he would not leave Midyan without first receiving his permission^[94] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:33; *Nedarim* 65a).

23-25. וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָרַבִּים הָהֵם — AND IT HAPPENED DURING THOSE MANY DAYS THAT THE KING OF EGYPT DIED, AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL GROANED BECAUSE OF THE LABOR... GOD HEARD THEIR WAILING, AND GOD REMEMBERED HIS COVENANT.

This description of the Jewish people's suffering and Hashem's response appears in the middle of the story of Moshe's life in Midyan, yet seems unrelated to that narrative.^[95] Therefore, Rashi explains its connection to that which precedes and follows it:

וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָהֵם — The flow of these verses should be understood as follows: *IT HAPPENED DURING THOSE MANY DAYS in which Moshe was living in Midyan, "וַיִּמָּת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם" וְהוֹצִרְכּוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְתַשׁוּעָה — THAT THE KING OF EGYPT DIED, and the Jewish people consequently needed salvation.*^[96] וַיִּמָּשֶׁה הָיָה — This sets the stage for the next passage (below, 3:1), *MOSHE WAS TENDING*

90. See Rashi there.

91. According to this interpretation, the root of וַיֹּאֶל is יֵאֵל, which connotes desire or willingness (*Be'er Rechovos*).

92. Although the phrase הוֹאֵלִי לְדָבָר appears twice in *Bereishis* Chapter 18, once in v. 27 and once in v. 31, Rashi refers specifically to verse 31, for in his commentary to that verse, Rashi interprets this phrase to mean, "I desired to speak." In Verse 27 however, these same words mean, "I have begun to speak," as is evident from Rashi's commentary to *Devarim* 1:5 (*Imrei Shefer*; *Sifsei Chachamim*; *Gur Aryeh* and *Mizrachi* to *Bereishis* 18:31).

93. The Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:33) cites a similar usage of this word in the verse (*I Samuel* 14:24), and

Shaul adjured (וַיֹּאֶל) *the people*. Accordingly, וַיֹּאֶל is derived from the root אֵלָה (*Be'er Rechovos*; cf. *Gur Aryeh*).

94. Moshe's father-in-law insisted on this oath for he exclaimed, "I know that after Lavan gave his daughters to your ancestor, Yaakov, he took them and left without permission (see *Bereishis* 31:17-20). Perhaps, if I allow you to marry my daughter, you will do the same to me" (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:33).

95. Immediately after these three verses, the Torah returns to Midyan, with Moshe tending to his father-in-law's sheep (3:1). Although the events recounted in these verses are presented in chronological order, the abrupt change of subject requires explanation (*Be'er Yitzchak*).

96. Rashi's next comment explains the connection between the king's "death" and the need for salvation.

וַיֹּאנְחוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן־הָעֲבֹדָה וַיִּזְעֻקוּ וַתַּעַל שׁוֹעַתָם
 אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים מִן־הָעֲבֹדָה: כד וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת־
 נַאֲקָתָם וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם אֶת־
 יִצְחָק וְאֶת־יַעֲקֹב: כה וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
 וַיֵּדַע אֱלֹהִים: ס רביעי [ג] א וּמִשָּׁה הָיָה רָעָה אֶת־צֹאן
 יִתְרוֹ חֲתָנָהּ כֹּהֵן מִדִּין וַיִּנְהֹג אֶת־הַצֹּאן אַחֲרֵי הַמִּדְבָּר
 ית ענא דיתרו חמויה רבא דמדון ודבר ית ענא בתר שפר רעיא דמדברא (א: לאתר שפר רעיא למדברא)

— רש"י —

לכך נסמכו פרשיות הללו: וימת מלך מצרים. עס אצרכס: (כה) וידע אלהים. נסן
 נטרט, והיה שוחט תינוקות ישראל ורוחן צדקס (תרגום
 יונתן; שמות רבה שס לד): (כד) נאקתם. לטקס, וכן
 "מעיר מתים ינאקו" (איוצ כד, יב): את בריתו את

— THE ELUCIDATED RASHI —

THE FLOCKS OF YISRO, HIS FATHER-IN-LAW... for that narrative culminates with the needed salvation occurring through Moshe.^[97] — It is for this reason that these passages follow each other.

□ *THAT THE KING OF EGYPT DIED, AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL GROANED BECAUSE OF THE LABOR.*

Since this wicked king had brought so much suffering upon the Jewish people, we would have expected them to rejoice at his passing. Why, then, did they groan? Rashi explains:

נצטרע — The Torah does not mean that Pharaoh literally died, but rather, that **he was stricken with the skin affliction *tzaraas***, which Scripture considers equivalent to death.^[98] והיה שוחט תינוקות ישראל — This explains why the Jewish people groaned, for in attempt to cure his malady, [Pharaoh] **would slaughter Jewish babies and bathe in their blood**^[99] (*Targum Yonasan; Shemos Rabbah* 1:34).

24. נאקתם — GOD HEARD “*NAAKASAM*.”

Rashi clarifies the meaning of this unusual term:

וצעקתם — It means “**their wailing**,” and likewise, we find a related word

97. For while Moshe was tending the flocks, Hashem called to him from the Burning Bush and appointed him to take the Jewish people out of Egypt. Throughout the remainder of the Torah, Moshe's narrative and that of the Jewish people are intertwined and inseparable (*Be'er Yitzchak*).

98. For when Miriam was afflicted with *tzaraas*, Aharon beseeched Moshe to pray on her behalf and

exclaimed (*Bamidbar* 12:12), “Please let her not be like a dead person” (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:34; *Nedarim* 64b). See similarly, Rashi to *Bamidbar* 12:12. [See also Rashi to 4:19 below, with note 51.]

99. Pharaoh's necromancers advised him that his *tzaraas* could only be cured by slaughtering 150 Jewish infants each morning, and another 150 each evening, and bathing in their blood (*Shemos Rabbah*). See Insight.

§ The Children or the Labor? Why does the verse say, *the Children of Israel groaned because of the labor* (העבדה), when it was not their labor, but rather, the fate of their children, that was the cause for their groaning? One possible solution is that, here, the word העבדה does not mean labor, but should rather be translated, “the service,” for they groaned when the blood of their murdered children was used in “service” of the king (*Kitzur Mizrahi*). Alternatively, the word העבדה refers to an idolatrous service, for this strange and cruel “remedy” was not intended as a medicinal intervention, but was performed ritualistically to gain favor from the gods, in hopes that they would provide healing. When the Jewish people became aware of this cruel, sadistic “service,” they groaned bitterly (*Levush HaOrah*).

and the Children of Israel groaned because of the labor, and they cried out. Their outcry because of the labor ascended to God. ²⁴ God heard their wailing, and God remembered His covenant with Avraham, with Yitzchak, and with Yaakov. ²⁵ God saw the Children of Israel; and God knew.

3 ¹ Moshe was tending the flocks of Yisro, his father-in-law, the minister of Midyan; he led the flocks far into the Wilderness,

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with this meaning in the verse (*Iyov* 24:12), **from the city, people wail** (וַיִּנָּאֲקוּ) and the soul of the slain cries out. ^[100]

□ **אֶת אַבְרָהָם — GOD REMEMBERED HIS COVENANT “ES” AVRAHAM, “ES” YITZCHAK, AND “ES” YAAKOV.**

Often the word אֶת has no translatable meaning. ^[101] Accordingly, this verse could be translated, “God remembered His covenant, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov.” But then, it is entirely unclear what covenant He remembered. ^[102] Therefore, Rashi interprets the verse as follows:

עִם אַבְרָהָם — It means, **GOD REMEMBERED HIS COVENANT** that He had made **WITH AVRAHAM**, ^[103] **WITH YITZCHAK AND WITH YAAKOV.** ^[104]

25. וַיֵּדַע אֱלֹהִים — GOD SAW THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL; AND GOD KNEW.

This seems to mean that Hashem became aware of something which He had not previously known, but that is impossible, for Hashem knows everything! ^[105] Rashi therefore interprets this phrase differently:

נָתַן עָלֵיהֶם לֵב וְלֹא הִעָלִים עֵינָיו מֵהֶם — It means that Hashem **directed His attention to [the Jewish people] and no longer averted His gaze from them.** ^[106]

3.

1. אַחֲרֵי הַמִּדְבָּר — HE LED THE FLOCKS FAR INTO THE WILDERNESS.

Why did Moshe lead them far into the Wilderness — was there no closer pasture? Rashi explains:

לְהִתְרַחֵק מִן הַגָּזֶל שְׁלֹא יֵרְעוּ בַּשָּׂדוֹת אֲחֵרִים — Moshe did so in order to **distance himself from theft, so that [the flocks] would not graze in the fields of others.** Deep into the Wilderness, they would only find unowned pasture (*Shemos Rabbah* 2:3).

100. In addition to clarifying the meaning of נִאָּקָה, this verse also supports Rashi's previous comment about Pharaoh slaughtering Jewish children. For just as the wailing in this verse is associated with *the soul of the slain*, so too in our verse, the Jewish people wailed for the murdered children (*Maskil LeDavid*; *Minchas Yehudah*).

101. In such cases, it merely designates whatever word it precedes as a direct object of the verb.

102. *Nachalas Yaakov*; *Be'er BaSadeh*.

103. The word אֶת sometimes means with; see for example, above 1:1.

104. Hashem had made a covenant with each of the Patriarchs, promising to give them Eretz Yisrael (see Rashi to 6:4 below). He was now preparing to fulfill that promise by taking their descendants out of Egypt and bringing them to the Promised Land (*Rashbam*).

105. *Rash Almoznino*; *Be'er Mayim Chaim*; *Devek Tov*.

106. Until now, by allowing the Egyptians to mistreat the Jewish people, Hashem had acted *as if* He were unaware of their plight. Now, however, He stopped concealing His knowledge, and openly turned His attention toward them and attended to their needs (*Ramban*).

Gur Aryeh, however, suggests that the verse should be read according to its plain meaning — their groaning was not only for their children, but also on account of the intense physical labor they endured. The verse mentions this, for if they had cried out only for their children, Hashem would have responded by ending the decree against the children, but allowed their servitude to continue. Thus, it was their groans about this horrific decree, together with the groans of slavery, that precipitated the redemption.

וַיָּבֹא אֶל־הַר הָאֱלֹהִים חֲרֵבָה: ב וַיֵּרָא מִלְּאֶף יְהוָה אֵלָיו בְּלַבַּת־אֵשׁ מִתּוֹךְ הַסֵּנֶה וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה הַסֵּנֶה בָּעֵר בָּאֵשׁ וְהַסֵּנֶה אֵינֶנּוּ אֲפֹל: ג וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶסְרֶה־נָּא וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת־הַמֵּרְאָה הַגָּדֹל הַזֶּה מִדּוֹעַ לֹא־יִבְעַר הַסֵּנֶה: ד וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה בִּי סֵר לְרֹאוֹת וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו אֱלֹהִים מִתּוֹךְ הַסֵּנֶה וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּנִי:

וַיָּבֹא אֶל־הַר הָאֱלֹהִים חֲרֵבָה: ב וַיֵּרָא מִלְּאֶף יְהוָה אֵלָיו בְּלַבַּת־אֵשׁ מִתּוֹךְ הַסֵּנֶה וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה הַסֵּנֶה בָּעֵר בָּאֵשׁ וְהַסֵּנֶה אֵינֶנּוּ אֲפֹל: ג וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶסְרֶה־נָּא וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת־הַמֵּרְאָה הַגָּדֹל הַזֶּה מִדּוֹעַ לֹא־יִבְעַר הַסֵּנֶה: ד וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה בִּי סֵר לְרֹאוֹת וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו אֱלֹהִים מִתּוֹךְ הַסֵּנֶה וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּנִי:

רש"י

מִתּוֹךְ הַסֵּנֶה. וְלֹא חֵילִן אַחֵר מִשּׁוּם "עֲמוּ חֲלָכִי בְּזֵרָה" (תהלים לא, טו; שמות רבה ט; תנחומא יד): אֲפֹל. לְחָקֵל כָּמוֹ "לֹא עֲבַד צֶה" (דברים כא, ג), "אֲשֶׁר לָקַח מִשָּׁם" (בראשית ג, כג): (ג) אֶסְרֶה נָּא. חֲסוּרָה מִכָּאן לְהַתְקַרֵּב שָׁם:

אֶל הַר הָאֱלֹהִים. עַל שֶׁ הָעֵתִיד (ספרי דברים כב): (ב) בְּלַבַּת אֵשׁ. צִשְׁלֶהֶבֶת אֵשׁ (אונקלוס), לְבֹ שֶׁל אֵשׁ (שמות רבה ט, ה), כָּמוֹ "לֵב הַשָּׁמַיִם" (דברים ז, יא), "לְבַב הָאֵלֹהִים" (שמואל-ב יח, יד). וְחָלַל סְתֵמָה עַל הַפִּי"ו, שֶׁיֵּשׁ לָנוּ כִּיּוֹלָא בּוֹ, "מִה חָמְלָה לְצַדִּיק" (יחזקאל טז, ט):

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□ אֶל הַר הָאֱלֹהִים — *HE ARRIVED AT THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD, AT CHOREIV.*

Why is Choreiv called "the Mountain of God"? Rashi explains:

עַל שֶׁ הָעֵתִיד — The Torah's use of this title is **based on the future**. Choreiv, another name for Mount Sinai, is called "the Mountain of God," because it was there that the Jewish people would, in the near future, accept Hashem as their God by accepting His Torah.^[1] Thus, our verse means that Moshe arrived at the mountain that would later serve as "the Mountain of God" (*Sifrei, Devarim* §22).

2. בְּלַבַּת אֵשׁ — "*BELABAS*" FIRE.

What does the term בְּלַבַּת אֵשׁ mean? Rashi explains:

בְּשִׁלְהֶבֶת אֵשׁ — It means *in the flame of a fire* (*Onkelos*). לְבֹ שֶׁל אֵשׁ — Although this is its meaning, the literal translation is *in the "heart" of a fire*, כָּמוֹ "לֵב הַשָּׁמַיִם" — and the term "heart" is used here in a way that is **similar to** the expression (*Devarim* 4:11), *the "heart" of the heavens*, which means "the center of the heavens," "בְּלֵב הָאֵלֹהִים" — and (*II Shmuel* 18:14), *at the "heart" of the elm tree*, which means "at the center of the elm tree."^[2]

The word לֵב (heart) does not contain the letter *tav*, nor is this letter generally added to it as a possessive suffix. Seemingly then, the word בְּלַבַּת, which does end with a *tav*, cannot be a form of לֵב. Rashi addresses this difficulty:

שׁוֹשׁ לָנוּ כִּיּוֹלָא — Do not wonder about the letter *tav* at the end of the word בְּלַבַּת, בְּלַבַּת לָנוּ כִּיּוֹלָא — for we find a similar example of this letter added to the word לֵב, in the verse (*Yechezkel* 16:30), "מָה אֲמָלָה לְבַתְּךָ" — *How ruined is your heart* [לְבַתְּךָ].^[3]

□ מִתּוֹךְ הַסֵּנֶה — *FROM AMID THE THORNBUSH.*

Why did Hashem reveal Himself specifically from amid a thornbush? Rashi explains:

וְלֹא אֵילָן אַחֵר מִשּׁוּם "עֲמוּ אֲנֹכִי בְּצִרְהָ" — Hashem revealed Himself to Moshe from inside a bush whose

1. *Shemos Rabbah* 2:4.

2. The flame is described as the "heart of a fire," because it is its central and primary portion, just as the heart is the central and primary organ in the body (*Gur Aryeh*). [See *Sifsei Yeshe'inim* Appendix for another reading and approach.]

3. When a noun ending in the letter *hei* is conjugated

in the possessive form, the final letter is replaced with a *tav*. For other nouns, however, this suffix is not used. Although לֵב does not end with a *hei*, its feminine form, לְבָה, does. Thus, in both verses, the word לֵב is conjugated in a feminine possessive form — לְבַת and לְבַתְּךָ (*Sefer Zikaron; Be'er Rechovos*, citing *Sefer Ha-Shorashim*).

and he arrived at the Mountain of God, at Choreiv. ² An angel of Hashem appeared to him in a flame of fire from amid the thornbush. He saw and behold! the thornbush was burning in the fire but the thornbush was not being consumed. ³ Moshe said, “I will turn aside now and see this great sight — why is the thornbush not burning?”

⁴ Hashem saw that he turned aside to see; and God called out to him from amid the thornbush and said, “Moshe, Moshe,” and he replied, “Here I am!”

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thorns inflict pain, **rather than another** type of tree, in order to demonstrate that He shared in Israel's pain, as it says (*Tehillim* 91:15) that Hashem declares, **I am with him in distress**^[4] (*Shemos Rabbah* 2:5; *Tanchuma* §14).

□ אָבֵל — **BUT THE THORNBUSH WAS NOT “UKAL.”**

One might interpret this word as an adjective meaning, *burned*, or *consumed*. Rashi clarifies that it is a verb:^[5]

וְאָבֵל — The thornbush was not **being consumed**.^[6] כִּמּוֹ “לֹא עָבַד בָּהּ” — This verb form is **similar** to that of the word עָבַד in the verse (*Devarim* 21:3), **which had not been worked** [עָבַד], “אֲשֶׁר לָקַח מִשָּׁם” — and the word לָקַח in the verse (*Bereishis* 3:23), **from where he had been taken** [לָקַח].^[7]

3. אֶסְרָה נָא — I WILL TURN ASIDE NOW AND SEE THIS GREAT SIGHT.

Why would Moshe turn aside to see? Does turning aside not make seeing more difficult?^[8] Rashi clarifies:

אֶסְרָה מִכָּאן לְהִתְקַרֵּב שָׁם — Moshe meant: **I will turn aside from here**, where I am now, **so as to go closer to there**, the place of the Burning Bush, and see it more clearly.^[9]

4. *Mizrachi; Tosafos HaShalem*. Additionally, the choice of a *lowly* thornbush, as opposed to a tall, imposing tree, displayed empathy with the Jewish people's *lowly status* in Egypt (see *Be'er Yitzchak*). See first Insight.

5. *Meisiach Ilmim; Leket Bahir*.

6. Thus, the verse does not mean that the bush was not yet totally consumed, but rather that it was not being consumed at all (*Leket Bahir*).

7. Just as these words convey an action, rather than a description, so should אָבֵל be understood as an action. However, unlike עָבַד and לָקַח, which are past tense — *been worked, been taken* — the word אָבֵל in our verse is *present tense* and means, *being consumed* (*Mizrachi; Gur Aryeh; cf. Sefer Zikaron*).

8. *Devek Tov*.

9. For a similar usage of the word סָרָה, see *Shoftim* 4:18 (*Mizrachi*). See second Insight.

☞ **“I Am With Him in Distress”** Obviously, this does not mean that Hashem actually suffers, for He is perfect and unchanging. Rather, on a simple level it means that Hashem empathizes with the plight of one who is suffering. As it also says (*Yeshayah* 63:9), בְּכָל צָרָתָם לוֹ צָר וּמִלֵּאדָּן פָּנֵי הוֹשִׁיעַם, *In all their troubles, He was troubled, so an angel from before Him saved them* (see *Radak, Ibn Ezra, and Malbim* there; *Shemos Rabbah* *ibid.*). *Maharal* explains, however, that the concept of Hashem being “with” His people in distress has a deeper meaning. Hashem's majesty and dominion, as perceived in this world, are inextricably linked with the status of His chosen people. When the Jewish people are downtrodden, people have less recognition of Hashem's Kingship. Accordingly, Hashem is “with” them in their suffering, for while He Himself is unaffected, the *perception* of His majesty is diminished by their plight (*Gur Aryeh*; see further, *Nefesh HaChaim* 2:11).

☞ **Turning Aside to Come Closer** Approaching the Burning Bush was Moshe's primary intention, while turning aside from his previous location was only an incidental step toward that goal. Why, then, does the verse stress that Moshe said, “I will turn aside”? *Divrei David* explains that our verse is not merely discussing Moshe's physical movement, but rather his desire to “come closer” to holiness. Accordingly, Moshe had to first “turn aside” from his previous state, for any increase in holiness must be preceded by removing from one's mind any attitudes or preconceptions that are not aligned with the sanctity he wishes to achieve. Accordingly, turning aside was no incidental matter, but rather a fundamental step on Moshe's spiritual journey, which is instructive for all who seek to “come closer” (see, similarly, *Alshich*).

ה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא תִקְרַב לְהִלָּכָא שְׂרִי
 סִינִיךָ מִעַל רִגְלֶיךָ אֲרִי אֲתֵרָא דִּי
 אֲתָ קָאִים עֲלוּהִי אֲתֵר קִדִּישׁ הוּא:
 וַיֹּאמֶר אָנָּה אֱלֹהִה דְּאִבּוּךָ אֱלֹהִה
 דְּאִבְרָהִם אֱלֹהִה דִּי־צִחֶק וְאֱלֹהִה
 דִּי־עֵקֶב וּבְכֻשָּׁנוּן מִשָּׁה לְאִפּוּהִי אֲרִי
 דְּחַל מְלֹאסְתַּפְלָא בְּזוּי וְקָרָא דִּי
 (ב"א: בְּצִית יִקְרָא דִּי): וַיֹּאמֶר יִי
 מְגֵלָא גְלִי קְדָמִי יֵת שְׁעִבּוֹד עַמִּי דִּי
 בְּמִצְרַיִם וְיֵת קְבִלְתָּהוֹן שְׁמִיעַ קְדָמִי
 מִן קָדָם מְפִלְחִיהוֹן אֲרִי גְלִי קְדָמִי
 כִּי־יִהְיֶה: ה וְאֶתְגַּלִּיתִי לְשִׁיבּוֹתָהוֹן
 מִיָּדָא דְּמִצְרַיִם וּלְאִסְקוֹתָהוֹן מִן
 אֲרֻעָא הָהִיא לְאַרְעֵ טְבָא וּפְתִינָא
 לְאַרְעָא עֲבָדָא חֶלֶב וּדְבָשׁ לְאַתֵּר
 כְּנַעֲנָאִי וְחִתָּאִי וְאַמּוֹרָאִי וּפְרָזָאִי
 וְחִנּוּאִי וַיְבֹסֵאִי: ט וּבְכַעַן הָא קְבִילֵת
 בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲלֵת קְדָמִי וְאַף גְּלִי
 קְדָמִי דּוּחָקָא (ב"א: יֵת דּוּחָקָא) דִּי
 מִצְרַאִי דְּחָקִין לָהוֹן: י וּבְכַעַן אֵימָא
 וְאַשְׁלַחְנָךְ לָנוּת פְּרַעָה וְאַפִּיק יֵת עַמִּי
 בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם: יא וַיֹּאמֶר מִשָּׁה
 קָדָם יִי מִן אָנָּה אֲרִי אִיוִּיל לָנוּת פְּרַעָה

ה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־תִּקְרַב הָלֶם שֶׁל־נַעֲלֶיךָ מִעַל רִגְלֶיךָ
 כִּי הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עוֹמֵד עָלָיו אֲדַמַּת־קֹדֶשׁ
 הוּא: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ אֱלֹהֵי אֲבִרָהִם
 אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב וַיִּסְתֵּר מִשָּׁה פָּנָיו כִּי
 יָרָא מִהִבֵּיט אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה רָאֵה
 רְאִיתִי אֶת־עַנִּי עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֶת־צַעֲקָתָם
 שָׁמַעְתִּי מִפְּנֵי נִגְשָׁיו כִּי יִדְעָתִי אֶת־מִכְאֲבָיו:
 ח וְאֵרֵד לְהַצִּילוֹ | מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וּלְהַעֲלֹתוֹ מִן־הָאָרֶץ
 הַהִוא אֶל־אֲרֶץ טוֹבָה וְרַחֲבָה אֶל־אֲרֶץ זָבֶת חֶלֶב
 וּדְבָשׁ אֶל־מָקוֹם הַפְּנִיעָנִי וְהַחֲתִי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהַפְּרָזִי
 וְהַחֲנִי וְהַיְבוֹסִי: ט וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה צַעֲקַת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל
 בָּאָה אֵלָי וְגַם־רְאִיתִי אֶת־הַלֶּחֶץ אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם
 לֹחֲצִים אֹתָם: י וְעַתָּה לָכֵה וְאַשְׁלַחְךָ אֶל־פְּרַעָה
 וְהוֹצֵא אֶת־עַמִּי בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם: יא וַיֹּאמֶר
 מִשָּׁה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים מִי אֲנֹכִי כִּי אֵלֶךְ אֶל־פְּרַעָה

רע"ה

(ה) של. שְׁלוֹף וְהוֹאֵל, כְּמוֹ "וְנָשַׁל הַבְּרָזֵל" (דברים יט, ה),
 "כִּי יֵשֶׁל זִיקָד" (דברים כה, מ): אֲדַמַּת קֹדֶשׁ הוּא. הַמָּקוֹם:
 (ז) בִּי יִדְעָתִי אֶת מִכְאֲבָיו. כְּמוֹ "וַיִּדַּע חֹלָהִים" (לעיל
 כה). כְּלוּמָר, כִּי שָׁמַעְתִּי לֹכַח לְהַתְּבָּוֶן וּלְדַעַת חֵט מִכְאוֹבָיו,

וְלֹא הִטְלַמְתִּי טֵינִי וְלֹא חָטַטֹס חֵט חֲזִנִי מִנְּטַקְתָּם:
 (י) וְעַתָּה לָכֵה וְאַשְׁלַחְךָ אֶל פְּרַעָה. וְאֵס תִּחַמֵּר מֵה
 פּוֹטִיל, וְהוֹצֵא אֶת עַמִּי, יוֹטִילוּ דְּצִרְךָ וְתוֹלִיחֵס מֵסָ:
 (יא) מִי אֲנֹכִי. מֵה חֲנִי חֲשׂוֹב לְדַעַר טֹס הַמְּלָכִים:

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5. שֶׁל — "SHAL" YOUR SHOES.

Rashi explains what the uncommon word שֶׁל means:

שְׁלוֹף וְהוֹצֵא — It means **slip off and remove**. Hashem was commanding Moshe to remove his shoes.
 — This word שֶׁל is **similar to** the word וְנָשַׁל in the phrase (*Devarim* 19:5), **and the iron shall dislodge** [וְנָשַׁל] *from the wood*,^[10] — and to the word יֵשֶׁל in the phrase (*Devarim* 28:40), **for your olive trees will shed** [יֵשֶׁל].^[11] These words all share the same root and have similar meanings of *removing or dislodging*.

□ אֲדַמַּת קֹדֶשׁ הוּא — *FOR THE PLACE UPON WHICH YOU STAND — IT IS HOLY GROUND.*

The word אֲדַמַּת (*ground*) is feminine; why then does the Torah use the masculine pronoun, הוא (*it*)? Rashi explains:

הַמָּקוֹם — The pronoun הוא refers to the masculine word "הַמָּקוֹם" (*the place*) that appears earlier in the verse (not to the word אֲדַמַּת). Accordingly, the verse is to be read: *it — the place — is holy ground.*

7. בִּי יִדְעָתִי אֶת מִכְאֲבָיו — *FOR I HAVE KNOWN ITS SUFFERINGS.*

Obviously, Hashem knows everything. What, then, is the meaning of "I have known," in this verse? Rashi explains:

10. This refers to a man who was chopping wood and axe dislodged from the wood (see Rashi there).

11. I.e., they will drop their fruit (Rashi to the verse).

⁵ He said, “Do not come closer to here, remove your shoes from your feet, for the place upon which you stand — it is holy ground.”

⁶ And He said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Avraham, the God of Yitzchak, and the God of Yaakov.” Moshe hid his face, for he was afraid to gaze toward God.

⁷ Hashem said, “I have indeed seen the affliction of My people that is in Egypt and I have heard its outcry because of its taskmasters, for I have known its sufferings. ⁸ I have descended to rescue it from the hand of Egypt and to bring it up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land which flows with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite, the Chittite, the Emorite, the Perizzite, the Chivvite, and the Yevusite. ⁹ And now, behold! the outcry of the Children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ And now, go, and I shall send you to Pharaoh, and you will take My people, the Children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

¹¹ Moshe replied to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh,

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“וַיֵּדַע אֱלֹהִים” — The meaning of this verse is **similar** to that of the verse above (2:25), *God saw the Children of Israel; and God knew*, i.e., He directed His attention to them and did not ignore them.^[12] “כִּי שָׁמָּה לִבִּי לְהִתְבּוֹןֶנָּה וְלִדְעַת אֶת מַכְאוּבֵי” — Similarly here, Hashem **means to say**, “**for I have directed My attention to understand and know their pain**, וְלֹא הִעֲלֵמְתִּי עֵינַי וְלֹא אֶאָסֹם אֶת” — **and I have not hidden my eyes from their suffering, nor will I block my ears to their cry.**”

10. וְעַתָּה לֵךְ וְאֶשְׁלַחְךָ אֶל פַּרְעֹה — AND NOW, GO, AND I SHALL SEND YOU TO PHARAOH, AND YOU WILL TAKE MY PEOPLE, THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, OUT OF EGYPT.

Since Hashem’s purpose in sending Moshe was for him to take the people out of Egypt, the verse should seemingly have said, “I shall send you to Pharaoh to take My people out.” Why does it say, “I shall send you to Pharaoh, and you will” take My people... out of Egypt? Rashi explains that this verse is to be understood as two separate statements:

וְאֵם תֹּאמַר מַה תּוֹעִיל — Hashem said, *GO, AND I SHALL SEND YOU TO PHARAOH* to demand that he release the Jewish people. **And if you ask what [this mission] will accomplish**, as Pharaoh surely will not agree, “וְהוֹצֵאת אֶת עַמִּי” — the answer is that *YOU WILL TAKE MY PEOPLE... OUT OF EGYPT*, וַיַּעֲלֵנוּ דְרָכֶיךָ וְתוֹצִיאֵם — **i.e., your words will be effective, and you will successfully take them out from there!**^[13]

11. מִי אֲנִי — WHO AM I THAT I SHOULD GO TO PHARAOH, AND THAT I SHOULD TAKE THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL OUT OF EGYPT?

Rashi explains the meaning of this expression in the context of the verse:

מִה אֲנִי חֹשֵׁב לְדַבֵּר עִם הַמְּלָכִים — It means, “**of what significance am I** that I should be able **to speak with kings?**”^[14] Lacking prestige or status, Moshe was concerned that Pharaoh would ignore his request, or even harm him.^[15]

12. See Rashi there.

13. Had Hashem said, “I shall send you to Pharaoh to take my people... out of Egypt” this would have only conveyed the purpose of the mission, but not its outcome. Rather, He informed Moshe, “I shall send you to Pharaoh, **and you will** take my people... out of Egypt,” assuring him of the mission’s success (*Gur Aryeh*).

14. A similar usage of the word מִי appears in *II Shmuel*

7:18 (*Tzeidah LaDerech*; see also *I Shmuel* 18:18).

15. *Levush HaOrah* (next verse). Alternatively, Moshe was concerned that he would be denied entrance to Pharaoh’s palace; if he entered without permission, he would certainly be killed (*Be’er BaSadeh*).

Although Hashem had already assured Moshe (v. 10), “You will take my people... out of Egypt,” Moshe was concerned that he might sin and consequently

וְכִי אוֹצִיא אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם: יב וַיֹּאמֶר
בִּי־אֱהִיָּה עִמָּךְ וְזֶה־לְךָ הָאוֹת כִּי אֲנֹכִי

וְכִי אוֹצִיא אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְאִם חֲשׂוֹב חָנִי, מִה זָכוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁיִּעָשֶׂה לָהֶם נִסִּים וּמוֹלִיחִים מִמִּצְרַיִם (שְׁמוֹת רַבָּה ג, ד: (יב) וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי אֱהִיָּה עִמָּךְ. הֵשִׁיבוּ עַל רֹאשׁוֹן רֹאשׁוֹן וְעַל אַחֲרוֹן אַחֲרוֹן. שְׁאִמְרָם "מִי אֲנֹכִי כִי אֵלֶךְ אֶל פַּרְעֹה", לֹא עָלָה הִיא כִי אִם מַשְׁלִי, בִּי אֱהִיָּה

רַשִׁי

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□ **וְכִי אוֹצִיא אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל — WHO AM I THAT I SHOULD GO TO PHARAOH, AND THAT I SHOULD TAKE THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL OUT OF EGYPT?**

If Moshe meant that he was personally unqualified to take the Jewish people out of Egypt, he should have said, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and *who am I* that I should take the Children of Israel out of Egypt?" Since Moshe does not repeat the phrase, "who am I," it is evident that he meant something else. Rashi explains:

וַיֹּאף אִם חֲשׂוֹב חָנִי — Moshe meant to ask, "and even if I *am* significant enough to speak with kings, מִה זָכוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁיִּעָשֶׂה לָהֶם נִסִּים וּמוֹלִיחִים מִמִּצְרַיִם — how have Israel merited that a miracle should be performed for them and that I should take them out of Egypt?"^[16] (*Shemos Rabbah* 3:4). Thus, the verse should be read as follows: *Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and [what merit do the Jewish people have] that I should take the Children of Israel out of Egypt?*

12. וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי אֱהִיָּה עִמָּךְ — AND HE SAID, "FOR I SHALL BE WITH YOU..."

Rashi clarifies how Hashem's response addresses the two concerns that Moshe raised in the previous verse:

הֵשִׁיבוּ עַל רֹאשׁוֹן רֹאשׁוֹן וְעַל אַחֲרוֹן אַחֲרוֹן — Hashem answered Moshe's two questions in order, **responding to his first question first, and to his last question last.** — **שְׁאִמְרָתָּה "מִי אֲנֹכִי בִי אֵלֶךְ אֶל פַּרְעֹה"** — To Moshe's first question Hashem responded: Regarding **that which you asked**, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh," i.e., of what significance am I that I should speak with kings, **לֹא שָׁלַךְ הָיָא בִּי אִם מַשְׁלִי "בִּי"**

forfeit the right to that assurance (see similarly Rashi to *Bereishis* 32:11). Then, as a commoner with no special influence, he could not possibly speak with royalty effectively (*Divrei David*).

16. Rashi deduces the meaning of Moshe's second question from Hashem's response in the next verse, *when you take the people out of Egypt, you (Israel) will serve God on this mountain* (*Mizrachi*; see Rashi to next verse).

Regarding Moshe's second question as well, although Hashem had already assured Moshe, "*you will take My people, the Children of Israel, out of Egypt*," he was concerned that their sins might prevent that assurance from coming to fruition. Therefore, he inquired whether they possessed any specific merit that would ensure their redemption regardless of their sins (*Divrei David*; see previous note). See Insight.

⚡ **Merit, or the Fulfillment of a Promise?** The commentators are perplexed by Moshe's question, for Hashem had already established a covenant with Avraham, promising him (*Bereishis* 15:13-14), "*Know with certainty that your descendants will be sojourners in a land not their own — and they will enslave them, and they will oppress them — four hundred years... and afterward they will leave...*" Seemingly, for Hashem to keep His promise would not require any special merit!

Imrei Shefer explains that Moshe asked about the Jewish people's merit because various methods could be used to calculate the four hundred years. While Hashem was now preparing to redeem Avraham's descendants four hundred years after the birth of Yitzchak, who was indeed a sojourner in a land not his own (see Rashi to 12:40 below), He could have instead waited until the nation had endured four hundred years of slavery and subjugation at the hands of the Egyptians. Therefore, Moshe inquired, in what merit did Hashem choose the more lenient count? Alternatively, although the time of redemption had already been decreed, the Jewish people would still require some merit before it could actually occur. Indeed, the Midrash (*Mechilta*, cited by Rashi to verse 12:6 below) teaches that when the time arrived for Hashem to fulfill His promise to Avraham, the

and that I should take the Children of Israel out of Egypt?”

¹² And He said, “For I shall be with you — and this is your sign that I

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“אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ” — the answer is that your personal status and significance are not important here, for **it is not your** mission to accomplish alone, **but** rather it is **Mine** as well,^[17] **FOR I SHALL BE WITH YOU**, ensuring your success and safety.^[18]

Rashi will soon clarify how Hashem responded to Moshe’s second question. First, he explains the continuation of the verse, *and this is your sign that I have sent you. When you take the people out of Egypt, you will serve God on this mountain.*^[19]

“לֹךְ הָאוֹת בִּי” — **AND THIS vision that you have seen at the thornbush,**^[20] “אֲנִי שְׁלַחְתִּיךָ” — **IS YOUR SIGN THAT I HAVE SENT YOU**, i.e., that I will be with you, for your mission is My mission, “וְתִצְלִיחַ בְּשִׁלְחוֹתַי וּבְרָאִי אֲנִי לְהַצִּיל” — **and therefore, you will succeed in My mission and be assured that I am able to save you from Pharaoh.**^[21] “כַּאֲשֶׁר רָאִיתָ הַסֵּנֶה עוֹשֶׂה שְׁלִיחוֹתַי וְאֵינָנוֹ אוֹכֵל” — **For just as you saw the thornbush performing My mission without being consumed,** “כָּךְ תֵּלֵךְ בְּשִׁלְחוֹתַי” — **so too will you go on My mission without being harmed.**^[22]

According to the preceding interpretation of the phrase, *and this is your sign that I have sent you*, the next phrase, *when you take the people out of Egypt, you will serve God on this mountain*, stands alone as its own sentence. Rashi explains that this is Hashem’s response to Moshe’s second question:

“וְשִׂשְׁאֵלָה מֶה זָכוֹת יֵשׁ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂוֵאָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם” — **And regarding your second question, “What merit does Israel possess that they should go out of Egypt?”** “דָּבָר גְּדוֹל יֵשׁ לִי עַל הוֹצָאָה זוֹ” — **indeed, they do**

17. See *Mizrachi*; *Bechor Shor*.

18. *Levush HaOrah*; *Be’er BaSadeh*.

19. This could easily be misinterpreted to mean that the Jewish people serving Hashem on the mountain would prove to Moshe that Hashem had sent him. However, that cannot be, for Hashem had already explicitly appointed Moshe as His messenger — so Moshe certainly did not need any proof about his appointment (*Be’er Mayim Chaim*; *Meisiach Ilmim*; cf. *Mizrachi*). Furthermore, *had* Moshe needed proof, how could a prediction of a future event assure him in the present (*Be’er Mayim Chaim*; *Meisiach Ilmim*; *Be’er Yitzchak*)? Therefore, Rashi clarifies that the phrase, *and this is your sign that I have sent you*, is not connected to the words, *when you take the people out of Egypt, you will serve God on this mountain*, but rather is a continuation of Hashem’s assurance, *for I will be with you*.

20. The word *this* (זֶה) implies that Hashem was, so to speak, pointing at something, namely, the thornbush (*Leket Bahir*). Indeed, Rashi often interprets the word

“this” (זֶה / זאת) in this manner (e.g., below, 12:2; 15:2; *Vayikra* 11:2; *Bamidbar* 8:4).

21. Moshe did not question whether Hashem was sending him, but rather was unsure if it was his mission to carry out alone, or Hashem’s own mission, in which He Himself would be directly involved (*Gur Aryeh*; cf. *Mizrachi*). To address this concern, Hashem said, בִּי שְׁלַחְתִּיךָ, rather than simply saying, “אֲנִי שְׁלַחְתִּיךָ”, *for I have sent you*. The extra word אֲנִי stresses that it is I, the all-powerful God, Who has sent you and Who will ensure the success of the mission (*Be’er Yitzchak*). And the sign of this is the burning thornbush, as Rashi goes on to explain.

22. Seeing himself as unworthy of being Hashem’s emissary, Moshe was concerned that he would fail or be harmed. The Burning Bush dispelled both of these notions, for although a lowly thornbush is seemingly unable to serve as a resting place for the *Shechinah*, once Hashem chose it for this mission, it was able to do so and emerge unscathed (*Leket Bahir*; based on *Yerios Shlomo*).

Jewish people lacked sufficient merit, and Hashem therefore commanded them to circumcise themselves and to slaughter the *pesach* offering, allowing them to merit the promised redemption.

Tzeidah LaDerech suggests a novel approach: While Moshe knew that Hashem would certainly fulfill His promise and allow Avraham’s descendants to leave Egypt, he did not know how this would happen. Perhaps Hashem would send an angel to redeem them, rather than revealing His own Divine Presence. Indeed, Moshe assumed that the Jewish people would not merit for Hashem Himself to redeem them, for he had discovered that there were informants among the nation (see Rashi above, 2:14), and the sin of *lashon hara* causes the *Shechinah* to depart (*Midrash Tehillim* 7:8). Consequently, when he heard Hashem declare (above, v. 8), *I have descended to rescue [the nation] from the hand of Egypt*, i.e., that Hashem Himself would redeem them, Moshe was perplexed. Therefore, he inquired what merit would allow the *Shechinah* to dwell among them, despite the sin of slander. To this Hashem responded, “*You will serve God on this mountain*,” i.e., you as a nation will accept the Torah, which is the most powerful remedy for *lashon hara* (see *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Metzora* §2).

שְׁלַחְתִּיךָ בְּהוֹצִיאָךְ אֶת־הָעָם מִמִּצְרַיִם תַּעֲבֹדוּן
אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים עַל הָהָר הַזֶּה: יג וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה
אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי בֹא אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְאָמַרְתִּי לָהֶם אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם
וְאָמְרוּ־לִי מַה־שְּׁמוֹ מָה אָמַר אֱלֹהִים: יד וַיֹּאמֶר
אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה וַיֹּאמֶר
כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲהִיָּה שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם:

רע”

וְשִׁיעָה לוֹ, ט, מִשְׁלֵת סִנְחָרִיב תִּהְיֶה לָךְ לְאוֹת עַל הַבְּטָחָה
חֲתָרָה, שְׁאֲרָלָכְס חֲרִיבָה מִפִּירֹת וְחִנִּי חֲצָרָה הַסְפִּיחִים:
(יד) אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה. אֲהִיָּה עִמָּם בְּזָרָה זֹאת
אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה עִמָּם בְּשַׁעֲבוֹד שָׁחַר מַלְכוּיֹת. חָמַר לִפְנֵי:
רְבוּנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, מָה חָנִי מִזְכִּיר לָהֶם לָרָה חֲתָרָה,
דְּיִים בְּזָרָה זֹאת. חָמַר לוֹ: יִפֶּה חֲמָרָה, "כֹּה תֹאמַר וְגו'"
(שְׁמוֹת רַבָּה ג, ו; בְּרָכוֹת ט:):

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not currently possess sufficient merit, but I am considering their future merit,^[23] and **I have a matter of great importance that depends on this exodus,** שְׁהָרִי עֲתִידִים לִקְבֹּל הַתּוֹרָה "עַל הָהָר הַזֶּה" לְסוֹף שְׁלֹשָׁה חֳדָשִׁים שֶׁיֵּצְאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם (שְׁמוֹת רַבָּה ג, ד). דָּבָר חֲתָרָה, בִּי אֲהִיָּה עִמָּךְ, וְזֶה שְׁלֵלִית בְּשִׁלְחוֹתְךָ לָךְ הָאוֹת עַל הַבְּטָחָה חֲתָרָה שְׁחִנִּי מִבְּטָחָה, שְׁשִׁיעָה לִי מִמִּצְרַיִם תַּעֲבֹדוּן חֲתָרָה עַל הָהָר הַזֶּה, שְׁשִׁיעָה לִי הַתּוֹרָה עַלֵּי, וְהִיא הַזְכִּיָּה הַעוֹמֶדֶת לִישְׂרָאֵל. וְדוֹגְמָה לְשׁוֹן זֶה מִיָּמֵינוּ, "זֶה לָךְ הָאוֹת אֲכֹל הַשְּׁנֵה סְפִית וְגו'" (מַלְכִּים ב יט, כט)

Rashi presents another interpretation of the verse:^[25]

An alternative explanation of this verse: "כִּי אֲהִיָּה עִמָּךְ" — Hashem meant: **FOR I SHALL BE WITH YOU** to help you on your mission, and you will indeed succeed, וְזֶה שְׁתַּצְלִיחַ בְּשִׁלְחוֹתְךָ "לָךְ הָאוֹת" עַל — **AND THIS — that you will succeed in your mission — shall be THE SIGN**

23. *Divrei David*; see similarly *Meisiach Ilmim*.

24. Although the Jewish people left Egypt on the fifteenth of Nissan and accepted the Torah seven weeks later, on the sixth of Sivan, Rashi describes this event as "three months after they leave Egypt" because this interval was comprised of parts of three different months — namely, the second half of Nissan, the entire month of Iyar, and the first week of Sivan (see

Chizkuni al Rashi, second approach; *Eved Shlomo*; see also *Meisiach Ilmim*). See Insight.

25. Like the first interpretation, this approach also maintains that the beginning of the verse, *for I shall be with you*, is Hashem's answer to Moshe's concern about his own qualifications; and the end of the verse, *you will serve God on this mountain*, indicates that the merit of accepting the Torah will enable the Jewish

⚡ **Future Merit** In his commentary to *Bereishis* (21:17), Rashi explains that Hashem judges a person based only on his current behavior — not his future actions. Therefore, Hashem provided water for Yishmael in the desert, without considering the sins that he or his offspring would commit in the future. Similarly, the Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* 3:2) teaches that Hashem redeemed the Jewish people from Egypt, despite the sin of the Golden Calf, which He knew they would later commit, for *He sees iniquity but does not consider it* (*Iyov* 11:11), instead limiting His judgment to the present moment. However, Rashi's comment to our verse indicates that Hashem *does* account for the future in judgment, for He credited the Jewish people with the merit of accepting the Torah before they had done so!

To resolve this contradiction, *Parashas Derachim* suggests that although Hashem does not account for our future *transgressions*, He does account for our future *merits*, for His system of justice is tempered by His great mercy and kindness. Indeed, while those very people who would later accept the Torah would also participate in the sin of the Golden Calf, Hashem redeemed them based upon their future merit while simultaneously ignoring their future iniquity (*Parashas Derachim* §4; see *Zohar*, Vol. 1, 121b).

have sent you. When you take the people out of Egypt, you will serve God on this mountain.”

¹³ Moshe said to God, “Behold, when I come to the Children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your forefathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His Name?’ — what shall I say to them?”

¹⁴ God said to Moshe, “I Shall Be As I Shall Be.” And He said, “So shall you say to the Children of Israel, ‘I Shall Be has sent me to you.’”

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FOR YOU that I will fulfill **another** promise that I am promising you, “מִמְצְרַיִם תֵּצְאוּ” — namely, **that when you will take them out FROM EGYPT, YOU SHALL SERVE [ME] ON THIS MOUNTAIN;** שְׁתִּקְבְּלוּ הַתּוֹרָה עָלֶיךָ — **for you will receive the Torah upon it.** וְהָיָה הַזֵּכֶר הָעוֹמֵד — **and this shall be the sign for you that you will eat this year of the aftergrowth, etc.**^[26] — **This is the merit** that you asked about, **which will stand for Israel.** In other words, Hashem is saying, “I will be with you to ensure your success in taking the Jewish people out of Egypt, and that success will serve as a sign, assuring that they will accept the Torah, which is the greatest possible merit.”

However, this approach is difficult. Since Moshe did not yet know whether he would succeed in taking the nation out of Egypt, it seems strange that Hashem would use this future event as a sign of *another* future event. Therefore, Rashi cites a similar verse to demonstrate that such signs are not unprecedented:

“וְרֹאשֵׁית לֶשֶׁן זֶה מִצִּינוֹ, ‘זֶה לָךְ הָאֵת אֲכֹל הַשָּׁנָה סָפִיחַ וְגוֹ’” — **We find an example of this same language** being used to designate one future event as a sign guaranteeing another in the verse (*II Melachim* 19:29; *Yeshayah* 37:30), **and this shall be the sign for you that you will eat this year of the aftergrowth, etc.**^[26] — **מַפְלֵת סִנְחָרִיב תִּהְיֶה לָּךְ לְאוֹת עַל הַבְּסָטָה אַחֶרֶת** — That is, **the promised downfall of Sancheiriv,** which will soon occur, **will be a sign for you,** assuring the fulfillment of **another promise.** שְׁאֵרְצֶכֶם — **Namely, that although your land has been laid desolate of produce, I will bless the aftergrowths,** and they will suffice for the entire year. So too, our verse means that when the Exodus does occur, this will be a sign to Moshe that the Jewish people will accept the Torah.

14. אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה — GOD SAID TO MOSHE, “I SHALL BE AS I SHALL BE.” AND HE SAID, “SO SHALL YOU SAY... ‘I SHALL BE’ HAS SENT ME TO YOU.”

What is the meaning of the name, *I Shall Be As I Shall Be*? Furthermore, why does Hashem first identify Himself by this double name, but then use the shorter name, *I Shall Be*?^[27] Rashi explains:

אֶהְיֶה עִמָּם בְּצָרָה וְאֶהְיֶה עִמָּם בְּשַׁעֲבֹד שְׂאֵר מַלְכוּתֵי — **First, Hashem revealed His entire name, I Shall Be As I Shall Be,** which implies, **I SHALL BE with them during this period of distress AS I SHALL BE with them during their future subjugations** at the hands of **other kingdoms.** — אָמַר לִפְנֵי — **But when Moshe heard this, he objected and said before [Hashem],** רַבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם מָה אֲנִי מוֹבִיר לָהֶם צָרָה — **“Master of the World! Why should I mention to them another period of distress?”** דִּיּוּם — **“This current distress is enough for them!”** — אָמַר לוֹ: יָפָה אָמַרְתָּ — **[Hashem] said to him, “You have spoken well!”** “כֹּה תֹאמַר וְגוֹ” — **SO SHALL YOU SAY TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, I SHALL BE** — i.e., Hashem, Who shall be with you in your *current* distress — **HAS SENT ME TO YOU**^[28] (*Shemos Rabbah* 3:6; *Berachos* 9b).

people to leave Egypt. However, this interpretation differs from the first regarding the middle of the verse, both in terms of what sign Hashem gave Moshe, as well as what the sign was intended to prove. Additionally, according to this interpretation, the middle section of the verse connects the beginning to the end, allowing the verse to be read as one sentence rather than two.

26. This verse is part of the prophecy that Yeshayah conveyed to King Chizkiyahu when the army of

Sancheiriv, king of Assyria, laid siege to Yerushalayim and destroyed all the crops of the land. Yeshayah assured Chizkiyahu that Sancheiriv’s downfall was imminent, and he also gave him a sign that the famine resulting from Sancheiriv’s destruction of the crops would end.

27. *Imrei Shefer; Maharsha, Berachos* 9b.

28. Hashem accepted Moshe’s argument that future troubles need not be mentioned now, and thus

טו וַיֹּאמֶר עֹד יְיָ לְמֹשֶׁה כִּדְּבַר תִּימָר
לְבִנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יְיָ אֱלֹהֵא דַּבְּחֶתְכוֹן
אֱלֹהֵה דַּבְּחֶהֶם אֱלֹהֵה דִּיחֶק
וְאֱלֹהֵה דִּיעֶקֶב שְׁלַחֲנִי לְוַתְּכוֹן דִּין
שְׁמִי לְעֵלָם וְדִין דְּכִרְנִי לְכָל דָּר וְדָר:
טז אֲזַיִל וְתִכְנוֹשׁ יֵת סְבִי יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְתִימָר לַחֹן יְיָ אֱלֹהֵא דַּבְּחֶתְכוֹן
אֲתַגְלִי לִי אֱלֹהֵה דַּבְּחֶהֶם יִחֶק
וְיַעֲקֹב לְמִימָר מְדַבֵּר דְּכִירְנָא
יִתְכוֹן וְיֵת דַּתְעֵבֵד לְכוֹן בְּמַצְרַיִם:

טו וַיֹּאמֶר עֹד אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה כֹּה תֹאמַר אֶל־
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹרָהֶם
אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב שְׁלַחֲנִי אֵלֵיכֶם זֶה שְׁמִי
לְעֵלָם וְזֶה זְכוֹרִי לְדָר וְדָר: חֲמִישִׁי טז לָךְ וְאַסְפַּתְּ אֶת־
זְכוֹנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם
נִרְאָה אֵלַי אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹרָהֶם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר
פֶּקֶד פְּקֻדֹתַי אֶתְכֶם וְאֶת־הָעֲשׂוֹי לָכֶם בְּמַצְרַיִם:

רע"ו

(טו) זֶה שְׁמִי לְעֵלָם. חֶסֶד וַי"ו, לומר: העלימהו, שלא יקרא כְּכֶתְבוּ (שמות רבה טז: פסחים טז: וְזֶה זְכוֹרִי. למדו היסוד נקרא (טז: וס), וכן דוד הוא חומר "ה" שמך לעולם ה' זכרך לדר ודר" (תהלים קלח, יג): (טז) אֶת זְכוֹנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. מיוחדים לשיצה (ומא כח:). ואם תאמר זְכוֹנֵים סתם, היסוד אפסר לו לאסוף זְכוֹנֵים של ששים רבוא:

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15. זֶה שְׁמִי לְעֵלָם — *THIS IS MY NAME FOREVER*.

Rashi comments on the spelling of לעלם:^[29]

— The word לעלם (*forever*) is written here **without a vav**, a spelling that is identical to that of the word לעלם (*to conceal*). Accordingly, this verse can be read as saying, “*This is My Name to conceal.*” — **This teaches that one should conceal [Hashem’s Name]** — i.e., **that it should not be pronounced as it is written**^[30] (*Shemos Rabbah* 3:7; *Pesachim* 50a).

□ וְזֶה זְכוֹרִי — *AND THIS IS MY REMEMBRANCE*.

What does “*My remembrance*” mean? And to what does “*This*” refer? Rashi explains:

[Hashem] taught [Moshe] how [the Divine Name] is to be pronounced. *This*

instructed him to use the shorter Name, which alluded only to their current predicament. See Insight.

29. Rashi discusses the fact that the word is written as לעלם, without a vav, rather than לעולם with a vav. Now, there are many other places in the Torah where this word is written without a vav (e.g., וְיִמְלֹךְ לְעֵלָם וְעַד, below, 15:18), yet nowhere else does Rashi comment on it! Indeed, commentators often note that it is not Rashi’s practice to comment on the lack of a vav in a word unless he seeks to resolve another difficulty

in the verse (see *Gur Aryeh* to *Bereishis* 1:14; *Be’er BaSadeh* to *Bereishis* 1:28 and 18:1). It thus seems that Rashi is addressing an underlying question: What is the meaning of the double expression, “*This is My Name*” and “*this is My remembrance*”? The distinction comes to light through the spelling of לעלם, as Rashi explains.

30. The Divine Four-Letter Name of Hashem [יהוה] may not be pronounced as it is written in the Torah. Ordinarily, Hashem’s Name is pronounced as *Ado-nai*,

☞ **Change of Heart?** Seemingly, Hashem retracted his initial instructions to tell the people, “*I Shall Be As I Shall Be*,” because Moshe informed Him that this would be too much for them to bear. But certainly, Hashem was already aware of this objection!

Indeed, careful reading of the verses demonstrates that Hashem did *not* change His mind, but rather first answered Moshe’s direct question and then offered him instructions and guidance: First Moshe asked, *When I come to the Children of Israel... and they say to me, “What is His Name?” — what shall I say to them?* To this, Hashem responded that if, in fact, they would inquire about His Name, it would be necessary to answer them fully and truthfully, *I Shall Be As I Shall Be*. Then, addressing Moshe’s concern that this would cause undue distress, Hashem advised him that he should not wait for them to ask, but rather should proclaim immediately, *I Shall Be has sent me to you*. The Jewish people would be satisfied with this partial name and would not ask to hear it in its entirety; they would thus be spared the distress of contemplating future subjugations. Nevertheless, Hashem did reveal the entire Name to Moshe, informing him that He would be with His nation throughout their many travails. [This Name is recorded in the Torah to inform future generations that Hashem is with us in our darkest moments as well] (*Gur Aryeh*, first approach; see there for an additional approach).

¹⁵ God said further to Moshe, “So shall you say to the Children of Israel, ‘Hashem, the God of your forefathers, the God of Avraham, the God of Yitzchak, and the God of Yaakov, has sent me to you.’ This is My Name forever, and this is My remembrance for generations. ¹⁶ Go and gather the elders of Israel, and say to them, ‘Hashem, the God of your forefathers, has appeared to me, the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, saying, “I have surely remembered you and what is being done to you in Egypt.

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pronunciation is His “remembrance”^[31] (*Shemos Rabbah* 3:7; *Pesachim* 50a). — וכן דוד הוא אומר — This distinction between Hashem’s “Name” and “Remembrance” is alluded to elsewhere as well, for King David similarly says (*Tehillim* 135:13), — ה' שִׁמְךָ לְעוֹלָם ה' זָכְרְךָ לְדֹר וָדֹר — **Hashem, Your Name is forever; Hashem, Your remembrance is for generations.**^[32]

16. אֶת זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל — THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL.

Who were these “elders”? Rashi clarifies:

מִיּוֹחָדִים לִישׁוּבָה — This means those who were **designated for sitting** in the academies of Torah learning^[33] (*Yoma* 28b). — וְאִם תֹּאמַר זִקְנִים סְתָם — **For if you say that this refers to elders in the plain sense**, i.e., people of advanced age regardless of their scholarship — this cannot be! הֵיכָן אֶפְשָׁר לוֹ לְאַסּוֹף זִקְנִים — **For how would it be possible for [Moshe] to gather all the elderly people from a nation of six hundred thousand?!**^[34] Thus, the word *elders* in our verse must refer to the distinguished scholars of the nation.

as if it were spelled אִדְנִי (see *Pesachim* 50a; *Kiddushin* 71a). See Insight.

31. The word זָכָרִי (*My remembrance*) also means “My mentioning.” Hashem taught Moshe how His Name is to be *mentioned*, i.e., pronounced. In reference to that Oral Teaching, Hashem said, “*This is My remembrance*” (*Mizrachi*).

[Alternatively, “*remembrance*” refers to the fact that the way we pronounce the Name is the way in which it is *remembered*. For when one utters the pronounced version of the Name, he alludes to the written Name and causes it to be *remembered* (*Be’er Yitzchak*).]

32. In both verses, the apparent redundancy of referring separately to Hashem’s “Name” and “Remembrance,” indicates that they are not one in the same. Accordingly, the former refers to the written Name and the latter to its pronunciation (*Divrei David*, based on Rashi to *Pesachim* 50a).

[The written Name is “forever,” whereas the pronunciation is “for generations.” In the World to Come, the Name will be pronounced the way it is written

(*Pesachim* 50a; *Kiddushin* 71a; see *Maharsha* there for elaboration).]

33. The Gemara (*Yoma* 28a) states: From the days of our forefathers, yeshivos (set academies of learning) did not depart from them. When they were in Egypt they had a yeshivah, as it is stated: *Go and gather the elders of Israel...*

Likewise, the Gemara (*Kiddushin* 32b) interprets the word זָקֵן (elder) as an acronym for זֶה שֶׁקָּנָה (הַקְבִּיחַ), *he who has acquired wisdom* (see Rashi there).

34. Below (12:37), the Torah informs us that the adult male population of the Jewish people numbered approximately 600,000 when they left Egypt.

Although Moshe would eventually gather *the entire assembly of the Children of Israel* (below, 35:1), this was feasible only after he had assumed his position of leadership and was thus able to summon them by sounding a shofar or sending emissaries. At this point, however, he would need to approach each person separately, making gathering such a large group impossible (*Divrei David*).

§ Hashem’s Concealed Name Our verse teaches that Hashem’s Name is not pronounced as it is written, but on what basis do the Sages say that this refers to the Four-Letter Name specifically? It is because this is the only Name that is used *exclusively* in reference to Hashem, whereas the other Names are also used to refer to other beings. For example, “*Elohim*” is also used to refer to other powerful beings, such as angels or judges. That is why the Four-Letter Name is called מְפֹרָשׁ. The term מְפֹרָשׁ is related to מִפְרָשׁ, “separated” or “unique.” The מְפֹרָשׁ is separated from all other Names and designated only for Hashem; it is His *Unique Name*. Since our verse says simply “*My Name*” without further specification, it refers to the Unique Name that is only His (see *Sefer Halkkarim* 2:28).

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲסִיק יִתְּכוֹן מִשְׁעָבוֹד
מִצְרָאִי לְאֶרֶץ כְּנַעֲנָאִי וְחַתָּאִי
וְאִמְרָאִי וּפְרָזָאִי וְחֹנָאִי וַיְבֹסְאִי
לְאֶרֶץ עֲבָדָא חֶלֶב וּדְבָשׁ:
יִח וַיִּקְבְּלוֹן לְמִימְרָךְ (נִיֵּא: מִינְךָ)
וְחִיתִּי אֶת וְסָבִי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְוֹת
מִלְכָּא דְּמִצְרַיִם וְחִימְרוֹן לֵה יִי
אַלְהָא דִּיהוּדָאִי אֲתִקְרִי עֲלֵינָא

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲעֵלָה אִתְּכֶם מַעֲנֵי מִצְרַיִם אֶל-אֶרֶץ
הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהַפְּרָזִי וְהַחִוִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי
אֶל-אֶרֶץ זֶבֶת חֶלֶב וּדְבָשׁ: יִח וְשָׁמְעוּ לְקוֹלְךָ
וּבֵאתָ אִתָּהּ וְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם
וְאָמַרְתָּם אֵלָיו יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִיִּים נִקְרָה עָלֵינוּ

רש"י

(יח) וְשָׁמְעוּ לְקוֹלְךָ. מֵאֵלֵיהֶם, מִכִּיּוֹן שְׁתֹּאמַר לָהֶם לָשׁוֹן
זֶה מִיָּד יִשְׁמְעוּ לְקוֹלְךָ, שְׂכָרָר סִימָן זֶה מְסוּר צִידָם מִיַּעֲקֹב
וּמִיֹּסֵף שְׂבָלָשׁוֹן זֶה הֵם נִגְאָלִים, יַעֲקֹב אָמַר לָהֶם "וְאֱלֹהִים
פָּקֵד יִפְקֹד אֶתְכֶם" (נִרְאָהִית ג, כד), יוֹסֵף אָמַר לָהֶם "פָּקֵד

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18. וְשָׁמְעוּ לְקוֹלְךָ — *THEY WILL LISTEN TO YOUR VOICE.*

We would expect the verse to say, "They will listen to *your words*." Why does it say, "*to your voice*?"^[35]
מֵאֵלֵיהֶם — This means that they will be attentive **on their own** and will be receptive to your message
as soon as you *begin* to speak; מִכִּיּוֹן שְׁתֹּאמַר לָהֶם לָשׁוֹן זֶה מִיָּד יִשְׁמְעוּ לְקוֹלְךָ — **once you say to them this
expression** that I instructed you to say (above, v. 16), פָּקֵד פָּקֵדְתִּי, *I have surely remembered you, they
will immediately listen to your voice.*^[36] שְׂכָרָר סִימָן זֶה מְסוּר בִּידָם מִיַּעֲקֹב וּמִיֹּסֵף — **For this sign has
already been entrusted to them by Yaakov and Yosef,** שְׂבָלָשׁוֹן זֶה הֵם נִגְאָלִים — **who informed them
that they would be redeemed with this language:** "וְאֱלֹהִים פָּקֵד יִפְקֹד אֶתְכֶם" — **Yaakov
said to [his sons] (*Bereishit* 50:24), but God will surely remember** [פָּקֵד יִפְקֹד] **you,** יוֹסֵף אָמַר לָהֶם "פָּקֵד
וְאֱלֹהִים אֶתְכֶם" — **and Yosef said to them (*ibid.* 50:25; see also *Shemos* 13:19), God will indeed
remember** [פָּקֵד יִפְקֹד] **you**^[37] (*Shemos Rabbah* 3:8).

35. *Or HaChaim; Maskil LeDavid.*

36. You will not need to elaborate, will not need to tell them My Name, and surely will not need to perform any miracles or demonstrations, for they will heed you as soon as they hear your voice with the tiding of redemption (*Or HaChaim*).

37. In truth, both verses cite Yosef as saying these words. However, since Yosef said these words twice, we deduce that one of those times he was relating to his brothers what he had heard from their father Yaakov (*Mizrachi*, citing *Ramban*; cf. *Gur Aryeh*). See *Insight*.

⚡ **Moshe's Proof** How could the elders be certain that Moshe was telling the truth simply because he used the expression, פָּקֵד פָּקֵדְתִּי, *I have surely remembered you*? Seemingly, just as the elders had received a tradition that the redeemer would use this expression, Moshe too might have been privy to this received knowledge. How did they know he was not deceiving them?

Ramban answers that perhaps, according to Yaakov's prophecy, Hashem had guaranteed that only the *true* redeemer would use this phrase. Therefore, the elders were confident that Moshe was telling the truth. Alternatively, *Ramban* writes that the Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* 5:2) teaches that it was for this reason that Divine providence orchestrated for Moshe to depart from his father's house at the age of twelve, when he was forced to flee to Midyan. Had he reached adulthood before departing, they might have suspected that he received the tradition from his father, Amram, a prominent leader of the Jewish people. Since, however, he had spent his adult years away from his family and the entire Jewish people, and Yaakov's prophecy would not have been taught to a child, they knew that he had now received this tradition.

Gur Aryeh, however, questions both of these explanations. The first answer is difficult, for Hashem grants every human being free will. Accordingly, if someone had wished to falsely invoke the tradition and deceive others, he would not have been prevented from doing so. Likewise, the second answer requires clarification, for it would only have been *unlikely*, but not *impossible*, for Moshe to have heard of Yaakov's prophecy. While his departure at a young age would bolster his credibility, it would not serve as conclusive proof! Therefore, *Gur Aryeh* concludes that, indeed, the elders would not be immediately certain of Moshe's authenticity, nor would they need to be. Moshe, however, had been concerned that they would not even pay attention to him, much less consider the possibility that Hashem had sent him. Therefore, Hashem assured him, "*they will listen*

¹⁷ And I have said: I shall bring you up from the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite, the Chittite, the Emorite, the Perizzite, the Chivvite, and the Yevusite, to a land which flows with milk and honey.” ’

¹⁸ ”They will listen to your voice. You and the elders of Israel shall come to the king of Egypt and say to him, ‘Hashem, the God of the Hebrews, happened upon us.

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□ אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִיִּים — THE GOD OF “HA’IVRIYIM.”

The standard way of referring to “the Hebrews” is הָעִבְרִיִּים, with only one *yud*.^[38] Why does our verse say הָעִבְרִיִּים, with two *yuds*? Rashi explains:

יִיְהוָה — The **extra** letter **yud**, whose numerical value (*gematria*) is ten, רָמַז לְעֶשֶׂר מִכּוֹת — is an **allusion to the Ten Makkos** that Hashem would soon bring upon Egypt.

□ נִקְרָה עָלֵינוּ — HASHEM THE GOD OF THE HEBREWS “NIKRAH” UPON US.

Rashi explains the meaning of this word:

לְשׁוֹן מִקְרָה — This term, from the root קרה, **connotes happenstance**.^[39] Thus, this phrase means, *Hashem the God of the Hebrews happened upon us*. וְכֵן “וַיִּקְרָה אֱלֹהִים” — Likewise, related language is used to describe prophecy in the phrase (*Bamidbar* 23:4), **God happened** [וַיִּקְרָה] upon Bilam, וַיִּנְאֲבֵי “אֶהְיֶה — and in the phrase (*ibid.* v. 15), **and I** (Bilam) **will be happened upon** [אֶקְרָה] here, אֶהְיֶה הָלוֹם — meaning, **I will be happened upon** with a prophecy from [Hashem] here.^[40]

38. See below, 5:3.

39. For this prophecy occurred without planning or premeditation on the part of Moshe and the elders (*Sforno*). Alternatively, this language is a general term for prophecy, for despite one’s preparation and efforts, it is ultimately beyond his control whether he will receive a prophecy or not [see *Rambam, Hil. Yesodei HaTorah* 7:4-5]. Thus, when prophecy does occur,

it is considered a “happenstance” (*Be’er Yitzchak*). [Moshe’s later prophecies were different, as Rashi comments (*Bamidbar* 9:7), “Whenever he wishes, he can converse with the *Shechinah*” (see also *Rambam* *ibid.* 7:6). At this point, however, Moshe had not yet attained his superior level of prophecy (*Ramban* to v. 5 above).]

40. See Insight.

to your voice,” for when they hear the very words that were transmitted to them by Yaakov and Yosef, uttered by an outsider who is unlikely to be familiar with the tradition, they will know to pay attention. Then, they will give you the opportunity to prove yourself.

§ **Language of Prophecy** In the beginning of his commentary to *Sefer Vayikra*, Rashi contrasts how Hashem addresses the prophets of Israel with the way He speaks to other prophets: *He called* (וַיִּקְרָה) to Moshe — with language of endearment... but He reveals Himself to the prophets of the nations of the world with language of impermanence and impurity, as it is written, *Hashem happened* (וַיִּקְרָה) upon Bilam. Yet, here Moshe is instructed to tell Pharaoh, “*Hashem the God of the Hebrews happened* (נִקְרָה) upon us,” using similar language to that of Bilam’s prophecy. Why was this language used here?

Some commentators answer that the negative connotations of this language depend on the context. We expect Hashem to use endearing terms while revealing Himself to a prophet, and thus, in that context the absence of such endearment conveys disgrace or contempt. Our verse, however, does not discuss how Hashem appeared to Moshe, but rather how Moshe should convey his prophecy to Pharaoh. Including terms of endearment in that context would be unnecessary and might even be construed as arrogance. Furthermore, Moshe was to speak on behalf of the nation’s elders as well. Since they were not prophets, he did not use the special language of prophecy (*Gur Aryeh*, second approach; see similarly, *Maskil LeDavid*). Indeed, at the beginning of the prophecy itself (above, verse 4) Hashem does call to Moshe using the endearing term וַיִּקְרָה (*Be’er BaSadeh*). [And notably, when Moshe actually spoke to Pharaoh (5:3 below), he used the expression נִקְרָה (with an א), which is *not* an expression of happenstance (see *Onkelos* to our verse and that verse). Perhaps that is because the elders did not accompany Moshe to Pharaoh’s palace (see Rashi to 5:1).]

Alternatively, Hashem did use the word נִקְרָה to convey impurity and contamination, for the Jewish people were enslaved in Egypt, a land that was completely permeated with the impurity of idol worship. Therefore, He demanded that His nation be permitted to distance themselves from the idolatry of Egypt and serve Him in purity in the wilderness (*Gur Aryeh*, first approach; *Divrei David*). [For other approaches, see *Mizrachi* and *Or HaChaim*.]

וַעֲשֵׂה נִלְכֶּה-נָא דֶּרֶךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים בְּמִדְבָּר
וְנִזְבַּחַה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ: יט וְאֲנִי יֹדַעְתִּי כִּי לֹא-
יִתֵּן אֶתְכֶם מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְהֵלֶךְ וְלֹא בִיד
חֲזָקָה: כ וְשַׁלַּחְתִּי אֶת-יָדִי וְהִכִּיתִי אֶת-מִצְרַיִם
בְּכָל נִפְלְאוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה בְּקִרְבּוֹ וְאַחֲרֵי-
כֵן יִשְׁלַח אֶתְכֶם: כא וְנִתַּתִּי אֶת-חֹן הָעַם-הַזֶּה
בְּעֵינַי מִצְרַיִם וְהָיָה כִּי תִלְכּוּן לֹא תִלְכוּ רִיקָם:
כב וְשִׁאֲלָה אִשָּׁה מִשְׁכַּנְתָּהּ וּמִגֵּרַת בֵּיתָהּ
כִּלְי־כֶסֶף וְכִלְי זָהָב וְשִׁמְלֹת וְשִׁמְתָם עַל-
בְּנֵיהֶם וְעַל-בְּנֵיהֶם וְנִצַּלְתֶּם אֶת-מִצְרַיִם:

וַעֲשֵׂה נִזְבַּחַה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ: יט וְאֲנִי יֹדַעְתִּי כִּי לֹא-
יִתֵּן אֶתְכֶם מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְהֵלֶךְ וְלֹא בִיד
חֲזָקָה: כ וְשַׁלַּחְתִּי אֶת-יָדִי וְהִכִּיתִי אֶת-מִצְרַיִם
בְּכָל נִפְלְאוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה בְּקִרְבּוֹ וְאַחֲרֵי-
כֵן יִשְׁלַח אֶתְכֶם: כא וְנִתַּתִּי אֶת-חֹן הָעַם-הַזֶּה
בְּעֵינַי מִצְרַיִם וְהָיָה כִּי תִלְכּוּן לֹא תִלְכוּ רִיקָם:
כב וְשִׁאֲלָה אִשָּׁה מִשְׁכַּנְתָּהּ וּמִגֵּרַת בֵּיתָהּ
כִּלְי־כֶסֶף וְכִלְי זָהָב וְשִׁמְלֹת וְשִׁמְתָם עַל-
בְּנֵיהֶם וְעַל-בְּנֵיהֶם וְנִצַּלְתֶּם אֶת-מִצְרַיִם:

רע"ו

מִפְרָשִׁים וְלֹא בִיד חֲזָקָה, וְלֹא בְּשִׁבְלֵי שִׁדּוֹ חֲזָקָה, כִּי מֵאִז
אֶשְׁלַח "אֶת יָדִי וְהִכִּיתִי אֶת מִצְרַיִם וְגו'" (פסוק כ), וּמִתְרַגְּמִין
אוֹתוֹ "וְלֹא מִן קֶדֶם דְּחִילָה פִּקְיָה". מִשְׁמֹה שֶׁל רַבִּי יִצְחָק
צְרַבִּי מֵנֶחֱם נֶאֱמַר לִי: (כב) וּמִגֵּרַת בֵּיתָהּ. מֵאוֹתָהּ
שֶׁהִיא גֵרָה אֲתָה צְרִית: וְנִצַּלְתֶּם. פְּתַרְגּוּמוֹ "וְתִרְקַנּוּן",

(יט) לֹא יִתֵּן אֶתְכֶם מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְהֵלֶךְ. אִם אֵין
אֲנִי מֵרָאָה לוֹ יָדִי הַחֲזָקָה. כְּלוּמָר, כָּל עוֹד שְׂאִין אֲנִי מוֹדִיעוֹ
יָדִי הַחֲזָקָה לֹא יִפֵּן אֶתְכֶם לְהֵלֶךְ: לֹא יִתֵּן. פְּתַרְגּוּמוֹ "לֹא
יִשְׁבּוֹק", כְּמוֹ "עַל כֵּן לֹא תִסְפִּיד" (בראשית כ, ו), "וְלֹא תִתֵּן
אֱלֹהִים לְהִרְעֵ עַמּוֹדִי" (שם לא, ח), וְכֵן לָשׁוֹן תִּתֵּנָה הֵם. וְשֵׁ

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19. *THE KING OF EGYPT WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO GO, "VELO" THROUGH A STRONG HAND.*

Generally, וְלֹא means "and not." Accordingly, this verse could be translated, "the king of Egypt will not allow you to go, and not through a strong hand," i.e., not even a strong hand will convince him to free you. But this cannot be the case, for Hashem later assures Moshe (below 6:1), *through a strong hand [Pharaoh] will send them out.*^[41] Therefore, Rashi explains that וְלֹא has a different meaning here:

אִם אֵין אֲנִי מֵרָאָה לוֹ יָדִי הַחֲזָקָה — *THE KING OF EGYPT WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO GO if I do not show him My strong hand*, for here, וְלֹא means "if not."^[42] In other words, Hashem is saying, "as long as I do not display to him My strong hand, he will not allow you to go."

Rashi will soon present another interpretation of this phrase, but first he will explain a difficult term that appears earlier in the verse.

□ לֹא יִתֵּן — *THE KING OF EGYPT "LO YITEIN" YOU TO GO.*

The literal translation of this verse is *the king of Egypt will not "give" you to go* — but that cannot possibly be its meaning. Rashi explains what the verse does mean:

— This is to be understood as it is rendered by Targum Onkelos: The king of Egypt will not allow you to go. — This is similar to other usages of the root נתן (*give*) elsewhere in the Torah, such as (*Bereishis* 20:6), *that is why I did not allow you to touch her*, — and (*ibid.* 31:7), *but God did not allow him to harm me*. — All of these terms, which mean *allowing*, are expressions of "נְתִינָה" (*giving*), meaning, "giving" permission or ability.^[43]

41. *Devek Tov; Meisiach Ilmim.*

42. *Be'er Yitzchak; Leket Bahir.* [See *II Shmuel* 13:26 with Rashi for a similar usage of וְלֹא].

43. *Be'er Yitzchak; Leket Bahir*; see similarly, Rashi below, 12:23.

And now, please let us go [on] a three-day journey in the Wilderness, and we shall bring offerings to Hashem, our God.¹⁹ I know that the king of Egypt will not allow you to go, except through a strong hand.²⁰ I shall send forth My hand, and I shall strike Egypt with all My wonders that I shall perform in its midst, and after that he will send you out.²¹ I shall grant this people favor in the eyes of Egypt, so that it will happen that when you go, you will not go empty-handed.²² Each woman shall request from her neighbor and from the one who lives in her house silver vessels, gold vessels, and garments; and you shall put [them] on your sons and daughters, and you shall empty out Egypt.”

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Rashi now returns to the end of the verse, offering an alternative interpretation of the words **וְלֹא בִיד חֲזָקָה** and explaining their connection to the following verse, *I shall send forth my hand, and I shall strike Egypt...*:

וְלֹא בִיד חֲזָקָה — **Some interpret “וְלֹא בִיד חֲזָקָה” to mean, “וְלֹא בִשְׂבִיל שְׂדֵי חֲזָקָה — THE KING OF EGYPT WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO GO, and not because his hand is strong.”**^[44] **כִּי מֵאִזּוֹ אֲשַׁלַּח “אֶת יָדִי וְהִכֵּיתִי”** — **Rather, the real reason that Pharaoh will not free you is that I will harden his heart, and consequently, after his refusal to let you go (v. 20), I SHALL SEND FORTH MY HAND, AND I SHALL STRIKE EGYPT WITH ALL MY WONDERS THAT I SHALL PERFORM IN ITS MIDST.**^[45] **וּמִתְרַגְּמִינָן אוֹתוֹ: “וְלֹא מִן קָרֶם”** — **Indeed, Targum Onkelos renders [וְלֹא בִיד חֲזָקָה] as “and not because his strength is mighty.”** **מִשְׁמוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי יַעֲקֹב בְּרַבִּי מְנַחֵם נֶאֱמַר לִי** — **This explanation was related to me in the name of R’ Yaakov son of R’ Menachem.**^[46]

22. **וּמִגֵּרַת בֵּיתָה — FROM THE ONE WHO LIVES IN HER HOUSE.**

Although this language seems to refer to the Jewish woman’s Egyptian tenant, it is inconceivable that the enslaved Jewish people could have owned houses, much less served as landlords to their Egyptian masters!^[47] Therefore, Rashi explains this phrase differently:

מֵאוֹתָהּ שֶׁהִיא גֵרָה אֵתָּה בְּבֵית — **In this context, her house does not mean the house that she owns, but rather the house that she lives in. Thus, the verse means, “from [the Egyptian woman] who lives with her in the same house.”** As with the *neighbor* mentioned earlier in the verse, the relevant factor here is proximity and familiarity, not property ownership.^[48]

וְנִצַּלְתֶּם — “VENITZALTEM” EGYPT.

וְנִצַּלְתֶּם is obviously a verb. Rashi explains what it means:

כִּתְּרִגְמוֹ: “וּתְרוֹקְנוּ” — **Its meaning is as Targum Onkelos renders it, “and you shall empty out Egypt.”**^[49]

44. According to this interpretation, **וְלֹא** is used in its usual sense, “and not,” but the *beis* in the word **בִּיד** means “because,” instead of “through.” Additionally, according to this interpretation, the *strong hand* in this verse is Pharaoh’s rather than Hashem’s.

45. The *makkos* that Hashem wished to bring upon Egypt were the true cause for Pharaoh’s refusal, for He hardened Pharaoh’s heart and encouraged him to refuse, in order to create a pretext for those *makkos* (*Gur Aryeh*; cf. *Mizrachi*).

46. Although this interpretation of **וְלֹא בִיד חֲזָקָה** is already mentioned in Targum Onkelos, R’ Yaakov son of R’ Menachem is credited with explaining its connection

to the following verse (v. 20), *I shall send forth My hand... (Mizrachi; Gur Aryeh)*. This connection is critical to this interpretation, for by informing us that the reason for Pharaoh’s refusal is *not because his hand is strong*, the verse begs the question — then what is the reason? (*Divrei David*).

47. *Mizrachi*; cf. *Ibn Ezra*; *Sefer Zikaron*.

48. *Sefer Zikaron*.

49. This word could have been understood as related to *הַצֵּלָה*, saving (as in 5:23 below). Rashi therefore teaches that it means to empty out (see *Mizrachi* to 12:36 below).

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וְכֵן "וַיִּנְצְלוּ אֶת מִצְרַיִם" (שמות יב, לו), "וַיִּתְּנֻלּוּ בְּיָד יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת טַבָּעִים" (שמות לג, ו). וְהֵנוּ "זו יסוד. וּמִנְחָם חִבְרוּ בְּמַחְבֶּרֶת לְדִי עַם" וַיִּנְצַל אֱלֹהִים אֶת מִקְנֵה אֲבִיכֶם" (בראשית לא, ט), "אֲשֶׁר הֵאֵל אֱלֹהִים מֵאֲדִינֹו" (שם טז), וְלֹא יֵאֱמָנוּ דְּבָרָיו, כִּי אִם

לֹא הִיְתָה הֵנוּ יסוד והיא נקודה בחיר"ק לא תהא משמשת בלשון ופעלתם אלא בלשון ונפעלתם, כמו "וּנְסַחֲתָם מִטַּל הָאֲדָמָה" (דברים כח, סג), "וְנִסְתָּם בְּיַד אֱלֹהִים" (ויקרא כו, כח), "וְנִגְפָתָם לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם" (שם יז), "וְנִסְתָּם בְּתוֹכָהּ

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Often, a *nun* at the beginning of a verb (as in *נִצְלָתָם*) is a prefix that signifies the passive (*nifal*) form.^[50] Accordingly, the word *נִצְלָתָם* would mean, "and you *will be emptied out*" (or "and you will be removed"). However, Rashi has explained it as an *active* verb: *and you will empty out [Egypt]*.^[51] To support his interpretation, Rashi provides other examples in which the letters *נצל* form an active verb:

Similarly, we find the active form of this verb in the verses (12:36 below), *and they emptied out [נִצְלָו] Egypt*; and (33:6 below), *so the Children of Israel removed [וַיִּנְצְלוּ] their ornaments*. The letter *nun* in [the word *נִצְלָתָם*], as well as the similar words just cited, is not a prefix, but an essential part of the **root, which is *נצל*.**^[52]

Rashi cites another opinion and rejects it:

However, Menachem ben Saruk, in his *Machberes*,^[53] listed [this word] in the section for roots that begin with the letter *tzadi*, rather than *nun*.^[54] **עַם "וַיִּנְצַל אֱלֹהִים אֶת" — He grouped it together with the words that contain no *nun* at all, such as *וַיִּצַּל* in the verse (*Bereishis* 31:9), *thus, God took away [וַיִּצַּל] your father's livestock*; "אֲשֶׁר הֵצִיל אֱלֹהִים" — and *הֵצִיל* in the verse (*ibid.* v. 16), *that God took away [הֵצִיל] from our father*. Menachem's classification indicates that he does not consider the *nun* of *נִצְלָתָם* to be an essential part of the root.**^[55]

For — בי אם לא היתה הנו"ן יסוד והיא נקודה בחיר"ק — But his view cannot be justified! — לא תהא משמשת — לא תהא משמשת — For if the letter *nun* was not an essential root letter, yet it is vowelized with a *chirik*, *נִצְלָתָם* — then [the word *נִצְלָתָם*] would not serve as an active verb that indicates "you shall do," i.e., *you shall empty out [Egypt]*, — אֶלָּא בלשון ונפעלתם — but rather as a passive verb that indicates, "something *shall be done to you*," i.e., *you shall be emptied out* — and that cannot possibly be the meaning of our verse, since it concludes with the word "Egypt"!

And it is clear that a *nun* prefix vowelized with a *chirik* makes a verb into the passive form, as we see in the following verses: *and you will be uprooted [וְנִסְחַתְתָּם] from the land (Devarim 28:63); "וְנִתְּתָם בְּיַד אוֹיֵב" — and you will be delivered [וְנִתְּתָם] into the hand of an enemy (Vayikra 26:25); "וְנִגְפָתָם לִפְנֵי אוֹיֵבֵיכֶם" — and you will be smitten [וְנִגְפָתָם] before your enemies (ibid. v. 17); "וְנִתְּתָם בְּתוֹכָהּ" — and you will be melted [וְנִתְּתָם] inside of it (Yechezkel 22:21).*

50. Unlike an active verb, which indicates that the subject does something, a passive (*nifal*) verb indicates that something *is done to* the subject.

51. As Rashi says below, it must be an active verb ("you will empty out") since the verse says *אֶת מִצְרַיִם*. If *נִצְלָתָם* means "you will be emptied out," the words *אֶת מִצְרַיִם* do not fit.

52. If the letter *nun* were a prefix, it would make the word into a *nifal* (passive) verb. Since the *nun* is part of the root, the verb is in the active form.

53. See above, 2:10 note 43.

54. I.e., under the entry for the root *צל*, instead of creating a separate entry for the root *נצל*.

[In our editions of *Machberes Menachem* (London,

5614, and Granada, 5746), *נִצְלָתָם* of our verse does *not* appear. However, the related *וַיִּתְּנֻלּוּ*, which Rashi mentioned above, is listed in this entry.]

55. Rather it is a prefix (*Mizrachi*), or a non-essential root letter that is dropped in certain conjugations (*Gur Aryeh*).

While later Spanish grammarians maintain that all Hebrew roots have three letters, Rashi and other French scholars utilized Menachem's system, which allows for two-letter roots as well (*Mizrachi*). Alternatively, Rashi agrees that all roots contain three letters, but in some cases, a root letter can be omitted, and in such cases it is *as if* the word has a two-letter root (see *Gur Aryeh* here and to 9:31; see also above, 1:20 note 51).

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ויחזקאל כב, כא), "וַיִּחַמְרְתֶּם נִלְנֹו" וירמיה ז, י, לִשׁוֹן נִפְעַלְנוּ. וְכָל נִו"ן שֶׁהִיא בָּאָה בְּתִיבָה לְפָרְקִים וְנוֹפֶלֶת מִמֶּנָּה, כְּנִו"ן שֶׁל נוֹגֵף, נוֹשֵׂא, נוֹתֵן, נוֹשֵׂךְ, כִּשְׁהִיא מְדַבֶּרֶת לִשׁוֹן וּפְעֻלָּתָם תִּנְקֹד צֶזֶז"א בְּחֶטֶף, כְּגוֹן "וַיִּנְשָׂאֲתֶם אֶת אֲבִיכֶם" (בראשית מה, יט), "וַיִּנְתְּתֶם לָהֶם אֶת אֶרֶץ הַגִּלְעָד" (במדבר לב, כט), "וַיִּמְלֹתֶם אֶת צֶמֶר עֲרֻלְתְּכֶם" (בראשית יז, יא). לִכֵּן חָנִי

אומר שזאת הנקודה בחיר"ק מן היסוד היא, ויסוד שם דבר גלול, והוא מן הלשונות הפעלים, כמו דבור, כפור, למוד, כשידבר בלשון ופעלתם ינקד בחיר"ק, כמו "ודצרתם אל הסלע" (במדבר כ, ח), "וכפרתם את הצית" ויחזקאל מה, כ, "ולמדתם אותם את צניכם" (דברים יא, יט):

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Similarly, we find the verse (Yirmiyah 7:10), **and you say: We have been saved** [נִצַּלְנוּ] — **לִשׁוֹן נִפְעַלְנוּ** — which is also in **the passive form, meaning** that something **has been done to us**. In all these cases, the *nun* is not a root letter, and with the *chirik* vowel it makes the word into a passive verb. Thus, according to *Menachem* who says that the *nun* in וַיִּנְצֻלְתֶּם is not a root letter, this word should be a passive verb — which it is not!

Rashi now explains how the *nun* of the active verb וַיִּנְצֻלְתֶּם would have been vowelized if the root was צל and the *nun* was a non-essential letter (as *Menachem* holds):

— Regarding any letter *nun* that is sometimes included in the word and sometimes deleted from it, — כְּנִו"ן שֶׁל נוֹגֵף נוֹשֵׂא נוֹתֵן נוֹשֵׂךְ — such as the *nun* of the words "נוֹגֵף" (*smites*), "נוֹשֵׂא" (*carries*), "נוֹתֵן" (*gives*), and "נוֹשֵׂךְ" (*bites*),^[56] — when [the word] means that **you shall do something**, [the *nun*] is vowelized with a *sheva* (also called a *chataf*), rather than a *chirik*. — כְּגוֹן "וַיִּנְשָׂאֲתֶם אֶת אֲבִיכֶם" — We find examples of this in the verses, **you shall transport** [וַיִּנְשָׂאֲתֶם] **your father** (*Bereishis* 45:19), **you shall give them** [וַיִּנְתְּתֶם] **the land of Gilad** (*Bamidbar* 32:29), **and, you shall circumcise** [וַיִּמְלֹתֶם] **the flesh of your foreskin** (*Bereishis* 17:11).^[57] It follows that since the word וַיִּנְצֻלְתֶּם means "you shall empty out," if the *nun* is not an essential root-letter it should have been vowelized with a *sheva*. — לִכֵּן אֲנִי אוֹמֵר שְׂוֹאֵת הַנִּקּוּדָה בְּחִיר"ק מִן — **Therefore, I say that this *nun*, which is vowelized with a *chirik* rather than a *sheva*, must be an integral part of the root**, which is never omitted from the word, as the root is צל. A root letter can sometimes be vowelized with a *chirik* even when the verb conveys the active command form.

Rashi now identifies the underlying grammatical construct (*binyan*) of the word וַיִּנְצֻלְתֶּם, which allows for the *chirik* vowel under the *nun*:

— **The most basic form of this word is the noun "נִצּוּל" (emptying),** והוא מן הלשונות — **וְיִסּוּד שֶׁם דָּבָר נִצּוּל** — **which is in the category of "intensive" word forms** (*binyan kaveid*).^[58] — **כְּמוֹ דְּבוּר, כְּפֹר, וְלִמּוּד** — **It is thus similar to the words "דְּבוּר" (speech), "כְּפֹר" (atonement), and "לִמּוּד" (study), which share the same "intensive" construct.** — **When [one of these words] is conjugated as a second-person plural verb, in the active form, meaning you shall do something,** וַיִּנְקֹד — **like** — **כְּמוֹ "וַיְדַבְּרֶתֶם אֶל הַסֵּלֶעַ"** — **the first root letter in the verb is vowelized with a *chirik*,** — **בְּחִיר"ק** — **the letter *dalet* in וַיְדַבְּרֶתֶם in the verse (*Bamidbar* 20:8), and *speak* [וַיְדַבְּרֶתֶם] *to the rock,*** — **וּכְפָרְתֶם אֶת** — **and the letter *chaf* in וּכְפָרְתֶם in the verse (*Yechezkel* 45:20), you shall purify [וּכְפָרְתֶם] *the House,*** — **and the letter *lamed* in וְלַמְדֶתֶם in the verse (*Devarim* 11:19), You shall teach [וְלַמְדֶתֶם] *them to your children.*** וַיִּנְצֻלְתֶּם follows this same pattern, and thus the first root letter, *nun*, is vowelized with a *chirik*.

56. In each of these cases, the *nun* is not an essential root-letter, but serves as a prefix to give the verb an active form. For example, נוֹשֵׂא means "carry" and נוֹשֵׂא means "carries" (active); נוֹתֵן means "give" and נוֹתֵן means "gives" (active).

57. In these cases, the essential root letters are שׂא, and תן, and מל; the *nun* is used for conjugation. And since

these words convey the active command form of the verb ("you shall do"), the *nun* is vowelized with a *sheva* (*Mizrachi*).

58. This *binyan* is also called *pi'el*. It is considered "intensive" because of the *dagesh* in the second root letter (in this case *tzadi*), which gives the word a heavier pronunciation (see above, 1:15 note 34).

א וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר וְהָא לֹא
יְהִימָנוּן לִי וְלֹא יִקְבְּלוּן מִנִּי
אֲרִי יִמְרוּן לֹא אֶתְגַּלִּי לָךְ יִי:
ב וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יִי מֵא דִין בִּידְךָ וַיֹּאמֶר
חֹטְרָא: ג וַיֹּאמֶר רְמוּהִי לְאַרְעָא
וּרְמָהִי לְאַרְעָא וְהִנֵּה לְחֹנִי
וְעַרְק מֹשֶׁה מִן קְדָמוּהִי: ד וַיֹּאמֶר
יִי לְמֹשֶׁה אוֹשִׁיט יָדְךָ וְאַחֲדוּ
בְּזַבְּחָא וְאוֹשִׁיט יְדָה וְאַתְקַף בִּיה

[ד] א וַיַּעַן מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר וְהֵן לֹא־יֵאֱמִינוּ לִי וְלֹא
יִשְׁמָעוּ בְּקִלִּי כִּי יֹאמְרוּ לֹא־נִרְאָה אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה:
ב וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה מִה־זֶּה [מזה ב] בִּידְךָ וַיֹּאמֶר
מֹשֶׁה: ג וַיֹּאמֶר הַשְׁלִיכֵהוּ אֶרְצָה וַיִּשְׁלַכְהוּ אֶרְצָה
וַיְהִי לְנַחֵשׁ וַיָּנֶס מֹשֶׁה מִפְּנָיו: ד וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־
מֹשֶׁה שְׁלַח יָדְךָ וְאַחֲזוּ בְּזַנְבוֹ וַיִּשְׁלַח יָדוֹ וַיַּחֲזֹק בּוֹ

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על יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲצֻחוּמְרוּ "לֹא יֵאֱמִינוּ לִי" וְתַפֵּס אֲוִמְנוּתוֹ שֶׁל
נָחֵשׁ: (ד) וַיַּחֲזֹק בּוֹ. לָשׁוֹן חֲחִיזָה הוּא. וְהִרְצָה יֵשׁ צִמְקָרָא,
"וַיַּחֲזִיקוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים צִידוֹ" (בראשית יט, טז), "וְהִחֲזִיקָה צִמְצִי"ו"
(דברים כה, יא), "וְהִחֲזִיקָתִי צִזְקוֹ" (שמואל-א י, לה). °כָּל לָשׁוֹן
חֲחִיזָה הִדְּבִיק לְצִי"ת לָשׁוֹן חֲחִיזָה הוּא:

(ב) מִזֶּה בִּידְךָ. לָכֵךְ נִקְפַּצַּת תִּיבָה חֲחֵס, לְדִרוּשׁ: מִזֶּה
שֶׁצִּידָךְ חֲחֵס תִּיבָה לְלִקוֹת, שֶׁחֲשָׁדָךְ צִבְּכָרִים (שמות רבה
ג, יב). וּפְשָׁטוֹ, כְּחֹדֶם שְׁאוּמֵר לְחִצְרוֹ: מוֹדָה חֲחֵס שֶׁזֶּה
שֶׁלְּפָנֶיךָ אֲצִן הִיא, חֹמֶר לוֹ: הֵן, חֲמֵר לוֹ: הֲרִינִי עוֹשֶׂה
אוֹתָהּ עַתָּה: (ג) וַיְהִי לְנַחֵשׁ. רָמַז לוֹ שֶׁסִּפֵּר לָשׁוֹן הֲרַע

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4.

2. מִזֶּה בִּידְךָ — WHAT IS THIS IN YOUR HAND?

Surely Hashem knew what was in Moshe's hand! What, then, is the meaning of this question?^[1] Rashi presents two approaches, beginning with an exposition based on the unusual form of the word *מִזֶּה*, *what is this*:

מִזֶּה זֶה — The reason it is written as one word in our verse, and not as two words, מִזֶּה, meaning *from this*.^[2] This changes the question into a statement: "*From this [that is] in your hand.*" Hashem's message to Moshe was: You should learn *from this that is in your hand*, which will turn into a snake, why **you deserve to be punished** — **שֶׁחֲשָׁדָת בְּבָשָׂרִים — for you suspected the Jewish people, who are innocent** of this charge of not believing you^[3] (*Tanchuma* §23; *Shemos Rabbah* 3:12).

1. Several times in the Torah we find that Hashem asks a question of a person, even though He knows the answer, for the sole purpose of opening a conversation (see Rashi to *Bereishis* 3:9). This approach would not suffice in our case, since Hashem was already in the middle of a conversation with Moshe (*Mizrachi*; *Maskil LeDavid*; see also *Or HaChaim*).

2. When the written word *מִזֶּה* appears in the Torah, it is commonly vowelized *מִזֶּה*, and means *from this*; e.g.,

Bereishis 37:17, 42:15; below, 17:12, 32:15.

3. Moshe had said (in the previous verse), *Behold, they will not believe me*. The snake represents the sin of speaking negatively about others, as Rashi explains in the following verse. Hashem was telling Moshe that he should take note that what is in his hand is actually a snake, which represents the sin he has just committed (*Maskil LeDavid*). See Insight for another approach.

⚡ **Punished by the Staff** Some explain that the words, *from this that is in your hand*, do not refer to the snake that the staff would turn into afterward, but rather to the staff itself. Moshe was being told that for his action he deserved the punishment of being struck by the staff that he was holding! This is in accordance with the teaching of the Sages (*Shabbos* 97a): הַחוֹשֵׁד בְּבָשָׂרִים לוֹקֶה בְּגוּפוֹ, *One who suspects the innocent is punished by being stricken in his body*. With other sins, one's property is affected first (see, for example, Rashi to *Vayikra* 26:1). This sin, however, is of such severity that the very first punishment affects the body. Now, although we do not find that Moshe was ever actually struck by the staff, Hashem was communicating to Moshe that he was deserving of such punishment (*Maharzu to Shemos Rabbah* 3:12).

Others observe that Moshe was indeed punished through this staff. Many years later, in the Wilderness, Moshe used the staff to strike the rock instead of speaking to it as Hashem had commanded him (*Bamidbar* 20:7-13, see Rashi to v. 12). That "sin" was the cause of Moshe being barred entry into Eretz Yisrael with the rest of the Jewish people. Hashem's message to Moshe here was fulfilled at that time through this staff. In both places, the fault ascribed to Moshe was a lack of belief: Here Moshe assumed the people would not believe him, and there Moshe was taken to task, "*because you did not believe in Me*" (*Tosafos HaShaleim*; see also *Be'er BaSadeh*).

4 ¹ Moshe responded and said, “Behold, they will not believe me and they will not listen to my voice, for they will say, ‘Hashem did not appear to you.’”

² Hashem said to him, “What is this in your hand?” and he said, “A staff.” ³ He said, “Cast it on the ground,” and he cast it on the ground and it became a snake. Moshe fled from it. ⁴ Hashem said to Moshe, “Stretch out your hand and grasp its tail.” He stretched out his hand and seized it,

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וּפְשׁוּטוֹ — But the simple meaning of [this question] is בְּאֶרֶם שְׂאוֹמֵר לְחִבְרֹו — that Hashem wished to bring Moshe’s attention to the miracle in the way a man might say to his friend: מוֹדָה אַתָּה שֶׁזֶּה — [His friend] responds: Yes it is! שְׁלֹפְנִיךָ אֵבֶן הִיא — Do you affirm that this object that is before you is a rock? אָמַר לוֹ הֵן — [The first one] then says to him: Now I will turn it into wood! Here, too, Hashem first asked Moshe to affirm that he was holding a staff, and only then did He turn it into a snake.^[4]

3. וַיְהִי לְנָחָשׁ — AND IT BECAME A SNAKE.

Why did Hashem transform it specifically into a snake? Rashi explains:

רָמָז לוֹ שֶׁסִּיפֵר לְשׁוֹן הָרַע עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל — By doing so, [Hashem] indicated to [Moshe] that he had spoken *lashon hara* (derogatory speech) about Israel בְּאוֹמְרוֹ “לֹא יֵאֱמִינוּ לִי” — when he said (v. 1 above), “Behold, they will not believe me”; וְתָפַשׁ אוֹמְנוֹתָיו שֶׁל נָחָשׁ — for in this way, he had adopted the practice of the original serpent.^[5]

4. וַיַּחֲזֶק בּוֹ — “VAYACHAZEK” IT.

Hashem told Moshe in the beginning of this verse, *Stretch out your hand and grasp* (and “grasp”) its tail, but when the verse describes what Moshe did, instead of saying וַיֹּאחֲזֶה בּוֹ, it says וַיַּחֲזֶק בּוֹ. Was Moshe’s action a deviation from what Hashem had commanded him to do? Rashi explains that Moshe had not deviated:^[6]

וְהִרְבֵּה יֵשׁ בְּמִקְרָא — [The term וַיַּחֲזֶק בּוֹ] similarly is an expression of *grasping*. There are many such examples of this usage in Scripture, such as: “וַיַּחֲזִיקוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים בְּרִדּוֹ” — *The men seized his hand* (Bereishis 19:16); “וַיַּחֲזִיקָהּ בְּמִבְשָׁיו” — *and she will take hold of his private parts* (Devarim 25:11); “וַיַּחֲזִיקֵנִי בְּקֶנּוֹ” — *and I took hold of his beard* (I Shmuel 17:35). כָּל לְשׁוֹן חֲזִיק הִרְבּוּק לְבִי’ת — All these cases follow the rule that any expression based on the root of “חֲזִיק”, when connected to a word beginning with the prefix *beis*, has the meaning of *grasping* something. Therefore, in our verse, when the Torah says about Moshe וַיַּחֲזֶק בּוֹ, it means that he grasped it.^[7]

4. This simple explanation is not at odds with the earlier exposition, since the exposition is needed to account for *מָחָד* being written as one word (*Mizrachi*).

5. The original serpent spoke *lashon hara* about Hashem to Chavah in Gan Eden; see *Bereishis* 3:5 with Rashi. By transforming the staff into a snake, Hashem

conveyed to Moshe that this was the sin for which he deserved punishment (see previous Rashi).

6. *Ba’er Heitev*.

7. The term חֲזִיק often refers to strength, but when it has a *beis* prefix, it refers to grasping or seizing something. See *Insight* for further discussion.

§ Moshe Seized the Snake Rashi explains that the phrase וַיַּחֲזֶק בּוֹ refers to grasping, and is therefore not a deviation from Hashem’s command, וַיֹּאחֲזֶה בְּקֶנּוֹ, *grasp its tail*. If the meaning is the same, however, why does the Torah switch from the root אָחַז that Hashem used in His command, to the root חֲזַק to describe what Moshe did? *Haamek Davar* explains that the term וַיַּחֲזֶק בּוֹ indicates that Moshe seized the snake especially *strongly*. This demonstrated that Moshe fully trusted that Hashem would protect him from the snake. In a similar vein, *Taama DeKra* points to the Gemara (*Yevamos* 121b) that notes that pressing upon a snake will cause it to bite regardless of any other precautions one may take. Despite this, Moshe held tightly to the snake to show his confidence in Hashem’s protection. See similarly, *Shemiras HaLashon*, Vol. 2, Ch. 13. [See *Malbim* for another approach.]

וַיְהִי לְמִטָּה בְּכַפּוֹ: ה' לְמַעַן יֵאֱמִינוּ כִּי־נִרְאָה אֵלָיֶךָ
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתָם אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק
וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לוֹ עוֹד הִבֵּאתָ יָדְךָ
בְּחִיקְךָ וַיָּבֵא יָדוֹ בְּחִיקוֹ וַיּוֹצֵאָהּ וַהֲנֶה יָדוֹ מִצְרַעַת
בְּשֻׁלְגִי: וַיֹּאמֶר הִשָּׁב יָדְךָ אֶל־חִיקְךָ וַיֵּשֶׁב יָדוֹ
אֶל־חִיקוֹ וַיּוֹצֵאָהּ מִחִיקוֹ וַהֲנֶה־שָׁבָה בְּבִשְׂרוֹ:
ח' וַהֲיָה אִם־לֹא יֵאֱמִינוּ לָךְ וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ לְקַל הָאֵת
הָרֹאשׁוֹן וַהֲאֱמִינוּ לְקַל הָאֵת הָאַחֲרוֹן: ט' וַהֲיָה אִם־
לֹא יֵאֱמִינוּ גַם לְשֵׁנֵי הָאֵתוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ
לְקַלְךָ וּלְקַחַת מִיָּמִי הַיָּאֵר וְשִׁפְכַת הַיִּבְשָׁה

וַהֲיָה לְחִוְטָרָא בִּידָה: ה' בְּדִיל
דִּיהִימְנוּן אֲרִי אֲתַגְלִי לָךְ יִי אֱלֹהָהּ
דְּאַבְרָהָם וְדִיִּצְחָק וְדִיִּעֲקֹב: וַיֹּאמֶר
יִי לָהּ עוֹד אֲעִיל בְּעֵן יָדְךָ בְּעִטְפָךָ
וְאֲעִיל יָדָהּ בְּעִטְפָהּ וְאִפְקָהּ וְהָא
יָדָהּ חֲרָא כְּתִלְגָּא: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲתִיב
יָדְךָ לְעִטְפָךָ וְאֲתִיב יָדָהּ לְעִטְפָהּ
וְאִפְקָהּ מִעִטְפָהּ וְהָא תִּבְתּ הָיִת
כְּבִשְׂרָה: ח' וַהֲיָה אִם לֹא יִהְיֶימוּן
לָךְ וְלֹא יִקְבְּלוּן לְקַל אֵתָא קְדָמָא
וַיִּהְיֶימוּן לְקַל אֵתָא בְּתַרְאָה: ט' וַהֲיָה
אִם לֹא יִהְיֶימוּן אַף לַתְרִין אֵתָא
הָאֲלִין וְלֹא יִקְבְּלוּן מִנָּךְ וְתִסָּב
מִמֵּי דְבִנְהָרָא וְתִישׁוֹר לִבְשָׁתָא

רש"י

נֹאמַר "מַחִיקוֹ" (שמות רבה טז יג; שבת נג:). (ח) וַהֲאֱמִינוּ
לְקַל הָאֵת הָאַחֲרוֹן. מִשְׁפָּחָא מִלֵּשָׁה: בְּשֻׁלְגִים
לְקִיטֵי עַל שְׁפָרְתִּי עֲלִיכֶם לִשׁוֹן הָרַע. יֵאֱמִינוּ לָךְ, שֶׁכָּזֶה
לְמַדוֹ דְּכָךְ שֶׁהַמִּזְדַּוְּגִין לְהַרְע לָהֶם לֹקִים דְּגִנָּעִים, כְּגוֹן
פְּרַעֲה וְאַצִּימֶלֶךְ בְּשֻׁלְגִי שָׁרָה: ט' (ט) וּלְקַחַת מִיָּמִי
הַיָּאֵר. רָמַז לָהֶם שֶׁצְּמִיחָה רִאשׁוֹנָה נִפְרַע מִלְּהוֹקֶס.

(ו) מִצְרַעַת בְּשֻׁלְגִי. דְּכָךְ לְרַעַת לְהִיט לְכָנָה, "וְאִם
בְּהֶרֶת לְכָנָה הוּא" (ויקרא יג, ד). חֵף בָּאוֹת זֶה רָמַז לוֹ שֶׁלִּשׁוֹן
הָרַע סֵפֶר בָּאוּמְרוֹ "לֹא יֵאֱמִינוּ לִי", לְפִיכָךְ הִלָּקְהוּ בְּלְרַעַת
(שמות רבה טז י"ג) כְּמוֹ שֶׁלָּקְחָהּ מִרְיָם עַל לִשׁוֹן הָרַע:
(ז) וַיּוֹצֵאָהּ מִחִיקוֹ וַהֲנֶה שָׁבָה בְּבִשְׂרוֹ. מִכָּאֵן שֶׁמִּדָּה
טוֹבָה מִמִּהְרָת לְבֹא מִמִּדַּת פּוֹרְעָנוּת, שֶׁהָרִי בְּרִאשׁוֹנָה לֹא

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6. מִצְרַעַת בְּשֻׁלְגִי — HIS HAND WAS LEPROUS, LIKE SNOW.

"His hand was leprous" means that it was stricken with *tzaraas*. But how is *tzaraas* like snow? Rashi explains:

Tzaraas is normally white, — as indicated by the verse — "וְאִם בְּהֶרֶת לְכָנָה הוּא" — *and if [the tzaraas] is a white baheress in the skin of his flesh.*^[8] Thus, the phrase "*His hand was leprous, like snow*" means that Moshe's hand was stricken with snow-white *tzaraas*.^[9] אַף
שֶׁלִּשׁוֹן הָרַע סֵפֶר בָּאוּמְרוֹ "לֹא" — With this sign, as well, [Hashem] hinted to [Moshe] — באות זה רָמַז לוֹ
— *that he had spoken lashon hara when he said* (v. 1 above), *Behold, they will not believe me.* — This is why [Hashem] struck him with *tzaraas* (*Shemos Rabbah* 3:12-13),
— *just as Miriam was later stricken with tzaraas for speaking lashon hara.*^[10]

7. וַיּוֹצֵאָהּ מִחִיקוֹ וַהֲנֶה שָׁבָה בְּבִשְׂרוֹ — THEN HE WITHDREW IT FROM HIS BOSOM AND BEHOLD, IT REVERTED [TO BE] LIKE HIS FLESH.

Why does the verse add that Moshe withdrew his hand *from his bosom*? Since that is where he had placed his hand, it should have sufficed now to state simply that he withdrew it. In fact, the parallel phrase in the previous verse says only *then he withdrew it*, without adding *from his bosom*! Rashi explains why our verse adds this extra term:

From here we see that Hashem's measure of goodness

8. A *baheress* is one type of *tzaraas*; see next note.

9. The Mishnah in *Negaim* 1:1 describes four types of *tzaraas*, differing in appearance according to their levels of whiteness. The *baheress* is the brightest shade of white; its color is described there as "bright as snow." [Snow-white leprosy is the least likely to be naturally

healed: When the skin of a limb turns an intense white color, it is a sign that the limb has already died. Moshe's hand turned white "like snow," the most intense degree of *tzaraas*, to highlight the subsequent miracle when his hand immediately healed (*Sforno*, v. 8).]

10. *Bamidbar* 12:1-10.

and it became a staff in his palm.⁵ “So that they shall believe that Hashem, the God of their forefathers, appeared to you — the God of Avraham, the God of Yitzchak, and the God of Yaakov.”⁶ Hashem said further to him, “Bring now your hand into your bosom,” and he brought his hand into his bosom; then he withdrew it and behold, his hand was leprous, like snow.⁷ He said, “Return your hand to your bosom,” and he returned his hand to his bosom; then he withdrew it from his bosom and behold, it reverted [to be] like his flesh.⁸ “It shall be that if they do not believe you and do not listen to the voice of the first sign, they will believe the voice of the latter sign.⁹ And it shall be that if they do not believe even these two signs and do not listen to your voice, then you shall take from the waters of the Canal and pour them out on the dry land, and they will become —

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comes faster than His measure of punishment. שְׁהָרִי בְּרִאשׁוֹנָה לֹא נֶאֱמַר “מִחִיקוֹ” — For in the first instance (Hashem’s “punishment”), when Moshe withdrew his hand from his bosom and found it leprous (v. 6), it does not say that he found it leprous “from his bosom.” Rather, it says, *then he withdrew it* — and subsequently he discovered that *his hand was leprous*. This is because his hand was not stricken with *tzaraas* while still in his bosom, but only after it was removed. But here, when speaking of the hand being healed (Hashem’s “goodness”), the verse stresses that it was healed “from his bosom,” indicating that it had *already* been healed, while still in his bosom^[11] (*Shemos Rabbah* 3:13; *Shabbos* 97a).

8. וְהָאֵמִינוּ לְקֹל הָאֵת הָאֲחֵרוֹן — IF THEY DO NOT BELIEVE YOU AND DO NOT LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF THE FIRST SIGN, THEY WILL BELIEVE THE VOICE OF THE LATTER SIGN.

The verse indicates that there is more of a reason for them to believe Moshe with the second sign than the first. What is it about this second sign that is more convincing? Rashi explains:

מִשְׁתַּאֲמַר לָהֶם בְּשִׁבְלֵיכֶם לְקִיטִי עַל שִׁסְפָּרְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם לְשׁוֹן הָרַע — Hashem meant: **Once you tell them, “I was stricken with *tzaraas* on your account, because I spoke *lashon hara* about you by suggesting that you would not believe me,”** וְהָאֵמִינוּ לָךְ — they will believe you that I had spoken to you. שֶׁבָּרָךְ לְמִדּוֹ — **For [the Jewish people] are accustomed to this occurrence, that those who attempt to harm them are stricken with plagues,** כְּגֹן פְּרַעַה וְאַבְיִמֶלֶךְ בְּשִׁבְלֵי שָׂרָה — **such as occurred to both Pharaoh and Avimelech on account of Sarah.**^[12]

9. וְלָקַחְתָּ מִמֵּי הַיָּאֵר — THEN YOU SHALL TAKE FROM THE WATERS OF THE CANAL.

Having explained the significance of the first two signs, Rashi turns to explain what this third sign alludes to:

שֶׁבִּמְכָה — By turning the water into blood, [Hashem] indicated to [the Jewish people] שֶׁבִּמְכָה — **that through the first *makkah* of the Ten *Makkos* that He was to bring against the Egyptians, He would exact retribution from their deity.**

11. Since the word *מִחִיקוֹ* is not needed here to tell us from where Moshe withdrew his hand, it is read as part of the next phrase: *מִחִיקוֹ וְהָיָה שֶׁבֶר בְּבָשָׂרוֹ*, *from his bosom, behold, it reverted [to be] like his flesh*; i.e., it was healed while still in his bosom (*Mizrachi*). [Indeed, in some editions of Rashi, the opening phrase (דִּיבֹר הַמִּתְחִיל) of this comment reads, *מִחִיקוֹ שֶׁבֶר בְּבָשָׂרוֹ*, *from his bosom it reverted [to be] like his flesh*, indicating that this is how the verse is to be read. See *Sifsei Yesheirim* Appendix.]

12. Pharaoh and Avimelech were each stricken with bodily afflictions when they took Sarah to their palaces

(*Bereishis* 12:14-20; 20:1-18). Because the Jewish people knew of these past occurrences, they would be more convinced by the sign of *tzaraas* than by the sign of the snake.

In the next verse, Hashem adds a third sign, that of the water turning to blood. That sign provided an even stronger reason to believe Moshe, because in that case, the water remained transformed into blood *permanently*, whereas in the first two signs, the snake reverted to a staff and Moshe’s flesh reverted to its normal state (*Gur Aryeh* to v. 9; *Chizkuni*; *Moshav Zekeinim*).

ויהיו המים אשר תקח מן-היאר והיו לדם
ביבשת: ויאמר משה אליהוה בי אדני לא
איש דברים אנכי גם מתמול גם משלשם

ויהיו המים אשר תקח מן-היאר והיו לדם
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איש דברים אנכי גם מתמול גם משלשם

רש"י

הקדוש צריך הוא מפתה את משה צסנה לילך צשליחותו.
"מתמול, שלשום, מאז דצדך", הכי שלשה, ושלשה "גמין"
רצונין הם (ירושלמי ברכות ט, ז) הכי שלשה, והוא היה
עומד ציום השביעי כשאמר לו זאת עוד "שלח לא ציד
תשלח" (להלן פסוק יא), עד שחרה צו וקבל תלוי (סדר עולם
רבה ה: ויקרא רבה יא, ו). וכל זה שלא היה רוצה ליטול
גדולה על אהרן אחיו שהיה גדול הימנו, ונציא היה,
שלאמר ^א"הלא אהרן אחיד הלוי וגו'" (להלן פסוק יד),

ופירושו, כשהקדוש צריך הוא נפרע מן האומות
נפרע מאלהותם תחלה, שהיו עובדים לילוס המציה
אותם והפכס לדם: והיו המים וגו'. "והיו ... והיו"
שתי פעמים. נראה צעיני, אלו נאמר "והיו המים
אשר תקח מן היאר לדם ציצשת" שומע אני שצידו
הם נהפכים לדם ^אואף כשצידו לארץ יהיו צהוויין,
אבל טכציו מלמדנו שלא יהיו דם עד שיהיו ציצשת:
(ו) גם מתמול וגו'. למדנו שכל שצטה ימים היה

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A clarification:^[13]

To explain: When the Holy One, blessed is He, exacts retribution from the other nations, He first exacts retribution from their deity. — In the case of the Egyptians, this would apply to the Nile River, for they worshiped the Nile that sustained them, and therefore in the first of the Ten Makkos, [Hashem] transformed [its water] into blood^[14] (below, 7:14-21). Hashem alluded to this first makkah here, by having Moshe take water from the Nile and turn it into blood in front of the people.

AND THEY WILL BECOME — THE WATERS THAT YOU SHALL TAKE FROM THE CANAL — THEY WILL BECOME BLOOD ON THE DRY LAND.

Rashi discusses the repetition in our verse:

The verse says "ויהיו והיו", they will become... they will become, using this term twice. — It appears to me that the reason is as follows: — והיו המים אשר תקח מן — If it had stated the term only once, i.e., AND THEY WILL BECOME — THE WATERS THAT YOU SHALL TAKE FROM THE CANAL — BLOOD ON THE DRY LAND, — I might understand the verse to mean that [the waters] would be transformed into blood while they were still in his hand, i.e., as soon as Moshe took them from the Nile into his hand, — and then, even when they would pour down from his hand onto the ground, they would remain as they are, i.e., they would continue to be blood and not revert to water.^[15] — But now that the phrase "they will become" is repeated, [the verse] teaches us — that [the waters] would not become blood until they would be on the dry land.^[16]

13. The remainder of this comment does not appear in early editions of Rashi, and seems to be a clarification of Rashi's words inserted by a student or copyist. See *Sifsei Yesheini* Appendix.

14. See Rashi below, 7:17.

15. See Chapter 7, note 29. The reason to understand the verse this way is as follows: The verse said earlier, you shall take from the waters of the Canal and pour them out on the dry land; thus, it could have simply continued, and they will become blood on the dry land. Why does it repeat, the waters that you shall take from the Canal? We would have understood the repetition of this phrase to indicate that the waters "that you shall take from the River" will become blood — i.e., as soon

as you take them from the Canal, while they are still in your hand. However, that understanding is possible only if the verse would say, "they will become" only once — before "that you shall take." Since the verse repeats this phrase at the end, saying, they will become blood on the dry land, it is clear that the waters would not become blood until they were poured out on the dry land.

As for why the verse repeats, the waters that you shall take from the Canal, that is to make clear that only the waters that Moshe removed from the Canal would become blood, not all the waters of the Canal (*Be'er Yitzchak*).

16. They would remain water in Moshe's hand, and would be transformed into blood only upon

the waters that you shall take from the Canal — they will become blood on the dry land.”

¹⁰ Moshe said to Hashem, “Please, my Lord, I am not a man of words, neither since yesterday, nor since the day before yesterday,

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10. גַּם מִתְמוֹל וְגו' — NEITHER SINCE YESTERDAY, NOR SINCE THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY, NOR SINCE THE TIME YOU [FIRST] SPOKE TO YOUR SERVANT.

Rashi explains that this lengthy description of the time Hashem had been speaking to Moshe alludes to the amount of time that this conversation took:

לְמַדְנוּ — This wording teaches us שְׁכַל שְׁבַעַה יָמִים — that for an entire seven days, הָיָה הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ — the Holy One, blessed is He, was engaged in **persuading Moshe at the thornbush to go on His mission.** “מִתְמוֹל שְׁלֹשׁוֹם מָאוֹ דְּבִרְךְ” הָרִי שְׁלֹשָׁה — The words of the verse indicate this as follows: “*since yesterday*,” “*the day before yesterday*,” and “*since the time You [first] spoke to your servant*,” indicate a period of at least **three days** — for “yesterday” and “the day before yesterday” indicate two days before the day on which Moshe was speaking, and “the time you first spoke to your servant,” indicates another day beyond that, for a total of three days before this day. וּשְׁלֹשָׁה גְמִיין רַבּוּיִין הֵם — And the three appearances of the words “גַּם” in the verse **each denote an addition**, adding an additional day for each;^[17] הָרִי שֵׁשָׁה — thus we have a total of **six** previous days. וְהוּא הָיָה עוֹמֵד בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּשֹׁאֲמֵר לוֹ וְזֹאת עוֹד — [Moshe] was now **standing before Hashem on the seventh day, when he further said to Him** (v. 13 below), “שְׁלַח נָא בְּיַד תְּשַׁלַּח” — **Send please through whomever You send;** עַד שֶׁתִּקְרָה בּוֹ — and Moshe persisted in asking that Hashem send someone else **until [Hashem] became angry with him** (as stated in v. 14), וְקָבַל עָלָיו — and only **then did [Moshe] accept the mission upon himself.** The verses thus indicate that Hashem spoke to Moshe on seven consecutive days until Moshe finally consented to go on His mission to redeem the Jewish people from their bondage in Egypt (*Seder Olam Rabbah* §5; *Vayikra Rabbah* 11:6).

Rashi explains why Moshe was so reluctant to accept this mission:

וְכָל זֶה שֶׁלֹּא הָיָה רֹצֵה לִישׁוֹל גְּדוּלָּה עַל אֶהְרֵן אָחִיו — All of this was **because [Moshe] did not want to take a position of prominence over Aharon, his brother,** שֶׁהָיָה גְּדוּל הִימָנוּ — **who was older than he, וְנִבְיָא — and who also had already been a prophet sent to the Jewish people before Moshe’s prophecy at the thornbush.** “שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר “הִלֵּא אֶהְרֵן אָחִיךָ הָלֹאִי וְגו'” — We see that Moshe’s main concern was about taking a higher position than Aharon, which could cause Aharon distress, **for it says that when Hashem finally directly commanded Moshe to go to Egypt, Hashem said to him** (v. 14 below), **Is there not Aharon your brother, the Levi? . . . behold, he is going out toward you, and he will see you and rejoice in his heart.**^[18]

reaching the ground (*Be’er Yitzchak*). See Insight.

17. The word גַּם (translated here as “neither,” “nor”), literally means *also*. Thus, the verse reads: *also since yesterday, also since the day before yesterday, also since*

the time You [first] spoke to Your servant. The three appearances of “also” add three days to the count.

18. As Rashi explains there, Hashem was responding to Moshe’s concerns by telling him that Aharon would not

⚡ **The Water Did Not Turn Into Blood Until It Was on the Ground** Why was it necessary for the water to remain as it was until it reached the ground, and not turn into blood as soon as Moshe removed it from the Nile? Some explain that had the water become blood in Moshe’s hand, skeptics would claim that Moshe had tricked them by concealing some red dye in his hand to perform this “miracle.” Therefore, the water did not change into blood until it was on the ground, when Moshe no longer had any contact with it (*Levush HaOrah*; *Be’er BaSadeh*).

Or HaChaim suggests that it would have been *inappropriate* for the miracle to be structured in a way that the water would transform to blood while Moshe was holding it. The Nile had saved Moshe when his mother had hidden him in its reeds when he was an infant (2:3 above). Rashi notes below (7:19) that for this reason, during the first of the Ten Makkos it was not appropriate for Moshe to be the one to ruin the water of the Nile by transforming it into blood, and instead Aharon was appointed to directly bring about the *makkah* of Blood. Here, too, *Or HaChaim* suggests, it would have been inappropriate for Moshe to be the one to directly turn the water that he took from the Nile into blood. The water therefore remained in its natural state as long as it was held by Moshe, and became blood only after it had fallen on the dry land.

אף מעדן דמלליתא עם עבדך
ארי יקיר ממלל ועמיק לישן
אנא: יא ואמר יי ליה מן שוי פומא
לאנשא או מן שוי אלמא או חרשא
או פקחא (נא: פתיחא) או עורא

גם מאז דפרך אל-עבדך כי כבד-פה וכבד לשון
אנכי: יא ויאמר יהוה אליו מי שם פה לאדם
או מי-ישום אלים או חרש או פקח או עור

רש

שם פה וגו'. מי למדך לדבר כשהיית גדון לפני פרעה
על המלך: או מי ישום אלים. מי עשה פרעה חלם שלא
תאמן צמנות הריגתך, ואת משרתיו חרשים שלא שמעו
צוותו עליך, ולאספקלמורין ההוגים מי עשאים עורים שלא
ראו כשצרכת מן הצימה וגמלקת (שמות רבה ח, לא; תנחומא י):

ועוד נאמר לעלי הכהן "הנגלה נגליתי אל בית אביך צהייתם
צמלרים" (שמואל ב, כז), הוא אהרן. וכן "ואנדע להם צארכן
מלרים... ואמר חללם איש שקולי עיניו השליכו" (יחזקאל כ,
הז), ואותה נבואה לאהרן נאמרה (שמות רבה טז כז: כבד
פה. צכצידית אני מדבר. ובלשון לע"ז בלז"ו: (יא) מי

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Rashi now shows where we see that Aharon had been a prophet for the Jewish people while they were in Egypt:

ועוד נאמר לעלי הכהן — And furthermore, we know that Aharon had already been a prophet, from that which was said to Eli the Kohen by Hashem (*I Shmuel* 2:27), "הנגלה נגליתי אל בית אביך צהייתם" — *Did I not reveal Myself to your father's house when they were in Egypt?* — *הוא אהרן* — This is a reference to a prophecy in Egypt given to Aharon, Eli's ancestor.

The verse from *I Shmuel* mentions only that Eli's ancestor (Aharon) prophesied in Egypt, but the content of that prophecy is not described. Rashi now cites another verse that reveals the prophecy itself:^[19]

ואמר אלהם איש שקוצי — So, too, Hashem says elsewhere, referring to this prophecy (*Yechezkel* 20:5-7), *I made Myself known to [the Jewish people] in the land of Egypt...* — *ענינו השליכו* — and I said to them, "Each man, cast away his detestable [idols] of his eyes; do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt." — *ואותה נבואה לאהרן נאמרה* — That prophecy was told to Aharon in Egypt. Thus, we see that Aharon had already been a prophet in Egypt before Moshe received his prophecy at the thornbush (*Shemos Rabbah* 3:16).

□ כבד פה — FOR I AM HEAVY OF MOUTH.

Rashi explains what this phrase means:

בבכירות אני מדבר — In our verse, the word פה (literally, *mouth*) refers to *speech*.^[20] Moshe meant: **I speak with heaviness**, i.e., haltingly and sluggishly. — *ובלשון לע"ז בלב"ו* — In Old French this is referred to as *balbe*.^[21]

11. מי שם פה וגו'. — **WHO GAVE MAN A MOUTH, OR WHO MAKES ONE MUTE OR DEAF, OR SIGHTED OR BLIND?**

Moshe had objected to his mission on the grounds that he could not speak well. Why, then, did Hashem answer him that He makes people mute, deaf, sighted, or blind, none of which relate to Moshe's objection? Rashi explains that every part of the verse reflects some aspect of Moshe's miraculous escape from Egypt years earlier, events that should have given Moshe the confidence in Hashem to go on His mission. Rashi begins with the first phrase, "Who gave man a mouth":

כשהיית גדון לפני פרעה על המצרי — **Who taught you how to speak eloquently in your defense**

resent Moshe's rising to this position of prominence; on the contrary, Aharon would be happy about it. Clearly, Moshe's concern had been specifically that Aharon might feel slighted by his younger brother's rise to greater prominence (*Ba'er Heitev*; *Nachalas Yaakov*).

19. Rashi to *I Shmuel* 2:27.

20. In the next phrase, "and heavy of tongue," Rashi does not need to explain the meaning, since the tongue speaks by movement; a heaviness of the tongue clearly

means that one cannot speak clearly or easily. But "heavy of mouth" does not have any simple meaning. Rashi therefore explains that the word "mouth" is used here to mean speech (*Mizrachi*).

21. In Modern French, *balbutier*, "stuttering." *Ibn Ezra* explains that the verse refers to an inability to clearly enunciate certain letter-sounds. For reasons that Hashem did not simply heal Moshe from this impediment, see *Ramban* here and *Derashos HaRan* §3 and §5.

nor since the time You [first] spoke to Your servant, for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue.”

¹¹ Then Hashem said to him, “Who gave man a mouth, or who makes one mute or deaf, or sighted or blind?

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— when you were being judged before Pharaoh regarding the Egyptian whom you had killed?^[22]

□ אֵלֶם — אוּ מִי יְשׁוּם אֵלֶם — OR WHO MAKES ONE MUTE.

Rashi now explains how the rest of the descriptions — that Hashem is the One Who makes people mute, deaf, sighted, and blind — apply to Moshe’s escape:

אֵלֶם — Hashem meant: **Who made Pharaoh “mute,”** שְׁלֹא נִתְאַמֵּץ בְּמִצְוַת הָרִיגָתוֹ — so that after you were sentenced to death, he did not do his utmost to ensure that the order that you be executed be carried out?^[23] וְיָאֵת מִשְׁרָתוֹ חֲרָשִׁים — And who made his servants “deaf,” שְׁלֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְּצִוּוֹתָיו — so that they did not take heed when [Pharaoh] issued his order about executing you? עָלֶיךָ — And regarding the executioners, those who kill upon Pharaoh’s command, who made them “blind,” שְׁלֹא רָאוּ בְּשִׁבְרָהֶת מִן הַבִּימָה וְנִמְלָטָה — so that they did not see when you fled from the execution platform and escaped?^[24] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:31; *Tanchuma* §10).

22. Above, 2:13-15.

23. This does not mean that Pharaoh actually became mute and did not issue the death sentence. Similarly, when Rashi speaks next about Pharaoh’s servants being deaf, it does not mean that they did not hear at all. Rather, all of these refer to a weakening of these powers: Pharaoh did not enforce his order and his servants did not hear and follow them with alacrity (*Gur Aryeh*; see further).

24. Just as I, Hashem, performed all these miracles to save you, Moshe, so too would I help you to be successful

in this mission with Pharaoh. [Rashi does not explain the phrase, אוּ פָקַח, or sighted. The Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* and *Tanchuma* *ibid.*), however, says: “Who gave you the vision (i.e., wisdom) to flee?” (see *Yefeh To’ar*).]

While all these phrases of the verse allude to the miracles that Hashem did for Moshe, in the simple sense they refer to the abilities that He gives every man. Hashem indirectly rebuked Moshe by speaking at length about what He does for all people and allowing Moshe to infer the message of “Who taught you, etc.” (*Be’er Yitzchak*). See Insight.

☞ **The Miracles Through Which Hashem Had Saved Moshe** The multiplicity of miracles mentioned here regarding Moshe’s escape seems difficult. Which of these various miracles saved him, and why were so many necessary? For example, If Moshe indeed argued eloquently for his case, why was he sentenced to death? And if Pharaoh was “mute” in commanding his officers to kill Moshe, why was it necessary for them to also be “deaf” to his command? *Gur Aryeh* explains that each of the miracles here happened on a small scale, and only with the combination of all of them did Moshe escape. This is in keeping with the rule that when there is no special need to do otherwise, Hashem performs His miracles in a manner as close as possible to natural events (see *Rabbeinu Bachya* to 13:18 below, cited there in note 14). Hashem therefore performed several small and “nearly natural” miracles, to avoid the need for larger, clearly supernatural miracles. Pharaoh’s lack of insistence that his command to execute Moshe be carried out (Hashem making him “mute”), appeared less miraculous specifically because Hashem had taught Moshe how to speak in his defense. It seemed almost natural that once Moshe advanced strong arguments, Pharaoh would be less insistent about his decree. When Rashi states that Pharaoh’s servants did not physically hear Pharaoh’s orders (Hashem made them “deaf”), this does not mean that they — supernaturally — did not hear Pharaoh’s words. Certainly, they *did* hear his words, but because Pharaoh himself was not insistent, they “naturally” *misunderstood* him to mean simply that Moshe deserved death, but not that Pharaoh was actually commanding them to kill him. As a result of this misunderstanding, the executioners did not feel the need to guard Moshe carefully, as they would have for someone whom the king had clearly ordered to be killed; therefore, they let down their guard and did not notice when Moshe escaped (Hashem made them “blind”).

Rashi elsewhere (above, 2:15; below, 18:4) mentions another miracle: Moshe was saved from the sword of Pharaoh because his neck turned to marble. How does that fit with the narrative here? *Gur Aryeh* suggests that Moshe would have been afraid to attempt an escape, but when his neck turned to marble, he realized that Hashem would not let him be killed, and that gave him the courage to flee (see also *Levush Ha’Orah*). In another approach, *Mizrachi* suggests that the executioners actually tried to behead Moshe with a sword but they failed because his neck had turned to marble. Then, as they busied themselves with preparing another form of execution, they were “blinded,” and he was able to escape.

הָלֹא אֲנִי יי: יב וּבָעֵן אֲוִיל וּמִימְרֵי
יָהּ אִם פּוֹמֶךְ וְאַלְפֹנֶךְ דִּי תַמְלִיל:
יג וְאָמַר בְּבָעוּ יי שְׁלַח בְּעַן בִּיד מִן
דְּבִשֶׁר לְמִשְׁלַח: יד וּתְקִיף רִגְזָא דִּי:
בְּמִשָּׁה וְאָמַר הָלֹא אֶהְרֵן אַחֲרָיךְ לְנֹאֶה
גְּלִי קָדְמִי אֲרִי מְלָלָא יַמְלִל הוּא

הָלֹא אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה: יב וְעַתָּה לָךְ וְאֲנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה עִם־פִּיךָ
וְהוֹרִיתִיךָ אֲשֶׁר תְּדַבֵּר: יג וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי אֲדֹנָי שְׁלַח־
נָא בְיַד־תְּשֻׁלָּח: יד וַיַּחֲרֹ־אֵף יְהוָה בְּמֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר
הָלֹא אֶהְרֵן אַחִיךָ הַלֵּוִי יִדְעָתִי כִּי־דַבֵּר יְדַבֵּר הוּא

רש"י

נֶאֱמַר צוּ רוּשָׁם וְלֹא מְלִינִי שְׂצָח עוֹנֵשׁ עַל יְדֵי אוֹתוֹ חֲרוֹן.
אָמַר לוֹ רַבִּי יוֹסִי: אֵף צָזוּ נֶאֱמַר צוּ רוּשָׁם, הָלֹא אֶהְרֵן
אַחִיךָ הַלֵּוִי, שָׂהִיב עֲתִיד לִהְיוֹת לֵוִי וְלֹא כֹהן, וְהַפְּהִיבָה
הַיִּתִּי אוֹמֵר לְגֵאֶת מִמֶּךָ, מִעֲפָה לֹא יִהְיֶה בֶן אֶלֶל הוּא יִהְיֶה
כֹּהֵן וְאַתָּה לֵוִי, שְׁנֶאֱמַר "וַיִּמָּשֶׁה אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים צִנְיָו יִקְרָאוּ עַל
שְׂצֵט הַלֵּוִי" (דברי הימים־א כג, יד; שמות רבה שס יז; זבחים כג):

הָלֹא אֲנֹכִי. שְׁשֵׁמִי ה' עָשִׂיתִי כָל זֹאת: (יג) בִּיד תְּשֻׁלָּח.
צִיד מִי שְׂאֵתָה רְגִיל לְשֹׁלֹחַ, וְהוּא אֶהְרֵן (שמות רבה ס).
דָּבָר אַחֵר, צִיד אַחֵר שְׂפָרְכָה לְשֹׁלֹחַ, שְׂאִין סוֹפִי לְהַכְנִיֵס
לְאֶרֶץ וְלִהְיוֹת גּוֹאֲלָם לְעַתִּיד, יֵשׁ לָךְ שְׁלוֹחִים הַרְבֵּה וּפְרָקִי
דְּרַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר מ: (יד) וַיַּחֲרֹ־אֵף. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן קַרְתָּה
אוֹמֵר: כָּל חֲרוֹן אֵף שְׂצָפּוּרָה לְנֶאֱמַר צוּ רוּשָׁם, וְזֶה לֹא

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□ הָלֹא אֲנֹכִי — IS IT NOT I, HASHEM?

Since it was Hashem Who had been speaking to Moshe, why was it necessary to add the Name of Hashem afterward (*Is it not I, "Hashem"*)?^[25] Rashi explains:

שְׁשֵׁמִי ה' — Hashem meant: *IS IT NOT I, Whose Name is HASHEM*, **Who did all of this?** The Name of Hashem carries in it the meaning that Hashem is the Source of all existence.^[26] Thus, says Hashem (in the next verse), *I shall be with your mouth and teach you what you should speak*.

13. בִּיד תְּשֻׁלָּח — SEND PLEASE THROUGH WHOMEVER YOU SEND!

The words בִּיד תְּשֻׁלָּח literally mean, "through whomever you *will* send," since the word תְּשֻׁלָּח, *you will send*, is in the future tense. But in that case, the sentence seems to mean the opposite of what Moshe is trying to say. The words mean, "Send the one whom You will send" (i.e., whom You have decided to send) — but the person that Hashem wishes to send was Moshe himself! How could Moshe use this phrase to implore Hashem to send someone else? Rashi explains that the words are actually understood differently.^[27]

בִּיד מִי שְׂאֵתָה רְגִיל לְשֹׁלֹחַ — This means: Carry out Your mission **through he whom You are accustomed to send** as Your messenger to relate prophecy to the Jewish people in Egypt, **namely, אֶהְרֵן — and, Aharon**^[28] (*Shemos Rabbah* 3:16).

Rashi presents another understanding.^[29]

דָּבָר אַחֵר, בִּיד אַחֵר שְׂתַרְבֵּץ לְשֹׁלֹחַ — **Alternatively**, Moshe meant: For this mission of redeeming the Jewish people from Egypt, do it **through someone else whom You will wish to send** on the *later* mission of bringing them into Eretz Yisrael, **שְׂאִין סוֹפִי לְהַכְנִיֵס לְאֶרֶץ — for I am not destined to bring them into the Land** **and to be their redeemer in the future**,^[30] **יֵשׁ לָךְ שְׁלוֹחִים**

25. *Be'er BaSadeh*. In other places, Rashi explains the words בִּיד מִי שְׂאֵתָה to mean that Hashem will reward or punish, depending on the context (see, for example, below, 6:2, *Vayikra* 18:5). Here, however, there is nothing being mentioned that would be related to reward or punishment (*Gur Aryeh*).

26. The Four-letter Name יְהוָה — whose letters can be arranged to form each of the words הוּא הוּא וְיִהְיֶה, *He was, He is, He will be* (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 5:1) — relates to Hashem being the Eternal One, Who is the Source of all existence. Hashem is now saying to Moshe that clearly, He, Whose Name represents the Source of everything that exists, is the One Who "gave man a mouth," etc. (see *Be'er BaSadeh*).

27. *Be'er Yitzchak*.

28. The term תְּשֻׁלָּח, although technically in the future tense, here expresses a continuous action in the present (see Rashi to *Bereishis* 24:45 for an example of this usage). Thus, the verse means, send through the one whom You have already been sending to the Jewish people, i.e., Aharon, who — as Rashi noted above (v.10) — had previously been sent to the Jewish people as a prophet.

29. According to the following approach, the term תְּשֻׁלָּח is indeed understood in its simple meaning as future tense, but Moshe's meaning is still clear.

30. It was decreed upon Moshe, due to the later incident

Is it not I, Hashem?¹² So now, go! I shall be with your mouth and teach you what you should speak.”

¹³ *He said, “Please, my Lord, send please through whomever You send!”*

¹⁴ *The anger of Hashem flared against Moshe and He said, “Is there not Aharon your brother, the Levi? I know that he will surely speak;*

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הַרְבֵּה — You have many potential agents other than me^[31] (*Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* §40).

14. אָף וַיִּחַר אֵף — THE ANGER OF HASHEM FLARED.

The verse does not spell out any consequence of Hashem’s anger. Rashi cites two Tannaic views as to whether this anger had a negative impact on Moshe:

אָמַר — R’ Yehoshua ben Korah says: כָּל חֲרוֹן אֵף שֶׁבְּתוֹרָה נֶאֱמַר בּוֹ רוּשָׁם — Regarding every “flaring of anger” that is recorded in the Torah, there is a mention of some effect resulting from it,^[32] וְהָיָה לֹא נֶאֱמַר בּוֹ רוּשָׁם — but regarding this anger of our verse, no such effect is mentioned, וְלֹא מִצִּינוּ שְׂבָא עוֹנֵשׁ עַל יְדֵי אוֹתוֹ חֲרוֹן — and indeed, we do not find anywhere in the Torah that a punishment came about as a result of that flaring of anger.^[33] **אָמַר לוֹ רַבִּי יוֹסִי — R’ Yose said to him:** אָף בּוֹ נֶאֱמַר בּוֹ רוּשָׁם — Regarding this anger, too, there is an effect mentioned in the Torah, and it is indicated by what Hashem immediately said to Moshe, הֲלֹא אַהֲרֹן אֶחֱיוֹ הַלֵּוִי — **“IS THERE NOT AHARON YOUR BROTHER, THE LEVI?”** Aharon was obviously a Levi, since he was the son of Amram, Levi’s grandson. Why, then, did Hashem stress here that Aharon was a Levi?^[34] It was to imply: שְׁהָיָה עֲתִיד וְהַכְהוֹנָה הֵייתִי — [Aharon] had been destined to be only a Levi, and not a Kohen, אֲמַר לִצְאָת מִמֶּךָ — for I had originally intended that the Kehunah should descend from you, Moshe. מִעַתָּה לֹא יִהְיֶה כֵּן — However, now that you have protested so much against being My emissary, it shall not be so! אֲלֵא הוּא יִהְיֶה כֵּן וְאַתָּה לֵוִי — You will not be a Kohen; rather, he, Aharon, will be a Kohen, and you, Moshe, will be only a Levi.^[35] **שָׁנְאָמַר —** We find this effect of Hashem’s anger specifically referenced by Scripture, as it states (*I Divrei HaYamim* 23:13-14): וְנִמְשָׁה אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים בְּנָיו יִקְרְאוּ עַל שֵׁבֶט — *The sons of Amram — Aharon and Moshe; and Aharon was set apart to sanctify him as holy of holies, he and his descendants forever, to burn [offerings] before Hashem, to serve Him and to bless His Name forever. But Moshe, the man of God — his sons will be reckoned among the tribe of Levi.* The verse points out that, unlike Aharon and his descendants who were set apart as Kohanim, Moshe and his sons were counted only among the tribe of Levi. This was the negative consequence of Hashem’s anger (*Shemos Rabbah* 3:17; *Zevachim* 102a).

of *Mei Merivah* (Waters of Strife), that he would not bring the Jewish people into Eretz Yisrael (*Bamidbar* 20:1-13). [Although the decree would not be issued until the incident of *Mei Merivah*, which was forty years later, Moshe already knew prophetically that he would not lead the Jewish people into the Land. See the Insight to 6:1 below.]

31. Moshe meant to say that since he would not be the one to complete the redemption of the Jewish people by bringing them into the Land, he clearly was not sufficiently worthy. Whomever Hashem would choose to carry out the final stage of their redemption and bring them into the Land would presumably be worthy to take them out of Egypt as well (see *Be’er Yitzchak*).

Some explain that the words, *for I am not destined to bring them into the Land “and to be their redeemer in the future,”* refer to two different things. Moshe was saying: I am not destined to complete this redemption by bringing the Jewish people into Eretz Yisrael, nor am I destined to bring about their final redemption in

the future era, as that will be done by Eliyahu HaNavi [and Mashiach] (*Nachalas Yaakov*; see *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* §40).

32. That is, some negative consequence, such as a punishment or a curse, resulted from it (Rashi to *Zevachim* 102a).

33. That is, there was no practical consequence of this anger, because Moshe’s refusal resulted from his extreme humility, not from any wish to contradict the will of Hashem (*Maharal in Gevuros Hashem*, Ch. 28; see also *Maskil LeDavid*).

34. *Be’er BaSadeh*.

35. A Kohen’s function is to act as an emissary between Israel and Hashem. Moshe’s unwillingness to take on the role of emissary made him unfit to be a Kohen (*Gur Aryeh*; *Maskil LeDavid*; for another approach by *Maharal*, see *Gevuros Hashem*, end of Chapter 28). Even though Moshe’s refusal stemmed from concern about Aharon’s honor, Moshe should not have

ואף הא הוא נפק לקדמותך
ויהי ויחזיק בלבבך: טו ותמלל
עמה ותשוי ית פתגמיה בפומה
ומימרי יהי עם פומך ועם פומה
ואליך יתבון ית די תעבדון:
טו וימליל הוא לך עם עמא ויהי
הוא יהי לך למתרגמן ואת תהי
לה לרב: יז וית חטרא דרין תשב
בידך די תעביר בה ית אתיא:

וגם הנה הוא יצא לקראתך וראך ושםח בלבבך:
טו ודברת אליו ושמת את הדברים בפיו ואנכי
איה עם פיו ועם פיהו והוריתי אתכם את אשר
תעשון: טז ודבר הוא לך אל העם והיה הוא יהיה
לך לפה ואתה תהיה לו לאלהים: יז ואת המטה
הזה תקח בידך אשר תעשה בו את האתת: פ

רש"י

הנה הוא יצא לקראתך. כשחלך למלכים: וראך
ושםח בלבבך. לא כשחלך סבור שיהא מקפיד עליך
שחלך עולה לגדולה. ומשם זכה חרן לעדי החשן הנתון
על הלכ (שמות רבה ט; שבת קל"ט). (טז) ודבר הוא לך.
כשחלך ידבר אל העם. וזה יוכיח על כל "לך" ו"לי" ו"לו"
ו"לכם" ו"לכם" הסמוכים לדבור שכולם לשון "על" הם:
יהיה לך לפה. למלך (אונקלוס; שמות רבה ט) לפי שחלך
כד פה: לאלהים. לרב טס וטס) ולשר:

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□ **הנה הוא יצא לקראתך — BEHOLD, HE IS GOING OUT TOWARD YOU.**

The words, *Behold he is going out*, could be understood to mean that Aharon was already on his way, and that Moshe would meet him as soon as this prophecy concluded. But Moshe did not immediately go toward Aharon; he first traveled back to Yisro (v. 18), and only then to Egypt!^[36] Rashi therefore explains: **בשחלך למצרים — Hashem meant: Aharon will be going out toward you when you go to return to Egypt.**^[37]

□ **וראך ושםח בלבבך — AND HE WILL SEE YOU AND REJOICE IN HIS HEART.**

How is this relevant to the discussion about Moshe going to Pharaoh to free the Jewish people? Rashi explains that here Hashem responds to Moshe's concern (see Rashi to v. 10) that if he became the redeemer, Aharon would feel slighted:

שיהא מקפיד עליך שאתה עולה — Hashem was saying to Moshe: It is not as you think, לא בשאתה סבור — that [Aharon] will resent you because you are rising to a position of greater prominence than him. To the contrary, he will rejoice about the matter!

refused, out of honor for Hashem (*Tzeidah LaDerech*).

Moshe functioned as a Kohen during the seven days of the *miluim* (Inauguration), when the Mishkan and the Kohanim were inaugurated for service. According to R' Yose, Moshe would have retained the Kehunah, had he not protested too much here. R' Yehoshua ben Korchah, however, holds that Moshe was never destined to be Kohen beyond the seven days of *miluim*

(*Maskil LeDavid*, from *Zevachim* 102a). See Insight.

36. *Maskil LeDavid*; see also *Rash Almoshnino*.

37. Scripture often uses the present tense when referring to a future event. Thus, הנה הוא יצא לקראתך, *Behold, he "is going" out toward you*, means: When you return to Egypt, you will find Aharon going toward you to greet you (*Leket Bahir*). [At this point, Aharon had not yet been commanded to go out to greet Moshe (see v. 27 below).]

❧ **Hashem's "Anger"** *Rash Almoshnino* explains that R' Yehoshua ben Korchah and R' Yose address an underlying issue: It is axiomatic that Hashem Himself does not undergo any change; He is not affected by emotion, nor by anything else. When Scripture describes Hashem as having a specific attribute, such as mercy, anger, or the like, it refers to how His actions are perceived by people at a given time. When He acts mercifully, He is described as "being merciful," and when He acts angrily He is described as "being angry." But He Himself is never merciful or angry in the emotional sense (see *Rambam, Hil. Yesodei HaTorah* 1:11-12; *Sefer HaChinuch*, Mitzvah 611). This is what underlies the statement: *כל הרון אף שבתורה נאמר בו רועם*, *Regarding every "anger" of Hashem that is recorded in the Torah, there is a mention of some effect resulting from it.* The anger must have had some noticeable effect, for otherwise Hashem could not be described as "angry." R' Yehoshua ben Korchah therefore expressed wonder at the fact that, in our case, the Torah does not mention any ill effect of Hashem's anger. R' Yose responded that we do, in fact, find a record of the effect of Hashem's anger, as this is the intent of Hashem's statement, *"Is there not Aharon your brother, the Levi?"* [For further discussion, see R' Avraham ben HaRambam here; *Maharsha* to *Zevachim* 102a; *Be'er BaSadeh*.]

moreover, behold, he is going out toward you and he will see you and rejoice in his heart. ¹⁵ You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I shall be with your mouth and with his mouth, and teach you both what you are to do. ¹⁶ He shall speak for you to the people; and it will be that he will be a mouth for you and you will be to him as a master. ¹⁷ And this staff you shall take in your hand, with which you shall perform the signs.”

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Why does Hashem stress that Aharon will rejoice *in his heart*? Rejoicing is always done in one's heart! Rashi explains that the verse is alluding to a future reward.^[38]

וּמִשֵּׁם זֶה אֶהְרֵץ לְעַד הַחַיִּין — It was **on account of this** heartfelt rejoicing and lack of jealousy that **Aharon merited** to wear the ornament of the *Choshen*, הַנֶּתּוּן עַל הַלֵּב — which is placed on the heart^[39] (*Shemos Rabbah* 3:17; *Shabbos* 139a).

16. וְדִבֶּר הוּא לָךְ — HE SHALL SPEAK “LECHA” TO THE PEOPLE.

לָךְ generally means *to you*. But if that is its meaning here, then what does “he shall speak to you — to the people” mean? If he speaks to the people, he is not speaking “to you”!? Rashi explains:

וְהָיָה יוֹכִיחַ עַל — This means that **he shall speak to the people on your behalf**. כָּל “לָךְ” וְ“לִי” וְ“לָכֶם” וְ“לָהֶם” הַסְמוּכִים לְדִבּוּר — This is one of the places that **proves regarding all instances of the words “לָךְ”, “לִי”, “לָכֶם”, and “לָהֶם” in Scripture that are connected to forms of the word “דִּבּוּר”, speaking, שְׂבוּלָם לְשׁוֹן “עַל” — that they all have the meaning of “עַל”, “about” or “for”;** i.e., they mean that someone is speaking *about* or *for* someone else, not that the other person is being spoken *to*.^[40]

□ יִהְיֶה לָךְ לֶפֶה — HE WILL BE A MOUTH FOR YOU.

What does “being a mouth” for Moshe mean? Rashi explains:

לְפִי שְׂאֵתָה בִּבְרִי — Aharon will serve as a **spokesman** for you^[41] (*Onkelos*; *Shemos Rabbah* 3:17), כִּי — **since you are “heavy of mouth,”** i.e., you have a speech impediment, as mentioned above (v. 10).

□ לְאַלְהֵימָם — AND YOU WILL BE TO HIM “LEILOHIM.”

What does לְאַלְהֵימָם mean here?^[42] Rashi explains:

לְרִב וְלִשָּׂר — You will serve **as a master** (*Onkelos*; *Shemos Rabbah* 3:17) **and a minister** over Aharon. You will be in the position to command Aharon what he should say and do as pertains to this mission.^[43]

38. *Ba'er Heitev*.

39. The *Choshen* (Breastplate) was one of the eight special garments worn by the Kohen Gadol (below, 28:15-30). The verses at the end of that passage stress (28:29-30): *Aharon shall bear the names of the Children of Israel on the Choshen of Judgment “on his heart”... You shall place into the Choshen of Judgment the Urim and the Tumim, and they shall be “on Aharon’s heart”... and Aharon shall bear the judgment of the Children of Israel “on his heart” before Hashem, constantly.*

40. The *lamed* prefix is used in the sense of עַל, *about* or *for*. Rashi makes a similar point in his comments to *Bereishis* 24:7 and 28:15, *Bamidbar* 17:5, *Iyov* 13:7, and elsewhere; see discussion in note 10 to Rashi to *Bereishis* 24:7. For exceptions to this rule, see Rashi to 32:34 below; cf. *Ramban* to *Bereishis* 24:7.

41. As the verses below (7:1-2) describe: *Hashem said*

to Moshe... You shall speak everything that I shall command you, and Aharon your brother shall speak to Pharaoh. Rashi there (v. 2) explains: You shall speak the message of each mission one time to Pharaoh, as you heard it from My mouth, and Aharon, your brother, shall interpret it and make it well understood to the ears of Pharaoh.

42. The term אֱלֹהִים generally refers either to God or to judges (see 22:7-8 below), but neither of these meanings applies here.

43. The root of the word אֱלֹהִים is אֵל, meaning *a power*. It is therefore used as a Name of Hashem, the All-powerful, and indeed when used in this way it refers to His authority over Creation. Other holders of power or authority, such as judges, are also referred to by this title. In our verse, it refers to Moshe’s role as being the master, or authority, over Aharon.

יח וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיָּשָׁב | אֶל-יִתְרֹן חַתָּנוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ
אֲלֵכֶה-נָּא וְאֶשׁוּבָה אֶל-אֲחִי אֲשֶׁר-בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאַרְאֶה
הָעוֹדָם חַיִּים וַיֹּאמֶר יִתְרֹן לְמֹשֶׁה לֵךְ לְשָׁלוֹם:
יט וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְיָן לֵךְ שָׁב מִצְרַיִם כִּי-
מָתוּ כָּל-הָאֲנָשִׁים הַמְּבַקְשִׁים אֶת-נַפְשְׁךָ: כ וַיֵּקַח
מֹשֶׁה אֶת-אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת-בָּנָיו וַיִּרְכָּבֵם עַל-הַחֲמֹר

ששי יח וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיָּשָׁב | אֶל-יִתְרֹן חַתָּנוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ
אֲלֵכֶה-נָּא וְאֶשׁוּבָה אֶל-אֲחִי אֲשֶׁר-בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאַרְאֶה
הָעוֹדָם חַיִּים וַיֹּאמֶר יִתְרֹן לְמֹשֶׁה לֵךְ לְשָׁלוֹם:
יט וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְיָן לֵךְ שָׁב מִצְרַיִם כִּי-
מָתוּ כָּל-הָאֲנָשִׁים הַמְּבַקְשִׁים אֶת-נַפְשְׁךָ: כ וַיֵּקַח
מֹשֶׁה אֶת-אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת-בָּנָיו וַיִּרְכָּבֵם עַל-הַחֲמֹר

רש"י

מנכסייהם, והעניי תשוב פמת (שמות רבה ה, ד; נדרים סד:)
(ב) על החמור. חמור המיוחד. הוא החמור שחבש
הצדקה לעקידת יצחק, והוא שטחיד מלך המשיח להגלות
עליו, שנאמר "עני ורכב על חמור" (זכריה ט, ט; פירקין דרבי
אליעזר לא):

(יח) וישב אל יתרו חתנו. ליטול רשות, שהרי
נשבע לו ויאלץ יזון ממדין כי אם בראשיתו (שמות רבה
ד, א). ונשבע שמות היו לו: רעואל, יתרו, יתרו, קיני,
חובב, חזק, פוטאל (מכילתא יח, א: (יט) כי מתו כל
האנשים. מי הם, דתן ואבירם. חיים היו, אלל שירדו

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18. וישב אל יתרו חתנו — SO MOSHE WENT AND RETURNED TO YESSER, HIS FATHER-IN-LAW.

After Hashem instructed Moshe to go to Egypt, it would have been expected that he would immediately set out to Egypt. Why did Moshe first go back to his father-in-law in Midyan?^[44] Rashi explains: שְׁהָרִי — Moshe went to ask permission from his father-in-law to allow him to go to Egypt. — נשבע לו שלא יזון ממדין כי אם בראשיתו — This was necessary because [Moshe] had sworn to him that he would not leave Midyan without his permission^[45] (see *Shemos Rabbah* 4:1).

Rashi now addresses the question of Moshe's father-in-law's name. In the beginning of our verse, he is identified as *Yesser*, but most of the time — even at the end of this very verse — he is called by a different name, *Yisro*. Rashi explains:

— רעואל יתרו יתרו קיני חובב חזק פוטאל — [Moshe's father-in-law] had seven names: — ונשבע שמות היו לו — *Re'uel* (above, 2:18),^[46] *Yesser* (our verse), *Yisro* (here and elsewhere),^[47] *Keini* (*Shoftim* 1:16), *Chovav* (*Bamidbar* 10:29), *Chever* (*Shoftim* 4:11),^[48] and *Putiel* (below, 6:25).^[49]

19. כי מתו כל האנשים — GO, RETURN TO EGYPT, FOR ALL THE MEN WHO SEEK YOUR LIFE HAVE DIED.

The one person about whom the Torah specifically writes that he wished to kill Moshe — Pharaoh himself (above, 2:15) — had not actually died, as Rashi explained above, 2:23. To whom, then, is this verse referring?^[50] Rashi asks and answers:

44. *Maskil LeDavid*.

45. See above, 2:21, where Rashi explains that before marrying Tziporah, Yisro demanded that Moshe swear that he not leave without his permission, so that he should not take his daughter away without his knowledge.

46. The verse there describes how Tziporah, Moshe's future wife, and her sisters came to "Re'uel, their father." Understood plainly this means that Re'uel was another name for Tziporah's father — Moshe's father-in-law. Elsewhere, the Torah identifies *Yisro's father* (Tziporah's grandfather) by the name Re'uel (see *Bamidbar* 10:29). Accordingly, we must say that both Yisro and his father shared the name Re'uel (*Mizrachi* to *Bamidbar* there). For an alternative approach to the identity of Re'uel, see Rashi to 18:1 below and to

Bamidbar there.

47. For discussion of why the Torah uses two different names in the same verse, see *Alshich*.

48. According to the simple reading of the *Shoftim* verse, Chever refers to a *child* of Yisro, not Yisro himself. See *Gur Aryeh* and *Be'er BaSadeh* to 18:1 below, for how the *Shoftim* verse can also be read to refer to Yisro himself.

49. For further elaboration as to the significance and meaning of these names, see Rashi to 18:1 below, and to *Bamidbar* 10:29.

Rashi to *Bamidbar* ibid. seems to indicate that Yisro had only two names; see *Insight* there for discussion. See also *Gur Aryeh* here, who has an alternative reading of this Rashi, and addresses the issue of whether Yisro had two or seven names.

50. *Be'er BaSadeh*.

¹⁸ So Moshe went and returned to Yesser, his father-in-law, and said to him, “Let me go, please, and I shall return to my brethren who are in Egypt, and see if they are still alive.” And Yisro said to Moshe, “Go to peace.”

¹⁹ Hashem said to Moshe in Midyan, “Go, return to Egypt, for all the men who seek your life have died.”

²⁰ So Moshe took his wife and sons, mounted them on the donkey,

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מי הם — Who were they who wanted to kill Moshe? **דָּתָן וְאֶבְרָם — Dassan and Aviram.** They were the ones who had previously tried to have Moshe executed by informing on him to Pharaoh (above, 2:11-15; Rashi to 2:15).

This cannot mean that they actually died by this time, since the Torah clearly speaks of Dassan and Aviram’s later participation in Korach’s rebellion (*Bamidbar* 16:1). Rashi therefore explains:

חַיִּים הָיוּ — Now in fact, **they were** still **alive** at that point, and so it does not mean literally that they died; **אֶלֶּא שְׂיָרְדוּ מִנְכֶּסֶיהֶם —** rather, **they had lost their possessions,** **וְהָעֲנִי חָשׁוּב כְּמֵת —** and the Torah considers them to have died, since **a poor man is considered as dead**^[51] (*Shemos Rabbah* 5:4; *Nedarim* 64b).

20. עַל הַחֲמֹר — ON THE DONKEY.

The word הַחֲמֹר, “the” donkey (instead of חֲמֹר, “a” donkey) implies a specific donkey referred to elsewhere.^[52] Which donkey is meant?

הַחֲמֹר הַמְיוֹחָד — The donkey upon which Moshe traveled was **the** previously **designated donkey:** **הוּא —** **הַחֲמֹר שֶׁחָבֵשׁ אֲבָרָהָם לְעֵקֶדֶת יִצְחָק —** This was the same **donkey that Avraham saddled to ride to the Akeidah of Yitzchak;**^[53] **וְהוּא שֶׁעֲתִיד מֶלֶךְ הַמָּשִׁיחַ לְהִגָּלוֹת עָלָיו —** and it is also [the donkey] upon which the King Mashiach will be revealed, **שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר “עֲנִי וְרֹכֵב עַל חֲמֹר” —** as it says in describing Mashiach (*Zechariah* 9:9): **a humble man, riding on a donkey**^[54] (*Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* §31).

51. This was pertinent to Moshe’s safety, because one who has lost his money will have lost his influence and power and would no longer pose a threat to Moshe. [This explains why we do not ascribe to Dassan and Aviram the other conditions about which the Gemara (*Nedarim* 64b) says are equivalent to death: blindness, *tzaraas*, and childlessness. Those conditions are considered as death in certain ways, but they would not affect the ability to harm Moshe (*Gur Aryeh*; see there for further discussion). For other reasons and further discussion about why the other three conditions could not apply to Dassan and Aviram, see *Ran*, and *Tosafos*, *Nedarim* 7b; *Rosh* *ibid.* 64b.] See first Insight.

52. *Imrei Shefer. Be’er BaSadeh* notes that the Torah

did not have to identify what animal Moshe used at all; the fact that it does points us to some lesson. This is especially so considering that a donkey is regarded as an undignified mode of transportation (see *Megillah* 9a).

53. *Avraham woke up early in the morning and he saddled his donkey* (*Bereishis* 22:3).

54. This does not mean literally that the same animal that Avraham rode was the one that Moshe used, and the one that Mashiach will ride upon. Rather, Rashi is teaching that Avraham, Moshe, and Mashiach share a similar mission and their means of arriving at it has a significant commonality, represented by the donkey (*Gur Aryeh*; cf. *Midrash Talpiyos* ערך חמור). See second Insight.

❖ **Poverty Is Compared to Death** Why is a poor man considered as though dead? *Gur Aryeh* explains that to be fully alive, one must be self-sustaining, not dependent upon others for one’s existence. This is why a spring whose water wells up on its own from under the ground is called מַיִם חַיִּים, *living water* (see *Shir HaShirim* 4:15), for it flows of its own accord and needs no other source of water to feed and sustain it.

When the Torah speaks of helping a person avoid poverty, it says (*Vayikra* 25:36), וְחֵי אֲחִיד עִמָּךְ, *and let your brother live with you* (see Rashi there, v. 35). Since a poor man requires the support of others to live, he lacks an element of life, and is thus comparable to the dead. By preventing his collapse into poverty, we allow him to continue “living.”

❖ **The Meaning of the “Donkey”** *Maharal* (in *Gur Aryeh* here, *Gevuros Hashem*, Ch. 29, and *Derashos Maharal, Derush Al HaTorah*, Mevo 10) presents a deep and wide-ranging explanation of the concepts of this teaching. One aspect follows:

The donkey always represents the idea of the material world, in contrast with the world of the intellect (the

וַיָּשָׁב אֶרְצָה מִצְרַיִם וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת־מִטָּה הָאֱלֹהִים בְּיָדוֹ: כֹּא וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּלִבְתָּךְ לָשׁוּב מִצְרַיִם רְאֵה כָּל־הַמִּפְתִּים אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַתִּי בְּיָדְךָ וַעֲשִׂיתָם לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה וְאֲנִי אֲחֻזֵּק אֶת־לְבֹו וְלֹא יִשְׁלַח אֶת־הָעָם: כב וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־פַּרְעֹה

וַיָּשָׁב אֶרְצָה מִצְרַיִם וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת־מִטָּה הָאֱלֹהִים בְּיָדוֹ: כֹּא וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּלִבְתָּךְ לָשׁוּב מִצְרַיִם רְאֵה כָּל־הַמִּפְתִּים אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַתִּי בְּיָדְךָ וַעֲשִׂיתָם לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה וְאֲנִי אֲחֻזֵּק אֶת־לְבֹו וְלֹא יִשְׁלַח אֶת־הָעָם: כב וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־פַּרְעֹה

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יִשְׁרָאֵל שִׁיחֲמִינוּ לוֹ, וְלֹא מִלִּינוּ שֶׁעָשָׂה לִפְנֵי (שמות רבה שם ו). אֵלֶּה מוֹפְתִים שֶׁאֵין עֲתִיד לָשׁוּב צִדְקָה צְמִרָס, כְּמוֹ "כִּי יִדְּצֶר אֱלֹהִים פַּרְעֹה וְגו'" (והלן ז, ט). וְאֵל פְּתִימָה טַל אֲשֶׁר כְּתִיב "אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַתִּי", שֶׁכֵּן מִשְׁמֵנו, כְּשֶׁתִּדְּבַר עִמּוֹ כְּדָר שְׁמַתִּים צִדְקָה: (כב) וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל פַּרְעֹה. כְּשֶׁתִּשְׁמַע שֶׁלְּבֹו קִזָּק וַיִּמְאָן לִשְׁלַח אֶמּוֹר לוֹ כֵּן:

וַיָּשָׁב אֶרְצָה מִצְרַיִם, וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת מִטָּה. חֵין מוֹקְדָם וּמֵאוּחַר מִדּוּקְדָּקִים צְמִרָס: (כא) בְּלִבְתָּךְ לָשׁוּב מִצְרַיִם וְגו'. דַּע שֶׁעַל מִנֵּת כֵּן תִּלְךָ, שֶׁתִּהְיֶה גְדוֹר צְלִיחוֹתִי לַעֲשׂוֹת כָּל מוֹפְתֵי לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה וְלֹא תִירָא מִמֶּנּוּ: אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַתִּי בְּיָדְךָ. לֹא טַל שֶׁלֹּא חֹתֹת הָאֱמוּנוֹת לַמַּעֲלָה, שֶׁהֵרִי לֹא לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה נִיָּה לַעֲשׂוֹתִים אֵלֶּה לִפְנֵי

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□ **וַיָּשָׁב אֶרְצָה מִצְרַיִם וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת מִטָּה הָאֱלֹהִים בְּיָדוֹ — AND [MOSHE] RETURNED TO THE LAND OF EGYPT; AND MOSHE TOOK THE STAFF OF GOD IN HIS HAND.**

The order of the phrases in this verse seems to be reversed: Surely Moshe first took his staff from Midyan and only then returned to Egypt! Rashi explains:

“Earlier” and “later” events are not recorded in their exact chronological order in Scripture. In this verse, the meaning is that Moshe first took his staff and then returned to Egypt.^[55]

21. בְּלִבְתָּךְ לָשׁוּב מִצְרַיִם וְגו' — HASHEM SAID TO MOSHE, “WHEN YOU GO TO RETURN TO EGYPT, SEE ALL THE WONDERS... AND PERFORM THEM BEFORE PHARAOH.”

If Hashem meant only to tell Moshe to make sure to do all the wonders before Pharaoh, He should have said, “When you return to Egypt, see...” The words, “When you go to return to Egypt,” imply that this is an instruction that applies even now, at the beginning of his journey. What is that instruction?^[56] Rashi explains:

55. The Torah will sometimes first convey the main point of the passage, and then go back to fill in other details, as it does in this verse (*Be'er Yitzchak*). Sometimes, the Torah will specifically state something out of chronological order to teach a point; see *Maharil Diskin* for an exposition of what the Torah wished to convey with the non-chronological order in our verse.

[For a discussion of why Rashi uses the words “earlier” and “later” are not exact in Scripture, instead of the more common expression, “there is no ‘earlier’ and ‘later’ in the Torah (e.g., Rashi to *Bereishis* 6:3; 35:29; below, 31:18), see *Teshuvos Beis Yechezkel* §20.]

56. *Be'er Mayim Chayim*.

Hebrew root חמר means *material*). Riding upon a donkey represents an elevation over, and a conquering of, the mundane and the material.

Avraham, Moshe, and Mashiach represent three different transformational points in history, where the world moved or will move from lengthy periods of darkness to the light of knowledge of Hashem. Before Avraham, the world was saturated with idolatry. Avraham introduced the belief in One Creator of the world, founding a nation that would be dedicated to serving Him. This is the deeper meaning of the description of Avraham as one who “saddled his donkey” to ride upon it: Avraham rose above the donkey-like ignorance of the world and elevated it with his teachings. Moshe’s mission, as well, was to introduce the Torah to a world that was without Hashem’s law. At the outset of Moshe’s mission, our verse notes that he “rode upon the donkey,” as he set out to elevate the world above the emptiness prior to the Giving of the Torah. Finally, Mashiach will raise the world out of its current state of material darkness and usher in an era of universal acknowledgment of Hashem. In this sense, the “donkey” of Avraham, Moshe, and Mashiach are the same; it represents the common material darkness that preceded each of these seminal figures, and over which each would dominate and thereby elevate the world around him.

and returned to the land of Egypt; and Moshe took the staff of God in his hand.
²¹ Hashem said to Moshe, “When you go to return to Egypt, see all the wonders that I have put in your hand and perform them before Pharaoh; but I shall strengthen his heart and he will not send out the people. ²² You shall say to Pharaoh,

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וְעַתָּה יָצֵאתָ בְּיָדְךָ — As you set out on your journey, **know that you are going** as My emissary on this condition: שְׁתֵּהיָא גִבּוֹר בְּשִׁלְיָחוֹתַי לַעֲשׂוֹת כָּל מוֹפְתֵי לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה — That you will be brave in My mission to perform all My wonders before Pharaoh, וְלֹא תִירָא מִמּוֹנִי — and not be afraid of him!^[57]

□ אֲשֶׁר שְׂמַתִּי בְיָדְךָ — **ALL THE WONDERS THAT I HAVE PUT IN YOUR HAND.**

Rashi clarifies which wonders are meant here:

לֹא עַל שְׁלֹשׁ אוֹתוֹת הָאֲמִוּרוֹת לְמַעַל — Hashem was **not** talking here about the three signs mentioned above (vv. 2-9),^[58] שֶׁהָרִי לֹא לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה צִוָּה לַעֲשׂוֹתָם — for [Hashem] had not commanded him to perform those before Pharaoh; אֲלָא לִפְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׂיאֲמִינוּ לוֹ — rather, Hashem had commanded that they be performed **before the Children of Israel, so that they would believe him** that he was sent by Hashem. וְלֹא מִצִּיּוֹ שֶׁשָּׂאֵם לִפְנֵי — And indeed, we do not find in the verses below that [Moshe] performed those three signs in front of [Pharaoh] (*Shemos Rabbah* 5:6). אֲלָא מוֹפְתִים שֶׁאֵינִי עֹתִיד לַשּׁוּם — **such as that which Hashem told Moshe below (7:9), When Pharaoh will speak to you saying, “Provide a wonder for yourselves,” you shall say to Aharon, “Take your staff and cast it down before Pharaoh — it will become a snake!”**^[59]

וְאַל תִּתְמַה עַל אֲשֶׁר כָּתוּב “אֲשֶׁר שְׂמַתִּי” — And even though, according to this approach, the wonders mentioned in our verse were not yet introduced, **do not be puzzled that this phrase is written** in the past tense, אֲשֶׁר שְׂמַתִּי, *that I have put in your hand*, שֶׁכֵּן מִשְׁמָעוֹ — **for this is what it means: בְּשִׁתְּדָבָר** — “When you will speak with [Pharaoh] and perform those miracles, **I will have already put [the wonders] in your hands**”; by that time I will have already commanded you to perform those wonders. Hashem was speaking to Moshe now, before he left for Egypt, and was telling him: You must undertake to be strong and to do before Pharaoh the miracles that I will have given to you by that time.

22. וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל פַּרְעֹה — YOU SHALL SAY TO PHARAOH, “SO SAID HASHEM, MY FIRSTBORN SON IS ISRAEL.”

A simple reading implies that this was to be Moshe’s opening statement to Pharaoh. But the next verse says that Moshe was to tell Pharaoh, “*but you refuse to send him out,*” and Pharaoh had not yet refused to do so!^[60] Rashi therefore explains:

בְּשִׁתְּשִׁמְעַתְּ שִׁלְבוֹ חֶזֶק וַיִּמָּאֵן לְשַׁלַּח — Hashem was telling Moshe: After you initially ask Pharaoh to let the Jewish people leave Egypt,^[61] **when you hear in his response that his heart is hardened and he refuses to send them out,** אָמַר לוֹ כֵּן — **then say to him the following:**

57. Since Moshe had been reluctant to accept this mission, Hashem made it clear to him before he started on his journey toward Egypt that, having accepted it, he must undertake to perform the entire mission fully and bravely before Pharaoh, whatever Pharaoh’s reaction would be (see *Ramban*).

58. I.e., Moshe’s staff turning into a snake, his hand turning leprous, and the water turning to blood.

59. Although our verse speaks of wonders in plural and

that verse discusses only the single wonder of the staff, there were, in fact, two parts to that wonder, since first Aharon’s staff turned into a serpent, and then the serpent turned back into a staff (*Nachalas Yaakov*).

60. *Be’er Yitzchak*.

61. As alluded to in the next verse, where Hashem instructs Moshe to further tell Pharaoh: So I have said to you, “Send out My son that he may serve Me” (*Leket Bahir*; see note 65 below).

בְּדֶגֶן אָמַר יְיָ בְּרִי בּוֹכְרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
בְּגִי וְאַמְרִית לָךְ שְׁלַח יֵת בְּרִי וְיַפְלַח
קִדְמִי וּמִסְרֵב אֶת לְשִׁלְחוֹתָהּ
הָא אֲנִי קָטִיל יֵת בְּרַךְ בּוֹכְרָהּ:
כְּד וְהָיָה בְּאַרְחָא בְּבֵית מְבֵתָא

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה בְּנִי בְכֹרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל: כַּג וְאָמַר אֵלָיךְ
שְׁלַח אֶת־בְּנִי וַיַּעֲבֹדֵנִי וַתִּמָּאֵן לְשַׁלְחוֹ הִנֵּה
אֲנֹכִי הֵיכָל אֶת־בְּנִי בְכֹרִי: כְּד וַיְהִי בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּמִלּוֹן

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שֶׁהָיָה קֶשֶׁה. וְזֶה הוּא שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר צִאִיז (לו, כב) "הֵן אֵל
יִשְׂרָאֵל צִאִיז צִלְחוֹ", לְפִיכָךְ "מִי כְּמֹהוּ מוֹרָה". צִאִיז וְדָם הַמִּצְבָּקֶשׁ
לְהַקְסָם מִחֲצִירוֹ מֵעֵלִים אֶת דְּצִרְיוֹ, שֶׁלֹּא יִצְבָּקֶשׁ הָאֵלֶּה,
אֲבָל הַקְדוֹשׁ צִרוֹךְ הוּא "צִאִיז צִלְחוֹ" וְאִין יְכוּלֵת לְהַמְלִיט
מִדּוֹ כִּי אֵס צִאִיזוֹ אֵלָיו, לְפִיכָךְ הוּא מוֹרָהוּ וּמִתְרָה זֶה
לְצִיז (שְׁמוֹת רַבָּה ט, טז: (כְּד) וַיְהִי מֶשֶׁה בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּמִלּוֹן:

בְּנִי בְכֹרִי. לְשׁוֹן גְּדוּלָּה, כְּמוֹ "לֵךְ אֲנִי צָכוֹר אֶתְּנֶנּוּ" (תהלים פט, כח). זֶהוּ פְּשׁוּטוֹ. וּמִדְרָשׁוֹ, כֵּאֵן חָתָם הַקְדוֹשׁ
צִרוֹךְ הוּא עַל מְכִירַת הַבְּכוֹרָה שֶׁלָּקַח יַעֲקֹב מֵעִשָׂו
(וּבְרָאשִׁית רַבָּה סג, יד; שְׁמוֹת רַבָּה ה, ז): (כַּג) וְאָמַר אֵלָיךְ
צִאִיזוֹתוֹ עַל מְקוֹם שְׁלַח אֶת בְּנִי וְגו': הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי
הֵיכָל וְגו'. הֵיא מְכָה אֶתְרֹנָהּ, וְזֶה הַתְּרָהוּ תַּחֲלָה מִפְּנֵי

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□ **בְּנִי בְכֹרִי** — “SO SAID HASHEM, MY FIRSTBORN SON IS ISRAEL.”

Clearly, the description, “firstborn son,” cannot be understood literally. Rashi explains the meaning of this term here, first according to the simple meaning and then with an Aggadic approach:

כְּמוֹ “אֵף אֲנִי בְכוֹר” — The term *בְּכוֹר*, *firstborn*, is meant here as **an expression of greatness**, **כְּמוֹ “אֵף אֲנִי בְכוֹר”** — like this word is used in *Tehillim* (89:28), where Hashem says of David HaMelech, **I will also make him a “firstborn”** (בְּכוֹר), *the supreme over the earth’s kings*.^[62] **זֶהוּ פְּשׁוּטוֹ** — This is [the verse’s] simple meaning.

וּמִדְרָשׁוֹ — And its Midrashic interpretation is that “firstborn” may be understood according to its literal sense, as follows: **כֵּאֵן חָתָם הַקְדוֹשׁ הוּא עַל מְכִירַת הַבְּכוֹרָה שֶׁלָּקַח יַעֲקֹב מֵעִשָׂו** — Here, where He referred to the Jewish people as “My firstborn son,” **the Holy One, blessed is He, “signed onto”** and affirmed **the sale of the *bechorah* (birthright) that Yaakov had purchased from Eisav**^[63] (*Bereishis Rabbah* 63:14; *Shemos Rabbah* 5:7).

62. Hashem’s promise that, in the future, he will make David a בְּכוֹר clearly refers to a *status* that he will later attain. The second half of the verse — *supreme over the earth’s kings* — clarifies this meaning.

63. By calling the Jewish people *My firstborn*, Hashem confirmed the transfer of the “firstborn” status from Eisav to Yaakov. See Insight.

§ **The Bechorah and the Exodus** Several centuries had passed since Yaakov bought the *bechorah* from Eisav.

Why did Hashem “sign on” and confirm this sale only now, when Moshe approached Pharaoh with the demand to free the Jewish people? Some commentators explain that it relates to the reason that Moshe gave for his demand (in the following verse): *Send out My son that he may serve Me*. “Serving” Hashem in this context refers to the sacrifices that the Jewish people would offer when they left Egypt (see below, 10:24-26). The reason that Yaakov purchased the *bechorah* from Eisav in the first place was to allow for Yaakov to be the one to bring sacrifices to Hashem, since at that time, this privilege was reserved for the firstborn (Rashi to *Bereishis* 25:31). It was when Moshe demanded that the Jewish people be allowed to sacrifice for Hashem that it was necessary for Hashem to confirm this sale, allowing the Jewish people to be the ones to offer Him these sacrifices (*Nachalas Yaakov* and *Tzeidah LaDerech*, based on the language of *Shemos Rabbah* 5:7).

Others explain that the confirmation of the *bechorah* at this point relates to the conclusion of the exile and the beginning of the Jewish people’s journey to Eretz Yisrael. The *bechorah* was more than simply a firstborn status — it was a birthright to the special status as the nation of Hashem, promised to Avraham, and to Yitzchak after him. Theoretically, this privilege could have gone to either one of Yitzchak’s sons, Yaakov or Eisav. The matter depended on which of them would be the “*bechor*,” the one who would be chosen — and would accept the responsibility — to carry on this mission. Indeed, it was soon after Yaakov received the blessings from Yitzchak as the *bechor* that Yitzchak told him: *May [Hashem] grant you the blessing of Avraham to you and to your offspring with you, that you may possess the land of your sojourns which God gave to Avraham* (*Bereishis* 28:4).

But this gift came with a debt that had to first be paid. Hashem had told Avraham that his descendants would receive Eretz Yisrael, but first, *your descendants shall be sojourners in a land not their own, and they will enslave them and they will oppress them* (*Bereishis* 15:13). Eisav wanted nothing to do with this liability, and he willingly gave up any right he had to Eretz Yisrael just to be free of the “debt” of exile that had to be “paid” to acquire it (see Rashi to *Bereishis* 36:7). Yaakov embraced the mission of carrying on the work of his forefathers, together with the

‘So said Hashem, My firstborn son is Israel. ²³ So I have said to you, Send out My son that he may serve Me — but you refuse to send him out; behold, I shall kill your firstborn son.’”

²⁴ When he was on the way, in the lodging place,

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23. וְאָמַר אֱלֹהִים — SO I HAVE SAID TO YOU, SEND OUT MY SON.

Hashem had never spoken to Pharaoh, so the phrase, *I have said to you...*, cannot mean “I, Hashem, have said to you.” Rather, it must mean, “I, Moshe, have said to you.” But how could Moshe himself have said, “Send out *my* son that he may serve *me*”? Rashi explains:^[64]

בְּשִׁלְחוֹתוֹ שֶׁל מֶקוֹם — so I (Moshe) have said to You **on behalf of the omnipresent, Hashem:** שְׁלַח אֶת “**SEND OUT MY SON THAT HE MAY SERVE ME.**”^[65]

□ הִנֵּה אֲנִכִּי הֹרֵג וְגו' — **BEHOLD, I SHALL KILL YOUR FIRSTBORN SON.**

Hashem would not kill Pharaoh's firstborn son until *Makkas Bechoros*, which came only after nine other plagues. Rashi explains why Hashem mentioned it now:

הָיָא מִכָּה אַחֲרוֹנָה וְכֵּה הִתְרַחוּ וְכֵּה הָיָא מִכָּה — This refers to the **last plague**, *Makkas Bechoros*, where Pharaoh's son and all the other Egyptian firstborns died, **yet [Hashem] warned [Pharaoh] about it first** מִפְּנֵי קֶשֶׁה — **because it was the harshest** of all the *makkos*.

Rashi notes that this practice demonstrates Hashem's greatness:

וְזֶה הוּא שְׁנֵאמַר בְּאִיּוֹב “הֵן אֵל יִשְׁגִּיב בְּכַחוֹ” לְפִיכָךְ “מִי כִמְהוּ מוֹדֵה” — This is an example of **what is said in the Book of Iyov (36:22), Behold, God is exalted in His might, therefore, who can instruct as He does.** The verse means: בָּשָׂר וְדָם הִמְבַּקֵּשׁ לְהִנָּקֵם מִחֲבֵירוֹ — **When a man of flesh and blood seeks to take vengeance from his fellow,** מְעַלִּים אֶת דְּבָרָיו שְׁלֵא יִבְקֵשׁ הַעֲלָה — **he conceals his plan so that [the intended victim] will not be able to seek a way to save himself from the planned vengeance.** אֲבָל וְאֵין יְכוּלָה — **But the Holy One, blessed is He, is exalted in His might,** הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא “יִשְׁגִּיב בְּכַחוֹ” — **and there is no possibility of escaping His reach** and avoiding His punishment, **other than by repenting and returning to Him;** לְפִיכָךְ הוּא מוֹדֵהוּ וּמְתַרְהוּ בּוֹ לְשׁוֹב — **therefore He does not hide His plans, rather, He instructs and warns [a sinner] of the impending punishment,** so that he will take heart **to repent** (*Shemos Rabbah* 9:9). So, too, here, Hashem, in His mercy, immediately revealed to Pharaoh the harshest punishment that He had planned for him, since Pharaoh would not be able to avoid it unless he would repent and let the Jewish people go.

24. וַיְהִי — “VAYEHI” ON THE WAY, IN THE LODGING PLACE, HASHEM ENCOUNTERED HIM.

The word וַיְהִי is usually translated as, “it happened.” Thus, וַיְהִי בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּמִלּוֹן would mean, “It happened on the way, in the lodging place.” But if so, the verse does not flow properly, since the next words, וַיִּפְגְּשֵׁהוּ ה', Hashem encountered him, are not connected grammatically to וַיְהִי, but are a separate clause.^[66] Rashi therefore explains the verse differently:

“בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּמִלּוֹן” מֹשֶׁה — **WHEN HE — Moshe — WAS ON THE WAY, IN THE LODGING PLACE, HASHEM ENCOUNTERED HIM.** The word וַיְהִי means, “When he was [on the way],” not “It happened [on the way].”

64. See *Ba'er Heitev*; *Be'er Yitzchak*.

65. Thus, Hashem instructed Moshe (in the previous verse and this one) to say to Pharaoh as follows: So said Hashem, “My firstborn son is Israel!” So I (Moshe) have said to you [on Hashem's behalf], “Send out My

son that he may serve Me — but you refuse to send him out; behold, I shall kill your firstborn son” (*Ba'er Heitev*; *Be'er Yitzchak*).

66. If this were a direct continuation, describing what happened, it would say: וַיְהִי בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּמִלּוֹן פָּגַשׁ אוֹתוֹ ה', and it

burden of paying off the debt, and he thereby gained the privilege of eventually acquiring the Promised Land.

Moshe was now standing at the end of this bitter exile, the debt having finally been paid. Therefore, *this* is when Hashem confirmed the special *bechor* status of the Jewish people: They have paid the debt that the *bechorah* entails, so they are ready to leave Egypt, to accept the mission of Avraham, and journey to the land of their forefathers. *My firstborn son is Israel... Send out My son that he may serve Me!* (*Be'er BaSadeh, Ohr HaChamah*; see also *Beis HaLevi* here).

וַעֲרַע בַּהּ מִלְאָכָא דִּי וּבְעָא לְמַקְטִלָּה:
כה וְסִיבִית צְפוּרָה טַנְרָא וּגְזֵרַת יֵת עֲרֵלַת
בְּרָה וְקִרְיַבִּת לְקַדְמוּהִי וְאַמְרַת אָרִי
בְּדִמָּא דְמַהֲלֵתָא הָרִין אֲתִיבָה חֲתָנָא לָנָא:

וַיִּפְגְּשׁוּהוּ יְהוָה וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַמִּיתוֹ: כה וַתִּקַּח
צִפּוֹרָה צֹר וַתִּכְרַת אֶת־עֲרֵלַת בְּנָהּ וַתִּגַּע
לְרַגְלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר בִּי חֲתַן־דָּמִים אֵתָה לִּי:

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הַמִּלָּךְ נִעְשָׂה פֶּמִין נָחַשׁ וּבּוֹלְטוֹ מִרְאֵשׁוֹ וְעַד יְרִכִּיו, וְחוּזַר
וּבּוֹלְטוֹ מִרְגְּלָיו וְעַד חוּתוֹ מִקּוֹס, הַבִּינָה לְפִוְרָה שֶׁצָּבֵיל
הַמִּינִה הוּא (שְׁמוֹת רַבָּה ה, ח; נְדָרִים לז.ג.). (כה) וַתִּגַּע
לְרַגְלָיו. הַשְׁלִיכְתּוֹ לַפְּנֵי רַגְלָיו שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה (יְרוּשָׁלַיִם נְדָרִים ג, ט):
וַתֹּאמֶר. עַל צָנָה: בִּי חֲתַן דָּמִים אֵתָה לִּי. חֲתָה הִיִּתָּ
גֹּרֵם לְהִיֵּת הַחֲתָן שְׁלִי נִרְלַח עֲלֶיהָ. הוֹרָג אִישִׁי חֲתָה לִּי:

וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַמִּיתוֹ. לְמַשָּׁה, לְפִי שֶׁלֹּא מִל אֶת אֱלִיעֶזֶר בְּנוֹ,
וְעַל שֶׁנִּתְרַשַׁל נִעְנֵשׁ עוֹנֵשׁ מִיתָה. תִּנְיָא: אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹסֵ: חָס
וְשָׁלוֹם לֹא יִתְרַשַׁל, אֲלֵא אָמַר: אֲמוּל וְחָלָא לְדָרְךָ, סָבְנָה
הִיא לְתִינוּק עַד שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים. אֲמוּל וְחָשָׂה שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים,
הַקְדוּשׁ צְרוּךְ הוּא לְגוֹי "לֶךְ שָׁב מִזְרָעִים" (וַעֲלִי פְסוּק יט).
וּמִפְּנֵי מָה נִעְנֵשׁ מִיתָה, לְפִי שֶׁנִּתְעַסֵּק בְּמִלּוֹן תַּחֲלָה. וְהִיא

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□ וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַמִּיתוֹ — *HASHEM ENCOUNTERED HIM AND SOUGHT TO KILL HIM.*

That is, He sought to kill Moshe.^[67] — לְמַשָּׁה

But why did Moshe deserve punishment?

— **Because he did not circumcise his son, Eliezer, who had been born shortly before Hashem commanded Moshe to return to Egypt,**^[68] **and because [Moshe] delayed fulfillment of the mitzvah, he was deemed liable to the death penalty.**^[69]

Rashi cites a teaching of the Sages that clarifies what Moshe's error was:^[70]

— **It was taught in a Baraisa: R' Yose said: Heaven forbid! [Moshe] did not simply neglect to circumcise his son.** — **Rather, Eliezer was born right before Moshe set out to Egypt, and Moshe was then faced with two conflicting obligations: the mitzvah of *milah* and the mitzvah to go to Egypt at Hashem's command. In weighing these obligations, he said to himself: **Should I first circumcise my son and then immediately set out on the road to Egypt?** — **I cannot do that, since the first three days following *milah* are dangerous for the baby, and travel may endanger his life.**^[71] — **Should I first circumcise my son, and then wait three days to allow the wound to heal before****

happened that on the way, in the lodging place, Hashem encountered him. I.e., the verb, פָּגַשׁ, would not have a prefix. Since the next phrase begins with a *vav-yud* prefix, וַיִּפְגְּשׁוּהוּ, it is a separate clause, not connected to the word וַיְהִי (*Gur Aryeh*).

67. The Gemara (*Nedarim* 31b-32a) cites two opinions as to whether the verse means that an angel sent by Hashem sought to kill Moshe or to kill the child mentioned in the next verse. Rashi explains our verse in accordance with the opinion that the intended victim was Moshe, as this fits better with the plain meaning, since "him" seems to refer back to Moshe, who was mentioned earlier (*Mizrachi*). [Rashi mentions the angel later, and in some texts of Rashi, the angel is mentioned here as well; see *Sifsei Yeshe'inim* Appendix.]

68. Eliezer was Moshe's second son, and as is evident from the next verse, Moshe's wife, Tzipporah, had recently given birth to a son. [Both of Moshe's sons must have been born before he returned to Egypt, since Tzipporah turned back and did not accompany Moshe to Egypt, yet when she later came to meet Moshe she already had two sons (see Rashi to 18:3 below). Thus, Rashi says that the uncircumcised son was Moshe's second son, Eliezer. See, however, *Targum Yonasan*, who writes that our verse

refers to Moshe's elder son, Gershom, who had been born some time earlier but had not been circumcised.]

69. Even prior to the Giving of the Torah, the offspring of Avraham were obligated to perform the mitzvah of *milah* (*Bereishis* 17:9-14). Although the punishment for neglecting this mitzvah is not usually death, Moshe was treated more stringently because he was extraordinarily close to Hashem, as the Gemara (*Yevamos* 121b) writes, הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְדַקְדָּק עִם סְבִיבֵי כְחוֹט הַשְּׁעָרָה, *the Holy One, blessed is He, is exacting with those who surround Him* (the righteous who are close to Him) *even to the extent of a hairsbreadth* (*Maharsha* to *Nedarim* 32a; see there for another approach).

70. The following teaching also sheds light on the wording of our verse; see note 73 below.

71. This follows the general principle that all mitzvot of the Torah (as well as most prohibitions) are suspended in the face of a danger to life. [Even though this principle was taught only later in the Torah (see *Yoma* 85b for the source), Moshe understood it intuitively before the Torah was given (*Gur Aryeh*; see also *Mizrachi*; *Divrei David*; *Yefeh To'ar*; for further discussion, see *Maharsha* to *Nedarim* 31b and *Parashas Derachim* §2 at length).]

Hashem encountered him and sought to kill him.

²⁵ *Tzipporah took a rock and cut off the foreskin of her son and touched it to his feet; and she said, “For you are a [cause of] bridegroom’s blood to me!”*

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traveling? “לך שב מצרים” — **הקדוש ברוך הוא צונו** — I cannot do that either, for **the Holy One, blessed is He, commanded me, “Go, return to Egypt”** (v. 19 above). Moshe therefore delayed his son’s circumcision until later and set out on his journey.^[72] **ומפני מה נענש מיתה** — **But** since this is a valid reason for delaying the *milah*, **why was [Moshe] liable to the death penalty?** **לפי שנתעסק במלון תחלה** — It is **because** when Moshe arrived at the lodging place, **he first busied himself with lodging arrangements** and did not immediately circumcise his son.^[73]

והיה המלאך נעשה כמין נחש ובלעו מראשו ועד ירכיו — At that point, **the angel** that Hashem sent confronted Moshe and **took on a form like a snake and was swallowing him**, first **from his head until his thighs**, **וחזר ובלעו מרגליו ועד אותו מקום** — **and then** releasing him and **again swallowing him**, this time **from his feet up until that place** of the *milah*. **הבינה צפורה שבשביל המילה הוא** — Upon seeing this, **Tzipporah understood that it was because of the mitzvah of *milah*** that he was being punished (*Shemos Rabbah* 5:8; *Nedarim* 31b-32a).

25. ונתגה לרגליו — TZIPPORAH... CUT OFF THE FORESKIN OF HER SON AND TOUCHED IT TO HIS FEET.

At whose feet did Tzipporah place the foreskin?^[74] Rashi clarifies:

השליכתו לפני רגליו של משה — **She threw it in front of Moshe’s feet**^[75] (*Yerushalmi Nedarim* 3:9).

□ **ותאמר — AND SHE SAID, “FOR YOU ARE ‘CHASSAN DAMIM’ TO ME!”**

Rashi clarifies whom Tzipporah was addressing:

על בנה — **She said of her son...**^[76]

□ **כי חתן דמים אתה לי — “FOR YOU ARE ‘CHASSAN DAMIM’ TO ME!”**

חתן means “bridegroom” and דמים means “blood.” Rashi explains what Tzipporah meant to say about her son, Eliezer, when she called him a חתן דמים:

אתה היית גורם להיות החתן שלי נרצח עליך — **“You have caused my bridegroom (חתן), Moshe, to be killed (הורג אישי אתה לי) on your account.”**^[77] And by saying, *you are a חתן דמים “to me,”* Tzipporah meant: **לי — To me, you, Eliezer, are considered a murderer of my husband**, for it is your lack of circumcision that caused the angel to come kill my husband.^[78]

72. Moshe reasoned that since Hashem knew that performing the *milah* would delay his trip to Egypt, and He nevertheless commanded him to go, Hashem must have meant that he should postpone the *milah*. Had Hashem meant for him to wait, Moshe reasoned, He would have commanded him after the three days had passed (*Shitah Mekubetzes*, *Nedarim* 31b).

73. This explains why the word במלון is mentioned in our verse. The verse could have said simply, *ויהי בדרך*, *When he was on the way*, Hashem encountered him, etc. (*Be’er Yitzchak*). [*Ran* (*Nedarim* 32a) writes that the words, בדרך במלון, *on the way, in the lodging place*, indicate that Moshe went directly from traveling to arranging his lodging, without taking care of anything else first, which points to an obligation that was neglected at that point, i.e., the *milah*.]

One may ask: Why was Moshe taken to task for not circumcising the baby at the lodging place when doing so would present him with the same dilemma that he faced earlier: either delay his mission three days or

travel the next day with a newly circumcised child, something life-threatening to the child!? Some commentators answer that this lodging place was close to Egypt, and the minimal travel that remained would not be dangerous for the baby. Moshe was therefore required to circumcise the child immediately upon arriving there, before making lodging arrangements (*Mizrachi*; *Ran* to *Nedarim* 32a; see *Gur Aryeh* for another approach).

74. *Yerushalmi Nedarim* 3:9 cites three opinions: the feet of the baby, of the angel, or of Moshe.

75. *Yerushalmi* there explains that Tzipporah did so to proclaim to the angel, הילך גזי חובך, “Here it is, your debt has been ‘cut’ and paid!” (see *Pnei Moshe* there).

76. i.e., she was not talking to Moshe.

77. דמים, literally, *blood*, is used here to mean *bloodshed*, or *murder*, as it is used in *Devarim* 22:8, ולא תשים, *so that you will not place bloodshed in your house*. See also *Yechezkel* 9:9.

78. At this point, Tzipporah thought that Moshe was

כו וַיִּרְף מִמֶּנּוּ אֶזְאָמְרָה חֲתָן דָּמִים לְמוֹלֶת: פ
 כז וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵךְ לִקְרֹאת מֹשֶׁה
 חֲמִידְבָּרָה וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּפְגְּשֵׁהוּ בְּהַר הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּשְׁק-לוֹ:
 כח וַיַּגֵּד מֹשֶׁה לְאַהֲרֹן אֵת כָּל-דִּבְרֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר
 שָׁלַח וְאֵת כָּל-הָאֲתָת אֲשֶׁר צִוָּהוּ: כט וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה
 וְאַהֲרֹן וַיֵּאֲסֹפוּ אֶת-כָּל-זִקְנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ל וַיַּדְבֵּר
 אַהֲרֹן אֵת כָּל-הַדִּבְרִים אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל-
 מֹשֶׁה וַיַּעַשׂ הָאֲתָת לְעֵינֵי הָעָם: לא וַיֵּאֲמֶן הָעָם
 וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כִּי-פָקֵד יְהוָה אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכִי רָאָה
 אֶת-עֲנָנִים וַיִּקְדּוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ: שביעי [ה] א וְאַחֲרָיִם בָּאוּ
 מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-פְּרָעָה כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה

כו וַיִּרְף מִמֶּנּוּ אֶזְאָמְרָה חֲתָן דָּמִים לְמוֹלֶת: פ
 כז וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵךְ לִקְרֹאת מֹשֶׁה
 חֲמִידְבָּרָה וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּפְגְּשֵׁהוּ בְּהַר הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּשְׁק-לוֹ:
 כח וַיַּגֵּד מֹשֶׁה לְאַהֲרֹן אֵת כָּל-דִּבְרֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר
 שָׁלַח וְאֵת כָּל-הָאֲתָת אֲשֶׁר צִוָּהוּ: כט וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה
 וְאַהֲרֹן וַיֵּאֲסֹפוּ אֶת-כָּל-זִקְנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ל וַיַּדְבֵּר
 אַהֲרֹן אֵת כָּל-הַדִּבְרִים אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל-
 מֹשֶׁה וַיַּעַשׂ הָאֲתָת לְעֵינֵי הָעָם: לא וַיֵּאֲמֶן הָעָם
 וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כִּי-פָקֵד יְהוָה אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכִי רָאָה
 אֶת-עֲנָנִים וַיִּקְדּוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ: שביעי [ה] א וְאַחֲרָיִם בָּאוּ
 מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-פְּרָעָה כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה

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כמו "ואמר פרעה לבני ישראל" (להלן יד, ג). ואנקלוס
 תרגם "דמים" על דם המילה: (א) ואחר באו משה
 ואהרן וגו'. חבל הזקנים שנשמו פולס קודם שהגיעו לפלסין,
 משה ואהרן עד שנשמו פולס קודם שהגיעו לפלסין,

(כו) וירף ממנו אז אמרה חתן דמים למולת.
 שכל המילה בא להורגו: אמרה חתן דמים למולת.
 חתני היה נקרא על דבר המילה: ° למולת. על דבר
 המולות. שם דבר הוא, והלמן"ד משמשת צלשון "על",

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26. וַיִּרְף — *SO HE LET GO.*

That is, **the angel** let go **OF HIM**, i.e., Moshe (*Shemos Rabbah* 5:8).

אָז — *THEN SHE SAID.*

Rashi explains what the word אז, *then*, implies:

— **הבינה שעל המילה בא להורגו** — It was only *then*, when the angel released Moshe, that **she understood that it was for the fulfillment of *milah* that [the angel] had come to kill him.**^[79]

אֶמְרָה חֲתָן דָּמִים לְמוֹלֶת — *SHE SAID, A "CHASSAN DAMIM LAMULOS."*

In the previous verse, Tzipporah had called her son, חֲתָן דָּמִים, meaning, "*the murderer of her bridegroom.*" Rashi now clarifies what Tzipporah meant in our verse, and whom she was currently calling חֲתָן דָּמִים לְמוֹלֶת:

being punished for delaying the *milah* and would be killed even though she had now circumcised the child; see following note.

79. Originally, when the angel came to attack Moshe, Tzipporah thought that he had come to punish Moshe for the sin of delaying the child's *milah*, and that nothing could be done about it. At that point she said to the child, "To me you are considered a murderer of my husband" (as Rashi explained earlier). Now that the angel had let go of Moshe, she understood that the angel did not come to impose punishment, but rather, to bring their attention to the *milah* so that they should perform the mitzvah! As soon as the mitzvah was done, the angel therefore let go of Moshe. Rashi's words, הבינה שעל המילה בא להורגו, *she understood that for the milah [the angel] had come to kill him*, mean that

she now understood that the angel did not come for the punishment, but for the *milah* itself, i.e., to ensure that the *milah* be done (*Riva; Gur Aryeh; Divrei David; Maharsha Nedarim* *ibid.*).

Others explain that originally, Tzipporah only *suspected* that Moshe was being punished for the *milah*, but she was not certain, since it was possible that Moshe was being punished for another sin, and the angel stopped at the place of his *milah* since the merit of his own *milah* was protecting him. Now that Tzipporah saw that after she circumcised Eliezer, the angel let go of Moshe, אז, *then*, she knew *with certainty* that the angel had come to harm Moshe as punishment for not circumcising Eliezer (*Maskil LeDavid*). [For additional approaches that reconcile this Rashi with Rashi's earlier comment, see *Eved Shlomo; Levush HaOrah; Tzeidah LaDerech*.]

²⁶ So he let go of him; then she said, “A bridegroom of blood for circumcision.”

²⁷ Hashem said to Aharon, “Go toward Moshe, to the Wilderness.” So he went and met him at the mountain of God, and he kissed him. ²⁸ Moshe related to Aharon all the words of Hashem, that He had sent him, and all the signs that He had commanded him.

²⁹ Moshe went with Aharon, and they gathered all the elders of the Children of Israel. ³⁰ Aharon spoke all the words that Hashem had spoken to Moshe; and he performed the signs before the eyes of the people. ³¹ And the people believed, and they heard that Hashem had remembered the Children of Israel and that He saw their affliction, and they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves.

5 ¹ Afterward Moshe and Aharon came and said to Pharaoh, “So said Hashem,

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הִתְנִי הִיָּה נִרְצַח עַל דְּבַר הַמִּילָה — Here, Tzipporah was talking about her husband, Moshe, and said of him: Had I not circumcised Eliezer, **my bridegroom would have been killed on account of** his failure to perform the circumcision.^[80]

□ לְמוּלָה — “**LAMULOS.**”

The term לְמוּלָה could be understood as a verb, “to circumcise.” Rashi clarifies that this is not the intention here:

עַל דְּבַר הַמִּילָה — The term לְמוּלָה means, “**on account of the circumcision.**”^[81] שֵׁם דְּבַר הוּא — [The word מוּלָה is a noun, not a verb, וְהַלָּמַד מִשְׁמַשׁת בְּלִשׁוֹן “עַל” — and the prefix *lamed* to לְמוּלָה does not mean “to” or “for,” but is used here to have the meaning of “עַל,” for; which in this context, means, “on account of.”] כִּמוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר פָּרַעְה לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל — The use of the *lamed* in this way is similar to the way it is used in the verse (14:3 below), **and Pharaoh will say לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, about the Children of Israel,** where the prefix *lamed* in the word לִבְנֵי is understood as if it said בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, meaning, “about the children of Israel.”^[82]

In explaining the passage thus far, Rashi has rendered the term דָּמִים, literally, “blood,” as “bloodshed.” Rashi now cites Onkelos who translates it differently:

וַאֲנִקְלוֹס תַּרְגָּם “דָּמִים” — But Onkelos translates the term “דָּמִים” in our passage to refer to the blood of the circumcision.^[83]

5.

1. וְאַחֲרַיִם בָּאוּ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן — AFTERWARD MOSHE AND AHARON CAME AND SAID TO PHARAOH.

Hashem had commanded Moshe to gather the elders of Israel and approach Pharaoh together with them (3:16-18 above), and Moshe and Aharon had, in fact, done so (4:29). Why does our verse say that only Moshe and Aharon came to Pharaoh? Rashi explains:

אֲבָל הַזְקֵנִים נִשְׁמָטוּ אֶחָד אֶחָד מֵאַחֲרֵי מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן — After Moshe and Aharon gathered the elders, they all set out to Pharaoh’s palace, **but on the way, the elders slipped away, one by one, from behind Moshe and Aharon,** עַד שֶׁנִּשְׁמָטוּ כּוֹלָם קֹדָם שֶׁהִגִּיעוּ לְפָלֶטִין — until all of them had slipped away before they

80. *Kitzur Mizrachi*.

81. The term מוּלָה is of the root מוּל, and relates to circumcision, *milah*.

82. See similarly, Rashi to v. 16 above, with note 40.

83. Onkelos translates the phrase in the previous verse, אֲרִי בְדָמָא דְּמַהֲלָתָא הָדִין אֲתִיבָה חֲתָנָא לָנָא, as, חֲתָן דָּמִים אֲתָה לִי, For with this “blood of circumcision” the bridegroom (i.e., my husband, Moshe) was given to us. Tzipporah was praying that now that Eliezer was circumcised,

Moshe would be spared, and she would be given her husband back. Similarly, Onkelos renders the phrase אֲלֹהֵי דְּמָא דְּמַהֲלָתָא הָדִין in our verse as חֲתָן דָּמִים לְמוּלָה מִלָּה, If not for this blood of circumcision, a bridegroom would have been liable to death. After the angel let go of Moshe, Tzipporah was saying with conviction, “My husband surely would have been killed for that sin, were it not for my performing the mitzvah of *milah* on Eliezer, which saved him” (*Gur Aryeh*; *Kitzur Mizrachi*; see also *Levush HaOrach*; cf. *Mizrachi*).

אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלַח אֶת־עַמִּי וַיַּחְגּוּ: ב וַיֹּאמֶר פֶּרַעַה שְׂמָא דִּי לֹא אֲתַגְּלִי לִי דִּי אֶקְבֵּל לְמִימְרָה לְשַׁלַּח אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא אֲתַגְּלִי לִי שְׂמָא דִּי וְאִם יִתְּן יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא אֲשַׁלַּח: ג וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֱלֹהֵי דִּיהוּדָאֵי אֲתַגְּלִי עֲלֵנָא גִיזִיל (ב"א: גהר) כְּעֵן מְהֵלָּה תִּלְתָּא יוֹמִין בְּמִדְבָּרָא וְנִדְבַח קֳדָם יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינָא דְלָמָּא יַעֲרַעֲנָנָא בְּמוֹתָא אוּ בְּקִטּוּלָא: ד וַיֹּאמֶר לְהוֹן מִלְכָּא דְּמַצְרַיִם לְמָא מִשָּׁה וְאַהֲרֹן תְּבַטְלוּן יִתְּ עֻמָּא מְעוּבְדִּיהוֹן

אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלַח אֶת־עַמִּי וַיַּחְגּוּ: ב וַיֹּאמֶר פֶּרַעַה מִי יִהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֲשַׁמֵּעַ בְּקִלּוֹ לְשַׁלַּח אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָדַעְתִּי אֶת־יְהוָה וְגַם אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא אֲשַׁלַּח: ג וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֱלֹהֵי הָעֶבְרִים נִקְרָא עָלֵינוּ גִלְכָּה זָא דְרָךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים בְּמִדְבָּר וְנִזְבַּחַה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ פֶּן־יַפְגְּעֵנוּ בְּדָבָר אוּ בַּחֲרָב: ד וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְמָה מִשָּׁה וְאַהֲרֹן תִּפְרִיעוּ אֶת־הָעָם מִמַּעֲשֵׂיו

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(ד) תִּפְרִיעוּ אֶת הָעָם מִמַּעֲשֵׂיו. תַּצְדִּילוּ וְתִרְחִיקוּ אוֹתָם מִמַּלְאכָתָם, שְׁשׁוּמֵעִין לָכֶם וּסְבוּרִים לִנְהוֹת מִן הַמַּלְאכָה. וְכֵן "פֶּרַעַה חָל טַעֲבָר צו" (משלי ז, טו), רַחֲקָה, וְכֵן [תִּפְרִיעוּ כָּל טַעֲבִי] (שם ח, כה), "פִּי פֶרַע הוּא" (והלן לב, כה), נִרְחַק וְנִתְעַב:

לְפִי שְׁיִרְאוֹ לְלֶכֶת. וּבִסְיֵי נִפְרַע לָהֶם, "וְנִגַּשׁ מֹשֶׁה לְצִדּוֹ וְהָם לֹא יִגְשׁוּ" (שמות כד, ז), הַחֲזִירִים לְאַחֲרֵיהֶם (שמות רבה ס ז): (ג) פֶּן יַפְגְּעֵנוּ. "פֶּן יִפְגְּעוּ" הֵיוּ לְרִיכִים לומר לוֹ, חָלָל שְׁחָלְקוּ כְּצוֹד לְמַלְכוּת נִשְׁטָה (שם טו). פְּגִיעָה זוֹ לָשׁוֹן מִקְרָה מוֹת הוּא:

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reached the palace, לפי שיראו ללכת — for they were afraid to go to Pharaoh. Thus, it was only Moshe and Aharon who actually came to Pharaoh and spoke to him.^[1]

Rashi brings proof to this explanation:^[2]

וּבִסְיֵי נִפְרַע לָהֶם — And we find that at Sinai [the elders] were repaid *middah keneged middah* (measure for measure) for their abandonment of this mission, as it says that Hashem commanded Moshe (below, 24:1-2), "וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְבָרֹךְ הוּא לֹא יִגְשׁוּ" — "Go up to Hashem, you, Aharon, Nadav, and Avihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and you shall bow down from a distance; and Moshe alone shall approach Hashem, but they shall not approach." [Hashem] allowed the elders to approach the mountain to bow, but then made them turn back to the place from which they had come^[3] (*Shemos Rabbah* 5:14).

1. This explains also why the verse says ואחר באו Moshe and Aharon [to Pharaoh], "Afterward Moshe and Aharon came [to Pharaoh]," rather than simply, "ויבאו משה ואהרן," "Moshe and Aharon came..." The verse conveys that, at first, Moshe and Aharon were accompanied by the elders, but "afterward" — i.e., in the end — only Moshe and Aharon came to Pharaoh (*Be'er BaSadeh*; *Yefeh To'ar*; *Eitz Yosef*).

2. *Ba'er Heitev*.

3. Since they had lacked the courage to fully carry out Hashem's instruction and enter Pharaoh's palace, at Sinai they were not allowed to enter the domain of the *Shechinah*. Rather, they were granted permission to approach Mount Sinai and bow (just as they had initially approached Pharaoh's palace), but for the actual Giving of the Torah they had to go back and stand among the people (*Be'er BaSadeh*; *Eshed HaNechalim*; see *Midrash HaGadol* to 24:2 below). See Insight.

§ Why Was Aharon Sent Back Too? Rashi's words leave us with an obvious difficulty: If the elders were sent back from Mount Sinai because they shirked Hashem's command to go to Pharaoh, why was Aharon — who did accompany Moshe into Pharaoh's palace — not allowed to go up on Mount Sinai with Moshe?

This may be explained on the basis of Rashi's comment on v. 19:24 below, that at the Giving of the Torah, there were various heights on Mount Sinai to which different individuals were allowed to ascend. Moshe had a boundary of his own, where only he was allowed [as it says in the verse that Rashi cites; see also 20:18 with Rashi]; Aharon had a boundary of his own, somewhat lower than that of Moshe; and Aharon's sons had a boundary of their own, somewhat lower than that of Aharon. But while Aharon and his sons were not allowed to ascend as far as Moshe, they also were not sent back to stand among the people; rather, at the Giving of the Torah they stood in areas designated specifically for them. The elders, however, did not have a boundary of their own; after approaching the mountain to bow down, they were sent back to stand among all the people for the Giving of the Torah. Since they turned back from Moshe and Aharon when they were going to Pharaoh's palace, they were made to turn back from Mount Sinai and stand with the rest of the nation when the Torah was given (*Nachalas Yaakov*; see also *Kitzur Mizrahi*; *Gur Aryeh*; *Divrei David*; *Riva*).

the God of Israel, ‘Send out My people that they may celebrate for Me in the Wilderness.’ ” ² And Pharaoh said, “Who is Hashem that I should listen to His voice to send out Israel? I do not know Hashem, nor will I send out Israel!” ³ So they said, “The God of the Hebrews was called upon us. Let us please go for a three-day journey in the Wilderness and we shall sacrifice to Hashem our God, lest He strike us dead with the plague or the sword.” ⁴ The king of Egypt said to them, “Moshe and Aharon, why do you disturb the people from its work?”

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3. פֶּן יַפְגִּיעֶנּוּ — LEST HE STRIKE US DEAD.

The Jewish people were unable to leave Egypt without Pharaoh’s permission, so it is not logical that Hashem would strike *them* dead if Pharaoh refused to release them!^[4] Rashi explains what Moshe and Aharon meant:

פֶּן יַפְגִּיעֶנּוּ — In truth, [Moshe and Aharon] should have told [Pharaoh], “**lest He strike you dead,**” meaning that Pharaoh would be punished with death if he refused to release Hashem’s people, אֲלֵא שְׁחַלְקוּ כְבוֹד לַמְּלָכּוֹת — **but they accorded respect to royalty**, so they did not threaten Pharaoh directly, and instead hinted to the threat by saying “lest He strike *us* dead”^[5] (*Shemos Rabbah* 5:15).

The term יַפְגִּיעֶנּוּ is related to פְּגִיעָה, which usually refers to an “encounter” (see v. 20 below; Rashi to *Bereishis* 28:11). Rashi explains what it means here:

פְּגִיעָה זֶה לְשׁוֹן מִקְרָה מָוֶת הוּא — This instance of the term “פְּגִיעָה” means “**a fatal incident.**” Moshe and Aharon were saying that if Pharaoh would not let the Jewish people go and bring offerings, Hashem would visit him with a plague of death.^[6]

4. תִּפְרִיעוּ אֶת הָעָם מִמַּעֲשֵׂיו — MOSHE AND AHARON, WHY “TAFRIFU” THE PEOPLE FROM ITS WORK?

Rashi explains the meaning of תִּפְרִיעוּ:

תִּבְדִּילוּ וְתַרְחִיקוּ אוֹתָם מִמְּלָאכָתָם — Pharaoh was saying to Moshe and Aharon: Why **do you separate and distance [the people] from their work?**^[7] שְׁשׁוּמְעִין לָכֶם וְסוֹבְרִים לָנוּחַ מִן הַמְּלָאכָה — **For** although you have not instructed them to lessen their work, **they listen to you** as you demand their release **and they think that they can rest from the work.**

וְכֵן “פָּרַעְהוּ אֶל תַּעֲבָר בּוֹ” — We find a **similar** usage of the root פָּרַע in a verse that says about the way of the wicked (*Mishlei* 4:15), “פָּרַעְהוּ”, **do not pass on it**, רַחֲקוּ — where the word פָּרַעְהוּ means **keep it distant**; וְכֵן “וְתַפְרִיעוּ כָּל עֲצָתִי” — **and this usage is likewise** found in the verse (*ibid.* 1:25), “וְתַפְרִיעוּ”, **my every counsel**, where וְתַפְרִיעוּ means **you have distanced** (i.e., rejected); “כִּי פָרַע הוּא” — **and so too** in the verse (32:25 below), **Moshe saw the people, that it was** “פָּרַע”, נִרְחַק וְנִתְעַב — which means that the people were **distanced** (rejected) **and despised** on account of the sin of the Golden Calf.^[8]

4. *Maskil LeDavid*; cf. *Be’er BaSadeh*.

5. “Us” refers to the Jewish people *and* Pharaoh; as if to say that they would all be struck with death. Pharaoh presumably understood that the threat was intended for him alone, but by expressing it in language that included the Jewish people, Moshe and Aharon accorded respect to the king (*Eshed HaNechalim*; see *Ramban* and *Chizkuni* for a different understanding of the verse). See similarly, Rashi to 11:8 below.

6. This refers to *Makkas Bechoros* (The Plague of the Firstborn). Hashem had commanded Moshe (4:23) to

warn Pharaoh about that final plague at his initial meeting with Pharaoh, and here Moshe fulfilled that command (*Chizkuni*).

7. The root פָּרַע has various meanings, one of which is to reject, or, to distance (*Radak, Shorashim*). Here it connotes: Why are you *distancing* the people from its work; i.e., causing a stoppage of work.

8. In all these instances, the root פָּרַע is used in the sense of “distanced” or “rejected.” [See also *Rashbam* and *Or HaChaim* to 32:25. See, however, Rashi there, who explains that verse differently.]

לָכוּ לְסַבְּלֵיתֵיכֶם: הַ וַיֹּאמֶר פֶּרְעֹה הַן־רַבִּים עֲתָה
עִם־הָאָרֶץ וְהַשְׁבַּתֶּם אֹתָם מִסַּבְּלָתָם: וַיֵּצֵאוּ
פֶּרְעֹה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־הַנְּגִשִּׁים בָּעַם וְאֶת־
שֹׁטְרָיו לֵאמֹר: זֶה לֹא תֹאסְפוֹן לָתֵת תְּבֹן לָעַם

רש"י

לָכוּ לְסַבְּלֵיתֵיכֶם. לָכוּ לְמַלְאכְתְּכֶם שֶׁיֵּשׁ לָכֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת
צְדָקִים, אֲבָל מִלֹּאכֶת שֶׁעֲבֹד מִצְרַיִם לֹא הָיְתָה עַל שְׂכָמוֹ
עַל לְוִי (שְׁמוֹת רַבָּה שֶׁס טז). וְתִדְעַ לָךְ, שֶׁהָרִי מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן
וַיֵּצֵאוּ וְצִאִים וְצִאִים עָלָה צְרָאוֹת: (ה) הֵן רַבִּים עֲתָה עִם
הָאָרֶץ שֶׁהַעֲבֹדָה מוֹטְלָה עֲלֵיהֶם, וְהָתָם מַשְׁצִיתִים

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□ לָכוּ לְסַבְּלֵיתֵיכֶם — *WHY DO YOU DISTURB THE PEOPLE FROM ITS WORK? GO TO YOUR BURDENS.*

Pharaoh criticizes Moshe and Aharon for disturbing the people from “*its work*” and then tells them to go to “*your burdens*.” This implies that Moshe and Aharon did not do the work that the people did. What, then, did Pharaoh mean by telling them, “*Go to your burdens*”?

לָכוּ לְמַלְאכְתְּכֶם שֶׁיֵּשׁ לָכֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּבֵיתֵיכֶם — Pharaoh meant: **Go to your chores that you need to do in your homes.** — *אֲבָל מִלֹּאכֶת שֶׁעֲבֹד מִצְרַיִם לֹא הָיְתָה עַל שְׂכָמוֹ שֶׁל לְוִי* — **But as for the slave labor of Egypt, it had not been imposed upon the tribe of Levi,** so Moshe and Aharon, who were Leviim, were exempt from that labor^[9] (*Shemos Rabbah* 5:16).

Rashi proves that Moshe and Aharon were not subject to slave labor:

וְתִדְעַ לָךְ, שֶׁהָרִי מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן וַיֵּצֵאוּ וְצִאִים וְצִאִים שְׁלֹא בְרָשׁוֹת — **And you can know that this is true, because** throughout their interactions with Pharaoh, **Moshe and Aharon would go and come** as they pleased, **without** first obtaining the **permission** of Pharaoh or a taskmaster.^[10]

9. Thus, Pharaoh first complained that Moshe and Aharon were disturbing the people from “*its work*,” referring to the slave labor, and then told them to go to “*your burdens*,” referring to their household chores. He called this סַבְּלֵיתֵיכֶם, *your burdens*, because personal chores often weigh upon a person like a burden (*Ramban; Mizrahi*).

Pharaoh felt that the reason Moshe and Aharon were spending their time petitioning him for the release of

the Jewish people was that they were not occupied with labor. He therefore told them to busy themselves with some other matter, so that they would not pester him to let the Jewish people go (*Shemos Rabbah* *ibid.*).

10. Had they been enslaved, they would not have been able to approach Pharaoh at will. And since there is no reason for Moshe and Aharon to have had a personal exemption, it must be that their entire tribe was exempt from the forced labor. See Insight.

⚡ **Why Was the Tribe of Levi Exempt From Labor?** Some explain that the tribe of Levi merited to be free from the Egyptian labor as a result of their own foresight and dedication to Hashem’s service. Pharaoh induced the Jewish people to become laborers through a cunning plot, as the verse (above, 1:10) tells us that he said about the Jewish people, *Come, let us act wisely toward it*. At first, Pharaoh announced that he needs to hire laborers for the vital task of strengthening the country’s cities. Many Jewish people, feeling obligated to show gratitude to their host nation, voluntarily joined Pharaoh’s workforce as paid laborers. Once they had let themselves be identified as skilled workers and submitted to Pharaoh’s authority, Pharaoh turned around and pressed them into forced labor. But the tribe of Levi declined from the outset to work for Pharaoh. Knowing that they were destined to carry Hashem’s holy vessels of the Mishkan, they refused to serve as laborers of Pharaoh, even for pay, so they all claimed that they lacked the skill for the necessary work. Therefore, Pharaoh was never able to turn them into slaves (*Daas Zekeanim*; see also *Sefer HaYashar*, cited in *Be’er BaSadeh*; *Chizkuni* on Rashi; see further, *Shemos Rabbah* 1:11, *Bamidbar Rabbah* 15:20, and *Pesachim* 39a with Rashi רכח תחילה).

Ramban, however, explains that Pharaoh chose to exempt the tribe of Levi from slavery, in keeping with the common practice of every nation to designate a class of scholars who guide the people and teach it morals. Although Pharaoh implemented this decision, it was Hashem’s guiding hand that led him to do so, in order that Moshe and Aharon — and their fellow Leviim — would, in fact, be free to emerge as leaders of the Jewish

Go to your burdens.”⁵ And Pharaoh said, “Behold! the people of the land are now numerous, and you will halt them from their burdens!”

⁶ On that day Pharaoh ordered the taskmasters over the people and its officers, saying, ⁷ “You shall not continue to give straw to the people

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5. הֵן רַבִּים עֲתָה עִם הָאָרֶץ — “BEHOLD! THE PEOPLE OF THE LAND ARE NOW NUMEROUS, AND YOU WILL HALT THEM FROM THEIR BURDENS!”

The fact that “the people of the land are now numerous” seems irrelevant. Rashi explains what Pharaoh meant:^[11]

וְאֵתָם — שֶׁהַעֲבֹדָה מוֹטֶלֶת עֲלֵיהֶם — The people of the land **who bear the burden of my work** are numerous, **וְאֵתָם** — and by petitioning for their release **you are making them stop** carrying out their duties;^[12] הַפֶּסֶד גָּדוֹל הוּא זֶה — **this is a great loss** to my kingdom!

6. הַנִּגְשִׁים — THE TASKMASTERS OVER THE PEOPLE AND ITS OFFICERS.

Rashi explains the difference between “taskmasters” and “officers”:

מִצְרַיִם הָיוּ — [The taskmasters] were Egyptians, וְהַשּׂוֹטְרִים הָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵלִים — whereas the officers were Jewish people^[13] (*Shemos Rabbah* 5:18).

What function did each of these groups serve?

הַנִּגְשׁ מְמוּנָה עַל כָּמָה שׂוֹטְרִים — The taskmaster was appointed over many officers and conveyed the work orders to them, וְהַשּׂוֹטֵר מְמוּנָה לְרִדּוֹת בְּעוֹשֵׂי הַמְּלָאכָה — while the officer was appointed to drive the workers to complete their assignments.

7. תֶּבֶן — “TEVEN.”

Rashi explains what תֶּבֶן is, and why the laborers needed it:

אֲשֶׁתוֹבֵל־א — In Old French, *estoble*, “stubble”; i.e., straw.^[14] הָיָה גּוֹבֵלֵין אוֹתוֹ עִם הַטֵּיט — Straw was essential to their labor, in that **they would knead it with clay** to make a firm mixture fit to be shaped and baked into bricks for construction.

11. *Meisiach Ilmim*; *Sefer Zikaron*; cf. *Ri Kanizal*.

12. As explained in the previous verse, the people think that they no longer need to work.

13. This is evident from the wording used later in this passage. Verse 14 refers to these officials as “Pharaoh’s taskmasters” and “the officers of the Children of Israel” [see also vv. 15,19]. This indicates that the taskmasters were Egyptians and the officers were Jewish people (*Nachalas Yaakov*). Moreover, v. 13 says that the taskmasters pressed the people to complete their work, and v. 14 says that the officers were beaten because the work was not completed. The contrast between the taskmasters, who had no qualms about pressing the

workers, and the officers, who let themselves be beaten because they would *not* press the workers, proves that the taskmasters were wicked Egyptians and the officers were righteous Jewish people (*Gur Aryeh*; see Rashi to v. 14; see further, *Mizrachi*).

Rashi’s definitions clarify why our verse says “the taskmasters over the people and its officers.” The taskmasters were Egyptians appointed over the Jewish people, while the officers came from within the people (*Or HaChamah*).

14. [In Modern French, *éteule*.] Rashi elsewhere (*Shabbos* 36b דִּי־הָ גִבְבָּא; *Yeshayah* 37:27) clarifies that this Old French term refers to the very bottom of the

people. *Maharal* (*Gevuros Hashem*, Ch. 30) adds that this practice had been set in place by Yosef, who, as viceroy of Egypt, exempted the priests from paying a tribute to Pharaoh (*Bereishis* 47:22, 26). The tribe of Levi dedicated themselves to Torah study, so they were considered priests, and by Egyptian law, exempt from taxes as well as slave labor. Some suggest that Yosef actually instituted that rule *in order* to exempt one tribe from the Egyptian labor. Yosef foresaw that the Jewish people would be enslaved, and he exempted the priests from Pharaoh’s tax in his time so that in the future, a class of Jewish “priests” would be exempt from working for Pharaoh (*Emes LeYaakov* to *Bereishis* 47:4).

For other explanations of how it came about that the tribe of Levi was exempt from slave labor, see *Gur Aryeh*; *Maskil LeDavid*; *Parashas Derachim* §4.

למַרְמִי לְבָנִין בְּמֵאֲתָמְלִי וּמִדְקָמוּהִי
אֲנוּן יִזְלֹן וַיִּגְבֹּן לְהוֹן תִּבְנָא:
ח וַיֵּת סָכּוּם לְבָנִיָּא דִּי אֲנוּן עֲבָדִין
מֵאֲתָמְלִי וּמִדְקָמוּהִי תִמְנוּן עֲלִידוֹן
לֹא תִמְנָעוּן מִנָּה אַרִי בְטָלְנִין
אֲנוּן עַל כֵּן אֲנוּן צֹחִין לְמִימֵר
נִיזִיל נִדְבָח קִדְם אֱלֹהֵנָּא: ט וַיִּתְקַף
פְּלֹחָנָא עַל גְּבִרְיָא וַיִּתְעַסְקוּן בֵּיהּ

לְלָבָן הַלְבָנִים בְּתִמּוֹל שְׁלֶשֶׁם הֵם יִלְכוּ
וְקִשְׁשׁוּ לָהֶם תִּבְנוּ: ח וְאֶת־מִתְכַּנֶּת הַלְבָנִים
אֲשֶׁר הֵם עֹשִׂים תִּמּוֹל שְׁלֶשֶׁם תִּשְׁיִמוּ
עֲלֵיהֶם לֹא תִגְרְעוּ מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי־נִרְפִּים הֵם עַל־
כֵּן הֵם צֹעְקִים לֵאמֹר גִּלְכָּה נִזְבַּחַה לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ:
ט תִּכְבֵּד הָעֶבֶדָה עַל־הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־בָהּ

רע"ו

בִּי נִרְפִּים מִן הָעֶבֶדָה הֵם, לְכָד לָכֶם פּוֹנֶה חֵל הַצִּטְלָה
וְצֹעְקִים לֵאמֹר גִּלְכָּה וְגו': מִתְכַּנֶּת, "וְתִכְנֵן לְצִנִּים" (וְהֵן
פְּסוּק יח, "וְלֹא נִתְכַּנְּנוּ עֲלִילֹת" (שְׁמוּרָא ב, ג), וְ"חֵת הַכֶּסֶף
הַמִּתְכַּנֵּן" (מִלְכִּים ב, יב, יג), כּוֹלֵם לָשׁוֹן חֲשָׁזוֹן הֵם: נִרְפִּים.
הַמְּלָאכָה רְפוּיָה צִדְקָם וְעוֹזְבָה מֵהֶם וְהֵם נִרְפִּים מִמֶּנָּה.
רַטְרִי"ט צִלְע"ז:

לְבָנִים. טוּוּל"ש צִלְע"ז, שְׁעוֹשִׂים מִטִּיט וּמִיֶּשֶׁן חוֹתָן
צִחְמָה, וַיֵּשׁ שְׁשׁוּרְפִין חוֹתָן צִצְצָשׁ: בְּתִמּוֹל שְׁלֶשֶׁם.
כְּאֲשֶׁר הֵייתָ עוֹשִׂים עַד הֵנָּה: וְקִשְׁשׁוּ. וְלִקְטוּ: (ח) וְאֶת
מִתְכַּנֶּת הַלְבָנִים. סָכּוּם (אוּנְקֵלוֹס), חֲשָׁזוֹן הַלְבָנִים שֶׁהִיא
כָּל אֶחָד עוֹשֶׂה לְיוֹם כִּשְׁמֵת הַחֲשָׁזוֹן נִתֵּן לָהֶם, חוֹתָן סָכּוּם
תִּשְׁיִמוּ עֲלֵיהֶם גַּם עַתָּה לְמַעַן תִּכְבֵּד הָעֶבֶדָה עֲלֵיהֶם:

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□ לְבָנִים — "LEVEINIM."

which — שְׁעוֹשִׂים מִטִּיט וּמִיֶּשֶׁן אוֹתָן בְּחִמָּה — In Old French, *tiules*, i.e., "tiles," or bricks, — טוּוּל"ש בְּלַעֲזִי — though they make out of clay mixed with straw and then dry in the sun, — וַיֵּשׁ שְׁשׁוּרְפִין אוֹתָן בְּבִבְשָׁן — though some people fire them in a furnace.^[15] Thus, Pharaoh was saying: You shall not continue to give straw to the people to manufacture bricks...

□ בְּתִמּוֹל שְׁלֶשֶׁם — AS YESTERDAY AND THE DAY BEFORE.

Had Pharaoh only been supplying the Jewish people with straw for the previous two days?^[16] Rashi explains what he meant:

— כְּאֲשֶׁר הֵייתָ עוֹשִׂים עַד הֵנָּה — Pharaoh was saying, "You shall not continue to give straw to the people... as you have been doing until now." The phrase בְּתִמּוֹל שְׁלֶשֶׁם, *as yesterday and the day before*, is a figure of speech that means "as in the past."

□ וְקִשְׁשׁוּ — THEY MUST GO "V'KOSHESHU" STRAW FOR THEMSELVES.

וְקִשְׁשׁוּ means, *and gather*.^[17]

8. — BUT THE "MASKONES" OF THE BRICKS.

Rashi explains the flow of the verse, but prefaces the meaning of מִתְכַּנֶּת:

חֲשָׁבוֹן — The meaning is as Onkelos renders it: "סָכּוּם", *the total amount*. Pharaoh was saying: חֲשָׁבוֹן — The total number of bricks that each individual used to make per day while the straw was being given to them — אֲוֹתוֹ סָכּוּם "תִּשְׁיִמוּ עֲלֵיהֶם" גַּם — that same amount YOU SHALL IMPOSE UPON THEM as a quota now too, even though they are no longer being given straw and must gather it themselves; and the reason is (as spelled out in the next

stalk, which is not cut and remains in the field after harvest (cf. *Tosafos* to *Shabbos* there ד"ה בירה, and to *Bava Metzia* 103a המקבל ד"ה). It appears, though, that חֲשָׁבוֹן can take on a broader meaning, for in *Shabbos* 140a Rashi explains that it means straw produced from any part of the stalk (see *Rosh Yosef* to *Shabbos* 36b).

15. See *Bereishis* 11:3 with Rashi.

16. This does not seem logical, for in the following

verses we find that once Pharaoh stopped supplying the Jewish people with straw, they were unable to meet the daily quota of bricks. If in the past they met the quota without being supplied straw, they would likewise have been able to do so after Pharaoh's new decree. Clearly, Pharaoh had been supplying straw all along (*Gur Aryeh*; see also *Mizrachi*).

17. The verb וְקִשְׁשׁוּ is of the root קשש, which denotes gathering. Rashi explains this further in v. 12; see note 31 there.

to make the bricks as yesterday and the day before; they must go and gather straw for themselves. ⁸ But the total amount of the bricks that they were making yesterday and the day before you shall impose upon them — do not subtract from it — for they are slacking off; therefore they cry out saying, ‘Let us go and bring offerings to our God.’ ⁹ Let the labor be heavier upon the men and let them engage in it;

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verse): **לְמַעַן תִּכְבֶּד הָעֲבוּדָה עֲלֵיהֶם** — **so that the labor should be heavier upon them.**^[18] Now, why did Pharaoh want to make the work heavier upon them?

□ **בִּי נִרְפִּים** — **FOR SLACKING OFF...**

“מִן הָעֲבוּדָה” — from the work ARE THEY.^[19]

Pharaoh goes on to say: *Therefore they cry out saying, “Let us go and bring offerings to our God.”* Rashi explains how slacking off from work leads them to cry out in this way:^[20]

“לֵךְ לָבֶם פּוֹנֶה אֶל הַבִּטְלָה וְיַעֲזֻקִים לֵאמֹר נִלְכָּה וְגו’” — Pharaoh meant: They are slacking off from the work; **therefore, their minds turn toward idleness and THEY CRY OUT SAYING, “LET US GO AND BRING OFFERINGS TO OUR GOD,”** as an excuse to be completely idle from work. If their workload is increased, they will not think about such things.^[21]

□ **מִתְכַּנֶּת** — **“MASKONES.”**

Rashi above cited Targum’s interpretation of **מִתְכַּנֶּת** as meaning *“total amount.”* Here, having explained the flow of the verse, Rashi returns to that word and supports this interpretation with examples of other words that share the same root:

“וְתָכֵן לְבָנִים” — The term **מִתְכַּנֶּת** in our verse, and the similar term **וְתָכֵן**, in the verse (v. 18 below), **but the “תָּכֵן” (count) of bricks,** **“וְיָלוּ נִתְכַּנּוּ עֲלֵיהֶם”** — and the term **נִתְכַּנּוּ**, in the verse (*I Shmuel* 2:3), **and by Him are [men’s] deeds “נִתְכַּנּוּ” (counted),** **“וְאֵת הַכֶּסֶף הַמִּתְכֵּן”** — and the term **הַמִּתְכֵּן**, in the verse (*II Melachim* 12:12), **the money “הַמִּתְכֵּן” (that had been counted),** **כֻּלָּם לְשׁוֹן חֶשְׁבוֹן הֵם** — **are all expressions of “a count.”**^[22]

□ **נִרְפִּים** — **“NIRPIM.”**

Rashi now focuses on the meaning of this word:^[23]

הַמְּלָאכָה רְפוּיָה בְּיָדָם וְעֲזוּבָה מֵהֶם — Pharaoh meant: **The work is loose in their hands and forsaken by them,** i.e., it is not sufficiently demanding, **וְהֵם נִרְפִּים מִמֶּנָּה** — **so they are slacking off from it;**^[24] **רֵטְרוּיִט בִּלְעִיז** — **retrait in Old French.**^[25]

18. Pharaoh’s words in the next verse, *“Let the labor be heavier upon the men,”* could be understood as a separate command, meaning that, *in addition* to enforcing the previous quota of bricks, the Egyptian taskmasters should impose heavier work on the men. Rashi explains that this is not so. The next verse is connected to this one; Pharaoh meant that the taskmasters should enforce the previous quotas *so that* the work would be heavier upon the men (*Meisiach Ilmim; Nachalas Yaakov*).

19. Rashi explains that **נִרְפִּים** is not an adjective describing the Jewish people’s nature (either “they are lazy,” or “they are weak”); rather, it is a verb that describes their present state: they are *slacking off* from the work (see Rashi further; **נִרְפִּים**).

20. If anything, being able to slack off should make them happy to stay in Egypt, whereas hard work should make them cry out (*Ri Kanizal*; cf. *Rash Almoshnino*).

21. Pharaoh was saying that he would not mind if they truly wished to serve Hashem during the time that they were not working, but in his view, they were simply using this as an excuse to take time off from work (*Ri Kanizal; Rash Almoshnino*).

22. All these words are of the same root, **תָּכֵן**. See further, Rashi to v. 18 with notes 53 and 54.

23. The root **רַפָּה** sometimes means *weak* (see *Bamidbar* 13:18) and sometimes means *slack* (see *Shoftim* 11:37). Rashi explains what it means here (see *Sefer Zikaron*).

24. If **נִרְפִּים** would mean “they are weak,” it would not make sense for Pharaoh to increase their workload, since that would make them even weaker. Rather, it means “they are being slack” — i.e., the workload is too easy so they are able to slack off (*Sefer Zikaron*; see *Rash Almoshnino; Ri Kanizal; Be’er Mayim Chaim*).

25. This is similar to the English terms, “retreat,” and “retire.”

וְאֵלֵי־יִשְׁעוֹ בְּדַבְרֵי־שָׁקֶר: וַיֵּצְאוּ נַגְשֵׁי הָעָם
וַיִּשְׁטְרוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־הָעָם לֵאמֹר כֹּה אָמַר פֶּרַעַה
אֵינֶנִּי נֹתֵן לָכֶם תָּבֶן: יֵאָמֶר אַתֶּם לָכוּ קָחוּ לָכֶם תָּבֶן
מֵאֲשֶׁר תִּמְצְאוּ כִּי אֵין נִגְרַע מֵעֲבַדְתְּכֶם דָּבָר:

רש"י

על קדוש יְהוָה "שם לא, א", "ולא יִשְׁעוּ אֶל המצותות"
(שם י, ח), ולא מִלֵּאחֲתֵי שְׁמוֹנֶה עָל זֵי"ת סְמוּכָה לְחֶרֶס.
חָצֵל חֶרֶס לִשׁוֹן דְּבוּר מִתְּחַסֵּק לְדַבֵּר דְּדָבָר נֹפֵל לִשׁוֹן
שְׁמוֹנֶה עָלֵי, כְּגוֹן "הַדְּבָרִים צֶדֶק" (יחזקאל לג, ט), "וְדָבָר
מִרְיָם וְחֶרֶן צִמְחָה" (במדבר יב, א), "הַמִּלֶּלֶךְ הַדְּבָר
צִי" (זכריה ד, א), "לְדָבָר צֶס" (דברים יא, ט), "וְהַדְּבָרָה
צִמְחָה" (תהלים קיט, מז), חָף פֶּחָן, "אֶל יִשְׁעוֹ דְּבָרֵי
שָׁקֶר", אֶל יְהוֹי נְדָבָרִים צִדְּבָרִי שְׁוֹא וְהִבָּחִי: (ויא) אַתֶּם
לָכוּ קָחוּ לָכֶם תָּבֶן. וְלִרְיָכִים חָסֶם לִינֶךְ צִרְיָוִת,

(ט) וְאֵלֵי יִשְׁעוֹ בְּדַבְרֵי שָׁקֶר. וְאֵלֵי יְהוֹי וִידְבָרוּ תְּמִיד
דְּבָרֵי רוּחַ לֵאמֹר "גִּלְכָּה נִזְבַּחָה" (פסוק ח), וְדוּמָה לוֹ
"וְאִשְׁתָּה צִחְקִיָּה תְּמִיד" (תהלים קיט, קיז). "לְמַשֵּׁל וְלִשְׁנִינָה"
(דברים כח, לו) מִתְּרַגְּמִין "וְלִשְׁוֹעִין", "וְיִסְפֹּר" (להלן יח,
ח) "וְאִשְׁתָּעִי". וְאִי אֶפְשָׁר לֹאמַר "יִשְׁעוֹ" לִשׁוֹן "וְיִשְׁעֵה'
אֶל הַבֵּל וְגו' וְאֵל קֵין וְאֵל מִנְחָתוֹ לֹא שָׁעָה" (בראשית ד,
ד) וְלִפְרָשׁ "אֶל יִשְׁעוֹ" חָל יִפְנוּ, שָׁחַס בֵּן הָיָה לוֹ לְכַפֹּז
"וְאֵל יִשְׁעוֹ אֶל דְּבָרֵי שָׁקֶר" אוֹ "לְדָבָרֵי שָׁקֶר", כִּי בֵּן גִּזְרֵת
כָּלֶם. "יִשְׁעָה הָאֶדָם עַל עֲשָׂהוּ" (ישעיה יז, ז), "וְלֹא שָׁעוּ

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9. AND LET THEM NOT "YISH'U" ABOUT RIDICULOUS MATTERS.

The term יִשְׁעוֹ is of the root שעה, which is often used to mean "turning toward or away from something." Rashi explains that it is used here in a different sense:

וְאֵלֵי יְהוֹי וִידְבָרוּ תְּמִיד בְּדַבְרֵי רוּחַ לֵאמֹר "גִּלְכָּה נִזְבַּחָה" — The word יִשְׁעוֹ in this context refers to constant conversation. Thus, Pharaoh was saying, Let the labor be heavier upon the men... **and let them not constantly contemplate and converse about pointless matters**, as they do by saying (v. 8), "*Let us go sacrifice to our God.*"^[26] — וְדוּמָה לוֹ "וְאִשְׁתָּה בְּחִקִּיָּה תְּמִיד" — The root שעה is used similarly in the verse (Tehillim 119:117), **and I will converse (וְאִשְׁתָּה) in Your statutes constantly.** — לְמַשֵּׁל וְלִשְׁנִינָה — This term also has an Aramaic counterpart, for in the verse (Devarim 28:37), לְמַשֵּׁל וְלִשְׁנִינָה, a parable and a conversation piece, the term וְלִשְׁנִינָה, and a conversation piece, is rendered by Targum Onkelos as "וְלִשְׁוֹעִין", which is related to the Hebrew שעה. — "וְיִסְפֹּר" — Similarly, the term "וְיִסְפֹּר", and he related (e.g., 18:8 below), is rendered by Targum Onkelos as "וְאִשְׁתָּעִי", also related to the Hebrew שעה.

Rashi discusses why יִשְׁעוֹ cannot mean "turning" in this case:

וְאִי אֶפְשָׁר לֹאמַר "יִשְׁעוֹ" לִשׁוֹן "וְיִשְׁעֵה" אֶל הַבֵּל וְגו' וְאֵל קֵין וְאֵל מִנְחָתוֹ לֹא שָׁעָה — But it is not possible to say that "יִשְׁעוֹ" is an expression for "turning", i.e., directing one's attention, as it is used in the verse (Bereishis 4:4-5), Hashem "turned" (וְיִשְׁעֵה) to Hevel and his offering, but to Kayin and his offering He did not "turn" — and thus, to interpret the phrase "אֶל יִשְׁעוֹ" of our verse to mean, "let them not turn (pay attention) to false words." — לְדָבָרֵי — אוֹ "לְדָבָרֵי שָׁקֶר" — This cannot be the intent, for if so, [the Torah] should have written, "וְאֵלֵי יִשְׁעוֹ אֶל דְּבָרֵי שָׁקֶר",

26. Rashi goes on to prove that יִשְׁעוֹ אֶל means "let them not converse," and does not mean "let them not turn." However, he says here "let them not constantly contemplate and converse." This is because the root שעה, when used in the context of speech, refers to being involved in extended conversation. This is evident from the verse that Rashi will immediately cite (Tehillim 119:117), וְאִשְׁתָּה בְּחִקִּיָּה תְּמִיד, and I will converse in Your statutes "constantly." What Pharaoh objected to was the Jewish people's constant involvement in conversation about going to sacrifice to Hashem, for that is what removed their focus from the labor. Had Pharaoh been bothered by the fact that they even mentioned the idea of sacrificing,

he would have used the more common expression אֶל דְּבָרֵי שָׁקֶר, "let them not speak" (see Nachalas Yaakov; Shem Ephraim; see also Ri Kanizal; Be'er Yitzchak).

Rashi also says that Pharaoh did not want them to converse בְּדַבְרֵי רוּחַ, "about pointless matters." At the end of this comment, Rashi uses the similar expression בְּדַבְרֵי שְׁוֹא וְהִבָּחִי, "about vain and nonsensical matters." Now, the verse says בְּדַבְרֵי שָׁקֶר, which literally means, about "false" matters. However, Pharaoh had no reason to refer to the Jewish people's request to serve Hashem as "false." Rather, Rashi explains, the term שָׁקֶר is used here in the sense of שְׁוֹא, "vain" or "meaningless." שְׁוֹא and שָׁקֶר may be used interchangeably (Nachalas

and let them not engage in conversation about ridiculous matters.”

¹⁰ The taskmasters of the people and its officers went out and spoke to the people, saying, “So said Pharaoh, ‘I am not giving you straw. ¹¹ You go, take for yourselves straw from whatever you find, for nothing is deducted from your labor.’ ”

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or “לְדַבְּרֵי שִׁקָּר”, using the term אָל, or the *lamed* prefix (ל), so that the verse would mean “and let them not pay attention to false words.” **For this is how all [instances of יָשַׁע in the sense of “turning”] are worded,** “יָשַׁעַה הָאָדָם עַל עֲשָׂוֹ” — as we find in the verse (*Yeshayah* 17:7), *man will turn* (יָשַׁעַה) “to” his Maker,^[27] “וְלֹא יִשְׁעוּ עַל קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל” — and the verse (*ibid.* 31:1), *and they did not turn* (שָׁעוּ) “to” the Holy One of Israel, “וְלֹא יִשְׁעָה אֶל הַמּוֹצִיחוֹת” — and the verse (*ibid.* 17:8), *he will not turn* (יָשַׁעַה) “to” the altars (*ibid.* 17:8). In all these instances, the verb that denotes “turning” is followed by the term אָל or a word with the *lamed* prefix. **I have not found a single instance of [an expression of turning] that is followed by a word with a *beis* prefix (ב),** as is the case here, for that prefix means “about” (“regarding”), or “with,” and does not fit with “turning.” **But, on the other hand, after an expression of speech,** בְּמַתְעֵסֶק לְדַבֵּר — where it is used in the sense of being engaged in conversation about a matter, נוֹפֵל לְשׁוֹן — the *beis* prefix is appropriate, as it refers to the subject of the conversation. **We find this, for example,** in the verse (*Yechezkel* 33:30), *who speak about You* (בְּךָ), “וְיַתְדַבֵּר” — and the verse (*Bamidbar* 12:1), *Miriam and Aharon spoke about Moshe* (בְּמֹשֶׁה), “הַמּוֹלֵאךְ הַדִּבֵּר בִּי” — and the verse (*Zechariah* 4:1), *who was speaking with me* (בִּי), “וְלְדַבֵּר בָּם” — and the verse (*Devarim* 11:19), *to speak about them* (בָּם), “וְאֶדְבַּרָה בְּעֵדוּתְךָ” — and the verse (*Tehillim* 119:46), *I will speak about Your testimonies* (בְּעֵדוּתְךָ). In all these instances, where the subject of the conversation is mentioned, a *beis* prefix is used. **אל יִשְׁעוּ בְּדַבְּרֵי שִׁקָּר** — *let them not engage in conversation about vain and nonsensical matters.*^[28]

11. אַתֶּם לָכוּ קַחוּ לָכֶם תֶּבֶן — YOU GO, TAKE FOR YOURSELVES STRAW... FOR NOTHING IS DEDUCTED FROM YOUR LABOR.

“For nothing is deducted from your labor” is not a logical reason for them to collect straw. On the contrary, if the same output was expected of them, they should *not* have been made to collect straw. Rashi therefore explains:

וְצִרְכִּים אַתֶּם לִילֵךְ בּוֹרִיזוֹת — When the taskmasters said, “YOU GO, TAKE FOR YOURSELVES STRAW,” they

Yaakov; Maskil LeDavid; see below, 20:7 and 23:1 with Targum Onkelos).

27. In this verse the word עַל is used in place of אֶל (see Rashi and Radak to the verse). The same applies to the next verse that Rashi cites.

28. As explained in note 26, אֶל יִשְׁעוּ means “let them not be constantly involved in conversation” (as opposed to “let them not speak”) and בְּדַבְּרֵי שִׁקָּר in this context means “about *pointless* matters” (rather than “about *false* matters”). See Insight.

§ **The Meaning of יָשַׁע** While Rashi here insists that יָשַׁע in our verse cannot mean “turning toward” as it does in the verse (*Bereishis* 4:4-5), “וְאֵל הָבֵל גִּוֵּ' וְאֵל קַיִן וְאֵל מִנְחָתוֹ לֹא שָׁעָה” Hashem “turned” to Hevel... but to Kayin and his offering He did not “turn,” Rashi to that verse explains differently. There, Rashi cites our verse as an example of יָשַׁע meaning “turn to” (see also Rashi to *Iyov* 7:19). Some commentators assert that the text of Rashi in *Bereishis* is erroneous, so they emend the text there and delete the reference to our verse (see *Mizrachi* and *Meisiach Ilmim*). However, others explain that even, according to Rashi here, the term יָשַׁע in our verse carries the meaning of “turn to.” People engage in extended conversation about a subject when they have turned their attention to it. Thus, although Rashi has explained that the *beis* prefix of בְּדַבְּרֵי שִׁקָּר compels us to translate אֶל יִשְׁעוּ as “let them not engage in conversation,” the *point* of אֶל יִשְׁעוּ is “let them not turn their attention.” The Torah uses the term יָשַׁע specifically because it carries the double meaning of “engage in conversation” and “turn attention to.” Rashi in *Bereishis* thus cites our verse as an example of יָשַׁע meaning “turn to,” while here he explains that Pharaoh was distressed that the Jewish people had become “constantly involved in conversation” about going to sacrifice to Hashem (*Shem Ephraim*; see similarly, *Gur Aryeh*). [For further discussion, see the commentaries to the *Bereishis* verse, cited in our note 12 there.]

יב וַיִּפֹּץ הָעָם בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְקַשֵּׁשׁ
קֹשׁ לְתֶבֶן: יג וְהַנְּגִשִּׁים אֲצִים לְאֹמֶר בָּלוּ
מַעֲשֵׂיכֶם דְּבַר-יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ בְּאֶשֶׁר בַּהֲיוֹת
הַתֶּבֶן: יד וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר-

יב וַיִּפֹּץ הָעָם בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְקַשֵּׁשׁ
קֹשׁ לְתֶבֶן: יג וְהַנְּגִשִּׁים אֲצִים לְאֹמֶר בָּלוּ
מַעֲשֵׂיכֶם דְּבַר-יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ בְּאֶשֶׁר בַּהֲיוֹת
הַתֶּבֶן: יד וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר-

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מוֹקֵן: (יד) וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. הַשְׂטָרִים
יִשְׂרָאֵלִים הָיוּ וְחָסִים עַל חֲזָרִיָּהּ מִלְּחָקֶס, וְכִשְׁהָיוּ
מַעֲלִימִין הַלְּבָנִים לְנוֹגְשִׁים שָׁהם מִלְּרִיִּים וְהָיוּ חֹסֵר
מִן הַסָּכּוּם הָיוּ מִלְּקִין חֹתֵם עַל שָׁלָל דְּחָקוֹ חֵת עוֹשֵׂי
הַמְּלָאכָה. לְפִיכֵךְ זָכוּ חֹתֵם שְׂטָרִים לְהֵיוֹת סִנְהֶדְרִין, וְנֶחְלָל
מִן הָרִיחַ אֲשֶׁר עַל מַשָּׁה וְהוֹשֵׁם עֲלֵיהֶם (בַּמִּדְבָּר י"א, כ"ה),
שֶׁנֶּחֱמַר "אֲסִפָּה לִּי שְׂבָעִים חֵישׁ מִזְקֵנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל" (ש"ס י"א, ט"ז),

בִּי אֵין נִגְרַע דְּבָר מִכֹּחַ לְבָנִים שְׁהֵייתֶם עוֹשִׂים
לְיוֹם בְּהֵיוֹת הַתֶּבֶן נִיפֹן לָכֵס מִזְמָן מִבֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ:
(יב) לְקַשֵּׁשׁ קֹשׁ לְתֶבֶן. לְאֶסּוֹף אֲסִיפָה, לְלָקוּט
לְקַט לְלוֹרֵךְ רָצוֹן הַפִּיט. "קֹשׁ" לָשׁוֹן לְקוּט, עַל שֶׁסָּדָדָר
הַמַּתְפָּאֵר הוּא וְלִרְיָךְ לְקוֹשְׁשׁוֹ קְרוֹי "קֹשׁ" בְּאַחֵר מִקוֹמוֹת:
(יג) אֲצִים. דּוֹחִקִים (אוֹקלוֹס): דְּבַר יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ. חֲשָׁבוֹן
עַל כָּל יוֹם כָּלוּ בְּיוֹמוֹ, בְּאֶשֶׁר עֲשִׂיתֶם בַּהֲיוֹת הַתֶּבֶן

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meant, "and you must go *swiftly* to collect straw," **בִּי אֵין נִגְרַע דְּבָר** "מִכֹּחַ לְבָנִים שְׁהֵייתֶם עוֹשִׂים" — **FOR NOTHING IS DEDUCTED from the total number of bricks that you had been producing each day until now, בְּהֵיוֹת הַתֶּבֶן נִיפֹן לָכֵס מִזְמָן מִבֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ — when the straw was being given to you, readily supplied from the king's supply house.** Since you are required to maintain the same quota of production while spending time collecting straw, "you must go *swiftly*" to collect the straw.^[29]

12. לְקַשֵּׁשׁ קֹשׁ לְתֶבֶן. — "L'KOSHEISH KASH" FOR STRAW.

The word קֹשׁ is generally used to mean "straw" (e.g., 15:7 below). However, that does not seem to be its meaning here, since תֶּבֶן means "straw" and it would not make sense to say, "to gather straw for straw." Rather, Rashi explains, the noun קֹשׁ is related to the verb לְקַשֵּׁשׁ.^[30] — **לְלָקוּט לְקַט לְלוֹרֵךְ רָצוֹן הַפִּיט** — **The phrase לְקַשֵּׁשׁ קֹשׁ means "to gather a gathering."**^[31] — **לְאֶסּוֹף אֲסִיפָה** — Thus the entire phrase לְקַשֵּׁשׁ קֹשׁ לְתֶבֶן is to be understood as follows: [The people spread out through the entire land of Egypt] **to glean a gleaning for the purpose of having straw for the clay** needed to produce bricks.^[32]

Rashi explains why straw (תֶּבֶן) is often called קֹשׁ:

עַל שֶׁם שְׂדָדָר הַמַּתְפָּאֵר הוּא — **The term קֹשׁ is essentially an expression of gathering,** — **"קֹשׁ" לָשׁוֹן לְקוּט** — **and since [straw], being thin and lightweight, is something that becomes scattered about, and in order to use it one must gather it (לְקוֹשְׁשׁוֹ),** — **קְרוֹי "קֹשׁ" בְּאַחֵר מִקוֹמוֹת** — **it is called "קֹשׁ"** (literally, *a gathering*) **in a number of other places in Tanach.**^[33]

29. "Go" means "Hurry!" (*Maskil LeDavid*), and "nothing will be deducted from your labor" means "nothing is deducted from your *work quota*" (*Torah U'Peirushah*). Thus, the taskmasters' words are understood: "Hurry, take for yourselves straw from whatever you find, for nothing will be deducted from your *quota*, even though you are no longer being provided straw" (*Mizrachi*).

30. *Mizrachi* to v. 7 above.

31. The verb לְקַשֵּׁשׁ means "to gather," as in the phrase מִקְשֵׁשׁ עֲצִים, *gathering wood* (*Bamidbar* 15:32). Although קֹשׁ is often used to mean straw, in this context it means "a gathering," as Rashi will explain (see *Mizrachi* to v. 7; *Daas Yissachar*).

32. Since the verse says לְקַשֵּׁשׁ קֹשׁ לְתֶבֶן, *to gather a gathering "for" straw*, yet what they gathered *was* straw, Rashi explains that it means "to glean a gleaning for

the purpose of having the supply of straw that they needed" (*Rash Almoshnino*).

[In explaining the phrase לְקַשֵּׁשׁ קֹשׁ, Rashi uses two different expressions — לְאֶסּוֹף אֲסִיפָה — "to gather a gathering," and לְלָקוּט לְקַט, "to glean a gleaning." — *לְלָקוּט* refers to picking up the pieces of straw bit by bit, and *לְאֶסּוֹף* refers to combining them into an accumulation of straw. The expression לְקַשֵּׁשׁ קֹשׁ encompasses both of these processes (*Ri Kanizal*; see Rashi to *Tzefaniah* 2:1).]

33. Such as 15:7 below; *Ovadia* 1:18; *Yeshayah* 40:24, 41:2, 47:14. In these and other places, straw is called קֹשׁ (*a gathering*), even though the verse uses only the noun and does not speak of the *act* of gathering it. Since straw must always be gathered, קֹשׁ, *a gathering*, is an appropriate name for it (*Mizrachi* and *Sefer Zikaron* to v. 7; *Rash Almoshnino*; cf. *Nachalas Yaakov*).

¹² So the people spread out through the entire land of Egypt to gather a gathering for straw. ¹³ The taskmasters were pressing, saying, “Complete your work, the daily matter each day, as when there was straw!” ¹⁴ They were beaten — the officers of the Children of Israel whom

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13. אָצִים — THE TASKMASTERS “ATZIM.”

דוֹחֵקִים — This means, they were **pressuring** the people^[34] (*Targum Onkelos*).

□ דְּבַר יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ — **COMPLETE YOUR WORK, THE DAILY MATTER EACH DAY, AS WHEN THERE WAS STRAW!**

חֲשׂוֹבֹן שֶׁל כָּל יוֹם כָּל יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ — This means: **Complete each day's quota on that very day,** “בְּאִשֶּׁר” וּבִשְׁהֵי מִשְׁלִימִין — **עָשִׂיתָם “בְּהֵיטָב” מוֹכֵן** — **AS you did WHEN THERE WAS STRAW** prepared for you from the king's supply.^[35]

14. וַיִּכּוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל — THE OFFICERS OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL... WERE BEATEN.

Why were the *officers* beaten, when it was the *laborers* who had not produced their quota of bricks?^[36]

הַשּׂוֹטְרִים יִשְׂרָאֵלִים הָיוּ — The officers were Jews,^[37] וַחֲסִים עַל חֲבֵרֵיהֶם מִלְּדַחֵקֵם — so they had pity on the Jewish laborers who were **their fellows**, and refrained from **pressuring them**. וּבִשְׁהֵי מִשְׁלִימִין — **הַלְכָּנִים לְנוֹגְשִׁים שֶׁהֵם מִצְרַיִם** — **Thus, when [the officers] would deliver the bricks** produced each day to the taskmasters, their superiors, who were Egyptians, וְהָיָה חֶסֶר מִן הַסֻּכּוֹם — **and there was a shortfall in the amount** of bricks that they had been expected to produce, הָיוּ מִלְּקִין אוֹתָם עַל שֶׁלֹּא דָּחֲקוּ — **the Egyptian taskmasters] would beat [the Jewish officers] because they had not pressured the laborers to work harder.**^[38]

Hashem rewarded the officers for their self-sacrifice:

לְפִיכָךְ זָכוּ אוֹתָן שׂוֹטְרִים לִהְיוֹת סְנֵהֲדְרִין — **Therefore, since the Jewish officers suffered in order to spare their brethren, those officers later merited to become members of the Sanhedrin,** וְנִאֲצַל מִן הָרוּחַ — **and at the time they were appointed to the Sanhedrin, the spirit of prophecy that had been upon Moshe was increased and was placed upon them** as well (*Bamidbar* 11:25). שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר “אֶסְפָּה לִּי שְׂבָעִים אִישׁ מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל” — We know that these officers were chosen for the Sanhedrin, **as it says** regarding the appointment of the Sanhedrin (*Bamidbar* 11:16-17), *Hashem said to Moshe,*

34. The term אָץ sometimes connotes “urge” (e.g., *Bereishis* 19:15) or “rush” (e.g., *Mishlei* 28:20), but Rashi consistently interprets it to mean “press,” in accordance with *Targum Onkelos* (see Rashi to *Bereishis* *ibid.*). One may press someone in order to urge or hasten him, or, as in our case, in order to make him work harder. [In the next comment, Rashi explains how the taskmasters pressured the laborers.]

35. Previously, when Pharaoh supplied the straw, each laborer had to produce a certain number of bricks each day. The taskmasters insisted that they produce the same number of bricks *each and every day*, even though they now had to gather the straw themselves.

This part of the verse clarifies the opening clause, *The taskmasters were pressuring*. Pharaoh had decreed only that the Jewish people must gather straw themselves and fill the same quota of bricks in a general way. The Jewish people could have chosen to spend one day in the fields gathering a large supply of straw

and then spend the next few days in uninterrupted production of bricks. This would have eased their burden somewhat, since they would not spend time every day walking to distant fields in search of straw. The taskmasters, however, added pressure on the laborers by insisting that the quota of bricks be filled each day, so they had to spend part of each day gathering straw and the rest of the day making bricks (*Ri Kanizal; Seichel Tov; Haamek Davar*).

36. *Sefer Zikaron; Be'er Yitzchak*.

37. See Rashi to v. 6 above, with note 13.

38. The taskmasters would demand of the officers to reveal to them which of the laborers failed to fill their quotas so that they could beat those laborers. In their righteousness and love for their fellow Jews, the officers refused to reveal that information. Since the taskmasters did not know which laborers were responsible for the shortfall, they beat the officers for not enforcing the quotas strictly enough (see *Bamidbar Rabbah* 15:20 with *Maharzu*).

שָׁמוּ עֲלֵהֶם נִגְשֵׁי פֶרֶעַה לֵאמֹר מִדּוּעַ לֹא
 כְּלִיתֶם חֻקָּם לִלְבֹּן בְּתִמּוֹל שְׁלֹשָׁם גַּם-
 תִּמּוֹל גַּם-הַיּוֹם: ^{טו} וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
 וַיַּצְעֲקוּ אֶל-פֶּרֶעַה לֵאמֹר לָמָּה תַעֲשֶׂה
 כֹּה לַעֲבָדֶיךָ: ^{טז} תָּבוֹן אֵין נָתַן לַעֲבָדֶיךָ

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מֵאוֹתָן שִׁידְעַת הַטּוֹבָה שֶׁעָשׂוּ צַמָּרִים "כִּי הֵם זָקְנֵי הָעָם
 וְשִׂטְרֵי" (שם: שְׁמוֹת רַבָּה שֶׁס כ; סְפָרִי דְּהַעֲלוֹתָךְ זצ:) וַיָּבֹאוּ
 שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר שָׁמוּ נִגְשֵׁי פֶרֶעַה אוֹתָם
 לְשׁוֹמְרֵים עַל־יְהוָה לֵאמֹר מִדּוּעַ וגו'. לָמָּה "וַיָּכּוּ", שֶׁהָיוּ

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"Gather to Me seventy men from the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and its officers... and I will increase some of the spirit that is upon you and place it upon them." מאותן שִׁידְעַת הַטּוֹבָה שֶׁעָשׂוּ צַמָּרִים "כִּי הֵם זָקְנֵי הָעָם וְשִׂטְרֵי" — With the extra phrase, "whom you know...", Hashem instructed Moshe to choose men **"from among those about whom you know the good that they did in Egypt, for they are the elders of the people and its officers** who suffered on behalf of their brethren"^[39] (Shemos Rabbah 5:20; Sifrei, Beha'aloscha §92).

□ וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל — **THEY WERE BEATEN — THE OFFICERS OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.**

A simple reading of this verse, following the order of its words, would lead to the following translation: *They were beaten — the officers of the Children of Israel whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had appointed over them to say (לֵאמֹר), "Why did you not complete your quota to make bricks," etc.* The verse would thus mean that Pharaoh's taskmasters had appointed officers to demand of the Jewish laborers, "Why did you not complete your quota?" But if *that* was the responsibility placed on the officers, they would not have been beaten when the quota was not met!^[40]

The end of the verse is also difficult, as it seems to read: *"Why did you not complete your quota to make bricks as yesterday and the day before (בְּתִמּוֹל שְׁלֹשָׁם), both yesterday and today."* This is self-contradictory,

39. Since these officers willingly took blows and suffered on behalf of their brethren, they were deemed worthy to join the Sanhedrin and thus be elevated above their brethren (Tanchuma, Beha'aloscha §13). They also merited to become prophets, in reward for

the purity of heart and love for their fellow Jews that they exhibited by opting to suffer in their place (Eshed HaNechalim to Shemos Rabbah ibid.). See Insight.

40. Gur Aryeh; Sefer Zikaron; Rash Almoshnino; cf. Mizrachi.

§ **Members of the Sanhedrin and Prophets** Rashi's explanation that the officers who were beaten were later appointed as judges of the Sanhedrin is repeated in his commentary to Bamidbar 11:16. In Bamidbar 7:2, however, Rashi writes that these officers became *Nesiim* of the tribes. Some suggest that the two approaches are not contradictory, because there were many officers who took beatings. Initially the most prominent among them — one from each of the twelve tribes — were chosen to be the *Nesiim*; later, when the Sanhedrin was formed, another seventy officers were chosen to be the judges of that body (Maskil LeDavid to Bamidbar 7:2; Nachalas Yaakov there, second approach).

Alternatively, the *Nesiim* themselves were among those appointed to the Sanhedrin. Although the position of *Nasi* is more prominent than that of a judge, the seventy elders who formed the first Sanhedrin had special prominence, as they merited to become prophets when Hashem increased Moshe's spirit so that it rested upon them. Thus, for the *Nesiim* to be chosen to join that particular Sanhedrin was a promotion. This approach is supported by Rashi's language here, for Rashi tells us that the officers who pitied their brethren were rewarded in two ways — as they were appointed to the Sanhedrin, and, in addition, the spirit of prophecy came to rest upon them (Nachalas Yaakov ibid., second approach).

Pharaoh's taskmasters had appointed over them — saying, "Why did you not complete your quota to make bricks as the day before yesterday, both yesterday and today?"

¹⁵ *The officers of the Children of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh, saying, "Why do you do this to your servants?"* ¹⁶ *Straw is not given to your servants,*

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for if they did not complete the quota "both yesterday and today," how could they say, "Why did you not complete your quota as yesterday?"^[41]

Rashi clarifies the meaning of the entire verse:

"אֲשֶׁר שָׂמוּ נְגָשֵׁי פַרְעֹה" — The verse is to be read as follows: *THEY WERE BEATEN — THE OFFICERS OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, those WHOM PHARAOH'S TASKMASTERS HAD APPOINTED AS OFFICERS OVER THEM* (the Children of Israel) to ensure that the quota was met — "לֵאמֹר מִדּוּעַ וְגו'" — with Pharaoh's taskmasters *SAYING, "WHY DID YOU NOT COMPLETE YOUR QUOTA TO MAKE BRICKS AS THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY, BOTH YESTERDAY AND TODAY?"*^[42] Accordingly, the latter part of the verse provides the explanation of the first part: "לָמָּה הָיוּ נִיכָוִים" — *Why is it that THEY WERE BEATEN?* שְׁהָיוּ — It is **because** [the Egyptian taskmasters] would say to them (לֵאמֹר) as follows: "מִדּוּעַ לֹא בָלִיתִם . . . גַּם הַמּוֹל גַּם הַיּוֹם" חַק הַקְצוּב עֲלֵיכֶם — *WHY DID YOU NOT COMPLETE, BOTH YESTERDAY AND TODAY, the quota imposed upon you* "לִלְבֹן בְּתִמּוֹל" הַשְּׁלִישִׁי — *TO MAKE BRICKS AS you did on the third YESTERDAY* (בְּתִמּוֹל שְׁלֹשׁ), שְׁהוּא יוֹם שְׁלִפְנֵי אֶתְמּוֹל — *meaning, the day before yesterday*,^[43] וְהוּא הִיָּה בְּהִיּוֹת הַתֵּבֶן נִתֵּן לָהֶם — *which was when straw was still being provided for them*.^[44]

□ **וְנִיכָוִים — THEY WERE BEATEN.**

לְשׁוֹן וְיִפְעֵלוּ — The word וְנִיכָוִים is a verb in the *huf'al* form, which expresses an action done *to* someone by another; הוּכָו מִיָּד אֲחֵרִים — the verse means that [the officers of the Children of Israel] **were beaten by others**, הַנּוֹגְשִׁים הַכּוֹסִים — that is, **the taskmasters beat them**. Thus, the verse is saying that the Jewish officers were beaten by their Egyptian taskmasters, who said to them, "Why did you not complete your quota..."^[45]

41. Mizrachi; Gur Aryeh; Rash Almoshnino; Nachalas Yaakov.

42. The word לֵאמֹר does not mean that the Jewish officers had been appointed to *say* to the laborers, "Why did you not meet your quota?" Rather, it means that the Egyptian taskmasters beat the Jewish officers, *saying*, "Why did you not meet your quota?" (*Sefer Zikaron; Rash Almoshnino*).

43. Rashi explains that the phrase בְּתִמּוֹל שְׁלֹשׁ does *not* mean "like yesterday and the day before" — which is what this phrase meant in v. 7. There (and in v. 8), both תִּמּוֹל and שְׁלֹשׁ are nouns; בְּתִמּוֹל means "as yesterday," and שְׁלֹשׁ means "the day before yesterday." In our verse, בְּתִמּוֹל שְׁלֹשׁ is a single phrase, with שְׁלֹשׁ being an adjective that modifies the noun תִּמּוֹל. The word שְׁלֹשׁ, from the root שלש, means "the third," so the phrase בְּתִמּוֹל שְׁלֹשׁ means literally, "like the third yesterday." This is a figure of speech that denotes "the day before yesterday"; today is "day one," yesterday is the "second" day counting backward, and the day before that is the "third" day counting backward (*Rash Almoshnino; Sefer Zikaron; Nachalas Yaakov; Be'er Yitzchak*).

44. When Pharaoh decreed that the Jewish people would no longer be given straw, he ordered that they must continue to produce the same number of bricks, as when they had been given straw. And the taskmasters insisted that the individual daily quotas still needed to be filled (see note 35). The incident recorded in our verse, that the Jewish officers were beaten, occurred two days later. The verse is saying that, after the Jewish workers had failed to meet the work quota on two consecutive days, Pharaoh's taskmasters beat the Jewish officers (who had been appointed to enforce the quota), saying, "Why did you not meet your quota to produce bricks *as the day before yesterday*, both yesterday and today?"

45. With this, Rashi resolves a difficulty with his earlier explanation of the verse. The subject of this verse ("They") is the *officers* who were beaten. But the phrase, *saying*, "Why did you not complete your quota?", explains the reasoning of the *taskmasters* who gave the beatings; it does not explain why the officers were beaten. The reason they were beaten is because the quota was not met, not because it was *said*, "Why did you not complete your quota." Rashi therefore

וּלְבָנִים אֹמְרִים לָנוּ עָשׂוּ וְהִנֵּה עֲבָדֶיךָ מֵכִים
וְחֹטְאֵת עִמָּךְ: י וַיֹּאמֶר נִרְפִּים אַתֶּם נִרְפִּים עַל־
כֵּן אַתֶּם אֹמְרִים גִּלְגָּה נִזְבַּחַה לַיהוָה: יח וְעַתָּה
לָכוּ עֲבְדוּ וְתָבֵן לֹא־יִנָּתֵן לָכֶם וְתָכֵן לְבָנִים תִּתְּנוּ:

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(טז) וּלְבָנִים אֹמְרִים לָנוּ עָשׂוּ. הַנוֹגְשִׁים אֹמְרִים: עָשׂוּ לָנוּ לְבָנִים כְּמִנְיָן הָרָשָׁיוֹן: וְחֹטְאֵת עִמָּךְ. אֵלּוּ הֵיךְ נִקְוֶה פֶּתַח הַיְיְתִי אֹמֵר שֶׁהוּא דְבוּקָה, וְדָבָר זֶה חֲטֹאת עִמָּךְ הוּא. טַכְשִׁיו שֶׁהוּא קִמֵּץ שֶׁסּ דָּבָר הוּא, וְכָךְ פִּירוּשׁוֹ: וְדָבָר זֶה מִצִּיא חֲטֹאת עַל עִמָּךְ, כֹּאֲלוֹ כְּתוּב

"וְחֹטְאֵת לְעַמְּךָ", כְּמוֹ "כְּבֹאֲנָה צִית לְחֶסֶךְ" (רות א, יט) שֶׁהוּא כְּמוֹ לְצִית לְחֶסֶךְ, וְכֵן הִרְצֵה: (יח) וְתָכֵן לְבָנִים. חֲשָׁבוֹן הַלְבָנִים. וְכֵן "אֵת הַפֶּסֶף הַמִּתְכַּן" (מלכים ב, יב, יג), הַמְנוּי, כְּמוֹ שֶׁאֱמֹר צִטָּנוֹן "וַיִּלְרֹו וַיִּמְנוּ אֵת הַפֶּסֶף" (שם יא):

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16. וּלְבָנִים אֹמְרִים לָנוּ עָשׂוּ — STRAW IS NOT GIVEN TO YOUR SERVANTS, YET THEY TELL US, "MAKE BRICKS!"

The officers seem to be saying that since the workers were not being given straw, they should not have to make bricks at all. But why should they not make *some* bricks? Rashi clarifies what they meant, and also identifies *who* it is that would tell them, "Make bricks":

וְעָשׂוּ לָנוּ לְבָנִים כְּמִנְיָן הָרָשָׁיוֹן: — The officers were saying: We are no longer being given straw, yet **the taskmasters say**, "Make bricks for us according to the original quota!"^[46]

□ וְחֹטְאֵת עִמָּךְ — AND "CHATAS" YOUR PEOPLE.

Rashi discusses two possible meanings of the phrase וְחֹטְאֵת עִמָּךְ.^[47]

אֵלּוּ הֵיךְ נִקְוֶה פֶּתַח הַיְיְתִי אֹמֵר שֶׁהוּא דְבוּקָה — Had the word [וְחֹטְאֵת] been vowelized with a *patach* rather than a *kamatz* (i.e., וְחֹטְאֵת),^[48] I would have said that it is linked to the next word, and the phrase would mean: וְדָבָר זֶה חֲטֹאת עִמָּךְ הוּא — and this matter is a sin of your people.^[49] The officers would thus be saying to Pharaoh: This matter of your servants (the Jewish laborers) being unable to meet the quota is actually the fault ("sin") of *your* people, who refuse to provide the needed straw.^[50] עַכְשָׁיו שֶׁהוּא קִמֵּץ שֶׁסּ דָּבָר הוּא — However, now that [the word] is vowelized with a *kamatz*, it is not connected to the next word, and **must be a free-standing noun**.^[51] וְכָךְ פִּירוּשׁוֹ: וְדָבָר זֶה מִצִּיא

explains that וְיָכֹוּ is a *huf'al* verb, which tells us that the Jewish officers were beaten *by others*. Having alluded to "others," the verse goes on to tell us *why* those others beat the officers (see *Mizrachi*; *Be'er Rechovos*).

46. Thus, *they tell us* "make bricks," means: The taskmasters order us to make the *same number* of bricks every day as we did when straw was being supplied. The officers' complaint was that the workers could not collect straw and still produce the same amount of bricks each day. The quota should have been lowered to allow time for collecting straw (*Gur Aryeh*; see also *Mizrachi*).

47. The word וְחֹטְאֵת is related to חָטָא, *sin*, but the vowelization חָטָא is unusual.

48. See *Levush HaOrah*; *Rashbam*; *Be'er Rechovos*; *Havanas HaMikra*.

49. The word וְחֹטְאֵת vowelized with a *patach* (under the letters ח and ט) would be a noun in the construct form, i.e., a

noun linked to the next word; חָטָא means sin, so וְחֹטְאֵת means a sin of someone, and it is linked to the next word, which tells us whose sin. We find this usage in the verses (*Yirmiyah* 17:1), חֲטֹאת יְהוּדָה, *the sin of Yehudah*, and (*Zechariah* 14:19), חֲטֹאת מִצְרַיִם, *the sin of Mitzrayim*. Thus, the phrase וְחֹטְאֵת עִמָּךְ would mean, "a sin of your people" (*Imrei Shefer*; *Sefer Zikaron*; *Divrei David*; *Be'er Rechovos*).

50. *Sefer Zikaron*; *Maharik*. Although Pharaoh himself had issued the decree, this would be a respectful way of speaking to Pharaoh, as though his people had decided on their own to withhold the straw and he was not at fault (*Sefer Zikaron*; see also *Levush HaOrah*). Alternatively, the officers would mean that Pharaoh's *taskmasters* were at fault because the taskmasters went beyond Pharaoh's decree and insisted that each day's quota still be met every day (see note 35).

51. When the word is vowelized וְחֹטְאֵת, it means "sin of," and the next word tells us whose sin it is. But

yet they tell us, 'Make bricks!' Behold, your servants are being beaten, and it is a sin [upon] your people."

¹⁷ He said, "You are lax, lax! Therefore you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to Hashem.' ¹⁸ Now, go work. Straw will not be given to you, but you must provide the count of bricks!"

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עֲמַךְ — This, then, is what the verse means: And this matter of your refusal to provide straw **brings a sin upon your people**, since the quota is unrealistic and unfair, so when your people beat us for failing to meet the quota, they sin.^[52] **וְיִחַטְּאָת לְעַמְּךָ** — It is as if the verse was written **"וְיִחַטְּאָת לְעַמְּךָ"**, with a *lamed* prefix (meaning *upon*) on the word **עֲמַךְ**, so that the phrase means, "and a sin is [brought] *upon* your people." **כְּבִיאָנָה בֵּית לֶחֶם שְׂהוּא כְּמוֹ לְבֵית לֶחֶם** — This missing *lamed* prefix is **similar to what** we find in the verse (*Rus* 1:19), **"כְּבִיאָנָה בֵּית לֶחֶם"**, which means literally *when they arrived, Beis-lechem*, but **which is understood as if it were written** **"כְּבִיאָנָה לְבֵית לֶחֶם"**, *when they arrived "at" Beis-lechem*. **וְכֵן הָרַבָּה** — **And there are many other such instances in Tanach.**

18. וְתָתֵן לָבַנִים — BUT YOU MUST PROVIDE THE "SOCHEN" OF BRICKS.

Rashi explains:

וְהַשְׁבֹּן הַלָּבַנִים — This means **"the count of bricks."**^[53] **וְכֵן אֵת הַכֶּסֶף הַמִּתְכָּן, הַמְנוֹי** — Likewise, the term **הַמִּתְכָּן**, in the verse (*II Melachim* 12:12), **"הַמִּתְכָּן"**, means, the money **that had been counted**. **כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר בְּעֵינֵי וַיִּמְנוּ אֶת הַכֶּסֶף** — That is clearly the meaning there, **as it says in that context**, in the previous verse (v. 11), **and they bagged and counted the money**; it was this counted money that the next verse refers to as **אֵת הַכֶּסֶף הַמִּתְכָּן**.^[54]

when it is vowelized **חַטָּא**, it is a free-standing noun that means simply "the sin."

The word **חַטָּא**, with a *kamatz* under both the *ches* (ח) and the *tes* (ט), is actually a verb in the feminine form and means "and she will sin," or "and she will have sinned" (see *Ibn Ezra*; *Radak*, *Shorashim*, חטא; Rashi to *Hoshea* 10:9). Since Rashi calls the word a noun, commentators suggest that Rashi's reading of the text vowelized it as **חַטָּא**, with a *patach* under the ח and a *kamatz* under the ט. *Rashbam* also indicates that this was his vowelization (*Havanas HaMikra*; *Leshon Chaim*). According to the accepted *Mesorah*, however, the word is vowelized **חַטָּא**. *Ibn Ezra* and *Radak* (ibid.) explain that **חַטָּא עֲמַךְ** means "and your people will sin." [See *Gilyon HaShas* to *Shabbos* 55b for other instances where Rashi's reading deviates from the *Mesorah*.]

52. According to this interpretation, the "sin" referred to here is the Egyptians' beating of the Jewish people, and "this matter" which brought about the sin is Pharaoh's refusal to provide straw. The officers told Pharaoh: By refusing to give us straw, yet insisting on the original quota, you bring sin upon your own people who beat us unfairly (*Maharik*). Alternatively, they meant, "You bring sin upon yourself," but they respectfully said, "your people" (*Sefer Zikaron*; *Ibn Ezra*; *Radak*, *Shorashim*, חטא).

[Others explain that "your people" refers to the

Jewish people. The officers were saying: This matter of our not being provided straw brings "sin" upon us, since it makes us unable to meet the quota and causes us to be beaten. They begged Pharaoh to reduce the quota so that they would not "sin" to him (*Levush HaOrah*; *Sifsei Chachamim*; cf. *Be'er BaSadeh*).]

53. Rashi already said in v. 8 (ד"ה מתכנת) that the word **מִתְכָּן** in our verse is of the same root as **מִתְכָּן** in that verse, and both words are related to "count." Here Rashi clarifies that **תָּכַן** means simply **הַשְׁבֹּן**, "the count." The term **מִתְכָּן**, however, refers to the *result* of the counting — the total number that emerges from the count (*Havanas HaMikra*).

54. Rashi emphasizes this because others explain **הַכֶּסֶף הַמִּתְכָּן** to mean "the high-quality money," referring to minted coins as opposed to blank slugs (see *Radak* there). According to that approach, **תָּכַן** means "quality," and Pharaoh could be understood as saying, "but you must provide the same *quality* of bricks." The verse could then mean that Pharaoh agreed to lower the daily quota and merely insisted that the quality remain the same — with the same straw content — even though he was no longer providing the straw. Rashi therefore goes out of his way to prove that **תָּכַן** means "the count," for Pharaoh did *not* agree to reduce the quota at all (*Yerios Shlomo*; *Minchas Yehudah*; *Oznayim LaTorah*).

יט וַיֵּרְאוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתְּם בָּרַע לֵאמֹר
לֹא־תִגְרְעוּ מִלְּבַנֵּיכֶם דְּבַר־יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ: כ וַיִּפְגְּעוּ
אֶת־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶת־אַהֲרֹן נֹצְצִים לִקְרֹאתָם בְּצֹאתָם
מֵאֶת פְּרֻעָה: כא וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם יְרֵא יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם
וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אֲשֶׁר הִבְאִשְׁתֶּם אֶת־רִיחָנוּ בְּעֵינֵי
פְּרֻעָה וּבְעֵינֵי עַבְדֵּי לְתֶת־חֶרֶב בֵּינָם לְהִרְגָנוּ:

יט וַיֵּרְאוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתְּם בָּרַע לֵאמֹר
לֹא־תִגְרְעוּ מִלְּבַנֵּיכֶם דְּבַר־יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ: כ וַיִּפְגְּעוּ
אֶת־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶת־אַהֲרֹן נֹצְצִים לִקְרֹאתָם בְּצֹאתָם
מֵאֶת פְּרֻעָה: כא וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם יְרֵא יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם
וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אֲשֶׁר הִבְאִשְׁתֶּם אֶת־רִיחָנוּ בְּעֵינֵי
פְּרֻעָה וּבְעֵינֵי עַבְדֵּי לְתֶת־חֶרֶב בֵּינָם לְהִרְגָנוּ:

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(יט) וַיֵּרְאוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת חֲבֵרֵיהֶם הַנִּרְדִּים
עַל יָדָם: בָּרַע. רָאוּ אוֹתָם צָרָה וְלָרָה הַמוֹלֶה אוֹתָם
צָהָרְדִם הַעֲבֹדָה עֲלֵיהֶם לֵאמֹר לֹא תִגְרְעוּ וְגו': (כ) וַיִּפְגְּעוּ חֲנָשִׁים מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל אֶת מֹשֶׁה וְאֶת אַהֲרֹן וְגו'.
וְרִצּוֹתֵינוּ דָרְשׁוּ: כָּל "לָנִים" וְ"לָנָדִים" דָּתָן וְחִזְדָּיִם הֵיוּ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר
צָהָרְדִם "יֵלְאוּ לָנָדִים" (במדבר טז, כז; נדרים סד; שמות רבה ה, כז):

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19. וַיֵּרְאוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל — *THE OFFICERS OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SAW THEM IN DISTRESS.*

Whom did they see in distress? Rashi explains:

אֶת חֲבֵרֵיהֶם הַנִּרְדִּים עַל יָדָם — The officers saw **their fellows, who were being pressed by them** to complete the quotas...^[55]

□ בָּרַע — “BERA.”

The word בָּרַע means literally *with evil*, which might be understood to mean that the officers viewed their fellow Jewish workers with an evil eye, i.e., antagonistically, and pressed them to work harder (as the verse continues: *saying, “Do not subtract from your bricks...”*). But this cannot be, for these are the very same officers who had taken beatings on behalf of their brethren! Rashi explains:

אֲוֹתָם בָּרַעַה וְצָרָה הַמוֹצֵאת אוֹתָם — The verse means that **[the officers] saw [their fellows] in the state of hardship and distress that had befallen them**, recognizing and empathizing with their suffering, — **בְּהִכְבִּידֵם הָעֲבֹדָה עֲלֵיהֶם** — **as, due to Pharaoh’s decree, they reluctantly made the workload heavier upon [their fellows], SAYING, “DO NOT SUBTRACT FROM YOUR BRICKS, WHAT IS DUE EACH DAY ON ITS DAY.”**^[56]

20. וַיִּפְגְּעוּ — *THEY ENCOUNTERED.*

A simple reading would indicate that the people who encountered Moshe and Aharon are those spoken of in the previous verse, namely, the officers. However, this does not seem correct, because those who encountered Moshe and Aharon spoke very harshly to them, as the next verse records, and the officers were righteous men who surely would not speak that way. Rashi cites two explanations of who it was that encountered Moshe and Aharon:

אֲנָשִׁים מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל — **The plain meaning is that unnamed people from the general populace of Israel ENCOUNTERED MOSHE AND AHARON, ETC., not the officers.**^[57]

55. The verse uses the pronoun “them” without having identified any subject. [The phrase בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, Children of Israel, describes the officers, not the people under them (see Rashi to v. 6 with note 13).] Rashi explains that the subject of our verse (“them”) must be the officers’ fellow Jews, whom the officers were now pressing to meet the quotas [as explained in the next note] (*Mizrachi; Gur Aryeh*).

56. Until now, the Jewish officers had ignored the orders of the Egyptian taskmasters and had not enforced the difficult quota on their fellows, choosing to take beatings on account of the shortfall (Rashi to v. 14). But now

that they had complained to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh had rejected their plea and forcefully commanded them to make sure the quota was met, they had no choice but to convey his order to the laborers and tell them, “Do not subtract from your bricks...” However, they did so with empathy, as they were pained by the hardship and suffering of their fellow Jews (*Nachalas Yaakov*; see also *R’ Avraham ben HaRambam*).

57. As Rashi explained in the previous verse (see note 55), the word אוֹתָם, *them*, in that verse refers to the Jewish people at large. Our verse continues the narrative, speaking about members of the Jewish people

¹⁹ *The officers of the Children of Israel saw them in distress, saying, “Do not subtract from your bricks, what is due each day on its day.”* ²⁰ *They encountered Moshe and Aharon, standing erect toward them, as they left Pharaoh’s presence.* ²¹ *They said to them, “May Hashem look upon you and judge, for you have made our scent abhorrent in the eyes of Pharaoh and the eyes of his servants, to place a sword in their hand to murder us!”*

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כל “נצים” ו“נצבים” דתן ואבירם היו — **But our Sages expounded** the verse as follows: **כל “נצים”**, *fighting*, or **“נצבים”**, *standing erect*, you can know that **it was** the wicked **Dassan and Aviram**, **“שנאמר בהם “נצאו נצבים”** — **about whom it is stated** at the incident of Korach (*Bamidbar* 16:27), **Dassan and Aviram went out “נצבים”**, *erect*, to defiantly confront Moshe.^[58] Thus, our verse, which uses the word **נצבים** to describe this encounter, means that it was Dassan and Aviram — “*standing erect*” with a brazen posture — who encountered Moshe and Aharon, and they were the ones who spoke harshly to them^[59] (*Nedarim* 64b; *Shemos Rabbah* 5:20).

at large. [It does not specifically identify the people because that is unimportant] (*Maskil LeDavid*; cf. *Ramban* to v. 22).

58. The term **נצבים** implies that these people took a fierce and brazen stance against their leaders, Moshe and Aharon (*Eshed HaNechalim* to *Shemos Rabbah* 5:20).

[The term **נצים** appears only once in the Torah, in 2:13 above, where it says that Moshe saw two Jewish men “נצים”. Although Rashi to that verse understands **נצים** as a verb, “*fighting*,” the Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:29) understands it as an adjective, meaning, “*fighters*,” and explains that this is an apt description for Dassan and Aviram, who consistently quarreled with Moshe and incited the populace against him. The term **נצבים** appears in a number of places. Sometimes it

simply means “standing” and clearly does not refer to Dassan and Aviram (see *Bereishis* 18:2; *Devarim* 29:9). Rashi means that in instances where the term seems superfluous, as in our verse, it means “standing erect” in a brazen way, and refers to Dassan and Aviram (see *Maharzu* and *Eitz Yosef* to *Shemos Rabbah* 5:20).]

59. According to this approach, the verse actually means that the officers of the Children of Israel — who are mentioned explicitly in the previous verse — encountered Moshe and Aharon as they (the officers) left Pharaoh’s presence. Dassan and Aviram were among those officers, and they were the ones who stood erect and spoke up brazenly. The others were righteous men who would not have spoken in this manner to Moshe and Aharon (*Shemos Rabbah* *ibid.*). See Insight.

⚡ **Dassan and Aviram’s Conflicting Traits** While Dassan and Aviram are noted throughout the Torah for their wickedness (see Rashi above, 2:13, 15, 4:19; below, 16:20; *Bamidbar* 16:1, 12-14, 27), according to Rashi’s second approach they possessed an element of great virtue: They were among the officers of the Children of Israel who let themselves be beaten rather than enforce Pharaoh’s unfair work quota on their brethren! Now, Rashi explained in v. 14 that the officers who took such beatings merited to become members of the Sanhedrin and attained prophecy. This does not mean that *all* the officers achieved that status. There were thousands of officers (one for every ten Jewish laborers; *Shemos Rabbah* 1:28), and only seventy of them — the most worthy ones from each tribe — were appointed to the Sanhedrin. Dassan and Aviram surely were not on the Sanhedrin. However, the merit of taking beatings for their brethren benefited them in another way. Rashi writes below (10:22) that there were wicked Jewish people who did not want to leave Egypt and they died during the *makkah* of Darkness. Dassan and Aviram were in that evil group, but they survived, and, in fact, *remained in Egypt* when Moshe led the Jewish people out at the time of the Exodus (*Targum Yonasan* to 14:3 below). At some later time, they joined the Jewish people in the Wilderness and resumed their wicked behavior. Why did they not die during the *makkah* of Darkness? *R’ Yehoshua Leib Diskin* explains that it was in the merit of the beatings that they took on behalf of their brethren. Despite their evil desire to remain in Egypt, they were spared from death. But while they gave of themselves for their brethren, their behavior toward Hashem remained evil, and when the Jewish people left Egypt, they chose to remain behind. After the Splitting of the Sea, when all the Egyptians drowned and it was evident that Egypt had no future, Dassan and Aviram joined the other Jewish people in the Wilderness. There they carried on their wicked ways, acting as thorns in Moshe’s side, until they were swallowed up by the earth together with Korach (*Maharil Diskin al HaTorah*).

R’ Chaim Kanievsky would often point out a lesson to be learned from this incident. One who suffers on behalf of his fellow Jewish people gains enormous merit which may save him from death even if he has grave sins — but there is a limit to this merit. Once the person gets involved in dispute, as Dassan and Aviram did when they joined Korach’s rebellion, even the great merit of taking blows for other Jewish people will not save him (*Minchas Todah* [Honigsberg], p. 443).

כב וַיָּשָׁב מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי לָמָּה הִרְעֵתָה לָעָם הַזֶּה לָמָּה זֶה שְׁלַחְתָּנִי: כג וַיֹּאמֶר בָּאתִי אֶל־פַּרְעֹה לְדַבֵּר בְּשִׁמְךָ הִרְעָה לָעָם הַזֶּה וְהֵצֵל לֹא־הֵצַלְתָּ אֶת־עַמִּי: [ו] א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה עֲתָה תֵּרְאֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לְפַרְעֹה

מפסיר כב וַיָּשָׁב מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי לָמָּה הִרְעֵתָה לָעָם הַזֶּה לָמָּה זֶה שְׁלַחְתָּנִי: כג וַיֹּאמֶר בָּאתִי אֶל־פַּרְעֹה לְדַבֵּר בְּשִׁמְךָ הִרְעֵתָה לָעָם הַזֶּה וְהֵצֵל לֹא־הֵצַלְתָּ אֶת־עַמִּי: [ו] א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה עֲתָה תֵּרְאֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לְפַרְעֹה

רע"ו

לך זרע"ו (בראשית כא, יב), וְאַחֲרֵי כֵן אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ "הֵעֲלֵהוּ אֵיכָפֶת לָךְ, קוֹבֵל אֲנִי עַל שְׁשִׁלְחָתִי (שמות רבה טז כב): (בג) הִרְעָה. לָשׁוֹן הַפְעִיל הוּא, הִרְעָה רָעָה עָלֵיהֶם, וְתַרְגּוּמוֹ "חֲבָאֵשׁ": (א) עֲתָה תֵּרְאֶה וְגו'. הִרְעָה עַל מַדּוּתִי, לֹא כְחֲבָרֶם שְׁאִמְרִי לוֹ "כִּי צִלַּקְתָּ יִקְרָא

לך זרע"ו (בראשית כא, יב), וְאַחֲרֵי כֵן אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ "הֵעֲלֵהוּ אֵיכָפֶת לָךְ, קוֹבֵל אֲנִי עַל שְׁשִׁלְחָתִי (שמות רבה טז כב): (בג) הִרְעָה. לָשׁוֹן הַפְעִיל הוּא, הִרְעָה רָעָה עָלֵיהֶם, וְתַרְגּוּמוֹ "חֲבָאֵשׁ": (א) עֲתָה תֵּרְאֶה וְגו'. הִרְעָה עַל מַדּוּתִי, לֹא כְחֲבָרֶם שְׁאִמְרִי לוֹ "כִּי צִלַּקְתָּ יִקְרָא

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22. לָמָּה הִרְעֵתָה לָעָם הַזֶּה — MOSHE RETURNED TO HASHEM AND HE SAID, "MY LORD, WHY HAVE YOU MADE IT WORSE FOR THIS PEOPLE — WHY HAVE YOU THUS SENT ME?"

Understood simply, Moshe's second question, "Why have You thus sent me," means: Why did You send me on a mission that was doomed to fail? But if so, Moshe's two questions are in the wrong order. He should have begun with the simple question, "Why have You thus sent me [on a doomed mission]?", and then progressed to the stronger question, "Why have You made it worse for this people [by sending me, which led Pharaoh to *increase* the persecution]!"^[60] Rashi therefore explains that Moshe's latter question is meant to bolster his first question:

אֶחָד אֵיכָפֶת מֶה אֵיכָפֶת לָךְ — ואם תאמר מה איכפת לך — After asking, "WHY HAVE YOU MADE IT WORSE FOR THIS PEOPLE?", Moshe anticipated a retort from Hashem, so he meant to say further: **And if You, Hashem, will ask me, "Why is it your concern** to question My judgment?"^[61] קוֹבֵל אֲנִי עַל שְׁשִׁלְחָתִי — then I must respond, "WHY HAVE YOU THUS SENT ME?", i.e., **I have a complaint over the fact that You sent me** on this mission and brought about this worsening through me^[62] (*Shemos Rabbah* 5:22).

23. הִרְעָה — FROM THE TIME I CAME TO PHARAOH... "HEIRA" FOR THIS PEOPLE.

The word הִרְעָה is from the root רע, which means *bad* or *harm*. Rashi explains what the word means in this form:

לָשׁוֹן הַפְעִיל הוּא — This word is in the *hifil* (causative) form, and thus denotes causing harm to another.^[63] וְתַרְגּוּמוֹ — Moshe was saying that [Pharaoh] **made it worse for [the Jewish people];** אֶחָד אֵיכָפֶת מֶה אֵיכָפֶת לָךְ — and the correct Targum for this word is "אֲבָאֵשׁ", which means, "he made it bad."^[64]

60. *Mizrachi; Gur Aryeh*. In addition, it does not seem logical for Moshe to ask, "Why have You sent me on a mission that was doomed to fail?", when Hashem had told him in advance (above, 3:19, 4:21) that Pharaoh would not agree to free the Jewish people (*Mizrachi*).

61. You should realize that if I (Hashem) made it worse for the Jewish people, I have a reason for doing so — even if that reason is beyond your comprehension! (*Gur Aryeh*; see also *Yefeh To'ar*).

62. Moshe had been told in advance that his mission would not immediately succeed (see note 60), but he had not been warned that it would make matters worse. Thus, he complained about the fact that he had been made a catalyst for the worsening of his brethren's plight (*Mizrachi*; see *Maskil LeDavid*; Or

HaChaim). Since Hashem normally brings about bad things through evil people, Moshe wondered why he had been chosen for this mission (*Divrei David*).

63. הִרְעָה does not mean that it has *become* bad, but rather, that Pharaoh *made* it bad.

64. There are two versions of Targum Onkelos for the word הִרְעָה; one version is אֲבָאֵשׁ, *he made it bad* (the Aramaic *hifil* form), and the other version is אֲתַבָּאֵשׁ, *it has become bad* (the Aramaic *hispael* form). Rashi tells us that the correct reading is אֲבָאֵשׁ, meaning that Pharaoh made it bad for the Jewish people. However, Pharaoh had been mistreating them all along, so Rashi explains it to mean that Pharaoh made it even *worse* for the Jewish people [by forcing them to collect the straw for their bricks] (*Nachalas Yaakov*; see *Sefer Zikaron*).

²² Moshe returned to Hashem and he said, “My Lord, why have You made it worse for this people — why have You thus sent me?²³ From the time I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name he made it worse for this people, and You did not rescue Your people at all!”

6 ¹ Hashem said to Moshe, “Now you will see what I shall do to Pharaoh,

THE ELUCIDATED RASHI

6.

1. עֵתָה תֵּרְאֶה וְגו' — HASHEM SAID TO MOSHE, “NOW YOU WILL SEE WHAT I SHALL DO TO PHARAOH.”

The verse would seem to mean that *now* (but not earlier) the time has finally arrived for Pharaoh to be punished and for Hashem to send out the Jewish people “with a strong hand” (see Ramban to 5:22). But although the *makkos* would soon begin, the Exodus was still many months away, so the word “now” does not fit well. Also, Hashem could simply have said, “Now I shall strike Pharaoh.” Why did He say, “Now you will see...”?^[1] Rashi explains:

הַרְהֵרָתָּ עַל מְדוּתִי — Hashem rebuked Moshe: **You questioned My measures** by which I govern the world!^[2] “כִּי בִיָּצְחָק יִקְרָא לָךְ וְנֶרֶ” — You did **not** act like Avraham, to whom I said (Bereishis 21:12), “**for through Yitzchak will offspring be considered yours,**” וַיֵּאָחֵז בְּךָ אֲמִרָתִי — **and yet when I said to him afterward** about his son Yitzchak (ibid. 22:2), “**bring him up as an offering,**” he did **not** question Me as to how this instruction could be reconciled with My promise that he would have offspring through Yitzchak. Rather, he accepted My command and faithfully set out to fulfill it. You, however, when faced with a difficulty in understanding My ways, questioned Me. “לְפִיכֵן” — **Therefore,** it is only **NOW** that **YOU WILL SEE** My salvation! הָעֲשׂוֹי לְפָרְעָה תֵּרְאֶה וְלֹא הָעֲשׂוֹי לְמַלְכֵי שְׂבָעָה אֻמּוֹת בְּשֹׁאבֵיָאֵם לְאַרְץ — That is, **you will merit to witness that which is done to Pharaoh now**, in the course of the Exodus from Egypt, **but you will not witness that which shall be done to the kings of the seven Canaanite nations when I bring [the Jewish people] into the Land of Israel**^[3] (Shemos Rabbah 5:23; Sanhedrin 111a).

1. Ri Kanizal; Yefeh To'ar; Eitz Yosef.

2. Although Moshe attempted to justify his question of “Why have You made it worse for this people” by adding, “Why have You thus sent me” (see Rashi to 5:22 with notes 61-62), Hashem rejected this justification. For by sending Moshe on this mission, Hashem had been testing Moshe, just as He had tested Avraham — but Moshe did not react like Avraham, as Rashi goes on

to explain (*Maskil LeDavid*; cf. *Mizrachi*; see further, Rashi to *Kohes* 7:7).

3. Rashi apparently means that Moshe would not merit to witness the defeat of the Canaanite kings because he would not be allowed to enter Eretz Yisrael. The implication is that it was decreed *here* that Moshe would not enter the Land. See Insight for discussion.

¶ **When Was It Decreed that Moshe Would Not Enter Eretz Yisrael?** Many commentators wonder about the implication that this is where it was decreed that Moshe would not enter Eretz Yisrael. Why, it is stated clearly in *Parashas Chukas* (Bamidbar 20:12) that Hashem issued this decree on account of the incident of *Mei Merivah* (Waters of Strife), when Moshe struck the rock to draw out water instead of speaking to it — and that incident happened forty years later!?

Mizrachi suggests that here Hashem decreed only that Moshe would not witness the defeat of the Canaanite kings, but Moshe still could have entered Eretz Yisrael, and would have died there before the battles with the Canaanite kings took place. Later, at the incident of *Mei Merivah*, it was decreed that Moshe would die in the Wilderness and not enter Eretz Yisrael at all. There are, however, numerous difficulties with this approach, as noted by *Mizrachi* himself (and by *Maharsha* to *Sanhedrin* 111a).

Maharsha (ibid.) explains that it was, in fact, decreed here that Moshe would not enter the Land, but this decree was not yet final because it was not accompanied by an oath; thus, it could have been overturned through prayer. At the incident of *Mei Merivah*, however, Hashem swore that Moshe would not enter the Land (see Rashi there תבאו ד"ה לכן לא תבאו). That sealed the decree, and precluded its being rescinded. *Gur Aryeh* (to *Bamidbar* 20:12) adds that here Hashem merely *hinted* that Moshe would not enter the Land, by saying “Now you will see,” which *implies*, “but you will not see the defeat of the Canaanite kings.” Since, at this point,

כִּי בְּיָד חֲזָקָה יִשְׁלַחַם וּבְיָד חֲזָקָה יִגְרֹשֶׁם
מֵאֶרְצוֹ: ס ס ס
אֲרִי בְּיָד תְּקִיפָא יִשְׁלַחֲנוּן וּבְיָד
תְּקִיפָא יִתְרַכְנוּן מֵאֶרְעָה:
קב"ד פסוקים. ויק"ח סימן. מעד"י סימן.

רש"י

כִּי בְּיָד חֲזָקָה יִשְׁלַחַם. מִפְּנֵי יְדֵי הַחֲזָקָה שֶׁתְּחַזֵּק עַל
פְּרַעֲה יִשְׁלַחֶם: וּבְיָד חֲזָקָה יִגְרֹשֶׁם מֵאֶרְצוֹ. עַל כִּרְחֹס
שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל יִגְרֹשֶׁם, וְלֹא יִסְפִּיקוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהֶם לֵידָה, וְכֵן הוּא
אוֹמֵר "וְתַחֲזֹק מִלְּרִיִּם עַל הָעָם וְגו'" (להלן יב, לג):

— THE ELUCIDATED RASHI —

□ **כִּי בְּיָד חֲזָקָה יִשְׁלַחַם — FOR “BEYAD CHAZAKAH” HE WILL SEND THEM OUT.**

The phrase **כִּי בְּיָד חֲזָקָה יִשְׁלַחַם** could be translated, “for *with* a strong hand he will send them out,” referring to *Pharaoh’s* strong hand, and meaning that Pharaoh will, in the end, *drive* the Jewish people from his land (as, in fact, happened; see below, 12:33). But that is what the next clause in our verse says! Rashi therefore explains differently:

כִּי בְּיָד חֲזָקָה יִשְׁלַחַם — Hashem was saying: On account of My Strong Hand, which will impose its might on Pharaoh, he will send out [the Jewish people] to freedom.^[4]

4. Thus, **כִּי בְּיָד חֲזָקָה** means “*through* [My] strong hand,” not “*with* [his] strong hand” (see *Mizrachi* and *Gur Aryeh*).

Hashem did not *explicitly* say that Moshe would not enter Eretz Yisrael, it was not yet a full-fledged decree, so it surely could have been reversed through prayer. [As for why Moshe pleaded with Hashem to let him enter the Land (*Devarim* 3:23-25) even after the incident of *Mei Merivah*, see *Gur Aryeh* to *Devarim* 3:23 and *Maskil LeDavid* here.]

Now, Rashi said above (4:13) that when Hashem appeared to Moshe at the Burning Bush, Moshe argued that he should not be the one to lead the Jewish people out of Egypt, since ultimately, he would not lead them into Eretz Yisrael. Although at that time, the decree had not yet been issued, Moshe knew prophetically that this would occur (*Mizrachi*; *Gur Aryeh* to *Bamidbar* *ibid.*).

for through a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them from his land.”

THE HAFTARAH FOR SHEMOS APPEARS ON PAGE 477.

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□ וּבִיד חֲזָקָה יִגְרֹשׁם מֵאֶרֶצוֹ — AND “BEYAD CHAZAKAH” HE WILL DRIVE THEM FROM HIS LAND.

The phrase וּבִיד חֲזָקָה in this clause refers to Pharaoh’s strong hand:

עַל כְּרַחֲם שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל יִגְרֹשׁם — Here Hashem is saying: On account of the plagues that I will inflict on Pharaoh, culminating in *Makkas Bechoros*, **he will drive the Jewish people out of Egypt against their will**, וְלֹא יִסְפִּיקוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהֶם צִידָה — using *his* “strong hand” to force them to leave so quickly **that they will not even have sufficient time to prepare provisions** for the way.^[5] וְכֵן הוּא אֹמֵר “וַיִּתְחַזֵּק” — And so it is stated (12:33 below), *Egypt imposed itself strongly upon the people, to hasten to send them out of the land, for they said, “We are all dying!”*^[6]

5. The Jewish people will surely leave Egypt happily, but will go out “against their will” in the sense of being forced to leave more hurriedly than they would have desired. They will not have time to prepare provisions, nor to wait for their dough to become leavened (see below, 12:34, 39). This is because Pharaoh and his people will be so desperate to escape Hashem’s wrath that they will push and cajole the Jewish people to leave quickly (*Be’er Yitzchak*). Thus, “*with [his] strong hand he will drive them from his land*” does not mean that Pharaoh will actually wield power against the Jewish people. To the contrary, it means that after experiencing Hashem’s strong hand, he will be in such a

desperate state that he will do everything in his power to hasten the Jewish people’s departure.

6. We have followed *Mizrachi* and *Gur Aryeh* in explaining that, according to Rashi, the first mention of בִּיד חֲזָקָה in this verse means “through Hashem’s strong hand” and the second means “with Pharaoh’s strong hand.” Others explain that the second וּבִיד חֲזָקָה also means “through Hashem’s strong hand.” The verse is saying that on account of the punishment that Pharaoh will endure through Hashem’s strong hand, he will desperately press the Jewish people to hurry out of his land (*Nachalas Yaakov; Be’er Yitzchak*).

