

TAN 1815

Rabbi Allen Schwartz

## **The Development of Moshe as Prophet and Leader**

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רב משה דוד גروس

# אוצר האגדה

מהמשנה והתוספות התלמודים  
והמדרשים וספריו ההור

כרך שני:

כ-פ



הוצאת מוסד הרב קוק • ירושלים

12. עין בז' 13. תמורה טה 14. ויקרא טנו 15. מכלתא בשלת טנו 16. פסיקתא רבתיה לא

<sup>17</sup> מפסיקתא זו שורתה דברים 18 תדבאייר: כה- 19 ילקוט יעקב מהם

**משה ואהרן.** 1 ברכות ד. 2 שם 3. 3 שם שם 4 שם ית : 5 שם לב.

7 שם לא: 8 שם לד. 9 שם מלה. 10 שם נטה. 11 שם שם :

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## תשמ"ב מושג ארון

למה מפני הגבורת, נכנס אהרן ושנה לו, משה פרקנו לעולם אהרן לימין משה, נסתלק משה  
ושנה, לכן אהרן פרקי<sup>29</sup>, כי דבריהם נבראו בערך שבין השמשות, קבשו של משה  
אף מקלו של אהרן<sup>30</sup>, אמר ר' רבנן היבי געיביד<sup>31</sup>, נאמרו הוה (בשכללו) לא- אמרו משה  
רבינו לא נאמרו יעקב<sup>32</sup>, כל אדם שבועס אם חכם הוא חכמתו מסתלקת ממנה  
משה; מבל דמשה אעלם מיניה<sup>33</sup>, היל זה, משה נישאל אמרו הוה גיגית כת בקהלו  
של משה והיה קולו מהליך בכל ארץ מצרים מתלך מ', יומם<sup>34</sup>, ויקרא אל' משה משה  
וכבישראל עומדין ; מלמד שחפסו הקב"ה למשה והביאו בענין<sup>35</sup>, יתנו בני עממיין לשפט  
דערדין עובדא דאהרן<sup>36</sup>, טוב לו למשה שלא נזנו פנים בעזה<sup>37</sup>, מעולם לא  
ירדה שכינה למשה ולא עלו משה ואליהו למרום<sup>38</sup>, שמן המשחה שעשה ממשה במדבר  
משה-בטים נעשו בו<sup>39</sup>, משה שפיר אמרה<sup>40</sup>, שמועה שםע, שם אהרן ונסתלקו ענני  
הכבד<sup>41</sup>, מלמד שנתעטף הקב"ה כשליח צבור והראה לו למשה סדר תפלה<sup>42</sup>, בקש  
קחלה להיות-במשה; לא קם נביא-עוד בישראל במשה בנביים לא קם במלכים קם<sup>43</sup>,  
וכי ידיו של משה עשות מלחת או, שבורות, מלחמה<sup>44</sup>, כי פרנסים טובים עדין  
ליישראל, משה ואהרן, מן בוקות משה<sup>45</sup>, שכן מצינו במשה רビינו, שצער עצמו עם  
האבות... כי אמר משה הוואיל, וישראל, שרויין-בעזר, אף: אני אהיה עתמת<sup>46</sup>, משה תייקו  
לחם לישראל ייה משמרות<sup>47</sup>, כוון שעשו ישראל אותן מעשה בקש הקב"ה, לחטוף את  
הלווחות מיד' משה ובירה, יdag של משה וחטוף, מבנו-תורה, שהחטוף: משבחו ולבל היב  
החוקה<sup>48</sup>, משה תיקו להם לישראל-שיינו שואלי ודורשין בענינו, של יום הלווחות פסח  
בפסח<sup>49</sup>, הוא אהרן ומשה הן בצדקה מתחילתן ועד סוף<sup>50</sup>, גודד היה משה, שירד-להם  
ליישראל, מן בימייו<sup>51</sup>, מלמד שהראתו הקב"ה למשה דקדוקי תורה ודקדוקי ספרדים<sup>52</sup>,  
משה-התקין לישראל שיינו קוריון: בתורה, בשבותות וב仪<sup>53</sup> ובריה-וחולו, של מועד<sup>54</sup>,  
מלמד שכל אחד-קינא לאשתו ממשה<sup>55</sup>, כל הנביים גסטכלו באסקלפייא אשינה, מאירה  
משה הבינו-נסתכל באסקלפייא המaira<sup>56</sup>, נתינים משה גור עליה<sup>57</sup>, אל' וכי משה  
הייה-הגון ללימוד תורה מפני הגבורה ? אל' וכי משה אתה ? אל' וכי ר' ר' אלהים הוא ?<sup>58</sup>  
הعزירות, על דת משה יהודית<sup>59</sup>, דוכתא דמשה: ואהרן לא זכו לה ana מי יימר-דזכיבא  
לה ?<sup>60</sup>, גודלה מילה שלא בטלת, לו קמשה האציג עלייה: מלא שעיה<sup>61</sup>, לא למשה-רבינו  
בקש שטן, להרוג אלא לאו-תו תינוק<sup>62</sup>, לא העשיר משה-אל' מפטולן של לוחות ; לא-  
ניתנה תורה אלא: למשה ולזרעו, משה נוגה בה טבת-עין, וננתנה לישראל אין הקב"ה,  
משה-השכינהו אלא על גבור וועשר וחכם וכובל ממשה<sup>63</sup>, גודל מה שנאמר-בשם אולן  
יותר משנאמר במשה<sup>64</sup>, מלמד שעלו שמש, וירח מפרקיע לובל ואיל רבש"ע אם אתה  
עושה-דין, לבן ערמות אנו מאירים ואמ לאו אין אנו מאירין<sup>65</sup>, משה וכיה בעצמות יוספין  
ואין: בישראל גודל-מנבו<sup>66</sup>, כי טוב הוא טוב, טובי-שםו : טובי-שםו : בשעה שנולד, משה  
נתמלא הבית כלו אדור<sup>67</sup>, בא-זואת כמה הביבות נזנות על משה-ריבינו<sup>68</sup>, שתיים-עשרה-  
מעלות היו, שם ופען משה בפסיעה אחת<sup>69</sup>, היכן-משה מת ? בחילוק של ראנן : קבור-

25. עירובין-נור : 26. מסחים וזה : 27. שם-זה : 28. שם ס"ה : 29. שם ק"ג :  
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35. ירוש' שקלים ו א' : 36. ביצה לה' : 37. ר'יה ג' : 38. שם י' : 39. שם כא' :  
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58. שם גת' : 59. שם שם : 60. שם שם : 61. שם לט' : 62. סוטה ט' : 63. שם יב' : 64. שם יג' : 65. שם שם :

בחלקו של גן, מלמד שתיה משה מוטל בכונפי שכינה ומלאכיו הרשות אמרין: צדקתו ה' עשה והקב"ה אומר מי יקום ליל עם מרעים<sup>68</sup>, לא מות משה, עומדים ומשמשים<sup>69</sup> ב'ק משפטו ואומר נימת משה ספרה רבה דישראל<sup>70</sup>, הראנו היכן משה קבור עמדו למעלה בדמתה לסת למטה<sup>71</sup>, מפני מה נימאות משה ריבינו ליכנס לאדרי ז' לאך אך אמר משה הרבה מצית נצטו לישראל ואין מתיקיינן אלא בא"י<sup>72</sup>, מלמד שהיינו ישראל עזוני שירה אחרים שלasha עלה כל דבר ודבר ז' באותה שעה היה משה מאיריך בתפלת ז' מימות משה עד רבי לא מצינו תורה וגולה במקומן אחד<sup>73</sup>, והביטו אחריו משה זו אמר לבגאי וחדר אמר לשבח<sup>74</sup>, ולא עוד אלא שמשימין משה ריבינו יעקב וותרו אמרת ואומרין אילו היה יודע משה ריבינו שהיה ריות בהבר לא היה כותבו, לעולם אל ישנה אדם מן המנהג שחררי משה עללה למרום וואך כל חום<sup>75</sup>, אל' משנת לפני הקב"ה, אף伊利 בשעה שאתה מחביב עמים כל קדשו יתו בידך<sup>76</sup>, גדול העושה צדקה בסתר יותה משה רבינו<sup>77</sup>, אמר משה לפניו הקב"ה, بما תרומם קרן ישראלי? אל' בכ' תשא<sup>78</sup>, משה כחוב ספרו ופרש בלעם ואיוב<sup>79</sup>, אפשר משה מות וכחוב זימת שם משה? אלא עד כאן כתוב משה מכאנן ואילך יהישע, מכאנן ואילך הקב"ה אמר, משה בותה בדמע<sup>80</sup>, הימן זה משה, איוב בימי משה היה, משה איקרי מוחקק<sup>81</sup>, ר' לא, שלט בהן מלאך המתים, משה ואחרון ז' לא שלט בהן רמה ותולעה משה ואחרון<sup>82</sup>, אמרין משה אמרת ותורתו אמתות ווון בדאי<sup>83</sup>, ונחתת מהזעם עלו ולא כל הזעם זקנים שבאותו הדור אמרו פני משה כפניהם חמה פנוי, יתחשע כפניהם לבנת אויה לה לאotta בושת<sup>84</sup>, ואילו משה רבינו ברוכן בח' וקלון בכ"ב<sup>85</sup>, לאו ממשה קא אתית ז' רואי היה פרשת נחלות ליכטב, ע"י משה<sup>86</sup>, אחרון אהוב שלום ורודף שלום ומשים שלום בין אדים לאחים<sup>87</sup>, על דבר זה נענש משה<sup>88</sup>, וכי תיפא, משה במקומ ע"א, קאיו<sup>89</sup>, בשעה שאיל הקב"ה למשה אספה לייע' איש אמרו אליך ומידך אין אנו ראיין לנו זכות גדור<sup>90</sup>, מה נבואה נתנבאו? משה מות יהושע מבנים את ישראל לארכין<sup>91</sup>, שקר החן זה דורו של משה<sup>92</sup>, גנאי הוא למשה וס' ריבונו קבריה למשה במא依 טביל<sup>93</sup>, מתהנים בדבר רשות זה משה<sup>94</sup>, גנאי הוא למשה וס' ריבונו שלא אמרו ברוך עד שבא יתרו<sup>95</sup>, אל חמי מי קעביד משה איזו הו מלכא לאחיזו שוויא כהנא רבא<sup>96</sup>, יישמע משה ויפול על פניו שמע שחשדו מה אשיש<sup>97</sup>, עריהם הבדיל משה<sup>98</sup>, תרוי"ג, מצות נאמרו לו למשה<sup>99</sup>, ד' גוירות גור משה רבינו על ישראל באו ד' נבאים וביטלים<sup>100</sup>, בששביע משא: אתי ישראל אל דעו של על דעתכם אני<sup>101</sup> משבע עתכם<sup>102</sup>, אמר להן משה לישאל כפני טובה בני כפני טובה<sup>103</sup>, לעולם יסדר אדם שבחו של מקום ואחיך יתפלל מגן ז' משנת רבינו<sup>104</sup>, שאני מושת דרב גובריה<sup>105</sup>, משה קבל תורה מסיני ומסרה ליהושע<sup>106</sup>, משה זכה זוכת את הרבים זכות הרכבים תלויות בו<sup>107</sup>, משה עשה י"ב? מי חנוכה כדי לחולק כבוד לעשאים<sup>108</sup>, שמן המשחה שעשה<sup>109</sup> במרבר כמה גלדים נערו בנו<sup>110</sup>, כמין ב' טפי מרגליות היו תלויות לאחרן בקננה ועדין

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 101 שם כב: 102 שם כ. 103 שבאותם כב. 104 ע"ז ה: 105 שם ז: 106 שם ז: 107 אבות א א 108 שם ה כ. 109 הורות ז: 110 שם י:

ט' ש' ז' א' א' ה' ד'

תייה אחרין דואג אמר שמא משה לא מעיל אבל אין מילתי? יתחה ביך ואיל תגה מה טוב ומה נגידים שבת אהים גם חדר מה משה לא מעיל אף אתה לא מעיל<sup>111</sup>. אש שירדה מון השמיים בימי משה לא נסמלקה: מעיל מונח החושש לא בא בימי שלמה<sup>112</sup> הורה ולא רוש משה לומרא לא: שמעתי; שמעתי; ושפוחוי<sup>113</sup>; לא נחכמך משה אלא זי ימי המלאוים בלבד; לא פסקה כהונת-אלא מוריעו של משה<sup>114</sup>; ג' דברים היו קשין לו למשה עד שרחראה לו הكب"ה באגביעו<sup>115</sup>; ובא טוביה משה ויקבל טבו זו תורו<sup>116</sup>; יבא זה המש ויקבל את זו התורה<sup>117</sup>; משה ריבינו אוחב ישראל היה<sup>118</sup>; אל רחמנא למשה שורת קובא<sup>119</sup>; מלמד שחתפס הكب"ה מכל מין זמן תורה לו למשה ואיל זאת אול<sup>120</sup>; ור' משה הבינו איננו הדת או בלטוטרי<sup>121</sup>; ר' יהה<sup>122</sup>; נתהי נדולת למשה זאהרן אמר ונחנו מה צידול שנאמר במשה ואחרין יותר מה שבסאר באברותם אין העולם מתקיים אלא בשבייל משה ואחרין<sup>123</sup>; משה מן-התורה מגין? בSEGOT הוא בשרד<sup>124</sup>; משה ררכט גוב היה אן קויבוטוס היה און אייבו כי בחשיבותו? אל' משה רבינו גבר נאמן היה ובקי בחשיבותו<sup>125</sup>; משה דרבינו זי אמות היה; אל' עשייתו למשה רבינו בעל מום<sup>126</sup>. כל אשכליות שעמדו לישראל מימות משה עד שמוט יוסף בן יווער היין למידן תורה למשה דרבינו<sup>127</sup>; ג' אלפיג' האלות נשתקחו בימל' אבלו של משה<sup>128</sup>; אשר דבר ה' ו' הילכת ייד משה זו גומא<sup>129</sup>. כשם שעיל התורה הלכה למשה מסינה<sup>130</sup>; קובל' אונע'יליכם פרושים שאטם כותבין את המשל עם משה: בוגט<sup>131</sup>; הulos זמלוא לא נבדא אלא זוכות משה<sup>132</sup>; ממאמר של הكب"ה למאמר: של משה; מהקב"ה שנקרוא אל מלך נאמן למשה שנקרוא נאמן; מהלב"ז שנקרוא צדיק<sup>133</sup>; בכל מקום הוא מקדים משה לאחרן ובמקומות אחד הוא אומר הוא-אחרן ומשה מלמד שנייהם שקולין זה זה<sup>134</sup>; אפרע אטור שכותבו בו הלא את השמים ואת הארץ אני מלא היה. מדבר עט' משה על הר העברים<sup>135</sup>; הארונו<sup>136</sup>; געשה קולו של הكب"ה מיטטרוק למשה בשעה שאיל לעלה על הר העברים<sup>137</sup>; בשעה שהיתה משה כותבת את התורה היה כתוב: מעשה כל يوم כוון שהגייע לפטוק געשה: אדם אמר רבונו העולם מה אתה גונן? פתחן. פה למאיים? אל כתוב והרצח לטפנות יטעה; אל' הكب"ה משא: האדרם: הוות שבראות אל גודליים וקטניהם אני מעמידן<sup>138</sup>. אפיקלו נת: שנשחטי מהה לא שהיה כואיל לא שזכה הكب"ה שם עטידי<sup>139</sup> לעמוך: מבנו שנאמר בשוגם זה משה דחושבניתה: דין הוא שהוא השבינה<sup>140</sup>; משה היה מותקן לבואל<sup>141</sup>; חביב: משה מנה: משה: שנקרוא איש: מצרי: נקרוא איש האלים<sup>142</sup>; ומפניו: אני מהן משה: שהאה: הגעה: בתורה בעי: לשון<sup>143</sup>; כמה: גגעה יגע בו בן עמרם עד שלמד שירת: ללוים<sup>144</sup>; בב': מקומות: דימת: משה עצמו לאברהם<sup>145</sup>; משה בסוף של ישראל וגנסו: של משה: הكب"ה<sup>146</sup>; אדרת: צדיקים זה משה<sup>147</sup>; כעשעה זמרי: אותו מעשה כתיב ויבא אחר איש ישראל ותיכן היה משה? זפנחים מדבר לפני משה? בינתה היושעה לפניהם והשפיל את משה<sup>148</sup>; ס' ר' בוא: תינוקותם עיברין: גשותיתן: של ישראל: בבלילה אחת: זוכלים הושלכו ליאור ועל בוכתו של משה<sup>149</sup>; לפי שיראה יוכבד מפני הكب"ה העמיד

<sup>111</sup> שם זב. <sup>112</sup> זבחים זא: <sup>113</sup> שם קא: <sup>114</sup> שם קב: <sup>115</sup> מונחות כת. <sup>116</sup> שם זג

<sup>117</sup> שם סה. <sup>118</sup> חולין זח: <sup>119</sup> שם מא: <sup>120</sup> שם ס: <sup>121</sup> שם טפ.

<sup>122</sup> שם קלט: <sup>123</sup> בכורות זג: <sup>124</sup> שם מה: <sup>125</sup> תמורה טז: <sup>126</sup> שם טפ.

<sup>127</sup> כירחות גז: <sup>128</sup> גודה מה: <sup>129</sup> קידם דת: <sup>130</sup> ביר' אה: <sup>131</sup> שם שם טז

<sup>132</sup> שם שם כא: <sup>133</sup> שם זג: <sup>134</sup> שם גג: <sup>135</sup> שם חז: <sup>136</sup> שם בז: <sup>137</sup> שם בז: <sup>138</sup> שם לו: <sup>139</sup> שם מט: <sup>140</sup> שם זג: <sup>141</sup> שם גה: <sup>142</sup> שם נט: <sup>143</sup> שם זג: <sup>144</sup> שם צו: <sup>145</sup> שם צו: <sup>146</sup> שם צו: <sup>147</sup> שם צו: <sup>148</sup> שם צו: <sup>149</sup> שם צו: <sup>150</sup> שם צו: <sup>151</sup> שם צו: <sup>152</sup> שם צו: <sup>153</sup> שם צו: <sup>154</sup> שם צו: <sup>155</sup> שם צו: <sup>156</sup> שם צו: <sup>157</sup> שם צו: <sup>158</sup> שם צו: <sup>159</sup> שם צו: <sup>160</sup> שם צו: <sup>161</sup> שם צו: <sup>162</sup> שם צו: <sup>163</sup> שם צו: <sup>164</sup> שם צו: <sup>165</sup> שם צו: <sup>166</sup> שם צו: <sup>167</sup> שם צו: <sup>168</sup> שם צו: <sup>169</sup> שם צו: <sup>170</sup> שם צו: <sup>171</sup> שם צו: <sup>172</sup> שם צו: <sup>173</sup> שם צו: <sup>174</sup> שם צו: <sup>175</sup> שם צו: <sup>176</sup> שם צו: <sup>177</sup> שם צו: <sup>178</sup> שם צו: <sup>179</sup> שם צו: <sup>180</sup> שם צו: <sup>181</sup> שם צו: <sup>182</sup> שם צו: <sup>183</sup> שם צו: <sup>184</sup> שם צו: <sup>185</sup> שם צו: <sup>186</sup> שם צו: <sup>187</sup> שם צו: <sup>188</sup> שם צו: <sup>189</sup> שם צו: <sup>190</sup> שם צו: <sup>191</sup> שם צו: <sup>192</sup> שם צו: <sup>193</sup> שם צו: <sup>194</sup> שם צו: <sup>195</sup> שם צו: <sup>196</sup> שם צו: <sup>197</sup> שם צו: <sup>198</sup> שם צו: <sup>199</sup> שם צו: <sup>200</sup> שם צו: <sup>201</sup> שם צו: <sup>202</sup> שם צו: <sup>203</sup> שם צו: <sup>204</sup> שם צו: <sup>205</sup> שם צו: <sup>206</sup> שם צו: <sup>207</sup> שם צו: <sup>208</sup> שם צו: <sup>209</sup> שם צו: <sup>210</sup> שם צו: <sup>211</sup> שם צו: <sup>212</sup> שם צו: <sup>213</sup> שם צו: <sup>214</sup> שם צו: <sup>215</sup> שם צו: <sup>216</sup> שם צו: <sup>217</sup> שם צו: <sup>218</sup> שם צו: <sup>219</sup> שם צו: <sup>220</sup> שם צו: <sup>221</sup> שם צו: <sup>222</sup> שם צו: <sup>223</sup> שם צו: <sup>224</sup> שם צו: <sup>225</sup> שם צו: <sup>226</sup> שם צו: <sup>227</sup> שם צו: <sup>228</sup> שם צו: <sup>229</sup> שם צו: <sup>230</sup> שם צו: <sup>231</sup> שם צו: <sup>232</sup> שם צו: <sup>233</sup> שם צו: <sup>234</sup> שם צו: <sup>235</sup> שם צו: <sup>236</sup> שם צו: <sup>237</sup> שם צו: <sup>238</sup> שם צו: <sup>239</sup> שם צו: <sup>240</sup> שם צו: <sup>241</sup> שם צו: <sup>242</sup> שם צו: <sup>243</sup> שם צו: <sup>244</sup> שם צו: <sup>245</sup> שם צו: <sup>246</sup> שם צו: <sup>247</sup> שם צו: <sup>248</sup> שם צו: <sup>249</sup> שם צו: <sup>250</sup> שם צו: <sup>251</sup> שם צו: <sup>252</sup> שם צו: <sup>253</sup> שם צו: <sup>254</sup> שם צו: <sup>255</sup> שם צו: <sup>256</sup> שם צו: <sup>257</sup> שם צו: <sup>258</sup> שם צו: <sup>259</sup> שם צו: <sup>260</sup> שם צו: <sup>261</sup> שם צו: <sup>262</sup> שם צו: <sup>263</sup> שם צו: <sup>264</sup> שם צו: <sup>265</sup> שם צו: <sup>266</sup> שם צו: <sup>267</sup> שם צו: <sup>268</sup> שם צו: <sup>269</sup> שם צו: <sup>270</sup> שם צו: <sup>271</sup> שם צו: <sup>272</sup> שם צו: <sup>273</sup> שם צו: <sup>274</sup> שם צו: <sup>275</sup> שם צו: <sup>276</sup> שם צו: <sup>277</sup> שם צו: <sup>278</sup> שם צו: <sup>279</sup> שם צו: <sup>280</sup> שם צו: <sup>281</sup> שם צו: <sup>282</sup> שם צו: <sup>283</sup> שם צו: <sup>284</sup> שם צו: <sup>285</sup> שם צו: <sup>286</sup> שם צו: <sup>287</sup> שם צו: <sup>288</sup> שם צו: <sup>289</sup> שם צו: <sup>290</sup> שם צו: <sup>291</sup> שם צו: <sup>292</sup> שם צו: <sup>293</sup> שם צו: <sup>294</sup> שם צו: <sup>295</sup> שם צו: <sup>296</sup> שם צו: <sup>297</sup> שם צו: <sup>298</sup> שם צו: <sup>299</sup> שם צו: <sup>300</sup> שם צו: <sup>301</sup> שם צו: <sup>302</sup> שם צו: <sup>303</sup> שם צו: <sup>304</sup> שם צו: <sup>305</sup> שם צו: <sup>306</sup> שם צו: <sup>307</sup> שם צו: <sup>308</sup> שם צו: <sup>309</sup> שם צו: <sup>310</sup> שם צו: <sup>311</sup> שם צו: 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<sup>447</sup> שם צו: <sup>448</sup> שם צו: <sup>449</sup> שם צו: <sup>450</sup> שם צו: <sup>451</sup> שם צו: <sup>452</sup> שם צו: <sup>453</sup> שם צו: <sup>454</sup> שם צו: <sup>455</sup> שם צו: <sup>456</sup> שם צו: <sup>457</sup> שם צו: <sup>458</sup> שם צו: <sup>459</sup> שם צו: <sup>460</sup> שם צו: <sup>461</sup> שם צו: <sup>462</sup> שם צו: <sup>463</sup> שם צו: <sup>464</sup> שם צו: <sup>465</sup> שם צו: <sup>466</sup> שם צו: <sup>467</sup> שם צו: <sup>468</sup> שם צו: <sup>469</sup> שם צו: <sup>470</sup> שם צו: <sup>471</sup> שם צו: <sup>472</sup> שם צו: <sup>473</sup> שם צו: <sup>474</sup> שם צו: <sup>475</sup> שם צו: <sup>476</sup> שם צו: <sup>477</sup> שם צו: <sup>478</sup> שם צו: <sup>479</sup> שם צו: <sup>480</sup> שם צו: <sup>481</sup> שם צו: <sup>482</sup> שם צו: <sup>483</sup> שם צו: <sup>484</sup> שם צו: <sup>485</sup> שם צו: <sup>486</sup> שם צו: <sup>487</sup> שם צו: <sup>488</sup> שם צו: <sup>489</sup> שם צו: <sup>490</sup> שם צו: <sup>491</sup> שם צו: 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<sup>672</sup> שם צו: <sup>673</sup> שם צו: <sup>674</sup> שם צו: <sup>675</sup> שם צו: <sup>676</sup> שם צו: <sup>677</sup> שם צו: <sup>678</sup> שם צו: <sup>679</sup> שם צו: <sup>680</sup> שם צו: <sup>681</sup> שם צו: <sup>682</sup> שם צו: <sup>683</sup> שם צו: <sup>684</sup> שם צו: <sup>685</sup> שם צו: <sup>686</sup> שם צו: <sup>687</sup> שם צו: <sup>688</sup> שם צו: <sup>689</sup> שם צו: <sup>690</sup> שם צו: <sup>691</sup> שם צו: <sup>692</sup> שם צו: <sup>693</sup> שם צו: <sup>694</sup> שם צו: <sup>695</sup> שם צו: <sup>696</sup> שם צו: <sup>697</sup> שם צו: <sup>698</sup> שם צו: <sup>699</sup> שם צו: <sup>700</sup> שם צו: <sup>701</sup> שם צו: <sup>702</sup> שם צו: <sup>703</sup> שם צו: <sup>704</sup> שם צו: <sup>705</sup> שם צו: <sup>706</sup> שם צו: <sup>707</sup> שם צו: <sup>708</sup> שם צו: <sup>709</sup> שם צו: <sup>710</sup> שם צו: <sup>711</sup> שם צו: <sup>712</sup> שם צו: <sup>713</sup> שם צו: <sup>714</sup> שם צו: <sup>715</sup> שם צו: <sup>716</sup> שם צו: <sup>717</sup> שם צו: <sup>718</sup> שם צו: <sup>719</sup> שם צו: <sup>720</sup> שם צו: <sup>721</sup> שם צו: <sup>722</sup> שם צו: <sup>723</sup> שם צו: <sup>724</sup> שם צו: <sup>725</sup> שם צו: <sup>726</sup> שם צו: <sup>727</sup> שם צו: <sup>728</sup> שם צו: <sup>729</sup> שם צו: <sup>730</sup> שם צו: <sup>731</sup> שם צו: <sup>732</sup> שם צו: <sup>733</sup> שם צו: <sup>734</sup> שם צו: <sup>735</sup> שם צו: <sup>736</sup> שם צו: <sup>737</sup> שם צו: <sup>738</sup> שם צו: <sup>739</sup> שם צו: <sup>740</sup> שם צו: <sup>741</sup> שם צו: <sup>742</sup> שם צו: <sup>743</sup> שם צו: <sup>744</sup> שם צו: <sup>745</sup> שם צו: <sup>746</sup> שם צו: <sup>747</sup> שם צו: <sup>748</sup> שם צו: <sup>749</sup> שם צו: <sup>750</sup> שם צו: <sup>751</sup> שם צו: <sup>752</sup> שם צו: <sup>753</sup> שם צו: <sup>754</sup> שם צו: <sup>755</sup> שם צו: <sup>756</sup> שם צו: <sup>757</sup> שם צו: <sup>758</sup> שם צו: <sup>759</sup> שם צו: <sup>760</sup> שם צו: <sup>761</sup> שם צו: <sup>762</sup> שם צו: <sup>763</sup> שם צו: <sup>764</sup> שם צו: <sup>765</sup> שם צו: <sup>766</sup> שם צו: <sup>767</sup> שם צו: <sup>768</sup> שם צו: <sup>769</sup> שם צו: <sup>770</sup> שם צו: <sup>771</sup> שם צו: <sup>772</sup> שם צו: <sup>773</sup> שם צו: <sup>774</sup> שם צו: <sup>775</sup> שם צו: <sup>776</sup> שם צו: <sup>777</sup> שם צו: <sup>778</sup> שם צו: <sup>779</sup> שם צו: <sup>780</sup> שם צו: <sup>781</sup> שם צו: <sup>782</sup> שם צו: <sup>783</sup> שם צו: <sup>784</sup> שם צו: <sup>785</sup> שם צו: <sup>786</sup> שם צו: <sup>787</sup> שם צו: <sup>788</sup> שם צו: <sup>789</sup> שם צו: <sup>790</sup> שם צו: <sup>791</sup> שם צו: <sup>792</sup> שם צו: <sup>793</sup> שם צו: <sup>794</sup> שם צו: <sup>795</sup> שם צו: <sup>796</sup> שם צו: <sup>797</sup> שם צו: <sup>798</sup> שם צו: <sup>799</sup> שם צו: <sup>800</sup> שם צו: <sup>801</sup> שם צו: <sup>802</sup> שם צו: <sup>803</sup> שם צו: <sup>804</sup> שם צו: <sup>805</sup> שם צו: <sup>806</sup> שם צו: <sup>807</sup> שם צו: <sup>808</sup> שם צו: <sup>809</sup> שם צו: <sup>810</sup> שם צו: <sup>811</sup> שם צו: <sup>812</sup> שם צו: <sup>813</sup> שם צו: <sup>814</sup> שם צו: <sup>815</sup> שם צו: <sup>816</sup> שם צו: <sup>817</sup> שם צו: <sup>818</sup> שם צו: <sup>819</sup> שם צו: <sup>820</sup> שם צו: <sup>821</sup> שם צו: <sup>822</sup> שם צו: <sup>823</sup> שם צו: <sup>824</sup> שם צו: <sup>825</sup> שם צו: <sup>826</sup> שם צו: <sup>827</sup> שם צו: <sup>828</sup> שם צו: <sup>829</sup> שם צו: <sup>830</sup> שם צו: <sup>831</sup> שם צו: <sup>832</sup> שם צו: <sup>833</sup> שם צו: <sup>834</sup> שם צו: <sup>835</sup> שם צו: <sup>836</sup> שם צו: <sup>837</sup> שם צו: <sup>838</sup> שם צו: <sup>839</sup> שם צו: <sup>840</sup> שם צו: <sup>841</sup> שם צו: <sup>842</sup> שם צו: <sup>843</sup> שם צו: <sup>844</sup> שם צו: <sup>845</sup> שם צו: <sup>846</sup> שם צו: <sup>847</sup> שם צו: <sup>848</sup> שם צו: <sup>849</sup> שם צו: <sup>850</sup> שם צו: <sup>851</sup> שם צו: <sup>852</sup> שם צו: <sup>853</sup> שם צו: <sup>854</sup> שם צו: <sup>855</sup> שם צו: <sup>856</sup> שם צו: <sup>857</sup> שם צו: <sup>858</sup> שם צו: <sup>859</sup> שם צו: <sup>860</sup> שם צו: <sup>861</sup> שם צו

במנה משה שכותב בנו כי טוב הוא<sup>144</sup>, הגון לנביות, נולד כשהוא מהול<sup>145</sup>, בנו אדר בכל תורתה אלא כמו שקרתו בתיה בת פרעה<sup>146</sup>. ויגדל משה בנו כבשנה היה משה באתחה שעה, היה גדול שלא כدرك כל העולם<sup>147</sup>. אף משה לא בתרונו הקביה אלא, בשלה מה רועה צאנו של יתרו מדבר ברוח מגנו גדי ורא אחריו הרכיבי עלי, כתפו אל הקב"ה יש哉 ל闯ים לנווה צאנו שלبشر ועם חיק אתה תרעה צאננו ישראל ישבילו סנה<sup>148</sup>, סר זעף הוא זה לראות עצערן שלישראל במצרים לפיכך דראי הוא להו רועה עלי<sup>149</sup>, בקש משה שיעמדו מגנו כהנים ומכלים<sup>150</sup>, בשעה שנגלה הקב"ה על משה טירון היה משה לבואה<sup>151</sup>, אמרו חכמים ימי קודם והיה הקביה מפתחה למשה שעיליתו ולא היה רוצה לילד<sup>152</sup>, סבור אתה שהיתה מעכבר משה לילד אינו כן אלא במקבב לאחרו שתיה אמר עד שעילך עמידתי היה אהרן אחיך מתגנא להם במצרים<sup>153</sup>, נקי כפים זה משה; ואה נשבע למרמה זה משה<sup>154</sup>, אמריך בחוץ אשקל תוץ במדבר מקום שישקו אתים זה לוה משה ואחרון<sup>155</sup>, בז' שנה נתלש משה ריבינו מבית אבוי<sup>156</sup>, חסר זה אהרן ואמתה זה משה; צדק מה שעה ושלום עה אהרן<sup>157</sup>, לפי שכבר הודיע הקב"ה למשה שליא בניח אותם פרעה לילד ומשה לא שمر את הדבר הזה ועל זה בקשה מדרת הדין לפגוע במשה ולפי שנטכל אקב"ה שבשליל צער ישראלי דבר כן חזר ונתקע עמו במרת לחמים<sup>158</sup>, חיית איש מהיר במלאתו וזה משה שהר במלאת המשכן<sup>159</sup>, שלת אורך ואמתך זה משה ואחרון<sup>160</sup>, כשבקש הקב"ה לדרוש את החודש אמר צעק אני ואחרון אני ואתם נקדש את החודש<sup>161</sup>, וייה בשלח פרעה משה אמר זו עמי<sup>162</sup> אמר צעק אני שנחיגעת להוציא ישראל ממצרים ואני נבנש עמו לארץ<sup>163</sup>, ומה עלה אל האלים באורה שעה בקשו מלאי השרת לפגוע במשה עשה לו אקב"ה קלטידון של פניו זרומה לאברהם<sup>164</sup>, כי דברים נתן משה נפשו עליהם ונקרו על שמו ישראל והتورה והדיניהם<sup>165</sup>, כל מי שנחי ישראל במדבר שם משפט בכחונה גדולה<sup>166</sup>, בשעה שירד משה מסניינו וראה יהוד באוטו מעשה היה סבות שתיה אהרן שורי עמם זה היה בלבו עליון<sup>167</sup>, באיה עמו<sup>168</sup>, אל הקב"ה משה מלך עשיטיך ואין לך מלך גשות זבדך אל גוזר ואחרותם עשים<sup>169</sup>, כל מ' יומ שעשה משה למאלה היה למד תורה ישובת<sup>170</sup>, בקש משה לרדך ומאה מלאי חובל וגונדר מהם הילך ואיתו את הכסא<sup>171</sup>, משה אחד משני סנגורין שעמדו למד סגיוריא על ישראל והעפידון פנים כביכיל כגד אקב"ה משה ודינהיל<sup>172</sup>, בשעה שא"ל הקב"ה לך רד כי שhort עמד היה תפיס בלוות זלא היה מאמין שחתאו ישראל אמר אם איini רואה איini מאמין<sup>173</sup>, תן לךTEM, כי חכם עמד זהו משה<sup>174</sup>, איש אמותות זה משה שהוא נאמנו של הקב"ה<sup>175</sup>, אל משיח חיים נגמר המשכן אתן לכם חשבון<sup>176</sup>, כי שמות נקרו לו למשה ירד חבר יקותיאל אביגדור אביה סוכו אביה זנוח; אף טוביה;

146 שם ר' א ב 147 שם שם ב ג 148 שם שם כת 149 שם שם כת 150 שם שם 151 שם שם ב ב  
 152 שם שם ט 153 שם שם א 154 שם שם א 155 שם ג א 156 שם ג א 157 שם שם כא 158 שם ד א  
 158 שם שם יט 159 שם ה א 160 שם שם יא 161 שם יא 162 שם יא 163  
 163 שם ט ז 164 שם ט יט 165 שם ב ז 166 שם כת א 167 שם ל ז 168 שם לו א 172 שם מא ז  
 171 שם מ ב 170 שם ט ז 175 שם מ ג א 176 שם ט ז 177 שם נ א 178 שם שם ה

שטעמיה<sup>181</sup>, בשעה שאיל הקב"ה למשה עשה לי משכדי על כל דבר ודבר שהייתה עשו  
זהה כותב עליי כאשר צוחה ה' את משה<sup>182</sup>, מה בין משה לכל הביאים?<sup>183</sup>, כך אמר משה  
לפנוי הקב"ה מעז אומות אוthoniyotot (מושילות) אי אתה מצוה אותן אלא זו את בני  
ישראל דבר אל בני ישראל? אל שהן דבוקין לי<sup>184</sup>. משה בשעה שבחשידות הקב"ה  
בא עמו בחסידות<sup>185</sup>, כל זו ימי אדר היה משה מבקש תפלה ותחנונים שיכנס לאיל<sup>186</sup>,  
צער גדול היה למשה בדבר רוחה ברך הוא בכבודו של אהרן אחיו להיות דראה את  
הנוגעים<sup>187</sup>, העומדתו להן<sup>188</sup> פלוגוגין משה אהרן ומרומים שבוכות משה היו היתם אוכלים  
את המן<sup>189</sup>, ומלהן עז ימושל זה משה שהיה מלכה של תורה<sup>190</sup>, ביה"ח מקומות אתה  
מושץ' משה ואחריך שווים כגון י"ח ברכות<sup>191</sup>, אשרי בכפלים מי שהקב"ה בחר בו וקירבו  
זה אהרן<sup>192</sup>, אמר משה רבב"ע דמן של בני קהות אסור ודמן של בני אהרן מותר?<sup>193</sup> אל  
לאו אל אהרן קדש קדשים<sup>194</sup>, משה עלם במשכן ונקרא על שמנו<sup>195</sup>, משה נתקדש  
בענן כל זה אהרן ובנינו נתקדשו בשמן ודם<sup>196</sup>, ולא קם נגיא ערך בישראל כמו שהוא  
לאם אבל באומות העולם גם זה בלעם;<sup>197</sup> ג' מלחמות היו ביד משה שלא היו ביד כל עם;<sup>198</sup> ג'  
מלחמות היו ביד בלעם שלא היו ביד משה<sup>199</sup>, לשאיל הקב"ה ועשית מגורות זוב אל ניצד  
געשה אותה? אל מקשה תישעה ואע"פ כן נתקשה משה וירד ושכח מעשיה עלה ואמר  
רבוני שכחתי אותה הראה לו למשה וועוד נתקשה עד שנintel מطبع של אש והראה לו  
עשיתה ואע"פ כן נתקשה<sup>200</sup>, הוא נקרא אלהים וקרא למשה אלהים; אל הקב"ה מלך  
עשיתיך מה מלך בשתוא וואה' תוקען לפנוי אף אתה עשה לך ב' חזוצרות<sup>201</sup>, ושילה  
מלאך וויאציאנו ממצרים ולהלא משה לידה? אלא מכאן שנמשלו הגבאים כמלכים<sup>202</sup>, בשעה  
עליה משה למרום: שמע קולו של הקב"ה שירוש ועוסק בפרשת פרה אדומה<sup>203</sup>, לפ"ז  
שנתעצל משה במעשה זמרי, לבן ולא ירע איש את ברורתו למזרך שציריך אם להיות  
עו כנמר וגיבור, כאריך לעשות רצון קונו<sup>204</sup>, מלמד שהראת הקב"ה למשה כל מה שהיה  
ועתיד להיות, וכן כל דור ודור דורו ודורו וטופטו דור וטופטו דור ומתייגרו דור דוד  
ופושעינו<sup>205</sup>, משה עד שלא וכיה לתרורה כהיב בו לא איש דברים אכן כיון שזכה לתרורה  
ונתקפא לשונו והתחליל לדבר דברים<sup>206</sup>, אמר הקב"ה יוכיחו משה שאחנן וירובנו בלבעם  
ששוגן משה שעתוב בו לא צחיר אחד מהם נשאתי לו זה אה להובי<sup>207</sup>, החזונים ידרר רשות  
זה משה שבאו אצל בוראו בתהנונים<sup>208</sup>, אף משה בקש הנהני לכהונה הנהני למלכות אל  
הקב"ה אין לך עסוק בכהונה, אין לך עסוק במלכות<sup>209</sup>, בשעה שעלה משה למרום, שמע  
למלך השרת שהיו אומרים להקב"ה בורך שם בבוד מלבותו וזריך אותה לישראל<sup>210</sup>,  
מן הלווחת נטל משה זיו הפנים<sup>211</sup>, אל אם אעכברת נא אתה מבקש לקיים בכל סלח נא  
כיוון ששמע משה רבינו כך אמר לפניו רבב"ע ימות משה ומאה ציויאzo בו ולא תנתק  
צפורה של אחד מהם<sup>212</sup>, אמר משה ל"ז כרויות הן שמאי עברתי על אתה מון ומה אתה  
גוזו, עלי מיתה? אל, בחתאו של אדם הראשון<sup>213</sup>, מני יעללה בהר זה, זה משה ומרי יקוט  
במקומות קדרשו וזה משה נקי כפים וכבר לבב זה משה<sup>214</sup>, באיטה שעה ונשקו הקב"ה וגונת

179. ויק"ה א ב

180. שם שם י

181. שם שם ז

182. שם שם ג

183. שם שם ה

184. שם שם י

185. שם שם ז

186. במדברי א ב

187. שם שם ג

188. שם שם ז

189. שם שם ב

190. שם ז ב

191.

192.

193.

194.

195.

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214.

נשmeno בנסיקת פה והיה הקב"ה בוכה מי יקום לי עם מרעים ורוחה קדרש אומת ולא קם נביא עוז בישראל כמשם שמים בוכין ארץ בוכין<sup>210</sup>, והוא (חמן). לא יידע שבאחד מטה משה ובא' לנביים יהושע ר' אש לכושים<sup>211</sup>, ונפשו של אהרן ומשה ומרם לא גטלו אלא בנסיקה<sup>212</sup>. משה ואחרון באדר מת משה<sup>213</sup>, ונפשו של אהרן שתוארנו טוביה זה על זה שהשם בגודלו של זה וזה לא נבראו אלא לדברו; משה ואחרון שתוארנו טוביה שם שמוריאי עלייך ית' מיראך באדר מת משה לא עשה כל שם בגדות אחים<sup>214</sup>, ילדהasha אחת במצרים ס' רבוע בכרס אחד זו יוכבד שילדה את משה ששלוק בוגר' ס' רבעו מישראל<sup>215</sup>. עד שעמצעאת את שאהבה נפשי זה משה עד שהבאתי אל ביתAMI זה סיני ואל חזרה הורתי זה האל מועד<sup>216</sup>, מה השדים הללו הודה והדרת אל אשתך משא ואחרון הדרן של ישראל<sup>217</sup> כבודו ושבתו של ישראל; לא משה גדול מהארון ולא אהרן גדול משה בתורה<sup>218</sup> עמד משה והודיע את השבינה לאירועין, משה ראת את ישראל בכבודם ושלותם ואמר איכת אשא לבדי טרכם<sup>219</sup>, גור הקב"ה על התהוננים שיאלו וישתו ועל העלונים<sup>220</sup>, משה גדרך מפני יאללו וישתו עמד משה ועשה תחוננים שאין אוכלי ואין שנותי<sup>221</sup>, משה גדרך מפני פרעה ובחור הקב"ה; במשה<sup>222</sup>, טובים השנינים זה עמרם ויוכבד אשר יש להם שכיר טוב בעמלם זה משה שנקרא טוב<sup>223</sup>, טובים השנינים זה משה ואחרון מן האחד זה; עצמו וזה לעצמו כשבא משה וברך את ישראל לא שרתה שכינה על דוד ושבאו שניהם וברכו מיד שורתה שכינה<sup>224</sup>, הרי משה באה מזות וצדוקות. עשה יש לו מזות קבועה לדורות דכתיב או יכידיל משה שלש ערים<sup>225</sup>, מה שחתה כבר נקרא שמו זה משה<sup>226</sup>, נולד אהרן כה'ג לא הרוגיש בו בריה וכשות נסתלקו עגבי כבוד והרגישו הכל נולד משה רבינו ולא הרגישו בו בריה וכשות הרגישו הכל<sup>227</sup>, עושק שעשקו דתנו ואבירם למשה רבו אבדו חכמתו<sup>228</sup> ממן איילו היה משה מתון וית ניצל אלא שוקנינו והקfidן, אותו אף הוא הקfid מכעסן<sup>229</sup>, טובה חכמתו של משה עם נחלה שהנתיל חורתו לישראל<sup>230</sup>, על כל דבר ודבר שוהה הקב"ה אומר למשה היה אמר לו טומאנו וטהרתו<sup>231</sup>, לא לקלים המרוין זה משה אתמול טס לריקע וועלה בעוף והיום כי לא תעבור את הירדן הוה<sup>232</sup>, וגם לא לבובנים עשר זה משה מהיכן בא לו עושר? מחציב של ספר גלת לו הקב"ה בטור אהלו<sup>233</sup>, ומצא בה איש מסכן וחכם זה משה ואדם לא זכר את האיש המסכן תהוא אמר הקב"ה אתה לא אדרחותניה אנא מדבר לך ויזוכו ימי עולם משה<sup>234</sup>, מה כדור זה מקלען בטה בידים ואינה נופלתך משה קבל תורה מסניין ומטרת ליהיעש<sup>235</sup>, שמי שדייך בשני עפרים זה משה ואחרון<sup>236</sup>, מי כחכם זה משה מי יודע פשר דבר שפירש תורה לישראל<sup>237</sup>, ואחריתך ישגה מאד מדבר במשה ז' ימים היה הקב"ה מפתחה למשה בטנה והוא בורו<sup>238</sup>, ויאמר משה אסורה נא ואראה נ' פסיות פסע משה<sup>239</sup>, מבין וכיה משה לכרני ההור<sup>240</sup> מן המערחה נמייצחות שיצאו מפי השכינה גטל קרני ההור<sup>241</sup>, לטוב זה משה שנולד מהל לפהו וזה אחרון שטחן עונותיהם של ישראל<sup>242</sup>, אל' משה רבש"ע אתה קראני משה עבדי אני

- 209 שם שם 210 אסתר פריחתא 211 שם ז' 212 שהש"ד א' ז'  
 213 שם שם נא 214 שם שם סדר 215 שם ג' ב' 216 שם ד' ב'  
 217 שם ה' א' 218 איכ"ר א' 219 קהיר ג' י' 220 שם ע"ט 221 שם ד' ז'  
 222 שם שם 223 שם ח' ח' 224 שם ז' י' 225 שם ז' ב' 226 שם שם ז'  
 227 שם שם כב' 228 שם ח' ה' 229 שם ט' י' 230 שם שם 231 שם שם ז'  
 232 שם י' יא 233 מירוש ווטא שח"ד 234 שם קהילת ה' 235 מה'מא תי' שר' ז'  
 236 שם שם טו 237 שם תשא ז'

## תשמה

משה וארון הדרן

עבד ולויוּן עבד אגוי מזוחנן לפוניק והוא מתחנן תחנות ליטוּן שמעת' חברתי עמו ברון. וקיימות<sup>239</sup>, הדינין נקרו על שם משה<sup>240</sup>, משה הצדק שלא היה כמותו בכל הנביאים ולא בכל הולמים שהרי הקב"ה העיד עליו ולא קם נביא עוד ממשה ואע"פ כן לא היה ספיקת בידו להציג עצמו מן המיתה<sup>241</sup>, עד שלא נבחר אהרן היו כל ישראל כשרים לכהונה שנבחר אהרן יצאו כל ישראלי<sup>242</sup>, משה היה שקוּל בוגד כל העולם בולו<sup>243</sup>, וירד משה מן החרד מלמד שלא היה משה פונה לעסוקיו ולא לבתו אלא מן החרד אל העם<sup>244</sup>, נס גדול ראה משה את הסנה והוא מלבלב ואם תמייה אתה בו וראה מkalו של אהרן עץ ישב הוציא שקדדים ופרחים<sup>245</sup>, אליך אתה דבר בלשון קודש במלאך זההן אחיך ידבר בלשון מצרי<sup>246</sup>, י"ג בדברות נאמרו ב תורה למשה ולאהרן ובוגד נאמרו בתורה י"ג מעתים שלא לאהרן נאמרו אלא למשה שיאמר לאהרן<sup>247</sup>, ויפשط משה את אהרן וכי היאן היה יכול המשך לפרשיות את בגדיו כסדורן ? העמידו משה על הסלע<sup>248</sup>, היה אהרן דואת את המובח כתבנית שור ותלה מתיירא ואיל' משה אהוי<sup>249</sup>, אמר משה לפניו המקומות יפה לי להרגני חלה ואל אראה בפערונות העתידה לבוא עלייהם<sup>250</sup>, והאיש משה עני מאי עני בדעתו במנומו מכל אדם ולא מאבותיו ולא מלמאלכי השורה<sup>251</sup>, מגיד הפטוב שהראתו הקב"ה למשה את כל חזרי א"י בshallon עוזר ; נתן לך בעינינו של משה וראה מסוף צעירים ועד סופו אותה דאייה של נתת זהחתן של צעירות<sup>252</sup>, כשות אהרן נתבקשו זולט אצל משה ואמרו לו היכן אהרן אחיך ? אל אלהים גנו לחמי זולט ולא היו מאנינים בו אמרו לפדן אתה שמא אמר לפניך לדבר שאינו הגון וקסת עליו מיתה נטול הקב"ה מטהו של אהרן תולאה בשמיים זה היה הקב"ה מספיד עליו<sup>253</sup>, באותה שעיה אל הקב"ה למלאך המתות לך והבא לי נשמותו של משה אל משה במקומות שאין יושב אין לך רשות לערמוד<sup>254</sup>, באשר מטה אהרן אחיך מיתה שחמלת לה נ"ג, לפ"ש אל משה לישראל דבריהם קשים תולאה מוי רעב זלחומי רשות חור זאמר להם דבורי נחותים זהאת הברכה<sup>255</sup>, ולא ידע איש את קברותיו אף משה אינו יודע מקומות קברותיו<sup>256</sup>, ומשה בן ק"כ שנה זה אחד מרבעה שמותו בני ק"כ שנה<sup>257</sup>, שני נבאים עמדו לישראל משבעו של לוי משה ראשון ואליהם אהרן והו שווין זה לויה לכל דבר משה נביא אליהם נביא משה איש האלים ואליהם איש האלים<sup>258</sup>, מי עלה שמיט זה משיח<sup>259</sup>, והוא משה עזם וזה הריבור בא לתוך אונו כמין סילון ולא היה אחד מישראל שומע אבל כשהיה פניו מדידות היו יודעים שהדייבור בא אצלר<sup>260</sup>, משה ישב לו בנקוטה הצור באו מלאכים לפגע בו הקב"ה הגין ידיו עליו ומשם נטול משה קרני החוד<sup>261</sup>, בשעה שעלה משה למרום באות ענן ורבבה בגנדו ולא היה יודע משה אם לרוכב עליה או לאחוה בה<sup>262</sup>, על הכל הודה משה חוץ מדבר אחד אמר משה לפניו הקב"ה אדם חוטא לפניך ואתה מאיר לו תחוץ גובה ממנו מיד אל הקב"ה חירץ שatzר לך במרגליים<sup>263</sup>, י"ג תורות כתב משה י"ב, ליב שבטים ואחד לשבעתו של לוי<sup>264</sup>, היה משה רועה את אנו של יתרו, ממי' שגה ולא שכלה אותן חיית השדה והיו פורים ורבים הארבה ונחג את האן עד שבא לחורב ושם נגלה עליו הקב"ה מתוך הסנה<sup>265</sup>, כשות משה הקב"ה נתן את קברו בגנדו וכשיישראל חוטאין והוא רוצח

239 שם שם ז 240 שם שופטים ה 241 שם ברכה 1

242 מכלאות נא ב 243 שם בשלת טו 244 שם יתירו יט

245 מכלאות דרשבי א 246 שם שם ספ

247 חז"כ ויקרא א 248 שם זו ח 249 שם שמיט

250 ספרי בעלתך נא

251 שם שם קא 252 שם מנוח קלו 253 שם נבאים שם 254 שם שם 255 שם האינו שיט

256 שם ברכה שמב 257 שם שם שנוי 258 שם שם 259 מסיקתא וบทי ד 260 שם ד

261 שם שם 262 שם ז 263 שם ב 264 פטיקתא ור"כ כו 265 שם לב 266 פרקי דר"א ז

לולשميد את ישראל חוא, רוזאת קברנו של משה וחור לאותרו<sup>269</sup>, מ' יומם עשה משה בהר קורא במקרא, ביום, ושונה: במשנה בלילה<sup>270</sup>, משה הצדיק, עמד בתפלה, ביה... וה מקומות הצליל את ישואל, מימות העלת, עליו הכתוב כאלו הוא בא-ברא אותו<sup>271</sup>, לא נשא לשוא נפשי אמת הקב"ה למשה, נפש רוח נפשמה, ענתקי, בר לא טענה דבר, שוא-שלא, בתבתי בתורתך, ולא, נשבע למרמה, שלא, רימה בשבעות, שנשבע לתרון<sup>272</sup>, בלעם בן-בעור, תהה מעולה בחכמו כמו: משה; בלעם חסר דבר אחד ממשה במשה-בתיב, ויקרא ובבלעם כתיב זיקר, ומשה חסר דבר אחד מכלעם<sup>273</sup>, ויקרא אל משה-לחולק כבוד למשה; מפניהם מה עצוב משה-בל ו'-מים, ולא, שרתה עליו זיבור? - בשבייל, שויירק מכל אכילה ושינה שחיה במעיו, ותקדש והוא כלאי-השרות<sup>274</sup>, משה זכה זוכה את הרבים, וכותה-הרבין תליה בורוי, עבורי-משה, רביינו ושפל-רזה, מהארו שך-היה אומנתו, של אהרון, הצדיק היה שומע על שנים-שהן מריבים הלא, אצל-אחד ואומר לו פלוני שלום, עלייך<sup>275</sup>, גודל הוא, השלים שהרי, אהרון, הכהן לא, נשבח אלא בשבייל, השלים<sup>276</sup>, אל-הקב"ה-למשה) כן, בשער לבני איל, מאין לי בשער איל, צפודאים, חיו לך, במארים בנימ, ותוי, לך וכל כר-היית, עשר-שם, ועכשו-גשיות; עני ג', אשר לא נשא לשוא, גPsi, זה משה שנintel נפשו של מגורי<sup>277</sup>, תפלה למשה איש-ההאלים, בשעה שהה, עזם-לפני פרעה נקרא אלהים, בשעה-שברח, מפניהם נקרא איש<sup>278</sup>; אדם עומד ומתקפל שעיה, אחת או שתים וכשהוא מתפלל הרבה מתפללים, יום אחד, אבל, משה-רבינו מ', יום ומ', ליליה<sup>279</sup>, ממחזיחו ולטמות-נקרא איש<sup>280</sup>, י', קרנות הוי, קרנו של משה<sup>281</sup>, מה-שכחות במשה; כתוב בשמואל זה, לוי-זוה, לוי<sup>282</sup>; אמר הקב"ה למשה אתה אמרת כי יבא-אל-העם, לדרש, אלהים דצライ לגורא יפהיה, בה אף אתה כשתה אדריך דבר-תחא בא-אצלוי<sup>283</sup>, אל-הקב"ה למשה, משה אתה זו-דיין קשה, אני מביא, לפניך דיין שתלמיד תלמיד יכול לשמעו, ואני אתה יוזע-לשמעו<sup>284</sup>, קשה דוא, הוגול שנייג, גוזלי, עולם-הצרכו להתוכה עלו-משה ושמואל<sup>285</sup>, מגות-בית-המקדש, מסר-הקב"ה למשה בעמידה<sup>286</sup>, אל-הקב"ה למשה, משה לך שבתי חביב, אל-תיר שאחרנו אתיק, הוא<sup>287</sup>, ברकותיו של לי, באורה-עה, שמה, ואמר-כר בער-בוכה זה, אהרון, המלאך שעה מתלה, עמו, שמלאך נקרא געה<sup>288</sup>, מה-רואה-משה ליתן-ונפשו על-ערץ, מקלט זמי, שאכל את-התבשיל הוא יזע טעמן<sup>289</sup>, משה, לשון-חבה-לשונו, זירעו<sup>290</sup>, אנכי אלהי-אביך נגלה, עליו, בקהלו של עמרם-אבינו, כי-שלא יתירה באותה-שעת, שמה-משה ואמר עמרם-אבינו, אל-הקב"ה אני-אליה, אביך<sup>291</sup>, אל-הקב"ה, למשה אם אין אתה פיך זה, מה-פמיה פה ומענה לשון-חוירתי, מלך זה, עיטה, שליחותי, אלא אני רוצה לוכותך<sup>292</sup>, אהיה עם רוצה, את-שליחותי, מלך זה, עיטה, שליחותי, וזה, נני חכמה שגילת הקב"ה למשה כל גני תורה חכמה ומדע והראתו מטה, שעדת להיות לעוז"ב וכיוון שראת-כתות כתות של סנהדרין יושבין בלבשת הגוית וזרועים-התורה במשיט-בפים והראתו ר', עקיבא דורש מתרי-אותיות אמר כי אדוניו שלח: בא-ביר תשלח<sup>293</sup>, לשבח-היו, אומרים אשרי יולדתו של זה כל ימיו הקב"ה מדבר עמו כל ימיו הוא מושלם להקב"ה לבנאי

267 שם מ"ג 268 שם מו 269 שם ז 270 שם י 271 תורבא"ז ז  
 272 אכות דריין א 273 שמות ח 274 כליה, רבתני ג 275 זאי' ברק, השלים  
 276 ש"ט ת浩ים כ"ג 277 שם שם כד 278 שם שם ז 279 שם שם  
 281 מדורש שמואל ד 282 שם ט 283 שם שם 284 שם יג 285 שם קד 286 שם שם  
 287 שם נב 288 שם ל 289 ילוקוט שמות קסן 290 שם שם קפנ 291 שם שם קע  
 292 שם שם לפא 293 שם שם 294 שם שם קען

השׁב  
משוא פג'ם

הן אומרים ראה צוארו ראה שוקיו ראה כרעיו אוכל משל יהודים זוכב מה שיש לו משל יהודים ביוון ששמע משותך א"ל משה משכון נגמר אני גוטן חשבון<sup>298</sup>, א"ל הקב"ה למשה טובה ואמור לו לאחר על המיטה שאני בשן למן<sup>299</sup>, כל מילים שהיו ישראל קיימן היה משה נבנש לפני הקב"ה בדורו ביוון כתיב במדבר: זהה יתמו זשם ימותו התחל מותחן<sup>300</sup>, אמר משה תורה הוו שקבתני מימינך טמא משאות נקראה על שם אחר<sup>301</sup> א"ל הקב"ה זו שלשטי היא נקראה<sup>302</sup> מלך המשיח ירום מאברהם ונsha משוח עתיד משה ליכנס בראש כל חברה חיבורה בהאש ניבורה של בעליך מקרה<sup>303</sup>, משה לא תלה מלאה בזוכותיה אלא בזכות אbehן קדרמי<sup>304</sup>, מה בין לשאר נבייאי הוו נפלי על אנפיו<sup>305</sup>, משה מיום שנולד לא זה מלחה עלי בורית, שאר נבייאי הוא נפלי על ימימה שירחא לומנא דאתי<sup>306</sup>, משה ממנה רוח הקדש<sup>307</sup>, משה זמין לימייל שירחא לדלא נחרא<sup>308</sup>, מה מספקליה דנהירה וכלהו נבייאי לא חמו אלא מגנו אספקלריא א"ל לא נחרא<sup>309</sup>, מה בין משה לאחרן<sup>310</sup> משהعلاה משה שושבינה דמלכא אחרן ששבינה דטטרוניה<sup>311</sup>, משה לא אתכנייש מעלמא והוא נחיר לסייעו<sup>312</sup>, כל שאר נבייאין לגביו משה<sup>313</sup>, לא אשתחח דרא בעלמא כדרא דמשה<sup>314</sup>, משה לית דכוותיה בכתרין עלאיין בלעם לית דכוותיה בכתרין תחאן<sup>315</sup>, דקב"ה ושכניתה מדבר על פומי (דמשה)<sup>316</sup>, בשאמר משה מהני נא מספרק אף דמחל קב"ה לישראל בתחום קלתו שלא נזכר שמו בפרש תצוה<sup>317</sup>, כל נבייאי כלחו לגביו משה כקוף בעיניהם דבני נשא<sup>318</sup>, בשעה שבא שראל ליהק"ה אמרו למשה אמר מהלה ואחיך גאמר אנו ענה משה לישראל אני יחיד אתם רבים וכבוד רבים גודל משל יחיד<sup>319</sup>, אמר משה לישראל אף אני אתן שבת והודיה להקב"ה שעשה עמי נסיטים ונבלאות<sup>320</sup>, מה זכה משה להיות חתן תורה<sup>321</sup> עקב ענה יוראה מהיו בו, בשכר ג' דברים מבני, מה זכה משה להיק"ה חייך אני גותן לך פתחון מה ומפורשים בין החקוקים על כתר מלכות שבראו ובין החקוקים על כסא הכבור<sup>322</sup>, בשעה שאמר משה אני ערל שפטים נודעונו כל בריות שבועל וועל שאמר ואני ערל שפטים זכה להיות שליח בין הגבורות ליישראל א"ל הקב"ה חייך אני גותן לך פתחון מה ומגענה לשון יותר מכל באוי עולם<sup>323</sup>, כיון שראו את משה ואחרן שהם דומים למלאכי השורט ורומן קומתם כארוי לבנון זגללי עיניהם כגללי כוכב הנוגה ווקנם תאשכלות תמרה ויוע פניהם ניוו החמה ומדבור פיהם יוצאות של הבוט מיד גפלו על סופרי המזרים פחד רודעה והשליכו קולמוסיה ב מידם<sup>324</sup>, ולא קם נבייא נביא לא קם אבלכם קם ומנו? ר' עקיבא<sup>325</sup>, ע"ע כהונת מרים, נבייא תורה.

משוא פניהם, כתיב בתורתך אשר לא ישא פנים לא יקח שוחד ולהלך אתה נושא פנים לישראל כתיב ישא ה' פניו אליך? א"ל וכי לא ישא פנים לישראל שכבתותך להם

295 שם מקורי התו<sup>296</sup> שם חוקת המשרד<sup>297</sup> שם ואחתנן תחין<sup>298</sup> שם ברכña תתקנת<sup>299</sup> שם ישיעת תען<sup>300</sup> שם וזהר בראשית סוף<sup>301</sup> שם שם קפא<sup>302</sup> שם שם נז<sup>303</sup> שם שם קנה<sup>304</sup> שם שם אב<sup>305</sup> שם ויקרא נז<sup>306</sup> שם במדבר כל<sup>307</sup> שם שם קנה<sup>308</sup> שם שם קפה<sup>309</sup> שם שם קגנ<sup>310</sup> שם שם ריב<sup>311</sup> שם שם רמו<sup>312</sup> שם דברים רמד<sup>313</sup> נארש יושע ה<sup>314</sup> שם ו<sup>315</sup> מדרש עשרת הגדות<sup>316</sup> אומנות דיזע וו<sup>317</sup> שם גוזי<sup>318</sup> שם קרי<sup>319</sup> ללקוט דאובי ברכña

ואבלת' ושבעת' וברכת' ותום מודקדים על עצם עד כוית נ' ברוך המקום שהרגנו שלא נשא פנים לזרותה<sup>1</sup>. לא טוב להם לדרושים שנשאינו להם פנים בעוהיז' לא טוב לא לאחאב שנשאינו לו פנים בעוהיז' טוב להם לצדיקים שניין נשאינו להם פנים בעוהיז'<sup>2</sup>. כתיב בתרורתם אשר לא ישא פנים וכתיב ישא ה' פניו<sup>3</sup> ניטפל לה ר' ג' הכהן ואיל אמשול לך' משלך<sup>4</sup>. איל וכי משוא פנים יש' בדבר<sup>5</sup> ונשא פנים זה שנשאינו פנים לדרכו בעברו למעליה<sup>6</sup>. ז' חמל המלך על מפיבושת שלא העבירו וכי משוא פנים יש' בדבר<sup>7</sup>. ברוך הוא שאין לפניו לא עולה ולא שכחה ולא משוא פנים ולא מקח שוחר<sup>8</sup>. יתברך שם של הקב"ה שאין לפניו משוא פנים והוא חוקר לב ובוחן כלות<sup>9</sup>. ברוך הוא שאין לפניו לא משוא פנים ומפניו נוגה זואר יוצא לעולם<sup>10</sup>. חורש בא עליהם ברוך המלכים ברוך הוא שאין לפניו משוא פנים בשם שחלקו כבוד. בראתי להם את החשובה באותה שעיה<sup>11</sup>. אין לפניו משוא פנים בשם יישראל שלא היו דוצים לצאת וקראו לו גבור כמו כן לפוי גודל כבודם כן גודל הפדרנויות<sup>12</sup>. בראתי להם את החשובה והאיך אתה אומר שיש לי משוא פנים? יט' ידער הכל צדקתו של הקב"ה שאינו נשא פנים לא לקטו ולא נגוז לא למלך ולא לכהן גבור<sup>13</sup>. כדי שידעו כל הדורות צדקתו ההיא שבשים שאינו נשא פנים לא לגוז ולא לישראל<sup>14</sup>.

משיח (בן דוד, חבי המשיח, ימות המשיח). וכי מוכירין יציאת מזרים לימות המשיח? אלא שתהא שעבוד מלכיות עיקר ויציאת מזרים טפל לוין, כל הגבאים כולם לא נתנו באו אלא לימות המשיח אבל לעות' ב עין לא ראתה<sup>15</sup>. אין בין העוהיז' לימות המשיח אלא שעבוד מלכיות בלבד<sup>16</sup>. אכן מלכא משיחא אין מי חייא הוא דוד שמייה אין מי דמיכיא (מן המתים) הוא דוד שמייה<sup>17</sup>. התיים ארץ שטחה חין תחליה לימות המשיח<sup>18</sup>. מאחר דתקשיטין הון (סיף וקשת) לו מפני מה הון בטלון לימות המשיח? איל לפוי שאינן צריכין שנאמר לא ישא גוי חרב; אף לימות המשיח אין בטלון<sup>19</sup>. ותאכל בעוהיז' ותשבע לימות המשיח<sup>20</sup>. כל המקימים שלוש סעודות בשכת נצול' מהבל של משיח<sup>21</sup>. אל תגעו במשיחיל אלו הינוקות של בית ר' רבנן<sup>22</sup>. אל ימי המשיח שאין בחין לא צות ולא חובב<sup>23</sup>. הריני נזיר ביום שבון דוד בא מותר לשתוין יון בשבתוין. משיח נמי לא אתי בעמצעי שבתאי<sup>24</sup>. בשכרך ג' רាជון זכו לא' ר' רבנן, לשם של משיח דכתיב ראשון לציוון הנגה הנם<sup>25</sup>. ז' דברים נבראו קודם שנבראו הульם, שמו של משיח<sup>26</sup>. כתיב וחורה הלבנת' וכתיב והיתה אויר הלבנה כאור החמה? כאן לעות' ב' כאן לימות המשיח<sup>27</sup>. משות שיש בו (בhalb) ה' דברים, חבלו של משיח דכתיב לא לנו<sup>28</sup>. עתידה מזרים שתביא דודון למשיח כסbor. אינו מקבל מהם אל הקב"ה למשיח מהם<sup>29</sup>. אין בן דוד בא עד שטפשות מלחות ארם בכל הולמים כלו ט' חדשין<sup>30</sup>. אמריתא אמריא לא אתי' משיח<sup>31</sup>. הספדיא על' משיח בן יוסף שנחרג<sup>32</sup>. משיח בן דוד אומר לו הקב"ה שאל' מנגני' דבר ואחן לך' וכיוון' שראה' משיח' בן' יוסף שנחרג אומר לפניו רבש' ע' איני' מבקש מך משוא פנים. 1. ברכות ב': 2. שבת ג': 3. יונה ג'. 4. ר' יי': 5. מגילה יב. 6. חגיגה יד. 7. יבמות עט. 8. אבות ד'. 9. שמיר יג. 10. מדא'יר ב... 11. שם ז. 12. שם יט. 13. תובאיי כב. 14. מדרש חזאי יט. 15. שם כ. 16. שבת סג. 17. שם קיג. 18. שם קית. 19. שם קיט. 20. שם סת. 21. עירובין טג. 22. שם שם. 23. פטחים ה. 24. שם נה. 25. שם סת. 26. שם קית. 27. שם שם. 28. יומא ז. 29. שם יט. 30. סוכה נה.

# **אִישׁ הַתְבָ"ר בְּאָסְפָּקָלְרִיאָ שֶׁל חֹזֶל**

מתוך שני התלמודים והמדרשים  
עורך לפי סדר א-ב

מאת

**ישראל יצחק ברמן חסידה**

ירושלים, תשל"ד

כשmetaה מרים, לא ספודה ולא קבורה, אלא משת בראש ואחרון ברוגל ולהלו זקבורה  
יל"ש מסעיה תשפו  
כית שmetaה מרים, ומשה ואחרון עפיקים בה  
ישראל מבקשים מים ולא מוצאים, ומשה ואחרון  
יושבים ומתחבלים על מרים, מיד נחגנו עליהם  
כל העדר, כיון שראו משה ואחרון פניהם זעומות,  
ברחו להם לאוהל מועד, אמר להם י'קדוש ב'ת  
משרגי ציבור, צאו מכאן במרתה, בני מרים  
בצמא ואתם מתחבלים על הקבבה  
יל"ש חקם תשסיג

## הsworth יוכבד

מרט. מרנסנא (אסתר א י)  
מרט. מרנסנא ממוכן מירושלים היו  
מורש אבא נוכנו א

מרים המתיינה למשה שעת אחת, לפיכך מתעכבו  
לה ישראל שבעה ימים סוטה ט :  
נתעכוב לה עמוד הענן מדרש שוחט טז ד

## מיתתה

בעשרה בנין מתה מרים הנביאת סוף מגילת תענית  
ששה לא שלט בתה מלך המתות ואלו הן, אברاهם  
יצחק ויעקב, משה אהרן ומרים, בנשיקה מתה  
ביבין  
שבועת לא שלט בהן רמת ותולעה ואלו הם...  
משה אהרן ומרים ובנימין שם  
בשנה אחת מתו שלשה צדיקים, משה אהרן  
ומרים... מתה מרים נסתלקה הבאר  
ספריו נזכרים שא

## משה (שמות ב, י)

1) תאריכים זמנים 2) אישיותו 3) לידתו 4) געוינו 5) שמותיו  
6) גודלו 7) נביה 8) פרנס ומנהיג 9) עניו 10) קרי חור 11 בעניין  
העם 12) במשחתו 13) אצל יתרו 14) המטה 15) מראה הסנה  
16) לפני פרעה 17) נאולות ישראל 18) מילה 19) עשר מכות  
20) יציאת מצרים 21) ארון יוסף 22) קרייתם סוף 23) מעמד הר  
סיני 24) משה במורים 25) שבירת הלוות 26) תורה ומאות  
27) תורה שבعل פה 28) תקנות 29) תחילים 30) מעשה העגל  
31) המשכן וכליו 32) חנוכתו 33) שריפת בני אהרן והשעיר  
34) תפלה 35) סגנו ר' 36) מי מריבה 37) קורת 38) במדבר  
39) צפthead ומקושש 40) מלחמת עמלק 41) מדין 42) סיחון ווג  
43) מצורין 44) כוותיו לדורות 45) חטאיהם 46) על פטירתו  
47) משטווק לא"י 48) מללא מקומו 49) נפרד מהעם 50) יוט  
פטירתו 51) יציאת נשמו 52) קבורתו ואבלו 53) בעולם העליון

## אותו היום [שוצחים משה ביאור] ששה בטין היה

שמ"ר א כד

משנברא העולם ועד שהיתה משה בן שלשים  
ושתים שנה, שהחלה להוות לישראל במצרים  
ויגדל משה" (שמות ב, יא) היה בן חמיש וחמש  
כבן אחת עשרה אלפים וארבע מאות שנה במד"ר יין, יה  
מגילת יין: "ויגדל משה" בן עשרים שנה היה משה באותה  
שבועה באדר נולד משה

## 1) תאריכים זמנים

משנברא העולם ועד שהיתה משה בן שלשים  
ושתים שנה, שהחלה להוות לישראל במצרים

אלפים וארבע מאות שנה במד"ר יין, יה

מגילת יין: "ויגדל משה" בן עשרים שנה היה משה באותה

[ רעא ]

# **בנתיבות המדרש**

**כולל כל נושא**

## **מדרש רבה**

על חמישת חומשי תורה  
וחמש מגילות  
מסודרים על פי תכנות.

ונלווה עלייו מראי מקומות  
על פי פסוקי התנ"ך

נערך וסודר ע"י  
הلال קופרמן

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# LEGENDS OF THE JEWS

BY  
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Translated from the German Manuscript by

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and  
PAUL RADIN

VOLUME ONE

Bible Times and Characters  
From the Creation to Moses in the Wilderness



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# **בְּרִבְהָ בְּמַקְדָּשׁ**

**עידונים בפרשיות התורה על פי הספרות הפרשנית**

מאת

**הרב דששבר יעקב סוזן**

מחדרורה שנייה מתקנת

**חוצאת ספריהם מסרנוב תל אביב**



“**אָמַרְתִּי** אֶל־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל

३

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אלא תמהו – מהו לתוכה

חַמְבָּדָלָה וְתִפְשָׁרָה חֲנָן אַלְמָנָה.

1  
2

*kol 'amo*" indicating that the midwives were Egyptian. The phrase "all his people" is appropriate only if the midwives were included.

<sup>9</sup> Admittedly the referent of the subject of the predicate (showed no fear of God) is a matter of dispute between *Tanna'im* (Sifrei, Mekhilta). Both Rashi and Ibn Ezra, however, identified the subject with Amalek and not "thou" (i.e. Israel). This would seem to be the plain sense in spite of the fact that "thou" is the immediate antecedent.

<sup>10</sup> A similar criterion no doubt motivates the Torah's 36 admonitions championing the cause of the stranger. Since he lives far away from his own kith and kin he is particularly vulnerable.

<sup>11</sup> See *Yevamot* 63a (on Gen. 12, 3: "... and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."): "The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Abraham: I have two goodly shoots to engraft on you: Ruth the Moabitess and Na'amah the Ammonitess. (Rashi s.v. *berekhot*: like, sinking a vine-shoot into the ground; s.v. Ruth and Na'amah among their descendants will be kings and prophets. Na'amah was the mother of Rehoboam and the ancestress of Isaiah the prophet [his father Amoz and Amaziah, King of Judah were brothers], Hezekiah, Asa and Jehoshaphat, all of whom were noted for their righteousness.)

## MOSES SEEKS OUT HIS BRETHREN

The Torah does not relate to us how Moses, the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, came to the resolve to ruin his chances of following a "brilliant career" as a member of the Egyptian royal house, and throw in his lot with his persecuted brethren, whose very customs and habits were foreign to him. We are not told whether he arrived at this decision suddenly or gradually. The Torah is not a psychological novel and is not concerned with satisfying biographical curiosity. All that is said on the subject of Moses' transition from Egyptian prince to champion of his stricken people is the following verse:<sup>11</sup>

בְּאָנֹכִי אֶתְנַחֲמֵךְ וְאֶתְלַמְּדֵךְ  
— בְּאָנֹכִי אֶתְנַחֲמֵךְ וְאֶתְלַמְּדֵךְ

...when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren, and looked on their burden. (2, 11)

His "look" was no mere external glance with his eyes. For to which Egyptian was the spectacle of Jewish slaves being maltreated by their taskmasters not a familiar sight? But we must understand the "looking" as Rashi interprets it:

תְּצַדֵּקְנָה לְעֵינֵינוּ עַל־לְמִלְחָמָה.

He directed his eyes and heart to share their distress.<sup>2</sup>

Divine Providence foresaw that the saviour of Israel would hail from a foreign environment, steeped in idolatry and would be educated in Egyptian lore, divorced from his people and their tradition. This phenomenon is not unusual in Jewish history. Indeed, Ibn Ezra dwells on this point in his commentary to the Pentateuch. This commentator regards it as providential that Moses should have originated from just such an environment of royalty and distinction. His superior education eminently fitted him for the task of leadership, at a time when his brethren were slaves and suffered from an inbred slave mentality. Moses was free from all this. His princely upbringing gave him the courage to slay the Egyptian maltreater of his brethren, to come to the rescue of the daughters of Midian, wronged by the violence of the shepherds. Ibn Ezra added that, had he grown up amongst his own people, they would have had no respect for him, and would have considered him as just another Jew. Let us now take a look at verses 12–22 of chapter 2, the only ones that give us any details of Moses' career prior to his experience of Revelation at the burning bush, prior to his assumption of the prophetic mantle. The Bible reveals to us three incidents only of Moses' early life, three deeds that he performed when he went forth to seek out his brethren, some say at the age of twenty, others (Shenot Rabbah 1, 27) forty.

Moses intervened on three occasions to save the victim from the aggressor. Each of these represents an archetype. First he intervenes in a clash between a Jew and non-Jew, second, between two Jews and third between two non-Jews. In all three cases Moses championed the just cause.

Any further clash must needs belong to one of these three categories. Had we been told only of the first clash we might have doubted the unselfishness of his motives. Perhaps he had been activated by the sense of solidarity with his own people, hatred for the stronger oppressing his brethren rather than pure justice. Had we been faced with the second example we might still have had our doubts. Perhaps he was revolted by the disgrace of witnessing in-

ternal strife amongst his own folk, activated by national pride rather than the objective facts. Came the third clash where both parties were outsiders neither brothers, friends nor neighbours. His sense of justice and fair play was exclusively involved. He instinctively championed the just cause. The third example is of special significance. The Bible abounds in examples of repeated trials, particularly the third one successfully withstood, that prove the mettle of the personality involved. A first win, as it were, proves little. Perhaps he was prompted by the incentive of recognition and reward. Only when repeated championing of justice brings no reward can we be convinced of the unselfishness of the deed.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps Moses on the first and second occasion may have imagined that he would have earned the gratitude of his own folk, not their insults and threats, as he did. What is more, he had to run for his life from Pharaoh and go into exile. That was his only reward. Nevertheless his first deed on arriving in the land of his forced exile after having risked his life to protect the defenceless was to repeat his action and champion the weak again.

Let us now study the first incident:

Strange and inescapable is the fact that Moses first of the prophets, the lawgiver, began his career by being involved in a killing. This disturbing circumstance has constantly preoccupied commentators ancient and modern.

Admittedly, the exact connotation of the Hebrew verb: *makkeh* in 2, 11 is crucial to the question of how Moses came to kill the Egyptian without due process of justice.

Some take the Hebrew to imply "kill" as in Gen. 4, 15:

*לֹא תִּמְלַכֵּן אֶת־נָתָן כִּי־מֵת*

Lest any finding him kill him

(King James)

Or the next verse (2, 12):

וְנִשְׁתַּחֲנוּ בְּמִצְרָיִם

**He slew the Egyptian**

(King James)

**If tua l'Egyptian**

(Synodale)

The same applies to Lev. 24, 21:

וְנִשְׁתַּחֲנוּ בְּמִצְרָיִם

**He that killeth a person shall be put to death**

**The Midrash takes the same view:**

**He struck him and sought to kill him**

(Shemot Rabbah 1, 28)

In the light of the above there is no moral problem since it was Moses' duty to take the law into his own hands and save the victim from his would-be murderer.

Cf. Rambam in his Code (*Rozehah*, 1, 5):

Who pursues his fellow with intent to kill . . . every Jew is obliged to rescue the victim from the pursuer even at the expense of the pursuer's life.

But if we take *makkeh* to mean striking a blow not intended to be mortal, as most commentators do (cf. Rashi: "beating and harassing him") then the moral dilemma looms large. Here it is as formulated by Naphtali Hertz Weisel:

It looks very much like an unlawful act. Did merely striking a blow warrant killing? Surely the shedding of blood was forbidden to all mankind even prior to the Giving of the Torah. What difference does it make whose life was involved — Egyptian or Hebrew? What advantage would he gain for his people by killing him in secret? It surely savoured of unlawful vengeance and anger.

Our sages and commentators tried to explain and understand

Moses' conduct. We cite here some of the different views advanced in various periods of Jewish history:

Ramban does not attempt to answer the moral problem involved but merely endeavours to explain the motives of Moses' behaviour and understand the feelings that led him to commit the deed. Moses, Ramban explains, sallied forth to see his brethren after he had been told that he was a Jew. Witnessing their sufferings, he was not able to bear the sight, and slew the Egyptian who was beating his victim.<sup>4</sup>

Did Moses do the right thing? Was it permissible? Ramban does not answer. He merely notes that "Moses could not bear the sight".

Ha-ketay Veha-kabalah (eighteenth century), has a completely different approach. Moses thought, he states, that one of the Jewish bystanders would come to the rescue of his stricken brother:

**He looked this way and that way, and when he saw there was no man . . .**

He saw there was no real man amongst them, no one who took an interest in his brothers' misfortune.

The head of the renowned Volozhin Yeshiva in the 19th century R. Naphtali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, in his commentary Ha'amek Davar offers another interpretation. The Torah states that Moses:

**spied an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren.**

He smote him for no other reason but that he was a Hebrew, not for any laziness or neglect to do his work. But, continues the author of Ha'amek Davar, the Torah adds: "one of his brethren" He belonged to Moses' own people. "He looked this way and that way"—Moses sought to find a way to bring the Egyptian to justice for his criminal and inexcusable conduct. "He saw there was no man"—he saw there was no one to whom he could appeal for jus-

tice, since they were all enemies of Israel. Realising that the law would not protect the Jew in Egypt, he took the law into his own hands.

According to the author of Ha-ketay Vaha-kabalah the phrase: “there was no man”, in the Sidra refers to the Israelites, the killing being a demonstration to arouse his people to action, strengthen their backs, and breathe a spirit of independence into those who had lost all hope, and were resigned to slavery. According to the author of Ha’amek Davar, the phrase—“there was no man” refers to the Egyptians, the slaying constituting taking the law into his own hands, since there was no justice to be obtained, in any other fashion.

One of our earliest rabbinic expositors, Rabbi Yehudah in the Midrash realised that Moses' summing up of the situation in "looking hither and thither" and seeing there was no man" did not imply concealment or a guilty conscience. Rather:

לְהַזָּה אָמֵר : רָאָה שָׁאַן יִצְמֹר וַיַּקְרָא לְשָׁנוֹת תְּקַבָּתָן .  
[Vayikra Rabba 32, 4]

The classic explicator of the Midrash Rabbah, Zeev Wolf Einhorn (Maharzay) provides an illuminating supporting text for this interpretation. He cites Isaiah 59, 15-16: "The Lord looked round and in his eyes it was an evil thing that there was no justice. He saw there was no man and was stunned that no one intervened; so his own arm brought them victory and his own integrity upheld him". From here it is evident that the prophet Isaiah understood our text in the same way and used the same figure of speech. The Maharzay maintains that Hillel too echoed our verse in his maxim: "Where there is no man, try to be one"<sup>5</sup> (Avot 2, 2).

How different from the above interpretation, both in substance and spirit, is the excerpt cited below from the Midrash known as Midrash Petirat Moshe<sup>6</sup> (the "Midrash of the Passing of Moses").

Rabbinic legend abounds with stories of Moses' death, how he fought with the Angel of Death to stave off the inexorable fate of all mankind. First he begged to be allowed to enter the Promised Land as an ordinary Israelite, seeing his prophetic mission was at an end. Finally, he besought God to let him live, in some way or other, but at least not to die. Here we quote the conclusion of this dialogue between God and Moses, containing a reference to the subject of our discussion.

Said the Holy One Blessed be He to him (Moses): "Moses the son of whom art thou?" Said he to Him: "The son of Amram". Said the Holy One blessed be He: "And Amram, whose son was he?" Said Moses: "The son of Yitzhar". — Said (God): "And Yitzhar, whose son was he?" Said Moses: "The son of Levi". Said the Holy One blessed be He: "And all of them, from whence came they forth?" Said Moses: "From Adam". Said the Holy One blessed be He: "Did anyone of them remain alive?" Said Moses: "All of them died". Said the Holy One . . . : "Norwithstanding thou desirest to live!" Said Moses: "Lord of Universe! Adam did steal and ate of that which thou didst disapprove of whereupon Thou didst punish him by death, but as for me have I stolen aught from thee?" Yea Thou hast already written of me (Numbers 12, 7): "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all My house, wherefore then should Moses die?" Said the Holy One . . . : "Art Thou, in any wise, better than I?"

Noah?" Said Moses: "Yea! As for Noah, Thou didst bring upon his generation the deluge; yet Noah besought not mercy for his generation. But I said (Exodus 32:32), "If Thou wilt forgive their sin, and if not, erase me from Thy book which Thou hast written". Said the Holy One: "Art thou, in any wise, better than Abraham whom I proved with ten trials?" Said Moses: "As for Abraham, there did come forth from him Ishmael who will cause to perish his sons and Thine". Said the Holy One: "Art thou, in any wise, better than Isaac?" Said Moses: "As for Isaac, there will come forth from his loins him who is destined to destroy Thy Temple and his children will slay Thy children, Thy priests and Levites". Said the Holy One: "Did I in any wise tell thee to slay the Egyptian?" Said Moses to Him: "But Thou didst slay all the firstborn of Egypt, and shall I die for the sake of one Egyptian?" Said the Holy One blessed by He to him: "Canst thou liken thyself to Me who causeth to die and bringeth to life? Canst thou, in any wise, bring to life like Me?"

With this the debate ended and Moses resigned himself to death.

The view expressed above regards the slaying of a person without trial, witness and due warning, by taking the law into one's own hands as a serious crime. No man may take a leaf out of his Creator's book who in the course of history brings death and oblivion to many. They afford no parallel for the taking of human life by another human being no matter how deep and sincere are the considerations of justice and morality involved. Such a parallel is implicit in the words that the author of the Midrash puts in Moses' mouth. "But Thou didst slay all the firstborn of Egypt and shall I die for the sake of one Egyptian?" The answer of the Midrash is explicit and unequivocal: "Canst thou liken thyself to Me who causeth to die and bringeth to life?" In other words: Only He who gives life can take it away but not man who though having the power to cause death cannot bring back to life. According to this Midrash, had Moses been guilty of just this one sin of slaying the oppressor, which would then have been a case of spontaneous manslaughter which carried no death penalty by earthly court, this would have been sufficient to warrant the Divine penalty of death.

#### Questions for Further Study:

1. **כל המכחה אדם כשר מישראל בין גורל רך צוין זה עבורי בלבד לא תשעת. שאמר (דברים כה, ג): "אַבְגָּנִים יִמְגַּדֵּל אֶת יְמִינֵךְ". אם תזהר מהירה מלהוציאך בתקאת הוה נא – קל ותמה – למכה את נצדיקין. צען על כל המבוגה זו נעל חבירו וא צעל צען. של האבו – הרי זה תי רשותך.**  
Whoever strikes another Jew, both great and small, in a contentious manner thereby transgresses a negative precept, as it is said: 'Forty stripes he may give him, *he shall not exceed*' (Deuteronomy 25:3). If the Torah forewarned against excess in striking the sinner, all the more with regard to striking the righteous! It is even forbidden to raise one's hand against one's fellow. Whoever raises his hand, even if he does not strike his fellow is a wicked man.  
(Rambam, Code: Hovel Umazik)
2. **אַל תְּשִׁלֵּחַ לְאַחֲרֵי רָשָׁם רָשָׁם.**  
Though he did not strike him, he was called wicked, because he lifted up his hand.  
From where did Rashi deduce that the Hebrew did not strike his fellow but merely lifted up his hand?  
(2, 12)  
**הִנֵּה לְפָנֶיךָ אֱמֹן כִּי הַרְגִּין בָּנָן, אֲחֵר הַכָּהָר שָׂמָחוּת לְאַגְּרָבָן.**  
(בראשית כ:ה – תבשיט מהימנת טופר תכובבם אֶת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ (וְעַל).)  
**וְאָמַר לוֹ: כִּי תְּהִרְתָּה יְהִינָּה לְבָנֵי שָׂרָאלִים – דָא: לְמִן תְּהִרְתָּה (שָׂמָחוּת, ג).**  
He spoke thus to the Holy One Blessed be He: If this is the way that Thy children are being slain where is the "thus" that Thou promised Abram: "Look now heavenward and count the stars if thou canst count them. Then He said to him: "Thus shall be thy seed". (Gen. 15:5). Another explanation: To whom wilt Thou say: "Thus shall thou say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel?"  
(Exodus 19, 3)

NOTES

THE TROTTERS

<sup>1</sup> The Torah similarly gives not the slightest hint of Abraham's sufferings and soul-searchings as he went to sacrifice Isaac. All that is stated is: "On the third day Abraham lifted his eyes . . . and both of them went together". See our *Studies in Genesis*, n. 194, ff.

*Judaica Monastrensis*, p. 127 n.

Rashi's source is Tanhuma: "He would see their burdens and weep saying: My heart bleeds for them. Would that I could die for them. For there is no more gruelling task than working in mortar". Perhaps Rashi omitted any reference to Moses' weeping because he could find no clue in the text for it, nor was it in keeping with Moses' character. Rashi invariably cites from the Midrash such explanations as are anchored in the text itself. Here the textual anomaly is the intransitive use of the Hebrew verb "to see" *r'dah* with

the preposition *bē* ("into"). The text reads: "He saw *into* their burdens" not: "He saw their burdens". Cf. I. Sam. 1, 11 and Gen. 29, 32 where the construction *r'ah bē-* is used. The Midrash commentary *Yeshî Tō'ar* suggests that the implication in both these texts is that God felt for them — shared their suffering. Otherwise what information is transmitted by telling us that God "saw"? Surely He is all-seeing "shall He that moulded the eye not see?" (Psalm 94, 9)

<sup>3</sup> Cf. David's two encounters with Saul in I Sam. 24 and 26. On the first occasion it could be argued David could not have killed Saul because he was cornered in the cave or because he still thought he could reason with him. In the second, however, the encounter was in the open and the slaying could have been carried out if he had wanted by another (Avshal had volunteered to do the job, and David no longer trusted Saul). His resistance of temptation see I Sam. 24, 25.

<sup>4</sup> This psychological analysis of human motives and feelings is characteristic of Rambam's approach. Cf. his comments to Gen. 46, 29; ibid. 29, 12; ibid. 30, 1. See further: W. Tissera § 116. On Ex. 32, 16.

5 So Issa, 63, 5: "I looked and there was no helper; I was stunned that there was no supporter: but my own arm brought me victory. See B. Jacob: "The Childhood and Youth of Moses", Essays in honour of Rev. J.K. Hertz 1942, London, p. 275.

6 Bet Midrash (Bamberg et Wahrman, Jerusalem 1938), pp. 118–119; also Oran W. Fidman, *Eigencartier*, New York 1915, vol. 2, 263.

And the children of Israel groaned from the bondage,  
and their cry rose up to God, from the bondage.  
God heard their moan,  
and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, wi-  
and with Jacob.  
And God saw the children of Israel, and God took co-  
of them.

The above verses, as we have noted,<sup>1</sup> mark the turning point from bondage to redemption. In this vein, Ramban explains it:

The plain sense is that, at the beginning, God had hidden his face and they had been devoured (for the images see Deut. 31, 17). Now, God heard their cry and "saw" them, i.e. that he no longer hid His face from them but "took cognizance" of their sufferings and their needs

and they say to me, What is His name? — what shall I say to them?

(3, 13)

3. Moses answered and said: But they will never believe me or listen to me, for they will say: The Lord has not appeared to thee.

(4, 1)

4. Then Moses said to the Lord ... I have never been a man of words, neither yesterday, nor even the day before, nor ever since Thou hast spoken to Thy servant; for I am slow of speech and tongue.

(4, 10)

5. Finally he said: Send I pray Thee by the hand of whom Thou wilt send.

לֹא אָמַר מִשְׁתַּחַת אַלְפָיָרָאָרְגָּם:  
 אֲנֵנִי כִּי אֶלְקָרְבָּן אֲנֵנִי אַתְּ בְּעֵדְךָ  
 לֹא אָמַר מִשְׁתַּחַת אַלְפָיָרָאָרְגָּם:  
 — — —  
 לֹא אָמַר מִשְׁתַּחַת אַלְפָיָרָאָרְגָּם:  
 אֲנֵנִי כִּי אֶלְקָרְבָּן אֲנֵנִי אַתְּ בְּעֵדְךָ  
 לֹא אָמַר מִשְׁתַּחַת אַלְפָיָרָאָרְגָּם:  
 אֲנֵנִי כִּי אֶלְקָרְבָּן אֲנֵנִי אַתְּ בְּעֵדְךָ  
 לֹא אָמַר מִשְׁתַּחַת אַלְפָיָרָאָרְגָּם:  
 אֲנֵנִי כִּי אֶלְקָרְבָּן אֲנֵנִי אַתְּ בְּעֵדְךָ  
 לֹא אָמַר מִשְׁתַּחַת אַלְפָיָרָאָרְגָּם:  
 — — —  
 לֹא אָמַר מִשְׁתַּחַת אַלְפָיָרָאָרְגָּם:  
 עֲבָדָךְ,  
 כִּי בְּכָרְבָּן וּכְבָדָן אֲנֵנִי.  
 אֲנֵנִי כִּי אֶלְקָרְבָּן,  
 שְׁלֹחָה אֲנֵנִי תְּשִׁלְחוּ.

### WHO AM I TO GO TO PHARAOH?

Five times did Moses refuse the mission he was charged with at the burning bush. Five times did he present his arguments, only to be overruled each time by the Almighty. Let us briefly survey the five rounds:

It may be observed that Moses changed his defence in each answer as if he were seeking shelter each time behind another excuse. In his first two replies his rejection was based on personal inadequacy; this is particularly evident in his second reply: "What shall I say to them?" On the third occasion he hides behind the people. The very preamble to it, "Moses answered and said" indicates that he had taken up a new line of defence. Cassuto in his commentary to Exodus remarks that this form of introduction to a speech does not merely connote an answer, but indicates the introduction of a new idea or fresh initiative on the part of the speaker. This is its connotation introducing the speeches in the book of Job, and here too.

After this argument too had been overruled by the Divine reply, Moses reverted in his fourth plea to himself, this time pleading a specific inadequacy (physical or spiritual). Our Sages detected in the drawn-out wording of this verse, its multiplicity of "alsos" \* (*gam*) the full force of Moses' hesitations, and the intensity of his misgivings.

1. Then Moses said to God: Who am I to go to Pharaoh, and take the children of Israel out of Egypt?  
(3, 11)
2. Moses said to God: When I actually come to the children of Israel and say to them ...

אָמַר מִשְׁתַּחַת אַלְפָיָרָאָרְגָּם: אֲנֵנִי הַעֲלִימִים, וְאַתָּה שְׁצָרָה אֲלֵיכָהּ? חַיְלָהּ? אֲנֵנִי אַשְׁרָבִים אֲגַבֵּן? אֲנֵנִי שְׁלֹחָה לְאַשְׁרָבִים וְלֹא הָרְזָה לְרַלְגָּן.

\* rendered here (4,10) "neither . . . nor even . . . nor ever".

"And Moses said to the Lord, O Lord . . .". Thus Moses addressed the Holy One blessed be He: You are the Lord of the world. Do you want me to be an emissary? Behold "I have never been a man of words". The Sages stated: For the previous seven days, the Holy One blessed be He had been trying to coax Moses to accept His mission and he had not wanted to go till the incident of the burning bush. To this the text alludes, as it is stated: "I have never been a man of words" — one (day); "yesterday" — two; "even" — three; "the day before" — four; "even" — five; "since" — six; "Thou hast spoken" — seven!

After God had overruled even this argument of Moses, there came the fifth plea, different in essence from all its precursors: "Send I pray Thee, by the hand of him whom Thou wilt send". It is completely unmotivated, though our Sages have endeavoured to detect a reasoned argument in it:

R. Hiyya the Great stated: Moses thus addressed the Holy One blessed be He: Lord of the universe! Through me do you wish to redeem the children of Abraham who acknowledged Thee master over all Thy creatures! "Send, I pray Thee by the hand of Him whom Thou wilt send" He (Moses) continued: Who is dearer to a man, his nephew or his grandchild? Surely his grandchild! When Thou didst seek to save Lot, Abraham's nephew, Thou didst send angels to deliver him; the children of Abraham who are sixty myriads, me dost Thou send to deliver them. Send the angels Thou art accustomed to sending.

But in the text itself we find just blank refusal, a final almost des-

perpetrate rebuttal, as if all his arguments had been silenced and he was left with a barren, bewildered no.

**Moses received at the burning bush read:**

ମୁଦ୍ରଣ ନ୍ୟା-ସେସ ଟାର୍କ-ଫିଲ୍ଡର ଏକାକିପା  
ଟେଲିକ୍ ଦ୍ୱାରା ପ୍ରେସ୍ କରାଯାଇଥାଏ

Come now therefore and I will send thee to Pharaoh and bring forth My people the children of Israel from among them.

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Since each half of the verse spells out a separate command, we are entitled to infer that two distinct messages are involved. The verse does not read: "Come I will send you to bring (*le-hozi*) forth My people". It reads: "Come I will send you... and bring forth (*ve-hozi*).

Rashi too understands the passage in this way:

אַתָּה תְּבִרֵךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
אֲתָּה נָכֵן אֶת-מִצְרָיִם

"Come, now and let me send you to Pharaoh". And if you ask what good will it do? "Bring My people out of Egypt." Your words will have the effect of getting them out of there.

Accordingly the first half unfolds the command to undertake the mission and no more. Whereas the second half imparts both the content of the mission and a promise of its success. To balance this came Moses' first refusal which was similarly composed of two parts.

ଦେ, ଅନ୍ତରେ କୁଣ୍ଡଳ ପାଇଁ ଏହିପରିମାଣ ଦେଖିଲୁଛାମୁକ୍ତ

Who am I to go to Pharaoh  
And take the children of Israel out of Egypt? (3-11)

Our commentaries disagree on the interpretation of this double-barreled retort. We shall deal with two converse opinions on this text. First Rashi:

**“אָכְלִי: מַה אֵין חֶשׁבּוּ נִמְלָכִים  
אֲכִילָה אֲתָה בְּנֵי כָּה וְכֹה אַל שִׁיעָשָׂה לְתָם  
בְּאַצְפָּנָה גַּמְגַדְלִים.”**

“Who am I?” Who am I important enough to speak with kings? “and that I should bring forth the children of Israel”: And even if I am important, what have the Israelites done to deserve a miracle to be performed for them that I should bring them out of Egypt.

The diametrically opposed view is expressed by Rashbam:

“Who am I?” Moses replied to the two instructions imparted to him by God, to go to Pharaoh and also to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt at the commandment of Pharaoh.

“And that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

Moses replied to each in order. “Who am I to go to Pharaoh” — even to bring him a gift and offering? Am I then of sufficient status, a stranger like me to enter the court of the king? “And that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” In other words, even if I obtain the privilege of a royal audience and succeed in him giving my words a hearing, what can I say that might have the faintest chance of appealing to Pharaoh? Is Pharaoh then such a fool as to listen to me and send away his slaves — such a multitude, free from his country? . . . whoever explains these verses in any other way is completely misled.”

Here we have a convincing example of how the so called rationalist, the adherer to the strict literalness of the text, the eschewer of all homiletic exegesis may be forced into deviating from the plain sense and the underlying meaning. Admittedly, Rashbam may find fault with his grandfather Rashi's explanation that the wording does not suit it. For, according to Rashi, not Moses should have been the

subject of the second half of the verse, but Israel, (as if it says: “who is Israel that they should (be brought out)?”) But this objection is not nearly so strong as that which can be raised against Rashbam's interpretation.

There is one golden rule of interpretation: the particular can only be explicated in terms of its general context. An application of this rule should serve to convince us how wide of the mark Rashbam was in explaining Moses' refusal in terms of political considerations. Let us stand with Moses confronting the burning bush which is never consumed, observe him hide his face, “For he was afraid to look upon God”. Now at this supremely sublime moment, Moses puts forward, in Rashbam's view, prudential, calculated considerations, to the effect that the existing political constellation was not appropriate for such a campaign, that the military junta at that moment in power in Egypt was not ready for negotiation regarding the sending away of the people, and that we should beware of being misled in our appraisal of the enemy, in regarding him as a fool . . . etc. Is not this just how Rashbam explains Moses' words, unaware of the fact that he has transplanted us from the burning bush to the practical, matter-of-fact atmosphere of the council chamber of a military headquarters? Does not the text belie this?

**תְּפַנְּתָה גַּעֲגָעָה אַלְמִינְתִּים  
לְאַמְרָה : מִלְּפָנֵי מִלְּפָנֵי.  
אַלְמָרָה : גַּעֲגָעָה.  
שְׁלָמָה אַלְמִינְתִּים  
כִּי תְּפַנְּתָה אַלְמִינְתִּים  
אַלְמָרָה - קַדְמָה . אַלְמִינְתִּים  
לְאַמְרָה : אַגְּבָה אַלְמִינְתִּים  
אַלְמִינְתִּים אַלְמִינְתִּים : יְצָרָה אַלְמִינְתִּים  
וְעַמְּקָמָה מִשְׁמָרָה פְּנִים**

בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ כָּל־הָאָרֶץ.  
וְאַתָּה אָמַרְתָּ לְאַנְגָּלֶל אֱלֹהִים  
לְאַתָּה תְּעַבֵּד אֶת־עַצְמָךְ וְתַּחֲזִקְתָּה  
בְּעַצְמָךְ וְתַּחֲזִקְתָּה בְּעַצְמָךְ.

And God called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses.

And he said, Here am I.

And He said, Come no nearer; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place on which thou standest is holy ground.

Moreover He said: I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.

And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt . . .

Against such a background would Moses have answered: "Is Pharaoh then a fool to listen to me and send away his slaves free from his country?" In the presence of the burning bush that was not consumed would he have expressed doubts of a political diplomatic nature?

How much more appropriate do the words of Rashi, prince of commentators sound than those of Rashbam the literalist? Rashi regards Moses' words as the only possible reaction in the circumstances. In these first moments of prophecy, in the atmosphere of Divine immanence, he recoils at His transcendence, sensing the nothingness of man, dust and ashes, acutely made aware of human weakness and frailty. What are we? What is our life? What our righteousness? that He should bestow on us His kindness from on high? It would seem that this is the plain sense of the text and this suits the reply of the Almighty who does not deny the unworthiness and insignificance of the receiver of His message, but counters with the one single assurance: "Certainly I will be with thee" aptly understood by Rashi in the sense of "It is not of yours (i.e. on the basis of your deserts) but of Mine (My free gift)".

כִּי־אָנֹה הָרָא אֶל־מִצְרָיִם.

לֹא־שָׁלֵר כִּי אָמַת מְשִׁלֵּחַ, כִּי אִירִהָּ עַצָּרָן.

To Moses' second argument: "What have Israel done to deserve this" comes the deeply significant answer:

בְּנֵי־עֲבָדָיו אֲנָשִׁים נְקֻדָּם.

עֲבָדָן אֲתָה אֱלֹהִים עַל־תְּהִרְתָּה.

When thou hast brought the people out of Egypt  
you shall serve God on this mount  
(3, 12)

Rashi comments:

וְאַתָּה שָׁאַל שִׁיאָנוּ מִמְּצָרָיו דְּבָרָנוּ לְשָׁאַל שָׁאַל שָׁאַל  
שְׁאַל עֲבָדָיו מִלְּפָנֵי תְּהִרְתָּה עַל־תְּהִרְתָּה לְפָנֵי מִלְּפָנֵי.

Regarding your question: What has Israel done to deserve being brought out from Egypt? I have a matter of great importance connected with that bringing out: they are destined to receive the Torah on this mount, three months after they leave Egypt.

Not a privilege but a responsibility awaited them. Not so much as a reward for past good behaviour but as a prelude to their future destiny. This release from slavery, this bringing forth was inspired by a purpose and goal rather than a motivating cause.

The text contains a profound message well brought out by the Rashi we have cited. The exodus from Egypt, the liberation from an alien yoke, independence, freedom and the like are not ends in themselves. The return to the homeland, the transformation from dependence to sovereignty, slavery to freedom are but instruments, the means for achieving the ultimate goal — specified in our text: the service of God ("you shall worship God"). In other words, the Almighty did not release Israel from the burden of persecution in

order to set them free from all burden or responsibility. He wished them to become free to accept another burden — that of the Kingdom of Heaven — of Torah and Mitzvot.

This idea is repeatedly formulated in the Torah. Sometimes, the end is presented before the means as here:

בָּנִים אֲלֹהִים לְכַדֵּם תְּבֻנָה וְעַמְּכָבֵד  
תְּמִימָן מִזְרָחָן תְּמִימָן מִזְרָחָן  
אֱלֹהִים שֶׁר תְּזַבֵּחַ אֱלֹהִים שֶׁר תְּזַבֵּחַ  
— תְּמִימָן קְרֵבָן אֱלֹהִים קְרֵבָן אֱלֹהִים

I shall walk to and fro in your midst and be your God  
And you will be My people.

I am the Lord your God who brought you forth from the land  
of Egypt from being their slaves.

I shall break the bonds of your yoke and lead you upstanding.  
(Leviticus 26, 12, 14)

At others, the means is delineated before the end:

אֱלֹהִים מְצָבָה תְּמִימָן תְּמִימָן  
— — — אֱלֹהִים לְכַדֵּם תְּבֻנָה וְעַמְּכָבֵד

Who brought you forth from the land of Egypt to be your God  
(Numbers 15, 41)

#### Questions for Further Study:

- Many are the explanations suggested for this text (3, 11-12). The right approach is to follow the plain sense. God imparted to Moses two things: that He was going down to deliver them (by sending Moses); it was possible for him to deliver them from the hand of the Egyptians in the land

of Goshen itself or near there, but he further promised to deliver them from that country, altogether, to the place of the Canaanite.

Moses was afraid on both counts and said, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh", I, the lowliest of men, a mere shepherd and he a mighty King. If I order him to let the people go, he will kill me . . . He further said, "Who am I that I should bring forth the children of Israel from Egypt?", in the sense that You implied to bring them to the land of Canaan; for this great nation is a wise and understanding people and will not attach sufficient weight to my pronouncements as to follow me to a land of peoples greater and mightier than them . . . For the deliverance from Pharaoh is not dependent on them, but if Pharaoh will listen, he will lighten their yoke and deliver them or expel them from his land. Moreover they themselves will listen to any such personage (i.e. as Pharaoh). For which man will not be willing to escape from such unprecedented slavery? But they will not be willing to enter the land of Canaan. And so it was. The campaign against those peoples was difficult for them, from the very beginning, and they feared it, both in Egypt and the wilderness. This constituted Moses' fear of Pharaoh and his fear of them (i.e. the people).

To both of these the Lord replied. He said to him: Do not be afraid of Pharaoh for I shall certainly be with you to deliver you. And this shall be the sign to you, to the people, that I have sent you to them: "when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt you shall serve God upon this mount". Henceforth they will accept the service of God to follow His commandment and they will also believe in you for ever and will run after you to wherever you command them. (Ramban)

This bringing forth will require two categories of Divine intervention, one, *in respect of Pharaoh*, that Moses should be assured that he would not slay him but would ultimately bow to his request and command, and the second, *in respect of the people*, that they should accept his leadership. For did it not happen that afterwards they said on many occasions: "Better for us to serve Egypt"?

- Do both these commentators follow Rashi or Rashbam or adopt a different approach?

- "I am not a man of words but am heavy of speech and tongue" (4, 10).

“כְּבֵד פָּה”: בכבאות אין מדובר, ובלשון לעוז: בלבינו (balbutier).

I speak labouredly — stammer.

(Rashi)

Shemot 7

DID MOSES SPEAK UNBEITTINGLY?

"I am not fluent in the Egyptian tongue because I ran away from the country and I am now eighty. Cf. Ezez. 3, 5 . . . For is it possible that a prophet whom God had known face to face and received the Torah should stutter, especially as there is no mention of this in Talmudic sources." (Rashbam)

He couldn't speak clearly; Certain sounds were difficult for him to pronounce. He who says that he had forgotten Egyptian is incorrect, for he pleaded two disabilities — heavy of speech and tongue. Further God's answer "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh a man dumb?" is not referring to linguistic fluency but to some congenital disability. This is the meaning of "I shall be with thy mouth and teach thee" (4, 12) — give you words which are not difficult for you to pronounce."

Let Ibn Ezra point out to us which letters are not to be found in Moses' message to the people (omitted because he could not pronounce them), apart from the fact it is blasphemy to suggest that God would choose to give the Torah to his people by an emissary who could not pronounce the words written therein. Actually what is meant is that Moses was not a man of words, an eloquent and glib speaker, which fits in with the description "that the man Moses was very meek, more than all men upon the earth". This is similar to Jeremiah's plea: 'Behold I cannot speak', except that Jeremiah could add: 'for I am a child'. But Moses was old and it was even more difficult for him, after so many years of shepherding his sheep, to go and argue with a great monarch. (Shadal)

- (a) List the different interpretations of the phrase: "heavy of speech" as they emerge from the foregoing commentators.
  - (b) Summarise the arguments of Rashbam against Rashi, Ibn Ezra against Rashbam, Shadal against Ibn Ezra.
  - (c) Which of the above explanations best fits the Divine reply (vv. 11-12)?

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The Lord called to Moses at the burning bush and charged him with the sacred mission of redeeming his people. Moses refused. Doubts assailed him: "Who am I to go to Pharaoh and bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" After God had answered him, Moses once again expressed his doubts: "When I actually come to the children of Israel and say to them, The God of your fathers has sent me to you; and they shall say to me, What is His name? what shall I say to them?"

Answer was given him this time too. He was told God's name: *Ehyeh asher ehyeh* and was instructed what to say to them. Then he was charged with his practical task.

Go and assemble the elders of Israel and say to them,  
The Lord God of your fathers has appeared to me . . .  
and they shall hearken to thy voice. And thou shalt come, thou  
and the elders of Israel unto the king of Egypt and say to him,  
The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us and now let us  
go I pray thee . . .

But once again Moses makes excuses. This time his excuses are particularly puzzling.

וְאֵלֶּה תֹּאמֶר לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: כְּאֵלָי אָמַר יְהוָה: כְּאֵלָי אָמַר יְהוָה: כְּאֵלָי אָמַר יְהוָה: כְּאֵלָי אָמַר יְהוָה:

**And Moses answered and said:** But, behold they will not believe me, nor hearken to my voice; for they will say; the Lord has not appeared to thee.

Moses no longer pleads unfitness and unworthiness but absolutely contradicts what has been told him. Rambam in his Guide for the Perplexed has referred to this problem:

Moreover after God had made known that name (*ehyeh asher ehyeh* — "I am that I am" 3, 14) to Moses, and had told him "Go and gather the elders of Israel ... and they shall hearken to thy voice", he replied, "Behold, they will not believe me nor hearken unto my voice", although God had told him, "And they will hearken to thy voice . . .".

Many answers have been proposed. Here is a selection:

The Almighty had promised that the elders would believe him, but did not mention that (all the people would); or perhaps: "they shall hearken to thy voice", but not believe you in their hearts.

(Ibn Ezra)

In my view, the passage implies that they will hearken to thy voice to accompany you to Pharaoh and tell him: "The God of the Hebrews hath met with us" (ibid. 18). For what had they to lose by so going? But the Almighty had revealed to Moses that Pharaoh would not let them go. In the light of this knowledge Moses turned to God and said. "But they will not believe me," after they see that Pharaoh refuses to let them go. They will not hearken at all unto me, for they will assert that the "Lord hath not appeared unto thee" (2, 1).—for if you really were an accredited messenger of the Almighty, Pharaoh would not have disobeyed His message".

(Ramban)

No one had laid claim to a prophetic mission, asserting that the Lord had spoken to him or sent him prior to the days of Moses. You must not be misled by the statements that God spoke to the Patriarchs or that He

had appeared to them. For you do not find any mention of a prophetic call which appealed to others or directed them. Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob or any other person before them did not tell the people, "God said unto me, you shall do this thing" or "God has sent me to you." Far from it . . . When God appeared to Moses and commanded him to address the people and bring them a message, Moses replied that he might first be asked to prove the existence of the One God, and that only after so doing, would he be able to announce to them that God had sent him. For, all men, with few exceptions, were ignorant of the existence of God (believing in the powers of the heavenly bodies). God first showed the proofs by which he would be able to convince the wise men of his nation of His existence. The explanation of His name is therefore followed by the statement, "Go, gather the elders of Israel," and by the assurance that the elders would understand what God had shown him (the intellectual proofs of the existence of God and the conception of *ehyeh asher ehyeh*) and would accept it, as evidenced by the words, "They shall hearken unto thy voice." Then Moses replied as follows: Granted they will accept the doctrine that God exists through the medium of these rational proofs with which you have furnished me. But, by what means shall I demonstrate that this existing God has sent me? Thereupon God gave him the sign (the rod), the tangible evidence authenticating the mission and not the sender whom man already acknowledges through intellectual proof.

All the foregoing authorities try to show there is no contradiction between the Almighty's statement and Moses' reply. God forbid that Moses should contradict the Almighty! Both refer to different circumstances. The Divine assertion that "they shall hearken to thy voice" referred to one thing and Moses' — "But behold they will not believe me", — to another.

Let us evaluate each of the four different explanations advanced by the commentators. These are schematised in the table at the foot of the next page.\*

According to the first explanation of Ibn Ezra, the subject of the hearkening is different in the words of God and Moses respectively. Is this conceivable? Surely the Divine message states explicitly "go assemble the elders of Israel and say to them" after which it is stated

(v. 18) "and they shall hearken to thy voice and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel . . ." Moses' words: "But, behold they will not believe me" contain no hint that he is referring to a different subject other than that alluded to by God, that he is indeed referring to the people and not the elders. In contradistinction to Moses' first reaction (3, 11) "that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt" and his second one (3, 13): "Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel . . . they shall say to me", his response in 4, 1, contains no suggestion that he is referring to the children of Israel. On the contrary, when he stated: "but behold they will not believe me and will not hearken to my voice", it is evident that he is referring to the same subject alluded to by God in His command: "Go and assemble the elders of Israel . . . and they shall hearken to thy voice".

Ibn Ezra's second solution maintains that the object of their respective statements is different. A different kind of hearkening is in-

volved in each case. This distinction likewise appears far-fetched, since the text employs the identical phraseology in each case. How can one be regarded as an outward hearkening, and the other, an inner hearkening? Admittedly, attention can be drawn to the first part of Moses' statement: "they will not believe me" suggesting therefore that the hearkening here is associated with inner belief, which probably was Ibn Ezra's justification for his distinction, but even this is, to say the least, questionable.

Now let us deal with Ramban's interpretation. The difference lies in the *time* of the hearkening. Admittedly, the children of Israel would hearken at the beginning, (as the Lord had promised), but what would their subsequent reaction be, after Pharaoh's decrees became more severe and they encountered setbacks and disappointments? Would not their enthusiasm flag? Projects taken up with great enthusiasm are wont to be shelved as soon as the first difficulties are encountered. Would it not be plausible to explain that Moses' words referred to such an eventuality? Would not such a passage as "You have discredited us in the eyes of Pharaoh . . . to put a sword in their hand to slay us" (5, 21) tend to confirm Ramban's analysis? The people did not vent their indignation against Pharaoh but against Moses and Aaron. Even Moses the faithful shepherd, father of the prophets, who had been told at the outset that "I know that the king of Egypt will not give you leave to go" (3, 19) is affected by this spirit of defeatism: "O Lord wherefore hast Thou brought misfortune on this people? why is it that 'Thou hast sent me. For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy name, he has heaped misfortune on this people; neither hast Thou delivered this people at all.'

How appropriately do Ramban's words fit the picture psychologically! First they would hearken to thy voice to go with thee to the king, "for what had they to lose?" Subsequently however, there would be a different story to tell. But do his words similarly fit in with the wording of the text? Where is the warrant in the text itself to the differing implications of the Divine message and Moses' res-

ponse? We may discover just such a warrant. At the end of Chapter 3, it is explicitly foretold that there would be failures, that the first approach would not succeed, "and I know that the King of Egypt will not give you leave to go."

Consequently, Ramban could base his explanation of Moses' statement that the people would not believe him on this text. That is indeed what Ramban says: "In the light of this knowledge Moses turned to God and said: "but they would not believe me", after they see that Pharaoh refuses to let them go, they will not hearken at all unto me, for they will assert that "the Lord hath not appeared unto thee". For if you are really an accredited messenger of the Almighty, Pharaoh would not have ignored His message."

There is one objection to this interpretation. The text should have stated that Moses said: "the people will not *continue* to believe me".

Let us however examine the last explanation, that of Rambam in his Guide, when he makes a distinction between the authenticity of God and that of His emissary. The people would believe in God, in the message of *ehyeh asher ehyeh*, but not in Moses. Here we do not have to understand even one additional word in the text. Moses said: "Behold they will not believe me for they will say 'that the Lord hath not appeared unto thee', since the belief in the existence of God need not necessarily involve belief in prophecy."

There is another strong support for Rambam's explanation. The Almighty Himself overruled Moses' hesitations by stating that the signs He showed him were not meant as proofs of His existence, to authenticate the sender, but rather the emissary, "that they may believe that the Lord hath appeared *unto thee*" (4, 5).

As we have observed earlier, the three commentators we have cited all try to extenuate Moses' conduct. He did not contradict the Almighty but raised another objection. Our Sages however, had a

different approach:

"And Moses answered and said: but behold, they will not believe me." On that occasion Moses spoke unbenefiting. The Holy One, blessed be He had said unto him "and they shall hearken to thy voice". Notwithstanding, Moses had replied: "They will never believe me". Forthwith the Holy One, blessed be He paid him back in his own coin and gave him signs in accordance with his words. See what is written afterwards "and the Lord said unto him, what is that (*mazeh*) in thy hand? and he said, a rod." In other words, with that thing (*mizeh*) which is in your hand you deserve to be smitten since

Our Sages were no respecters of persons, however great. They were ready to see the faults of last <sup>1</sup> <sub>1</sub> <sup>1</sup> <sub>1</sub>

their approach. He shared Ibn Ezra's supposition that Moses' upbringing in the royal court had made him incapable of believing that downtrodden slaves could ever rise to be worthy of redemption. One text states (2, 14): "and Moses feared". Rashi comments on this: "Moses doubted whether they were at all worthy of being redeemed". In the same sentence on the phrase: "surely the thing is known", Rashi comments: "I see that they deserve their bondage". On the text "who am I that I should bring forth the children of Israel", Rashi comments: "even if I am important, what have the Israelites done to make them deserve a miracle that I should bring them out of Egypt?"

We may observe how Rashi is thoroughly consistent in his explanations to the text, always working out an approach which reflects the plain sense of the narrative.

### *Questions for Further Study:*

1. What is the difference between the grade of prophecy vouchsafed Moses and the Divine revelation to Abraham according to Rambam? Note that Abraham, too, is called a prophet (Gen. 20, 7). How does this text not contradict our citation from Rambam?
  2. What is the difference between Moses' hypothetical apprehensions of what Israel would say in 3, 13 and subsequently in 4, 1?
  3. After Ramban quotes the Shemot Rabbah we cited at the end of our *Studies* and the two explanations of Ibn Ezra, he continues, by suggesting that God's message "and they shall hearken to thy voice" implies "*not a promise but rather a command*".

It is their business to hearken to thy voice. Cf. Nu. 14, 13: "And the Egyptians shall hear that Thou hast brought up with thy power . . . and they shall say to the inhabitants of the land" i.e. they are liable to speak thus; and "By this ye shall know that I am the Lord" (Ex. 7, 17) you ought to know, *not that it is bound to happen*. Similarly, we may interpret our text (Ex. 4, 8): "And they will believe the voice of the latter sign" and so on.

- (a) What difficulty is common to our text (4, 1) and other passages cited by Ramban here (Num. 14, 13; Ex. 7, 17; 4, 8)?

(b) What is the difference between the answer given by Ramban here and that cited from him by us in the *Studies*?

**Go and gather the elders of Israel  
and say unto them:  
The Lord, God of our forefathers,  
me, the God of Abraham, Isaac and**

38

were, on what was going on "down there". With the sound of the coarse revelry still ringing in our ears the text quickly whisked us "skyward" "up there" to the ton of the mountain

The next eight verses depict what was being said "from them."

Four are devoted to the words of God, three to those of Moses.

The final verse informs us of the outcome of the dialogue.

The Divine message may be divided into two parts. The first two verses (8-9) describe the facts of the situation: what Israel had done. The last two — the Divine response:

## MOSES INTERCEDDED

In our Studies of the first two chapters of *Shemot* we drew attention to the sudden change of scene. The stage shifted from a view of earthly doings: "down there" in Pharaoh's palace, among the Israelite slaves, in Amram's house to what was going on "up there", in the heavens. We are granted, as it were, a peep into

We have a parallel in the structure of this chapter. The first six  
verses find us in the camp of Israel, where the Divine laboratory, initiation into "the Divine mystery".

verses unto us in the camp of Israel. We hear what they were saying, what they demanded from Aaron, his response and theirs which developed into a veritable crescendo of debauchery.

କେବଳ ଏହା ଦୟାରୁ କ୍ଷେତ୍ର ଦୟାରୁ  
ଦୟାରୁ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ଦୟାରୁ ଦୟାରୁ

They rose early the next day, offered up burnt-offerings

have completed themselves.

**They have quickly turned aside from the way I commanded them**

They have made themselves a molten calf;

They have prostrated themselves before it, sacrificed to it

and said: These are your gods O Israel  
that brought you up from the land of Egypt

Verbs of movement like *lekh, red* ("go", "get down") are frequently used metaphorically<sup>2</sup> in Scriptures (as in modern Hebrew and other languages). The Midrash exploits this potentiality in human language to enrich the significance of the verse. Both a spiritual and physical ascent and descent are involved.<sup>3</sup>

Translator's Note:

[The NJB reads: "make merry"; the King James: "play": NEB: "gave themselves up to revelry"; Hirsch: "behaved wantonly". Only Hirsch reproduces the sexual connotation of the Hebrew alluding to the orgies associated with heathen cults. All the other translations convey an atmosphere of innocent fun and games.]

Get down from your lofty station. (Heb. "greatness"). Did I not advance you only on account of Israel? Now that Israel has sinned, what are you to Me? Whereupon Moses' strength ebbed away from him and words failed him.<sup>4</sup>

In Benno Jacob's view this Midrash may be accepted at face value. The whole of Moses' mission for which purpose he had been summoned to "ascend", literally, "rising to the occasion" had been voided. It was therefore only right that he get down, as it were, from his pedestal. But Deut. 9, 12 "rise, get quickly down from here" implies a literal descent from the mountain.<sup>5</sup>

For your people have committed themselves

The word ‘*am* “people”’ recurs frequently in the debate between God and Moses with a different pronominal marker. Each of these variations is highly significant<sup>6</sup>. Our rabbis have given thought to this in the Midrash:

ଯେ ପାଦ : ଏହି ରୂପ ଅତିଥିକ ଅଧିକ ଦୀର୍ଘ ଦୀର୍ଘ ଦୀର୍ଘ ଦୀର୍ଘ ଦୀର୍ଘ

"Bless Thy people, even Israel" (Deut. 26, 15). Is it not obvious that "Thy people" is Israel? Why then does the text state: "Thy people, even Israel?" — when Israel fail to do the will of the Omnipresent, He, as it were, no longer calls them: "My people"?7, as it is said: "Go — get down, for your people have dealt corruptly".

(Midrash Tannaim, p. 177)

Avraham b. Ha-rambam makes the same point:

"Your people have corrupted themselves" not My people. Only by exclusively worshipping Him did they qualify to be called "His people". Once they worshipped something else. He deprived them of that title as

is indicated in the prophet Hosea's formulation (1, 9): "You are not My people". When the Almighty said to Moses "your people" He implied the mixed multitude, "this rabble whom you concerned yourself with", alluding to their disrespectful attitude to Him. This is my view of the matter. What others have said will be found in their remarks on the texts.

But a more careful look at the text indicates that the children of Israel did not qualify for the title of God's people "My people" only by "their exclusive worshipping of Him". They were first addressed by that title when God spoke to Moses at the Bush. Then Israel was still in Egypt, addicted to idolatry<sup>9</sup>. Nevertheless God called them "My people" when He saw their misery.

ເຕັມເຕັນບໍ່ ຂູ້-ສົ່ງ ສົ່ງ ນຳ ດັກໄດ້...

I have indeed seen the misery of My people in Egypt.

They were referred to as: "My people" not in deference to their loyalty to God but in virtue of their suffering. (Cf. Deut. 9, 5: "not on account of your righteousness")

They were now stripped of the honourable title of "My people". Instead they were dubbed "your people" (i.e. Moses). The estrangement implied is expressed in the relative clause:

ପ୍ରକାଶକ  
ନିମ୍ନଲିଖିତ

whom you brought up from the land of Egypt.

It stands in contrastive correspondence to the relative clause in the opening sentence of the Decalogue:

ନୀତି ... ନୀତି ପ୍ରକଟିତ ହେଲା, ହେଲା - - -

I am . . . who brought you out from the land of Egypt.

Now comes the detailed breakdown of their actions:

କେନ୍ଦ୍ରିୟମାତ୍ର ହେଲା ଏହାର ପାଇଁ କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା  
କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା  
କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା

**They have quickly turned from the way I commanded them  
They have made themselves a molten calf  
prostrated to it.**

These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.

Can we detect in the Divine message here a clue to their attitude to the Calf? Was idolatry involved or not? Shadal who shares Yehudah Halevi's approach that actual idolatry was not involved finds support in the words of God:

God did not say: "they have turned aside from Me" indicating that they had not abandoned the worship of God in favour of other gods.

But others find that precisely the opposite is implied in the four-fold series of actions described:

they made for themselves — prostrated — sacrificed — said we have a direct correspondence with the actions forbidden in the Ten Commandments:

Thou shalt not make — prostrate — serve (= sacrifice)

with the addition of: "said: these are your gods".

Moses did not react to the Divine report of Israel's backslidings. God, as it were, waited expectantly for Moses' reply. Moses responded with a shocked silence! Both can be felt in the text. In actual fact the Divine message ends at the end of verse 8. The formula "God said" in 9 marks its resumption.<sup>10</sup> The pause intervening provided our Rabbis with the cue for their observation: "Whereupon Moses' strength ebbed away from him and words failed him".

This second message from God outlined the lesson to be learnt from the first:

ନେବୁ ଅପାର ଦ୍ୱାରା କଲାପ  
ନେବୁ ନେବୁ ଦ୍ୱାରା କଲାପ  
ନେବୁ ଦ୍ୱାରା କଲାପ  
ନେବୁ ଦ୍ୱାରା କଲାପ  
ନେବୁ ଦ୍ୱାରା କଲାପ

So the Lord said to Moses,  
I have considered this people,  
and I see that they are a stubborn people.  
Now therefore:  
Leave Me  
to vent my anger on them, and put an end to them  
and make a great nation out of you.

This time Israel is called "this people". Buber<sup>11</sup> appropriately commented: "that people down there", pointing as it were a finger of scorn and estrangement at them.

*Ve-attah* ("now, therefore")

The first word of verse 10: *ve-attah* is a finalising connective: “I have given you all the facts as I see them — here *now* is my considered decision. But note carefully the next phrase *ve-attah* is not followed, as we might expect from other contexts by a directive to Moses or Israel as in:

ମୁଦ୍ରଣ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ପତ୍ର

Now, strip off your ornaments

Now, write yourselves **Deut. 31:19**

Nor do we find it followed by a first person verb informing the reader of what God is about to do — “from now on” as in:

Now shall I avoca her disease  
— — — תְּהִלָּה אֲשֶׁר־בְּנֵי־עַמָּךְ —

Now shall I break — נָשַׁׁבֵּן — נִשְׁבַּעֲנָה — נִשְׁבַּעֲנָה — Nahum 1:13)

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"Now leave me to make an end of them". Had Moses caught the Holy-One-Blessed-be-He in his grip that He had to say: "Leave Me Be"? But to what may this be compared. To a king who became angry with his son and took him to an ante-room and set about to try and kill him. There he shouted from the room: Leave me alone to kill him! The boy's tutor who was standing outside, reasoned thus: Both the king and his son are closeted together inside. Why then does he shout: Leave me alone? The reason must be that the king really wants me to go in and make peace between him and his son. That is why he cries out: Leave me alone!

Similarly the Holy-One-Blessed-be-He said to Moses: "Now leave Me alone". Said Moses: The Holy-One-Blessed-be-He wants me to make peace between Him and Israel! That is why He says: "Now — leave Me alone". So he promptly began to intercede on their behalf.

Rashi makes the same point with characteristic brevity leaving out the parable:

କାହିଁ କାହିଁ

Moses had not even begun to pray for them, yet He said: "Leave Me alone?" but here He gave him an opening and informed him that the matter depended on him. If he prayed for them He would not destroy them.<sup>12</sup>

Benno Jacob aptly takes the phrase: *Haniḥah-li* "Let Me alone" to imply the opposite: "Do not leave Me alone"! Moses the faithful shepherd took the hint and promptly began to pray for them.

Moses interceded

Moses was a master of prayer. Our Sages observed that he was unsurpassable both in the composition of short and long prayers alike.<sup>13</sup> No one could equal his ability to marshal the appropriate arguments and maximise the impact of his intercession "commensurate with the urgency of the situation" (Akedat Yizhak). Long before the incident of the golden calf do we find frequent references to Moses' intercessions: "Moses cried to the Lord", "He entreated of the Lord", "He spread his hands to the Lord". But this is the first time that the text spells out the actual contents of his prayer:

ଦୟା ପାଇଁ ହେଲା ପାରିଥିବା  
ନେତ୍ର ପରିଷ୍କାର ଦୟା ଏବଂ ଦୟା  
ଦୟା ଏବଂ ପାଇଁ ନେତ୍ର ଦୟା

But Moses sought to placate the Lord his God and said:  
Why, O Lord, shouldst Thou vent Thy anger on Thy people,  
whom Thou didst bring out of Egypt  
with great power and a strong hand?

යෙයුය දැඩිප්පාදීය දැනුම්  
යෙය යේපා සෑල්ම  
දැනුදෝය දැන්ද යේ පැස්ස්ත්‍රිය  
දැනුදීය යේස්ස්ප දැප්පා යේප යේප  
දැනුප්ප යේප දැනුප්ප යේප

Why let the Egyptians say,  
So he meant evil when He took them out — to kill  
the mountains and wipe them off the face of the earth.  
Turn from Thy fierce anger  
and repent of the evil (Thou dost intend) against  
THEY people.

The above three verses of Moses' prayer correspond to the four verses of the Divine message (vv. 7-10). Let us take a closer look at its internal structure. The prayer comprises four sections. Two are rhetorical questions introduced by *lamah* "why?". The other two are petitions employing the imperative: *shuy* ("turn"), *ve-hinckhem* ("and repent") *zekhor* ("remember"). The first *lamah* is directed at God, the second at His enemies.

For whom did Moses pray? For "Thy people". "Why, O Lord shouldst Thou vent Thy anger on *Thy people*?" "and repent of the evil against *Thy people*". God had said: "Thy people have corrupted themselves". Moses returned the compliment, giving the people back to their Lord and Master. Here are some relevant excerpts from the Midrash which, as always, is keenly sensitive to textual anomalies:

କାଳ ଲାଦୁ - ପରିମା ଦେଖ ମହା କାଳ  
କାଳ - କାଳ କାଳ - କାଳ କାଳ କାଳ କାଳ  
କାଳ - କାଳ କାଳ - କାଳ କାଳ କାଳ - କାଳ କାଳ  
କାଳ - କାଳ କାଳ - କାଳ କାଳ - କାଳ କାଳ

"Why, O Lord shouldst Thou vent Thy anger on Thy people" . . . In the same way, you find that when the Holy-One-Blessed-be-He was angry

with Israel for making the Calf, Moses sought to placate him. He proclaimed them, "Not-My-people", as it is stated: "For thy people have corrupted themselves". Moses replied: They are Thy people. You cannot disown them, as it is stated: "Why shouldest Thou vent Thy anger on Thy people?" Make your peace with them, for they are your children. (Shemot Rabba 46:4)

Another Midrash resorts to a parable to illustrate the same idea:

"For Thy people have corrupted themselves": R. Berechiah said in the name of R. Levi: It may be compared to a king who had a vineyard which he farmed out to a tenant. When it produced superior wine he said: What fine wine my vineyard produces! When it produced inferior wine he said: What rotten wine my tenant produces! The tenant retorted: Your majesty, when it produced superior wine you said: What fine wine my vineyard produces. But when it produced inferior wine you said: What rotten wine my tenant produces! For better or for worse it's yours!

"Now, therefore, let Me send thee to Pharaoh and bring My people, the children of Israel out of Egypt. After they had perpetrated that deed, what is written thereon? "Go-get-down, for thy people have corrupted themselves". Moses said to the Holy One Blessed be He: Lord of the universe, when they are sinners are they mine but when saints, Yours? Saints or sinners they are Yours, as it is written: (Deut. 9, 29): "They are Thy people and Thy inheritance".

Let us now study the first verse of Moses' prayer of intercession  
(Pesikta De-rav Kahana 16)

We have already noted that it is structured as a point-by-point reply to the words of God. The Almighty opened with the words: "Let Me alone, that I may vent My anger on them". Moses responded in the same vein: "Why shouldst Thou vent Thy anger". Both describe a future action. Moses concluded from the future implication of: "that I may vent My anger" that there was still time to intercede. This point is stressed in Akedat Yizhak:

"Why shouldst Thou vent Thy anger": in other words: You are just, O Lord, in not having given vent to Your anger as yet. Henceforth, too, you have no justification in so doing.

But Moses' very questioning has been criticised. Some of our rabbis have regarded this as irreverent of Moses or at least un-befitting:

**אָמֵן וְיִשְׁתַּחֲווּ אֶפְרַיִם דְּבָרָךְ, כִּי אָמַר לְךָ יְהוָה צְדָקָה (לְמִזְבֵּחַ), וְאָמַר מִתְּנִינָה.**

Said R. Yizhak: Even as one man to another it is unbefitting (to ask why). Yet Moses said: Why, O Lord, shouldst Thou vent Thy anger?"? (Devarim Rabbah 11)

But the Midrash promptly finds a justification for this apparently irreverent questioning and continues:

אל לא לבו ברור עלייו, שהוא מובהך יותר נצנחו אל צורכו של ישראל.  
His conscience was clear. He was not pleading his own cause but  
Israels<sup>14</sup>.

But our commentators raise an even more crucial objection to the first verse of Moses' intercession. Was this the proper way to approach God when begging forgiveness and pardon for the sin of the Golden Calf? There is a remarkably pithy formulation of this Criticism in *Akedat Yizhar*:

If now wasn't the time (for God to be angry) when then?  
Ramban is more explicit:

In the face of a sin of such enormity Moses should have indited in confession and abject supplication employing such a formula as "Alas, this people has committed a great sin" (32, 31) just as Ezra had prayed when expressing his shame and humiliation at the conduct of the exiles (Ezra 9). There was no justification for beginning with "Why O Lord". Our rabbis were aware of this problem and justified Moses' formulation homiletically.

Here is an example of one such homily:

אָשֶׁר תַּחֲזֹאת מְאָרִים מִצְרַיִם – מֵהֶם רָאָה לְחַבֵּר כָּאֵץ יָאָת מִצְרַיִם אָל אָל  
תְּאַוְתָּה – רְבֻנָּה הַעֲלָמָה, מְהֻרָּכָה תַּחֲזֹאת אֲוֹתָן לֹא גְּנָזָרִים, שְׁתוֹן בְּלִם נְבוֹגָר  
תְּאַמְּנוּן אָרְךָנָה: אָנוּ נָשָׁל לְכָמָם שְׁפָטָה בְּנֵינוּ תְּהִמְמִי (מִקְמָה) הַנְּגָעָה, שְׁחָדָה, תְּהִמְמִי  
שְׁלֹן – צָא לְתַבְּרָאָה, בְּאָגָרְבָּה, רַעֲנָה. אָבָא אַגְּרָפָה, שְׁמָה הַלְּגָה, הַתְּחִילָה  
תְּהִתְחַתָּה כְּלַל הַאֲלֹתָה וְלֹא יְמִידָה אָלָה בְּשָׁם. הַתְּחַתָּה כְּלַל הַאֲבָבָה וְלֹא  
שְׁעַבְרוֹת בְּיוֹם הַנְּלִימָדִים, שְׁחָרָר פְּרָדָה, לְכָדוֹן מַהְמָּאָה וְלֹא תְּהִנְנָה  
שְׁעַלְלָה! ... רַעֲמָה מְהֻקָּם חֲזֹאת אָלָבָדָן

"Whom Thou didst bring out from the land of Egypt?" — What prompted Moses to mention the departure from Egypt? But Moses said (this was Moses' argument): "Lord of the universe, from whence didst Thou bring them out? Was it not from Egypt where all worshipped lambs?"

Rabbi Huna said: It can be compared to a wise man who opened a perfumery shop for his son in a street frequented by prostitutes. The street did its work, the business also did its share; and the boy's youth contributed its part, with the result that he fell into evil ways. When his father came and caught him with a prostitute, he began to shout: "I'll kill you". But his friend who was there said: "You ruined this youth's character and yet you shout at him! You ignored all other professions and taught him only to be a perfumer, you forsook all other districts and opened a shop for him just in a street where prostitutes dwell!" This is what Moses said: "Lord of the Universe! You ignored the entire world and caused your children to be enslaved only in Egypt, where all worshipped lambs, from whom Your children learned (to do corruptly). It is

for this reason that they have made a Calf! . . . Bear in mind whence You have brought them forth!"

The two adverbial phrases "with great power and a strong hand" designed to magnify the miracle of the Exodus serve further to reinforce our puzzlement at Moses' form of intercession. In the words of Ma'aseh Ha-shem:

What argument is this for saving them? On the contrary — the greater the miracle of their release from Egypt, the more guilty they were! Cf. the prophet Isaiah's statement of this (Isa. 1, 2): "Children have I reared and raised — only to rebel against Me".

Abraavanel follows the Midrash above in his justification of Moses' form of intercession. He finds too a plausible explanation of the force of the adverbial complement "with great power and a strong hand":

You knew very well that you brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, a land filled with abomination . . . And the Egyptians worshipped lambs and it was from them that they learned . . . And they did not want to leave, and it was against their will that He took them out with His great power and His outstretched arm. Since then, You took them out from the midst of abominations and idolatrous practices, why do You become angry when they fall back on their old practices? For habit has become second nature to them and that was what led them to do it. It is not something that arose within them just recently . . .

The preacher does not imply that Moses had to teach the Almighty a lesson in the nature of historical necessity, or the impact of environment and habit. The preacher wishes to answer the very puzzling question that had arisen in his heart and those of his listeners. Was this not the generation that had witnessed great miracles, had seen the dividing of the Red Sea; the very generation which had stood at the foot of Mount Sinai and perceived the thunderings? And those thunderings were still echoing in their ears, for — do we not read in Deuteronomy 9, 15 — "the mount

*bo'er* (pres. participle) burned with fire" still. How could it be that that generation — whose ringing declaration echoes through the ages —

— עַזְלָה הַשְׁמָן יְהִי שְׁמָךְ נָא

**All that the Lord hath spoken will we do and obey —**

(24, 7)

went and made a calf?

This burning question the above Midrash answers by depicting man's crucial dependence on the environmental forces surrounding him, the forces of time, place and habit. Man is not truly free unless he takes upon himself the yoke of Torah — only thus can he free himself from his environment.

But the literalists, the advocates of *peshat* — plain sense explicate the first "why" (*lamah*) of Moses' intercession differently. Moses was neither trying to extenuate Israel's conduct nor accusing the Almighty of unfairness. He was appealing to His mercy. Their stay in Egypt was not cited in extenuation of their behaviour, as suggested by the Midrash and Abravanel, but as an example of God's kindness to them, which would come to nothing, were they now to cease to be a people.

Bekhor Shor comments in this strain:

You performed for them miracles and wonders, as he goes on to list.  
Surely You will lose the benefits of all You have done for them!<sup>15</sup>

Benno Jacob finds support for this reading in the invoking of the Tetragrammaton: "O Lord" which implies in rabbinic exegesis the aspect of Divine fulfilment: "faithful to keep His promise"<sup>16</sup>. When the worshipper wishes to invoke the Almighty's covenant with the Patriarchs; His promise to His people, he invariably addresses God by his Ineffable Name "Lord" (*Ha-shem* = "the name" the

reverential circumlocution used in Hebrew as for example in Psalms 10, 1; 88, 15). Similarly God's "great power and mighty hand" could just as easily be an instrument of mercy as they had been of retribution. His hand might shatter the enemy but would also sustain the weak and guide him. Here Moses was invoking the aspect of Divine love, grace and fatherhood.

The first *lamah* "why" confined itself to the framework of God's relationship with Israel — directed exclusively inward. The second one is directed outwards to the nations of the world.

Sensitivity to world opinion is a major ingredient of the argument recurring in Moses' intercession on another occasion (Num. 14, 13-16), in Joshua (7, 9) and the Psalms, too (cf. 115, 2: "Why should the nations say, where now is their God?"). But we may well be puzzled by it. What threat did world opinion constitute to the Almighty? Akedat Yizhak posed this very question:

"Why should the Egyptians say" — is no plea. Should then justice be perverted for the sake of fools?

Abravanel expands on this theme:

How could Moses have conceived that the Judge of all the earth should refrain from administering strict justice for fear of what the Egyptians in their foolishness would argue? Surely the Holy One Blessed be He has no fear of the multitudes of peoples. What does it profit Him whether the Egyptians honour Him or otherwise, that He should refrain from dealing justly in His world and with His people?

Ramban offers us a bold and unequivocal explanation why the application of Divine justice is overruled by considerations of *hilul ha-shem* the bringing of His name into disrepute. This explanation is given by him not in our context nor in that of Moses' intercession after the sin of the spies but in *Ha'azinu* in the Song of Moses where the author of the argument is not the mortal worshipper but God Himself:

କୁ—ଅନ୍ଧା ମୃଦୁ ତୈଥିଲେଣ “ ହେଲେ ହେଲେ—ଏକ  
ଲୋକରେଣ୍ଟ ସଂଦର୍ଭୀ  
ଦୁଇ— ଦିନ ଅନ୍ଧ ମୃଦୁ  
ନେଇପାଇଁ ନେଇପାଇଁ ନେଇପାଇଁ କିନ୍ତୁ ହେଲେ—

I thought I would make an end of them;  
I would make their memory cease from among us.  
Were it not that I dreaded the enemy's power,  
Lest their adversaries should misdeem,  
Lest they should say: Our hand is exalted,  
And not the Lord hath wrought all this.

Dent 32 26-27

That is why Moses made use of this same argument in his prayer: "Then the nations who have heard Thy fame will say: It was because the Lord was powerless to bring the people to the land which He promised them that he slaughtered them in the wilderness". The Lord, Blessed be He acknowledged the force of this argument in: "The Lord said, I forgive them, according to your word". The force of this argument is not in God's display of His power for the benefit of His enemies; for all the nations put together mean nothing to Him. But we must bear in mind that the Almighty created man to acknowledge and give thanks to His name, giving them free choice to do evil or good. When mankind fell into sin, only this one people (Israel) remained to publicise His name... Should the memory of Israel be forgotten, so would the peoples forget His signs and wonders and this would utterly defeat the purpose of creation. No one would survive who would know Him, only those provoking Him to anger. The will that was behind creation therefore justified the raising up of an eternal people, close to Him, knowing Him more than all the peoples.

In Ramban's view therefore the question that springs to mind (formulated in *Akedat Yizhak* and by Abravanel): What does it matter to God what people say? arises from a misconception of His relationship to the world. Those who ask the question only see one side of Him — His transcendence and distance. But they forget

His other aspect — His immanence and close involvement with humanity.

These twin attributes of God are projected in a dictum of R. Yohanan in the Talmud (Megillah 31a):

Said R. Yohanan: Wherever you find the power of the Holy One Blessed be He there you find His humility. This twin role is recorded in the Law, duplicated in the Prophets and triplicated in the Writings. Recorded in the Law (Deut. 10, 17): "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords" followed by (v. 18): "He secures justice for widows and orphans and loves the stranger giving him food and clothing". Triplicated in the Prophets (Isa. 57, 15): "For thus speaks the High and Exalted One whose name is holy who lives forever: I dwell in a high and holy place" followed by "with him, who is broken and humble in spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, to revive the courage of the simple".

The above exposition illustrates the idea that God's transcendence does not contradict His immanence. He is both far (not a part of the world in contradistinction to heathen conceptions) and near, not indifferent to human welfare but involved in giving the world He created for His glory, direction. Moses' reference to Egyptian reaction: "Why let the Egyptians say: So He meant evil when He took them out . . ." was based on the assumption that God takes an interest in His world. He is, so to speak, concerned for His good name. Any act of His or of His creatures, must be weighed up in the perspective of its positive impact on the world, as consecrating His name (*kiddush ha-shem*) or, God forbid, desecrating it (*hilul ha-shem*), obstructing the cause of justice and moral improvement.

What educational purpose could retribution, however just in itself serve, if it was regarded as a purely vindictive act? Far from educating and promoting the cause of justice it would bring the Divine name into disrepute.

Were the Egyptians allowed to conclude that God had liberated His people simply to kill them off in the wilderness, the peoples of the world would be fortified in their idolatrous misconceptions. The cause of falsehood would be promoted and that of truth receive a setback. In these circumstances Divine retribution had to be suspended, since it would not further the Divine plan which is, no more and no less, the sanctification of His Name in the world.

Accordingly Moses parried the Divine call:

— — אָנֹךְ תְּבִרֵךְ מִנְחָה — —

... to vent My anger on them; and put an end to them....

with:

לְאַתָּה יְמִינָה נְאָמָר :  
תְּבִרֵךְ מִנְחָה אֲנָשִׁים  
וְאֶתְנָחַד אֶתְנָחַד  
— — אָנֹךְ תְּבִרֵךְ מִנְחָה — —

Why let the Egyptians say:  
So He meant evil when He took them out — to kill them in the mountains and wipe them off the face of the earth ...

— How trenchant is the Egyptian taunt: God had not brought them out of Egypt to deliver them from all evil. On the contrary: but rather to invite them into "evil". The end-product of Exodus was not "to serve God on this mountain" but rather: "to kill them in the mountains".

The "on the mountains" reference evokes the association of complete abandonment, "abandoned to the birds and beasts as dung on the ground" (Alshikh<sup>17</sup>).

The two rhetorical questions beginning *lamah* referring to the immediate past and future are followed by petitions that speak of the present but evoke the distant past:

לְעַזְבֵּן צָהָרָה צָהָרָה צָהָרָה בָּבָשׂ

Turn from Thy fierce anger and repent of the evil against Thy people.

The theme of "Thy people" recurs, emphasised by its final position and riming echo. The two previously mentioned motifs of *haron*—of "fierce anger" and *ha-ra'ah* "evil" are summed up here.

Moses continued his defence of Israel's case in a point-by-point echo of the very words used by the Almighty in His opening speech of prosecution: The Lord had then promised Moses: "I shall make a great nation out of thee". They are the very words uttered by God in His first blessing of promise to Abraham:

לְאַתָּה נְאָמָר  
— — אָנֹךְ תְּבִרֵךְ מִנְחָה — —

I shall make a great nation out of thee<sup>18</sup>  
and bless thee and make thy name great.

(Gen. 12, 2)

Moses rejected the proposal to make a fresh start from him by reminding God of His promise to the Patriarchs. In one verse he spelt out all the blessings — of descendants and homeland beginning with the words: "to whom Thou didst swear by Thy own self (echoing "by My own self I swear" (Gen 22, 16) and ending with: "forever" (echoing "to thy descendants for-ever" (ibid. 13, 15)). The only lexical item not borrowed from the Patriarchal blessing is *nahai* "possess" or "inherit". Moses employed it at the end of all his petitions (34, 9). Buber made this comment on it:

The same lexical item *n̄ h l* with which Moses' first speech of intercession concludes, recurs in the identical verbal construction as the final refrain, (though in a different connotation) in the last one (34, 9): *u-nehalimnu*. The Land as an inheritance of the people and the People as an inheritance of God — both were promised for ever.

The verse marking the end of the dialogue between God and Moses reflects in its shift in the person of the pronoun the change of attitude to Israel:

לְעֹלָה תְּשִׁיבֵנִי אֱלֹהִים כְּבָרֶךָ יְהוָה

**So the Lord repented of the evil with which He had threatened His people.** (32, 14)

Those who had been described in the Divine message of retribution as "thy people" (v. 7) i.e. Moses' people, and subsequently during a stage of further estrangement (v. 9) as "this people" reverted to becoming "His people" once again.

At the end of our chapter the scene once again shifts "skyward" to the top of the mountain after Moses had finished his business "down there". Once again Moses resorted to prayer<sup>19</sup>, a step which he first announced to the people:

אֱלֹהִים כְּבָרֶךָ יְהוָה לְעֹלָה תְּשִׁיבֵנִי  
אֱלֹהִים כְּבָרֶךָ יְהוָה לְעֹלָה תְּשִׁיבֵנִי  
אֱלֹהִים כְּבָרֶךָ יְהוָה לְעֹלָה תְּשִׁיבֵנִי  
אֱלֹהִים כְּבָרֶךָ יְהוָה לְעֹלָה תְּשִׁיבֵנִי.

The next day Moses said to the people:  
You have committed a great sin.  
I shall now go up to the Lord,  
perhaps I may be able to obtain pardon for your sin.

(32, 30)

It may well be asked: Had not he already obtained that pardon in response to his first prayer of intercession? Here is Abravanel's formulation of this difficulty:

The question involves Moses' petition: "O hear me! This people has committed a great sin . . ." Surely Moses had begged forgiveness for the sin of the calf before he came down the mountain. There it is written that: "the Lord repented of the evil with which He had threatened His people". Since He had in so many words already relented, what need was there for Moses to petition the Lord and ask Him whether He forgave them or not . . .?

The answer lies in the stage-by-stage character of Moses' intercession. His first prayer was directed against the Divine sentence of total destruction, of: "I shall make an end of them". It succeeded in averting that decree. But though those actually involved in worshipping the calf received their deserts, the fate of the rest of the people, those who had stood by without so much as a protest had not been decided. We hear nothing about whether they had been pardoned, whether they would be permitted to enter the promised land under Divine protection. Moses therefore made a second appeal for mercy to God.

This time he referred to them as "this people", not in any derogatory sense as employed by God in the opening sentence of His message: "I have seen this people" (v. 9). Moses referred to them compassionately as he did to Aaron (32, 21) when he said: "What has this people done to thee?" — in the sense of this unhappy, misled people who sinned through lack of understanding.

The first verse of this prayer prompts the following question. Was Moses, in asking for pardon, right in pointing an accusing finger at Israel. The answer lies in the opening word *ana* ["O hear me" NEB; "alas" NJB; "Oh" JB]. This word marks the utterance as a confession, not an accusation. It was fixed as the formula used by the High Priest in making the annual confession on Yom Kippur<sup>20</sup>. Moses repeated the opening word of the Divine denun-

ciation *ve-ata* "now therefore" (in "now therefore let Me alone") in introducing his request for pardon.

The paradoxical conclusion that this *ve-ata* leads to is worthy of note. Just because this people had sinned it was up to the Almighty to forgive them. The same apparent *non-sequitur* characterises Moses' parting words of intercession:

— — — יְהִי־זָהָב אֶל־עַמּוֹת־עֲדָת

for it is a stiff-necked people; pardon therefore  
our iniquity and our sin.

(34, 9)

(Ibn Ezra was certainly justified [see p. 235] in rejecting Gikatilla and Ibn Janah's reading of *ki* as "though" rather than as a connective of cause in the sense of "because"\*\*).

\* Translator's Note:

None of the current English versions reproduce Ibn Ezra's reading. The nearest is the JB and AV "for it is a stiff-necked people *and* pardon our iniquity" which, however, in its indiscriminate rendering of the Hebrew connective *vay* by "and" fails to provide any meaning relationship between the "therefore". The causative link could equally be reproduced by substituting "because" or "since" for *ki* which I have left as "for". Both NEB and NJB accept the reading rejected by Ibn Ezra, the former: "However stubborn a people they are, forgive them..." the latter: "Stiff-necked though this people be, pardon our iniquity . . ." In the passage from Psalms it is the NEB that allows a causative reading and the JB and AV which explicitly disallow such a reading, regarding both arms of the couplet as consecutive. Cf.:  
The tale of iniquities is too heavy for me.  
As for our transgressions, Thou wilt pardon them.

(JB)

Our sins are too heavy for me  
only Thou canst blot them out

(NEB)

I have therefore adopted the NEB syntax which supports a causative reading: [our sins are too heavy for me]S<sub>1</sub> causative link "therefore" "because of that" [only Thou canst blot them out]S<sub>2</sub>.

In other words, the conclusion is that since the people are stubborn we have no alternative except to depend on Thy pardon. The same idea is contained in the following passage:

לֵאמֹר תְּמֻנָּה גָּדוֹלָה מִשְׁפָּטְךָ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

The tale of iniquities is too heavy for me  
(Therefore) only Thou canst blot them out\*.

(Psalms 65, 4)

Moses following his line of argument continues:

גְּדוֹלָה מִשְׁפָּטְךָ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

Now, therefore, if Thou wilt forgive their sin,  
and if not blot me, I pray, from Thy book which  
Thou hast written.

The reading of this verse is a matter of dispute between our commentators at two levels — the syntactic and semantic.

First the syntactic problem:

There are two clauses of condition — a negative and positive respectively: '*im tissa* "if Thou will forgive" and *ve-im ayin* "and if not" with one matrix sentence: 'blot me, I pray, . . .' There are two possible readings. Some regard the verse as elliptical — an example of one of the 32 rules of rabbinic exegesis or *middot* (mida no. 9 "mi-derekh kezarah"). The matrix of the first conditional clause has been omitted since it is understood. Since Moses was only concerned with the second possibility, he shortcircuited, as it were, the first in order to get on with outlining the second.

Rashi, Ramban and many later commentators (including gentile scholars) adopt this approach:

בְּרֹא בְּרֹא קָרֵן וְכַנְּסָה מִתְּחָרֶה. וְהַמִּקְרָא קָרְבָּן לְךָ – אַתָּה אֲנָה – מִתְּחָרֶה. וְהַמִּקְרָא קָרְבָּן לְךָ – אַתָּה אֲנָה – מִתְּחָרֶה...

... Well and good; then I do not say to you "blot me out". But if not (i.e. otherwise) blot me out. This is an elliptical text of which there are many in the Torah<sup>21</sup>. (Rashi)

On the other hand, some commentators find nothing elliptical in the text. It has to be read, as it stands, as comprising two contrastive conditional clauses followed by the common matrix, as if to say: whatever the case, whether the answer is in the affirmative or negative, blot me out. But here the syntax can support various readings. Here are two proposals:

In my opinion the text is not elliptical. Rather is it implied that Moses was sick of his life and of leading the people — cf. (Num. 11, 15): "Kill me outright... and let me not see my wretchedness." He therefore begged on this occasion: whether You forgive their sin or not, whatever Your decision "blot me out of Thy book" — i.e. he begged for death — to be erased from the book of life wherein is recorded before Him "all who are inscribed for life" (the figure is taken from Isaiah 4, 3), since he had no desire to go on living any more.

(Abraavanel)  
Whether You are agreeable or not to forgiving their sin, blot out my good deeds from Your book and credit them to their account so that they will earn forgiveness.

In Abraavanel's view the verse expresses Moses' despair, a reading not warranted by the general context. It seems inconceivable that, having already succeeded through his initial prayer in averting the decree of total destruction, that Moses should have lost heart just as he was about to achieve for his people a further concession: pardon for their sin. What is more, he goes down on record after that as fighting for their right to the land of promise and their continued progress towards it under Divine leadership. The plea to be released by death from his responsibilities, even in the event of his prayers on behalf of Israel being accepted, does not at all

accord with the tenor of the narrative. Least of all does it fit in with Moses' dedicated efforts to clear the people of sin and sinners.

Sforno's explication which is based on the same syntactical reading as Abraavanel, is much more in keeping with Moses' mood, as indicated by the general context. Far from being indifferent to the outcome of his intercession Moses begged for his merits to be credited to Israel's account. In contradistinction to Abraavanel's interpretation, Moses' petition: "Blot me, I pray", constituted an unselfish offer of help to Israel. But both explications are based on shaky syntactical foundations. Stylistically, two parallel conditions that share one common result, attached to a single matrix sentence, are usually in Biblical Hebrew not joined by the conjunctive *vav* ("and") as here (*im... ve-im*). The insertion of the *vav* indicates that we have here two separate and consecutive complex sentences of condition.

Let us therefore revert to the first reading of our text (fol. Rashi Ramban *et al.*) and attempt to explicate the term "Thy book".

Rashi comments:

מִכְלָל הַתּוֹרָה בְּלָהָר, שֶׁאָמַר צְלִי, שֶׁאָמַר צְלִי. בְּקָרְבָּן לְךָ – אַתָּה אֲנָה – מִתְּחָרֶה.

"Blot me out from Thy book". From the whole Torah, that they should not say of me that I was not sufficiently worthy to intercede for them.

The Midrash understands it, too, to refer to the Torah:

אָמַר לְפָנֵי הַקָּבָבָה: כָּל הַתּוֹרָה שָׁוֹת – לְהָאָדָם – אֶל מְלֵאָתָה: תְּבִנֵּה אֶל בְּנֵי שְׂעִיר, "אָמַר אֶל בְּנֵי שְׂעִיר"; אֶת בְּנֵי שְׂעִיר אֶל אֶחָד: "מִתְּחָרֶה אֲנָה מִסְמְךָ".

Moses thus addressed the Holy One Blessed be He:  
The whole Torah that Thou didst give — is full of me: "The Lord spoke to Moses saying: Speak to the children of Israel", "Command the children of Israel", "Say to the children of Israel". If there is to be an end of

them, what role is left for me in Thy Torah? Accordingly he petitioned: "Blot me, I pray, from Thy book".

(Shemot Rabbah 47, 9)

**Avraham b. Ha-rambam made a similar point in the course of rejecting an alternative explication:**

Some suggest that the *book* is the same as that referred to in Malachi (3, 16): "there was written before Him a *book of remembrance* for those that feared the Lord and kept His name in mind".

Others suggest that it alludes to the Sefer Torah as if this was Moses' reply to God's proposal to "make thee into a great nation". Moses implied: if You forgive them and allow them to survive as a community obedient to Your Torah, then let my memory and the story of my mission to them be preserved in Your Torah. But if You have resolved to destroy them, because of what may come of them, then do not preserve my memory in Your Torah by charging me with a mission to anyone besides them as You have proposed in the words: "I shall make thee into a great nation".

This reading is, in my opinion, the most plausible and is supported by the qualifying clause of: "which Thou hast written".

The foregoing three explications, though variously motivated, take the "book" to be the Torah. One objection to them that has been advanced is that the Torah was not completed till the end of their forty years wandering. But this is based on a superficial over-literal understanding of the text. Maharal gives eloquent expression to its real, inner significance:

That Torah (which was not actually complete till the expiry of 40 years) was indeed written by Moses. The text however does not state: "which I have written"; but: "which Thou hast written" referring to the Torah that had been written from time immemorial — black fire on white.\*

\* Translator's Note:

In the sense of the timeless message of Torah which had always existed, as it were, in the Divine mind, as implicit in the plan of Creation; irrespective of its actual inscription in a parchment scroll at a particular point of time. Cf.

Nevertheless it is difficult to accept this view of the meaning of "Thy" book as expressing the plain sense of the text. Nowhere else do we find that the Torah is referred to as God's book. Moreover such a reading does not fit in with God's reply to the next verse. For this very reason Ramban rejected it:

What in that case, is the point of the Divine reply: "whoever has sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book"? There was no other to blot out of His book.

In other words, were there any others who had sinned inscribed in the Torah on a par with Moses?

Ramban accordingly was followed by many other commentators in understanding "Thy book" in the sense of the "Book of Life" *sefer ha-hayyim*, basing himself on the text in Isaiah (4, 3): "all who are inscribed for life"<sup>22</sup>. This idea goes back to our Sages:

רבנן רשותה לא אורה :  
ובן תמצא משות והבבאים אין לך מפיך אשר כתבתך ...  
"עוזה אם מוחץ ואם אמן מוחץ לא שאלתך כי רודר הוא אביך ואממך ?" (שמאלה ב, י) : "תנו לנו אביך ואממך בצד ימין תני יידך בצד ימין אביך". לא כל מוקט מהו מוציא :

So you find that Moses and the Prophets were prepared to give their lives for Israel. Moses in saying: "now if you forgive their sin, — and if not, blot me, I pray, from Thy book which Thou hast written" ... David — what did he say? "Look, it is I who have sinned and done wrong. But these sheep what have they done? Let Thy hand, I pray, be against me and my father's house". (II Sam. 24, 17). So you see everywhere without exception Moses and the Prophets were prepared to give their lives for Israel.

(Mekhilta Bo 4)

my introduction: Sabbath Chapters of Talmud, Elizur, XIII-XIV, Jerusalem 1972. Cf. the ambiguity of proper names which may refer to the person or his actual body. Cf. pp. 131-132, James D. McCawley, 'The Role of Semantics in a Grammar' in Bach and Harms: Universals in Linguistic Theory, which discusses the extension of meaning from mind to body in the context of language universals and gives references to a number of studies on the subject.

Saadiva Gaon takes the same name

"Blot me I pray, from Thy book". I'd rather die than be a witness to Israel's dire suffering.

Comments to Lab 8251 Test 5

This is the interpretation followed by most of our commentators. Moses' conduct here has been compared with that of other Hebrew prophets who likewise were prepared to die rather than witness the sufferings of Israel. But the Zohar paints a picture of a sliding scale of self-sacrifice with Moses at the top of the ladder, surpassing such Biblical heroes as Noah and Abraham to whom God has similarly manifested Himself in his role of passing judgement on the world.

"And Abraham drew near and said, wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" (Genesis 18, 23) — said R. Yehudai: Who hath seen a father as compassionate as Abraham? Come and see: Regarding Noah it is stated (6, 13): "And God said to Noah, the end of all flesh is come"

"Blot me I pray, from Thy book". I'd rather die than be a witness to Israel's dire suffering.

before Me; . . . and behold I will destroy them from the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood . . .". And Noah held his peace and said naught, neither did he intercede. Whereas Abraham, as soon as the Holy One Blessed be He said to him: "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now and see . . ." Immediately, as it is stated, "and Abraham drew near and said: Wilt Thou indeed do this?"

Thus there was no one prepared to protect his generation to the extent that Moses did. He only is rightly called the faithful shepherd.

The Lord answered Moses' prayer, likewise opening with the word *ve-attah* ("and now").

וְלֹא תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת־עֲבָדֶיךָ וְאֶת־מִצְרָיִם אֲלֵיכָם כַּאֲשֶׁר־בְּרִית־יְהוָה  
בָּרָא לְךָ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּצִדְקָה וְבְּמִשְׁפָּט.

Subsequently, after Moses had rejected any suggestion of separating his personal destiny from that of the people, and had recalled in support of his stance the covenant with the Patriarchs, came the reply which once again united Moses with Israel and repeated the promise made to their forefathers:

ଅକ୍ଷଳ ପରିଦ୍ୱାରା ଆଶିନ୍ତା ହେଉଥିଲା

וְיָשַׁבְתָּה תְּמִימָד בְּאֶרְצֵךְ לֹא־יָצַק תְּמִימָד  
וְלֹא־יָצַק תְּמִימָד בְּאֶרְצֵךְ לֹא־יָצַק תְּמִימָד

Come, go up from here, you and the people  
you have brought up from the land of Egypt,  
to the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,  
saying, to your descendants will I give it. (33, 1)

## Questions for Further Study:

## 1. Compare:

*Exodus 32**Num. 14*

(7) The Lord said to Moses  
Go, get down for *thy people*  
have corrupted themselves

(11) The Lord spoke to Moses  
How long will *this people*  
treat Me with contempt

(9) The Lord said to Moses,  
I have considered *this people*  
and see they are a stubborn

(13) Moses said to the Lord,  
Now the Egyptians have  
heard that Thou didst bring  
up *the people*  
with Thy might from  
their midst

(11) But Moses sought to placate  
the Lord . . .  
Why O Lord shouldst Thou  
vent Thy anger on *Thy people*  
whom Thou didst bring out  
of the land of Egypt  
with great power and a  
strong hand?

(14) And they will tell the  
inhabitants of this land  
They have heard that  
Thou art the Lord in the  
midst of *this people*

- (12) Why let the Egyptians say,  
So He meant evil when He  
took them out — to kill  
them in the mountains . . .  
Turn from Thy fierce anger  
And repent of the evil  
against *Thy people*  
(14) So the Lord repented of the  
evil  
with which He threatened  
*His people*
- (15) If then Thou dost kill  
*this people* to a man  
then the nations who  
heard of Thy  
fame, shall say as fol-  
lows:  
(16) The Lord could not  
bring *this people*  
to the land which He  
promised them on oath,  
therefore He slaughtered  
them in the wilderness  
(19) Forgive, I beseech thee,  
forgive the iniquity of  
*this people* as befits Thy  
great loving kindness  
and as Thou hast borne  
with *this people* from  
Egypt till now.
- Compare the prayer of Moses in the wilderness (Num. 14, 13-19) with his intercession after the sin of the calf (32, 11-13).
- (a) Explain what is common to both and in what way they differ.  
(b) Try to explain the variations in terms of the difference in the character of the sin involved there and here.
2. For the shift from "My people" to "thy people" cf. Jeremiah 5:  
Behold I shall make My words a fire in thy mouth and *this people* for wood and it shall consume them (verse 14).  
But *this people* has a rebellious and defiant heart, rebellious they have been and gone away (verse 23).  
For among *My people* there are wicked men (verse 26).  
Prophets prophesy lies and priests rule at their back and *My people* love to have it so (verse 31).



"Go, get down". Why? "Because thy people have corrupted themselves". He said to him: Since they have sinned, both you and they suffer a descent.

<sup>5</sup> Rashi cites a metaphorical reading from the Midrash only when he feels that the text justifies it. He did not cite all sources referred to in footnote 3. In our verse he cited the Midrash on account of the anomalous duplicated verbs of movement: "go", "get down". Or Ha-hayim comments on this:

The double verbs "go", "get down" reinforce each other. The first one refers to bodily movement that he should go. The second implies that he should get down from his pedestal. Had "go down" *red* only appeared in the text, we would have been right to understand it in a physical sense of descent, since he was on the mountain.

<sup>6</sup> Buber in his essay *Ha-milah Ha-manhah Ve-av-hazurah Shel Ha-ne'um* ("The motif-word and archetypal pattern of the dialogue) analyses the recurrence of this lexical item in the dialogue between Moses and God that punctuates chaps. 32-33-34 revealing delicate insights only some of which have been previously referred to in our ancient commentators. See: Darko shel Mikra, pp. 300-307.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Hosea 1, 9: "You are not My people".

<sup>8</sup> Rambam's son here alludes to other Midrashim followed by Rashi too. "Thy people" is understood to refer to the "mixed multitude" whom Moses, on his own initiative, took along with him, without consulting the Divine Presence and "it was they who behaved corruptly and corrupted others". Rashi's comments to the words *shikhet amkha* ("thy people have corrupted themselves") accord with his whole conception of the sin of the calf. He maintained that it was not the Israelites who took the initiative and mobbed Aaron but: "the mixed multitude who came up with them from Egypt. It was they who mobbed Aaron. They made him make it and then misled Israel into worshipping it" (Rashi on verse 4). Rambam's son *et al* rejected this approach.

<sup>9</sup> The tradition that the Israelites worshipped idols in Egypt finds support from Ezekiel 20, 7.

<sup>10</sup> The insertion of *va-yomer* (and-he-said) in a dialogue usually implies a change of speaker. But there are not infrequent examples in Scripture where two successive utterances of the same speakers are both prefaced by *va-yomer*. In such case the second *va-yomer* implies a pause, perhaps the expectation of a response from the addressee, an expectation unfulfilled or expressed by silence, look or gesture on his part. Sometimes the speaker pauses to give the listener time to grasp his words, think them over. Once he has given him time the speaker resumes the thread of his locution, a feature

expressed by *va-yomer*. See *supra*, pp. 61-62 question 3. Cf. Gen. 31, 27-28; Num. 32, 2-5; I Sam. 17, 34-37; 2 Kings 6, 26-28 etc. See also my: Studies in Genesis, p. 450, footnote 7.

<sup>11</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 300.

<sup>12</sup> Another Midrash emphasises the fact that God never contemplated their total destruction. It expounds the parallel text in Deut. (9, 14): "Let Me be"; "But the Lord had made no threat to blot out the name of Israel" (2 Kings 14, 27) — Said R. Aḥa in the name of R. Yonatan of Bet Guvrin: But we do find that God made such a threat in the case of the Calf and the Spies. Yet the text reads: "But the Lord had made no threat to blot out!" R. Levi retorted: since He said to Moses (Deut. 9, 14): "Let Me be" giving him an opening to petition for mercy, the text could rightly state — "But the Lord had made no threat to blot out the name of Israel!"

<sup>13</sup> Berakhot 34a.

<sup>14</sup> Regarding Moses' sense of grievance see *supra*, pp. 106 ff. on the text: "Why hast Thou brought misfortune on this people?" Gideon too questioned Divine justice employing the Hebrew interrogative *lamah* "Why?": "But, pray my Lord, if the Lord is really with us, why has all this happened to us? What has become of all those wonderful deeds of His?" It has been suggested that the reason why Gideon was praised rather than condemned for this outburst was because "he pleaded the cause of Israel". He was therefore told: "Go use this strength of yours to free Israel" — this strength through your demanding their rights of Me!

<sup>15</sup> So Cassuto "Let not Thy work, pray, Thou hast wrought by Thy power and mind be in vain". Commentary to Exodus, p. 416.

<sup>16</sup> See in particular Rashi on Exodus 6, 2 s.v. *ani ha-shem* ("I am the Lord").

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Isa. 14, 25: "I will break the Assyrian in My own land and trample him underfoot upon My own mountains"; Ezekiel 32, 5: "I will lay your flesh upon the mountains"; ibid. 39, 14: "on the mountains of Israel you shall fall . . . I will give you as food to the birds of prey and the wild beasts".

<sup>18</sup> The reason for the slight variation between the two texts, the pronominal object in the first case being separated (*ve-e'asəh otekhə*) and in the second affixed to the verb (*ve-e'asət'hə*) is obvious. In our verse it is separated from the verb in deliberate contrast to the preceding verb (*ya-'akhaləm*) "and destroy them (*ve-e'asəh otekhə*) and make you (separately) . . .". Malbim formulated the difference between the implications of the free and bound pronominal object in Scripture as a rule of interpretation (rule 150 in: *Ayelet Ha-shahar*):

The pronominal object of the verb can be marked in two different ways:

sometimes by the pronominal bound affix alone as in *ve-hikrivo* (and-brought-near) *u-sheha-to* (and-slaughter-it), *ve-hikir-am* (and-burn-them), at others by the free form with *er*: *ve-shahat oto; ve-hikrivo et;* *ve-hikrir otor.* Whoever believes in the sanctity of our Torah and the glory of the Holy Tongue will realise that this cannot be a matter of chance, a mere writer's whim. Why should he insert the additional item *et*, when the same effect could be achieved by the *o* affix?

Our Sages studied the matter closely and determined the appropriate and adequate explanation of this variation. Their exposition hinges on the following rule: Where the pronominal object is unmarked then the affix suffices. Where it is marked then the free *et* formative is used. It marks (i) that the range of the verb is co-extensive with the object as a whole and not with part of it (ii) that the verb is restricted exclusively to this particular object and to no other besides.

19 Ramban and Ibn Ezra however disagree as to whether two separate prayers of intercession are involved, one uttered prior to his descent from the mountain and the other after he had punished the sinners when he went again up the mountain (Ramban) or whether he uttered all the prayers when he returned from the camp (Ibn Ezra). Ibn Ezra argues: "it is inconceivable that Moses should have interceded on behalf of Israel with the idol still in their midst and not waited till they had banished it".

The first prayer was inserted out of its time sequence only because of the "leave-me" utterance of God which served as the opening for Moses to intercede. "There is no time-order in the Torah". But Ramban's view seems to us to be more plausible. He insists that the prayers follow the time sequence. See Ramban on verse 11 s.v. *lomah ha-shem* from *ve-hatefiah ha-zot . . . zehu seder nakhon be-farashiot ha-eileh.*

20 Cf. — Nehemiah 1, 5-6; Daniel 9, 4-5 and Sifra (Aharei Mot): Verbal Confession. How did he confess? "Alas, O Lord, I have sinned, I have transgressed". In the Gemara (Yoma 57a): Whence that the confession starts with *Ana*? ("Alas"). Here "atonement" is mentioned and so it is at Horeb (at the Calf — Rashi). Just as there it begins with *Ana*, so here with *Ana*.

The confessional prayer *Ashamnu* always begins with *Ana* in the Sephardi liturgical rite. The Ashkenazi rite has a number of variations.

Bahya in his Torah commentary observes:

Know that worshippers in the synagogue use the word *Ana* in combination with the name of God *Ana ha-shem*. Perhaps Moses refrained from so doing because he was ashamed to utter the special name by which the Torah was given, since Israel had sinned therewith.

21 The stylistics scholar Koenig in *Stilistik, Rhetorik, Poetik* quotes a parallel to our verse from 1 Samuel 12, 14-15. There too he finds the affirmative conditional sentence elliptical — the matrix being omitted because it was obvious and because the speaker focussed on transmitting the information contained in the matrix of the negative conditional sentence:

(A) (i) If you will fear the Lord,

and serve Him

and listen to His voice

and not rebel against the word of the Lord  
and both you and the king who rules over you  
will be behind the Lord your God

(ii) — — — — —

(B) (i) But if you do not listen to the voice of the Lord  
and rebel against the word of the Lord

(ii) *The hand of the Lord will be against you and  
your fathers.*

Ibn Janah supported the elliptic reading (Rikmah; Sha'ar 25) though the text actually does not necessitate such a reading and can quite plausibly be read with the break in the condition and the matrix sentence A(iii) beginning: "and both you and the king" as Rashi *ad loc.* observes in his paraphrase of that sentence: "then you will be established forever". There are many single conditions (without the converse or negation being stated, as in the condition of the sons of Reuben and Gad, Num. 32, 20-24) which leave the consequence or matrix sentence understood as in 2 Sam. 5; Psalms 27, 13; Dan. 3, 15; 1 Chron. 4, 10 (cited in Rikmah) etc.

22 Shadal explains *ad loc.*: "It is a figure of speech referring to all those who are decreed to live". A more obvious support for understanding "Thy book" as the book of life, I find in Psalms 69, 29: "let them be blotted out from the book of life and not be enrolled among the righteous", and Psalms 139, 16: "and in Thy book they are all recorded".

words of the same speaker are punctuated by another *va-yomer* "and he said", indicating nothing more than an expectant or otherwise significant pause in the utterance. Joshua opened by voicing his misgivings at the sound emanating from the camp. Perhaps enemies were attacking the camp. He waited for Moses' reply. But Moses kept silent. Joshua strained his ear to catch the sounds issuing from the camp and corrected his first impression and as if half-thinking aloud said: "Well it's not this, and not the other; it is evidently that". Once again Moses did not react, neither confirming nor denying his conclusions but rather keeping the bitterness of his anger to himself.

Perhaps this reading provides the answer too to another difficulty often aired, most recently in Ha'amek Davar s.v. *va-yishma yehoshua'* "when Joshua heard":

This passage seems entirely irrelevant to the story of the calf.

Why then was it inserted?

It constitutes a kind of intermezzo before the climax, an indication of Moses' inner suffering, shock and indignation, his inability to find words to express his feelings. He could find no time to pay attention to the words of his loyal disciple who had waited patiently for him, for forty days at the foot of the mountain. Moses did not turn to him or reply to him. He went his way wrapped in silence, advancing forward to the task ahead — of meting out judgement on the sinners.

### THE BREAKING OF THE TABLETS

תְּבַשֵּׂלֶם אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה בְּרַב שְׁאָלָה  
בְּרַב נְזֹבֶל אֲלֹהִים  
בְּרַב מְלֹאָה  
בְּרַב גְּלֹעָד  
בְּרַב מְלֹאָה  
בְּרַב מְלֹאָה.

And it came to pass as he approached the camp  
and saw the calf and dancing,

that Moses' anger burned  
and he hurled the tablets from his hands  
and shattered them at the foot of the mountain.

(32, 19)

Our commentators dealt with the many difficulties posed by this passage. We shall choose two of them: one relating to the first half, the other to the second.

A.

Moses' "anger burned". He had just been engaged in a confrontation with God in an attempt to placate His anger, had questioned His very right to be angry and finally implored Him to "turn from Thy fierce anger". Now *he* was angry. There is no contradiction. Moses' duty as a prophet was to intercede for the people (cf. Gen. 20, 7 "for he is a prophet and will pray for you"). But as the man of God it was his duty, too, to imitate God. What aroused His ire should displease him too.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See on this the essays of M. Weiss: "Meleket Ha-sippur Ba-mikra", *Hamanold*, Vol. 2, 1962, pp. 402–406. In greater detail in "Weiteres über die Bauformen des Erzählens in der Bibel", *Biblica* vol. 46, 1965, pp. 181–206.

<sup>2</sup> According to Cassuto the anomalous spelling of *be-re-o* "as they shouted" was designed as a word-play to evoke the *be-ra-ah* ("with evil") in verse 12, i.e. not only were they shouting shouts of exultation but their shouting boded no good but spelt evil.

<sup>3</sup> See *supra*, p. 563.

But the real question is not why Moses was angry at all, but why he was angry at that particular moment, on approaching the camp and witnessing the scene. Surely it had all been depicted for him quite clearly by the Almighty:

...ךְיָא נָשָׁ...  
...ךְיָא נָשָׁ...  
שְׂרֵךְ מִנְחָרֶת  
שְׂרֵךְ מִנְחָרֶת  
שְׂרֵךְ מִנְחָרֶת  
שְׂרֵךְ מִנְחָרֶת  
...ךְיָא נָשָׁ...  
...ךְיָא נָשָׁ...

Thy people have corrupted themselves . . .

Thy have turned aside from the way . . .

They have made themselves a molten calf  
prostrated themselves to it  
sacrificed to it

And they have said: These are thy gods . . .

(32, 7-8)

What new thing had he witnessed? Why did his anger burn just now? This question is put to good dramatic effect in the Midrash by being put in the mouth of God:

תְּמִימָה כַּי תְּזַקֵּעַ בְּגַלְוֹתָה בְּגַלְוֹתָה  
בְּגַלְוֹתָה אֲלֵהֶת הַמֹּתָה וְאֶת הַעֲלָתָה –  
שְׁמַרְבָּר: "וְרֹא אֲשֶׁר קָרְבָּה: הַלְאֵת  
אָמַר לוֹ תְּקַבֵּה: הַלְאֵת מִנְחָתָה, לְפָנֶיךָ...  
...מִנְחָתָה..."  
Moses descended from the heavens holding the tablets. Whence that he did not break them until he actually saw with his own eyes (what was happening)? From the text: "It came to pass that as he approached the camp and saw the calf", that moment "Moses' anger burned". Said the Holy One Blessed be He: Moses, didn't you take My word for it that they had made a calf?

(Devarin Rabbai)

The answers given by commentators to the problem can be said to represent one of two approaches. Some suggest that what Moses

saw down below did not completely tally with what God had told him when he was still on top of the mountain. The "dancing" was an item missing from the earlier Divine "preview". This fact would seem to be syntactically marked too.

The verb "saw" *"va-yar"* has two conjoined objects "calf" and "dancing". But oddly, the first is specified: "the calf" (*ha'-eget*); the second is unspecified: *u-meholot* (and dancing). The deictive is not repeated in the second nounphrase as is normal in Hebrew usage. Ibn Ezra solves this characteristically<sup>1</sup> by indicating that the second deictive is understood, the first one "carrying over to the other as well". Such a deletion or "extension of the first deictive to act for the second or even third" calls for no other exposition, in Ibn Ezra's view.

But he fails to explain why the Torah chose to resort to this deletion or extension just here. Why did not the text repeat the definite article before the second object, as is more usual? The difficulty is at once resolved if we accept that it reflects the fact that the calf was known from God's message to him on the mount. He saw *the* calf: the one that God had told him about beforehand. But he saw dancing for the first time.

Other commentators suggest that it was this discrepancy between what he had been told and what he saw there and then that sparked his anger, thus answering our question earlier.

The essence of Divine worship is to perform it with joy and a glad heart. By the same token, for those who transgress His will, hope remains for the one who sins and grieves over it, to repent and make amends. But he who revels in his iniquity, is, God forbid, a hopeless case. The Almighty did not tell Moses that they were in addition enjoying themselves. He was therefore not all that angry. But when he saw the calf and dancing — that they were actually enjoying it too — then his anger burned.

(Alshikht)

Sforno put the same point more briefly:

"And the two tablets of testimony in his hand". He thought that when he reached them they would have already repented of their deed, and if not,

He would break the tablets in front of them in order to stir them to remorse. "And he saw the calf and dancing". Then he saw that they were revelling in their iniquity cf.: "when thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest" (Jeremiah 9, 15). It was this that aroused Moses' anger and made him despair of being able to remedy matters and spur them to repent and become worthy of the tablets.

In other words, it was not the making of the calf that led to his anger — that was already known to him before — but the people's attitude to the deed. It was their subsequent conduct, the revelry and the absence of any remorse which brought him to despair. Hirsch elaborates the same point of view, in his commentary to the Pentateuch:

So long as the false conceptions of idolatry are rooted merely in the intellect, they can be eradicated by enlightenment and instruction. Misconceptions can be corrected by the force of truth. The gates of repentance are thus still wide open. But when idolatrous concepts break through the bounds of the intellect and begin to demoralise the practical behaviour of man, his uncontrollable passions becoming consecrated in a public cult on the altar of falsehood, then they develop and thrive to their heart's content. As easy as it is to enlighten the intellectually misled, so is it difficult to recall to repentance the unruly mob demoralised by corrupt and immoral behaviour. So long as Moses knew only of the sin of the golden calf and its deification, he felt that he could bring the people back to the path of the Torah. Consequently he brought down the two tablets. But as soon as he saw the calf and the dancing, he realised that the idolatrous poison had already wrought its havoc and given free reign to their evil passions, breaking all the bounds of moral conduct. He now realised that a new people would have to be created, capable of fulfilling this Torah. Without a moment's forethought and hesitation he cast the tablets from his hands and broke them, indicating that the people were neither worthy nor capable of receiving the Torah he had brought them down.

Some commentators resort to a psychological explication. It was not any new information that prompted Moses' anger but the impact of actually seeing something that he had previously only

heard about. Arama suggests this in his second and probably more definitive answer:

I imagine that though Moses did not doubt for a moment that they had perpetrated a very serious transgression, he could not conceive that things had reached the pitch of actually making a molten calf. Perhaps they had done something disgraceful which was termed making a molten calf. Perhaps even if they had made one, not all were involved. Perhaps the Divine message of: "Thy people have corrupted themselves" implied nothing more than in Joshua's case when He said: "Israel has sinned; even transgressed My covenant... what is more, they have taken of the forbidden thing, stolen too, and on top of that denied it and put it in their own vessels as well" (Joshua 7, 11). (Only one offender was actually involved — Achsan). And even if they had sinned perhaps they had repented or some had protested. When he arrived he realised that the report was literally true.

His second answer:

This is not such a difficult problem<sup>2</sup> when we remember that seeing is a much more vivid experience than hearing, even though we have no doubt whatsoever of the truth of what we have heard.<sup>3</sup>

Even Moses, the master of prophetic vision, in spite of hearing the information regarding the golden calf direct from the Almighty, could not visualise the scene of idolatrous worship as vividly as if he had actually seen it with his own eyes. Only when the ugly scene stared him in the face, did his anger well up.

B.

A much more difficult problem is posed by the second half of our verse — the act of breaking the tablets. What did Moses hope to achieve thereby and who authorised him to do it?

The following proposal of Rashbam (s.v. *va-yashlekh mi-yado* ("he hurled from his hands") is implausible:

When he beheld the calf, all his vitality ebbed away from him and he just managed to push the Tablets far enough away so as not to fall on his feet,

Like a person for whom the burden becomes too much. So have I seen in Pirkei Derabbi Eliezer ("Moses could not carry himself nor the tablets and cast them from his hands and they broke"). That is its plain sense.

Rashbam similarly notes in Deuteronomy that "I broke them" implies: "I could not muster enough strength".

Apparently, Rashbam a literalist par excellence veers far from the plain sense here. There is no clue in the text for his interpretation that Moses' physical strength had ebbed away. On the contrary, it emphasises his positive and energetic action:

נִזְבֵּן שְׁתָתָא  
נִזְבֵּן מַעֲלֵה  
נִזְבֵּן עַלְמָן

"I grasped hold of the two Tablets,  
I cast them from my two hands  
and I broke them".

not that they broke of their own accord<sup>4</sup>.

Our original question thus remains unanswered. What did Moses hope to achieve by this deliberate act of destruction? Be'er Yizhak's formulation is even more pointed:

The action of breaking the tablets appears strange and astonishing, prompted seemingly by anger. Yet we know that it is forbidden to break even the smallest vessel, how much more so an object as sacred and precious as this!

The answers suggested are many and varied. Some of our Sages regard Moses' action as a part of his programme of intercession and extenuation of Israel's sin, an attempt to share some of the blame with them:

"וְיִצְחָק אָמַר: אִמְשָׁל לְפָנֶיךָ כַּמְדָבָר  
שָׁמָר אֶל בְּנֵינוֹ אָמַר: בְּשַׂנְתָּה שְׁעִיר שָׂרָאֵל  
רְאֵבָר לְתַשְׁמִיד לְאַיִל בְּנֵר כַּמְדָבָר  
שָׁמָר לְפָלָחוֹ: צָא וְקַדְשֵׁךְ וְנִגְרַת הַתְּשׁׂוֹרָה."

לְיִהְיֶה שָׁמָר רְחָמָן מִן אֲבָדָה... בְּאֵין  
כְּבָבָה שָׁמָר אֶל אַלְמָנוֹת... בְּלֹא לְלִבְנָה מִן  
תְּלִיחָה מִן כְּלִילָה... הַגְּבָרָה שָׁבָת מִן  
לְהַנְּחָה בְּרוֹא דָמָה שָׁבָת מִן כְּלִילָה... אָמַר:  
"מִתְבָּבָה אֶת כְּתָבָת שְׁמֹן לְעֵדוֹת לְקָרְבָּן,  
כְּלָמָה: שָׁמָן עַל כְּשָׂרָה אַיִלָּה... אָמַר:  
כְּלָמָה: יְהוָה שָׁמָן עַל יְהוָה נָדְגָן כְּמָרָיִן. כְּלָמָה: שָׁמָן עַל  
רְאֵבָר עַל כְּלִילָה אַיִל."

"Therefore He said He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the breach (Psalms 106, 23)". R. Samuel b. R. Nahman said: When Israel were engaged in that deed, the Holy One Blessed be He sat in judgement upon them to condemn them, as it is said: "Now let Me alone that I may destroy them" . . . He came to pass final sentence, as it is said: "He that sacrificeth to the gods, save unto the Lord only, shall be utterly destroyed". What did Moses do? He took the tablets from the Almighty's hand in order to assuage His wrath. To what may this be compared? To a prince who sent a marriage-broker to betroth a woman on his behalf. He went but she had compromised herself in the meantime with another. What did he do? He took the marriage deed which the prince had given him whereabouts to betroth her and tore it up. He said: Better she should be judged as an unmarried woman than a married one.

Moses did likewise. As soon as Israel perpetrated that deed, he too took the tablets and broke them. Moses further said: Far better they be judged as inadvertent sinners than as deliberate ones, as if to say, had they seen their punishment they would not have sinned. (Shemot Rabbah 43, 1)

Moses is pictured here as the pleader of Israel's cause, trying to extenuate their wrongdoing. A similar approach but with a more optimistic ending is outlined in Avot DeRabbi Natan:

נִתְלַוְּרֵד וְהַתְּשׁׂוֹרָה שְׁמָר אֶל סִירָחָן סִירָחָן בְּמַעַשֵּׂת  
עַל, אָמַר: הָאָזְנָה וְלֹא תְּשׁׂוֹרָה לְמִזְרָחָה דָמָר  
וְמִזְרָב אָזְנָה קְרָבָה, שְׁכָנָה כְּחֻבָּה בְּהָמָם: וְלֹא יְהָרֵךְ אֶל  
לְהַלְלוֹת: צָא וְקַדְשֵׁךְ וְנִגְרַת הַתְּשׁׂוֹרָה."

... He (Moses) took them (the tablets) and joyfully made his way down (the mountain). As soon as he beheld the abhorrent spectacle of the worship of the calf, he said: How can I give them the tablets? I shall be involving them in serious breaches of the commandments rendering them liable to death at the hand of Heaven, since it is written thereon: "Thou shalt have no other gods besides Me". . . R. Yose the Galilean said: Let me tell you a parable. To what can it be compared? To a king of flesh and blood who said to his steward: Go and beuroth for me a damsel, comely and chaste, of seemly conduct. The steward went and betrothed her. After he had betrothed her, he discovered that she had played the harlot with another man. He immediately reasoned thus with himself: If I give her the marriage document now, I shall be condemning her to death, but I shall tear it up and separate her from her master forever.

Moses the righteous one argued in similar vein. How can I give Israel these tablets? I shall thereby be involving them in serious breaches of the commandments rendering them liable to the death penalty. For thus is it written: "He that sacrificeth to the gods save to the Lord only, shall be utterly destroyed".<sup>5</sup> Instead I shall break them and reform the people.<sup>6</sup> Moses' action met with the approval of the Omnipotent, as is stated: "The tablets, which thou didst break" implying: "More power to thee for having broken them!".

The following Midrash underlines to an even greater degree the self-sacrifice of Moses the faithful shepherd:

(କ୍ରମିତ ଦେଖିଲୁ) : ଏହାରେ ଆଜିର ପାଞ୍ଚମିତିଥିଲା ଏହାରେ ନାହିଁ କିମ୍ବା  
ଏହା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଅନ୍ତରେ ଆଜିର ପାଞ୍ଚମିତିଥିଲା ଏହାରେ ନାହିଁ କିମ୍ବା  
ଏହାରେ ଏହାରେ ଏହାରେ ଏହାରେ ଏହାରେ ଏହାରେ ଏହାରେ

"And I saw and behold you had sinned against the Lord your God" (Deut. 9, 16). When he saw there was no future hope for Israel, he threw in his' lot, with theirs and broke the tablets, and said to the Holy One Blessed be He: They have sinned; but so have I with the breaking of the tablets. If you forgive them, forgive me too; as it is said: "And now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin" forgive mine too. But if Thou dost not forgive them, do not forgive me but "blot me out I pray Thee from Thy book" which Thou hast written!"

(Shemot Rabbah)

According to the above three Midrashim, Moses' motive in breaking the tablets was in defence of Israel, to provide an extenuation for their sin, to throw his lot in with theirs.

But Rashi found this explication unacceptable. It was too far removed from the plain sense of the text according to which Moses' action was sparked off by his anger: "Moses' anger 'burned'". Rashi only felt obliged to incorporate those Midrashic explanations which kept as close as possible to the context<sup>8</sup>. Rashi, accordingly, adopted the reading of the Talmud (*Shabbat* 87a), in his comment to the text: "He hurled the tablets from his hands".

If with regard to the Passover which is but one of the commandments, the Torah ordained that "no apostate [may partake thereof" (Ex. 12, 43), where the whole Torah is involved and all Israel are apostates, how much more so

According to the foregoing, Moses wished to punish the Israelites severely, when he beheld that they were unworthy of the precious gift he carried. By their rash deed they had broken the covenant between them and their Father in heaven. He therefore broke them at the foot of the mount in front of them.

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I imagine that Moses broke them at the place where he built the altar beneath the mountain on the day of the Giving of the Law, just as one tears up a legal document that has been dishonored. He did not break them on the mountain itself when he was first apprised of the sin of the calf, but he broke them in the camp. For had Israel not seen the Tables intact, the awesome work of the Lord, they would not have been moved by the fragments, since the soul is more impressed by what it sees, than by what it hears. He therefore brought them down from the mountain to show them to the people, and then break them before their very eyes.

Isaac Arama proounds yet another view, though he, likewise, starts from the assumption that Moses meant to shock them:

Perhaps he saw fit to do it in order to teach them a lesson and shock them, as our Sages say (Shabbat 105b) in the name of R. Yohanan b. Nuri: "He who tears his garments in anger and breaks vessels in anger and scatters his money in anger shall be accounted in your eyes as one who worships idols", for such are the workings of the Evil Inclination. Today it says to him, Do this! and tomorrow it says to him, Do that! till it eventually prompts him to worship idols and he goes along and does so".

The Talmud continues its discussion on this subject, making one reservation. Anger not prompted by selfish motives but by the desire to discipline one's household is not tantamount to idolatry. If a man wished merely to impress on the members of his household his shock and disappointment at their misconduct, in order to correct them, he is inspired by educational motives. Isaac Arama applies this principle to our case:

When Moses approached them he saw that the calf the Lord had referred to was literally a calf, neither more nor less, and that the tumult he had heard was the sound not of pain but of uninhibited idolatrous revelry. "Moses' anger burned and he cast from his hands the Tablets and broke them beneath the mount", to draw their attention and shame them.

The text in Deuteronomy aptly fits this interpretation: "When I turned and went down the mountain I saw and behold that you had sinned against the Lord your God, you had made for yourselves a molten calf,

you 'had quickly turned aside from the way the Lord had commanded you, then I grasped hold of the two Tablets and cast them from my two hands and broke them before your eyes'".

In other words, Moses saw no other way of bringing the Israelites to their senses than by breaking the very Tablets he had received at the hand of God at Sinai, before their very eyes.

The Neziv gives a similar interpretation in Ha'amek Davar:

The text describes the greatness of Moses. How he took the calf and burnt it and no man resisted him, whereas they had forced Aaron to make it. This was because Moses, with deep psychological insight had not broken the Tablets on the mount, but resolved to bide his time in order to do it when it would make the greatest impact on them, shocking them and grieveing them to such an extent, that they would not have the heart to resist his harsh corrective measures. He broke a unique treasure before their eyes.

But was Moses' action as deliberately geared to an educational aim as these commentators have made out? Did he really, as Neziv suggests, "bide his time" till the psychological moment arrived? Such a picture does not emerge from the text. It implies quite the contrary:

**It came to pass as He approached the camp and saw . . .  
Moses' anger burned and he hurled . . .**

If it was not a premediated act but a spontaneous reaction sparked off by indignation.

Ramban therefore adopted an entirely different approach answering not the question what purpose Moses had in mind but what caused him to act:

Moses did not hesitate to break them because his anger was roused at the sight of their evil conduct. He could not control himself . . . (on 32, 16). When I saw you dancing in front of the calf I could not control myself and I broke the tablets! . . . (on Deut. 9, 17).

Ramban could not envisage that Moses whose heart was certainly full of love of God, Israel and the Torah could have possessed at that moment enough sang-froid to plan anything deliberate, either with a view to lightening their punishment or shocking them out of their complacency when he broke the tablets. What happened was quite unplanned. In Ramban's view it was not physical but spiritual weakness that overcame him, anger and mental anguish at what they had done: "He could not control himself".

Admittedly it is difficult to accept the idea that Moses deliberately planned to break the tablets. But the alternative — that it happened in a spontaneous fit of anger without any thought at all is equally implausible. A recent commentator has proposed an explication which appears to capture both aspects — the indignation and pain that overcame him at that moment and the educational aim of combatting idolatry in his day and for all time that informed his action. We quote here the relevant extract\* from Meslekh Hokhmah (s.v. *va-yehi ka-asher karav el ha-mahaneh* "it came to pass as he approached the camp"):

Torah and Faith are the essentials of the Jewish nation. All the sanctities — The Holy Land, Jerusalem etc., are secondary and subordinate entities hallowed in virtue of the Torah. Time and space therefore are no limiting factors in the Torah context. Its observances and duties apply to every man from the highest — like Moses the man of God — to the lowest, and in all countries, both in Erez Israel and outside (except for those precepts connected with the soil of the Holy Land).

The author repeatedly emphasises that there is only one source of holiness. No intrinsic holiness resides in places, houses or vessels, not even in the greatest of men. Even Moses himself was termed by our Sages — the "go-between" — the messenger who brought the Torah from on high to earth. But it was not *his* Torah. This conception of holiness is too refined to be grasped by man who is

\* Translator's note. In the interests of clarity we have where necessary summarised the commentator's arguments.

the slave of his senses and who can only perceive things through them.

The people therefore sought for ways and means of materialising their conceptions, and when they saw that Moses was delayed, their faith was undermined and they sought to make a calf. It was this that Moses condemned, that they should imagine he was unique, and that there existed any intrinsic holiness outside God Himself, his absence prompting them to make a calf. "I am a man just like yourselves and the Torah is not dependent on me and even had I not reappeared, the Torah would persist without any change".

Do not imagine that the Temple and Tabernacle are intrinsically holy. Far be it! The Almighty dwells amidst His children and if they transgress His covenant these structures become divested of all their holiness. Violent men came and profaned the Temple; Titus entered the Holy of Holies together with a harlot and no harm befell them, since its holiness had lapsed.

Even the Tablets — "the writing of God" — were not intrinsically holy, but only so on account of you. The moment Israel sinned and transgressed what was written thereon, they became mere bric a brac devoid of sanctity.

To sum up, there is nothing intrinsically holy in the world save the Lord Blessed be He, to whom alone reverence, praise and homage is due. The holy comes into being in response to specific Divine commandments, as for example those calling on us to build Him a house of worship or sacrifice offerings to Him. Now we may understand why Moses on receiving the physical and mental state of the people promptly broke the Tablets. He feared they would deify them as they had done the calf. Had he brought them the Tablets intact, they would have substituted them for the calf and not reformed their ways. But now that he had broken the Tablets, they realised how far they had fallen short of true faith.

For this reason God approved of Moses' action and said "More power to thee for having broken them". By this he had demonstrated that the Tablets themselves possessed no intrinsic holiness.

R. Meir Simhah now proceeds to explain the reason for the broken pieces being placed in the Ark:

It was the first Tablets which were the work of God — that were broken, not the Tablets hewn by Moses, which remained whole, demonstrating

that no holiness resides in any created thing other than that invested in it by Israel's observance of the Torah in accordance with the will of the Creator and His holy name.

The allusion is to the Talmud (Shabbat 87a):

רְאֵי שָׁבֵר ... עַמְּךָ שְׁבִירָה - תְּהִלָּתֶךָ נָשָׂא כָּל־עֲשָׂר אֶת־עֲשָׂר : אַתָּה אָמַן לִזְרֹחַ קְרָבָה נְצָרָה (א) אָשָׁר שְׁבִירָה .  
אַתָּה לִשְׁרָאֵל : שְׁבִירָה כְּפָרָה בְּקָרְבָּה .  
אַתָּה אָמַן אָשָׁר, שְׁאַלְמָר שְׁבִירָה עַל שְׁבִירָה .

We have learnt in a Baraita: Three things did Moses do of his own mind and the Holy One Blessed be He gave it His blessing ... he broke the tablets ... whence that the Holy One Blessed be He gave it his blessing? From the text (34, 1) *asher shi-barta* (which thou didst break) *yishmar kohakha she-shibarta* (more power to thee for having broken them).

This play on words is rather puzzling. Rashba asks:

What cue is there in the wording of the text to warrant their association of the Hebrew relative: *asher* with the verb: *asher* ("confirm")?

The classic commentaries on rabbinic homiletic exposition have proposed the following explanations:

The text should have read simply: *al ha-lulot ha-shevurim* "on the broken tablets": Why *asher shibarta* "which *thou* didst break"? What difference does it make who broke them? But the text gave him credit for it, approved his breaking of them and ruled out punishment for it.

(Me'or Enayim)

It should have read *she-shibarta* (assimilating the relative to the verb in the form of a prefix). Alternatively, the whole relative clause: "which thou didst break" is superfluous. It would have been adequate to end the verse with: "the first tablets", as in (34, 4): "He hewed two tablets of stone like the *first ones*". These were the holy ones he had broken.

(Maharsha)

"in the ark". Both sets of tablets, the whole and broken ones were placed in the ark. Had their breaking constituted a sin, the accuser (i.e. the first tablets) could not have been put together with the defender (i.e. the second tablets). We must conclude then that the breaking was valued by Him.

(Rashba)

The latter explanation of the Midrash *asher* = *yishmar kohakha* depends on other homiletic sources which in turn hinge on allusions and nuances of other Biblical texts. It is far more elegant to find the cue for the explanation in the wording of the text itself. On this account alone the proposal outlined in Torah Temimah is far more satisfying:

It is not usually considered decent to remind a person of something he has done in anger or on the spur of the moment. It can only embarrass and aggravate him. Accordingly, had God disapproved of Moses' breaking the tablets it would not have been right to add the words "which thou didst break" when referring to the first tablets. It would only have aggravated him, especially as there was absolutely no necessity to refer to it. The "like the two first tablets" would have done. Since the text does add: "which thou didst break" the expositor concluded that, on the contrary, God had approved of the breaking. What is more, He said to him "More power to thee for doing it".

#### NOTES

1. Cf. footnote 3, p. 139 where a similar syntactical device is detected by Ibn Ezra.

2. What Arama found so psychologically plausible and therefore "not such a difficult problem" confounded many modern critical scholars. So much so that they had to account for the apparent contradiction in their characteristic way by assuming that God's words to Moses in vv. 7-10 and our text describing his anger belonged to different sources. Otherwise "how came he to become angry just now on seeing the calf, when he had already heard that they had made one?"

3. An interesting parallel to this situation is cited by Alshich from Job 2, 11-13: "When Job's three friends heard of all these calamities . . . they left their

homes and arranged to come and console with him and comfort him. But when they first saw him from a distance and\* did not recognise him, they wept aloud, rent their cloaks and tossed dust into the air over their heads. For seven days and seven nights they sat beside him on the ground and none of them said a word to him; for they saw that his suffering was very great". Alshikh comments:

For though they knew every detail of the calamities that had overtaken him — they had been told — it would never have occurred to them to weep aloud, rend their cloaks and sit with him on the ground for a week of days and nights. They had contemplated, merely paying him a condolence visit, to console him. But actually seeing with their own eyes the enormity of his plight moved them to this unprecedented form of mourning. The text emphasises that the visual impact cannot be compared in the intensity of its effect with what is heard, however authentic and vivid the report. Similarly what Moses had merely heard from the Almighty, the Divine report of the details of Israel's worshipping of the calf did not spark his anger as much as the actual visual spectacle of their misconduct.

<sup>4</sup> In Ha'amek Davar, Dent. 9.17 is cited in support of the idea that "the tablets were not broken inadvertently by falling from Moses' hands. On the contrary, he grasped tightly hold of them and deliberately threw them down with force".

<sup>5</sup> Some have objected to his argument on the grounds that only the ten commandments were written on the tablets and not this verse. The answer suggested is that not the actual verse is meant but rather its message, which was

implied in the Ten Commandments. Cf. Rashi (24, 12) s.v. *et hukot ha-even vela-torah vela-mizvah* "the tablets of stone and Torah and commandments".

<sup>6</sup> "Being treated as unmarried they will not despair of being able to make amends for this serious transgression". (Binyan Yehoshua on Avot D.R.N.) The Torah Terimah reads: "But I shall break the tablets and reform the people and then I shall give them new tablets".

<sup>7</sup> "The *mem* of *mi-nifekha* ('from Thy book') may be homiletically understood in a causative sense: 'Blot me out because of Thy book which Thou hast written and I have brought it to nothing'. In other words, 'Thou, as it were took all the trouble to write the tablets and I went and broke them'". (Sar-Shalom in commentary to Midrash Rabbah: Fa-tirosh.)

<sup>8</sup> See Va'era, p. 174.

<sup>9</sup> Because he habituates his instincts to get the better of him (Rashi): Man was created to gratify His Creator not his passions. Whoever behaves thus, gratifies his passions — and displeases His Creator. This is therefore tantamount to worshipping idols since it will ultimately lead to it". (Iyun Yaacov, commentary on Ein Ya'akov).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ramban's comment here with the explanation he gave for Moses' killing of the Egyptian (2, 12) on p. 43. There, too, many commentators question Moses' purpose. Ramban, however, questions what prompted Moses to commit such an act. He answered that he could not bear to witness the sufferings of his people and killed the Egyptian who was beating the oppressed.

\* Translator's note: I have reproduced Alshikh's reading in my translation, with the break between constituent and matrix occurring between "him" and "wept". The NEB, whose general wording I have followed makes the break at "distance" reading: [But when they first saw him at a distance] [they did not recognise him] omitting the connective "and" indicating a consequential relationship between the two bracketed sentences rather than one of co-ordination, with the consequence outlined in the succeeding description of their mourning [they wept . . . rent their cloaks . . . tossed dust]. The JB, and NJB in their characteristic efforts to preserve the form of the original rather than "improve its readability" provide a rendering which though archaic and perhaps less readable allows for Alshikh's reading and preserves his valuable insight: "And when they lifted up their eyes afar off and knew him not, they lifted up their voice and wept, and they rent everyone his mantle and threw dust upon their heads toward heaven".

Rabbi Baruch Epstein, the author of the Pentateuch commentary Torah Temimah (19th century), interprets the attitude of the Sages in the following manner. Such a deed must be animated by a genuine, unadulterated spirit of zeal to enhance the glory of God. In that case, who can tell whether the perpetrator is not really prompted by some selfish motive, maintaining that he is doing it for the sake of God, when he has actually committed murder? That was why the Sages wished to excommunicate Phineas, had not the Holy Spirit testified that his zeal for God was genuine.

<sup>8</sup> The moral dangers involved in hunting down the wicked provide, according to Rav Kook, the background to the institution of the "blessing against the heretics" *birkat ha-minim* in the Amidah. This prayer beginning: "For the slanderers let there be no hope . . ." breathes vengeance on those traitorous to their people.

See "Studies in the Weekly Sidra" Pinhas, 1st Series.

### MOSES WAS UNAWARE HIS FACE SHONE

Cassuto in his commentary to Exodus (p. 448) stressed the majesty and sublimity of this passage and its poetic rhythm. In the very first verse we find repetitions and rhythm:

יְהִי בָרָאֵת מִשְׁפָט  
 יְהִי תְּחִזְקָה  
 יְהִי כְּלֹבֶד  
 יְהִי מִזְרָחָה  
 יְהִי שָׁמֶן  
 יְהִי נֶגֶן

It came to pass on Moses' descent from mount Sinai  
 (the tablets of testimony were in Moses' hand  
 on his descent from the mount),  
 Moses knew not  
 that the skin of his face became radiant  
 on his speaking with him\*. (34, 29)

\* Translator's note:

Many and varied are the ways in which English translators have tried to convey the relationships between the phrases and clauses that make up this verse; a process made particularly difficult by the relatively unmarked character of time and aspect relationships in the Hebrew as compared with English. (Cf. J. Watt: A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew O.T., (1951): "The time of the Hebrew verb must be judged in the light of its context. There are no obvious markers in grammatical formation or syntactical arrangement.") No translation can transfer the meaning of the original but I have tried to minimise the alteration in meaning which must ensue from the different English tense

(cont. at foot of next page)

The first half of the verse (It... mount) encapsulates a reference to Moses bearing the tablets between two phrases of time indicating his descent from the mount. In the verse as a whole we find a threefold repetition of Moses' name. At the end of the verse the phrase: "on his speaking with him" (*be-dabber ito*) is echoed several verses later in the middle of verse 34: "and when Moses went in before the Lord *to speak with Him*" (*le-dabber ito*) and re-echoed in the concluding phrase of the whole passage: "until he went in *to speak with Him*" (*le-dabber ito*).

Regarding the style of the passage Cassuto writes:

The poetic character of the passage is indicated not only in the rhythm and repetitions we have mentioned . . . but also in other harmonious repetitions. The glowing of Moses' face is mentioned three times and so is the veil. Moses' speaking "with Him" i.e. with God is mentioned three times. Moses' speaking to the children of Israel is mentioned three times (vv. 31, 33, 34) and the speaking of God to Moses once (v. 32) — in all, seven expressions associated with speaking or talking.

A true evaluation of the message of the text could not, in the view of our ancient commentators, rest with a mere statement of its poetic qualities, harmonies and rhythms. Bahya drew attention to the syntactical ambiguities in the triple references to Moses speaking with God:

תְּהִלָּה אֶת־בְּרֵית־יְהֹוָה אֲשֶׁר־בָּרַא  
תְּהִלָּה אֶת־בְּרֵית־יְהֹוָה אֲשֶׁר־בָּרַא  
תְּהִלָּה אֶת־בְּרֵית־יְהֹוָה אֲשֶׁר־בָּרַא

system, as well as leaving the referent of the pronominals in the last line ambiguous as in the original but cf.: JB: "... sent forth beams while He talked with him"; NJB: "... was radiant since he had spoken with Him; NEB: "... shone because he had been speaking with the Lord"; Hirsch: "... had become luminous when He spoke to him"; RSV: "... shone because he had been talking with him".

- (29) Moses knew not that the skin of his face shone  
*on his speaking with him*
- (34) Whenever Moses came before the Lord  
*to speak with him*
- (35) Moses removed the veil . . . until he came  
*to speak with him.*

In verse 29 what are the referents of the pronouns in "on his speaking with him"? Who spoke with whom? Ibn Ezra reads: "on the Lord speaking with him"; though God is not mentioned in this verse at all.

In verse 34 is the underlying or deleted subject of the infinitive complement [to speak with him] identical with the explicit subject (Moses), of the matrix sentence or with its predicate noun phrase ("the Lord")?

Is the reading: "Moses came before the Lord so that he (Moses) should speak with Him" or "so that He (God) should speak with him (Moses)? Verse 35 is even more mystifying: "till he came to speak with him". Who came? who spoke?

Here is Bahya's explication of the syntactic peculiarities:

"till he came to speak with *Him*". The text should have read: "till *he* came to speak with *the Lord*". The proper noun "Moses" is repeated several times in the same discourse without pronominalisation. Why then is the name of God pronominalised where to avoid ambiguity, the proper noun should have been used? Perhaps the ambiguity was deliberate to enhance Moses' spiritual stature by legitimising the alternative reading — "till *God* came to speak with *Moses*". The text implied that just as Moses came to speak with God, so God came to speak with Moses. The same idea (of reciprocity or symmetry in relationship with the Divine) is implicit in the text: "As one man speaks to another" (31, 11); one speaks and the other replies without an intermediary.

The mutuality of the dialogue is explicitly indicated, not conceptually but figuratively in Num. 12, 8: "*Mouth-to-mouth* I speak with him". The same idea is repeated at the end of the Torah: "There

never arose again a prophet in Israel like Moses who knew the Lord face-to-face" (Deut. 34, 10). In our text the same effect is achieved by syntactical means. The promoninalisation results in a deliberate ambiguity motivated by reverence for the transcendental nature of the subject matter: "The glory of God is to keep things hidden" (Prov. 25, 2).

What is meant by the "shining" "glow" or "radiance" of Moses' face? The early Greek and Latin translations (e.g. Aquila and the Vulgate) wrongly associated it with the Hebrew word for horn *keren*<sup>1</sup>. They were evidently misled by the causative form occurring in Psalm 69, 32 *makrin* and Deut. 32, 17 *ve-karnei re'em karnav*. Others relied on Habakkuk 3, 4 *karnayim mi-yado lo*. But this text proves precisely the opposite, as most of our commentators<sup>2</sup> have pointed out, that rays of light are meant\*.

The parallelism in the verse itself reinforces that reading:

A brightness as the light appeared  
Rays from His hand to him

The general context too: "His glory covered the heavens, and His praise filled the earth". The item "praise" is taken by some commentators to refer to the emergence of light at Creation.

Rashbam actually takes the Christian translators to task for their mistranslation of "horns":

It is an expression of majesty as in Habakkuk: "rays from His hand to him". Whoever compares it to "His horns are the horns of the wild ox" is an idiot. Most Biblical words are homonyms. Menahem b. Seruk has drawn attention to this too.<sup>3</sup>

Ibn Ezra marshalls similar arguments against the reading "horns" in controverting the views of a Jewish heretic.<sup>4</sup> Moses' face shone as a result of God communing with him. The glory of God, as it

\* Translator's Note:  
Cf. JB: "Rays hath He at His side"; NEB: "with twin rays starting forth at His side".

were, clung to him even after he left His presence. The heretic had suggested that Moses' skin had become cracked and dried up like a horn from his prolonged fasting on the mountain. The Israelites were "afraid" to approach him because they were repelled by his ugliness. "May his bones rot for suggesting such a monstrous idea", Ibn Ezra mordantly remarked, continuing:

Why couldn't this miserable creature wake up and realise that people only recoil from something unusual that they have never seen before! Everyone has at one time or another seen a dead man. That would not make them afraid to approach. If that were the case why didn't he keep the veil on all the time? Why did he remove it whenever he spoke to the people?

Surely this wretch must have remembered the fact that even at the age of a hundred and twenty Moses' eye was not dimmed nor his natural vigour abated, how much more so when he was eighty!

Let us now study the passage in more detail: This is the first time that the glow on Moses' countenance is referred to. Strange as it may seem, it is not referred to directly as something new. We are simply told about Moses' unconsciousness of this phenomenon. As the Or HaHayyim puts it: "What was the purpose of the text informing us of Moses' unconsciousness of the phenomenon, before it informs us of the existence of the phenomenon itself, before telling us, in the first place, that Moses' face shone?"

Presumably, the Torah refrained out of reverent reticence from emphasising directly the character of this miracle, but rather alluded to the effect of the phenomenon on Moses and Israel, on its subject and the beholders.

Moses himself was unaware of it. May we not see this as reflecting the one characteristic of Moses that the text bears witness to — that the man Moses was extraordinarily meek? According to Or Ha-Hayyim he was unaware of it, because coming down the mountain he was holding the two tablets, and presumed the light beamed forth not from him but from them — the light of the Torah. Regarding Aaron and Israel the text states:

Moses was unaware his face shone

କେବଳ ପାଦମ୍ଭାବ ହେଲା  
ପ୍ରସାଦ ଦେଖି ନାହିଁ

And Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses and behold the skin of his face glowed and they were afraid to approach him.

This fear is explained thus by Rashi:

Come and see, how potent is the force of transgression! For before they committed transgression what does the text say? — “And the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire at the top of the mountain in the presence of all Israel” (24. 17).

Before they made the calf they were able to withstand the dazzle of the Divine presence, but, as the Midrash words it: "once they sinned they could not look into the face of the intermediary" (i.e. Moses). Sin had deprived them of the ability to see — of the spiritual insight capable of appreciating the most holy and sublime. Had they honoured the Divine call to be "holy as I the Lord am holy", they would have felt, each one of them, the rays of majesty in their own heart — the Divine image in them. Since that image in them had become blurred they were afraid to approach the one whose holiness shone forth from his countenance<sup>5</sup>.

What did Moses do:

କୁଳେ ଦୂର୍ମା ଜୀବିତ  
ହେଲାଏ ନେବୁ ସାଥୀଙ୍କ ଦେଖି-ପାଞ୍ଚଶିର ହସ୍ତିମା  
ଦେଖିଲୁ କୁଳମାର

କେବଳ ମୁଦ୍ରା-ଶବ୍ଦ ଏହିମୁଦ୍ରା  
ପାଇଁ ଯଥିଲୁ ଯଥିଲୁ ନେଇ  
ନେଇ ସୁଧା-ଶବ୍ଦ ଏହିମୁଦ୍ରା

And Moses called to them and they returned to him, Aaron and all the princes of the congregation and Moses spoke to them, Afterwards all the children of Israel approached and he commanded them all that the Lord had spoken with him on mount Sinai.

And when Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.

(卷之二)

This picture of sudden recoil followed by reassurance calls to mind the following passage:

... וְלֹא־יַכְלُ אֶחָד לְעֹנֵת אֶחָד

... His brothers were so dumbfounded at finding themselves face to face with Joseph that they could not answer. Then Joseph said to his brothers,

"Come closer," he said, "I am your brother Joseph . . ." (*Genesis 45:3-10*)

635

Moses was unaware his face shone

Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin . . .  
He kissed all his brothers . . .  
and afterwards his brothers talked with him.

(Genesis 45, 14-15)

Both passages depict recoil, fear, partly conscience-stricken stemming from the conviction of sin. Both depict attempts at allayment of those fears, reconciliation. Both, our text more vividly, indicate a gradual overcoming of initial abashment. At first the people plucked up sufficient courage to approach Aaron and the princes, and Moses spoke with them. Later: the text's deliberate insertion of the adverbial link *ve-aharei khen* "and afterwards" conveys to us the effort to overcome the fear<sup>6</sup>:

The gulf barrier separating them had been breached.  
The last two verses of our chapter appear superficially to be a repetition of the previous:

ପିଲାର ଯତ୍ନିମ୍ବ ଦୂରାତ୍ମକ  
ଦୂରାତ୍ମକ ଯତ୍ନିମ୍ବ ନିର୍ମାଣ କରି  
ଦୂରାତ୍ମକ ଯତ୍ନିମ୍ବ କରିବା  
ଦୂରାତ୍ମକ ଯତ୍ନିମ୍ବ କରିବା  
ଦୂରାତ୍ମକ ଯତ୍ନିମ୍ବ କରିବା  
ଦୂରାତ୍ମକ ଯତ୍ନିମ୍ବ କରିବା

Whenever Moses went into the presence of the Lord to speak with Him he would remove the veil until he came out; and he would come out and tell the children of Israel what he had been commanded.

And the children of Israel would see the face of Moses that the skin of Moses' face shone

and Moses would put the veil back on his face until he went in again to speak with Him.

(34, 34-35)

Unlike Rashi, Ramban read the earlier passage (vv. 31-33) as a description of a particular event\* — the first meeting between Moses and the people after coming down the mountain. The last passage, however, was a statement of Moses' habitual conduct:

The text first describes exactly what happened at Moses' first meeting with the people. When they went to welcome him they shrank back in fear at the "halo" surrounding him. But Moses called out to them and Aaron and all the princes accompanying him came forward to his side. Moses spoke to them words of reassurance<sup>7</sup>. He gave them the good tidings of their pardon and the new set of tablets he had brought down with him. As soon as the Israelites observed he was coming to them

they all ran forward to him and then he transmitted to them all the commandments imparted to him by God on mount Sinai. They comprised the Ten Commandments and all contained in the passage beginning "Observe carefully what I command thee today" (34, 11) till the end of the chapter. He informed them that God had commanded him to make a new covenant with them in accordance with these words: "The text abbreviates this and refers to it in a general way. Then it states that after he had finished delivering the aforementioned message he covered his face with a veil, either having observed as he turned round or having been told that his face glowed.

\* Tangled's Note

Rashi *ad loc.* regards vv. 31-33 as describing not a single occurrence but Moses' regular way of transmitting the contents of the Torah to Israel, a process which, henceforth continued till Moses' death. Rashi's reading of these verses would be: "And whenever Moses called to them, Aaron and all the princes in the congregation came forward to him and Moses spoke (directly) to them. Afterwards all the children of Israel drew near and he would instruct them regarding all the Lord had spoken with him. And whenever Moses finished speaking with them he would put the veil back on his face". The passage thus represents in Rashi's view, echoing the Talmud, a description of how the Torah was habitually imparted to the people, first to Aaron, then his son, followed by the elders and finally the people.

After recounting the events of that day the text sums up "Whenever Moses . . ." reporting how Moses regularly conducted himself towards them throughout the rest of his life.

But what exactly is implied in the story of the veil? Abravanel wonders, why, if the Lord wished to endow Moses' countenance with a glow, did he put a veil over his face. Surely he was then defeating the Divine purpose? Ha'amek Davar answers: He veiled his face so that they would not stare at him continually and disturb him from concentrating on the Divine.

But according to this explanation the covering with the veil has no connection with the fear inspired by his countenance, Moses only being concerned with his own benefit. The text would indicate that the veil was put on on account of the fear inspired by the glow, and the fact that the Israelites were afraid to approach him. Here are the views of other commentators.

Ralbag explains that Moses attained an extraordinary degree of spirituality when closeted on the mountain for forty days and forty nights without food or drink. This itself is testimony of his conquest of the body and subordination to the soul. These heights of godliness and spirituality were reflected in the beams sent forth by his countenance, and this preeminence of mind over matter remained with him even when he came down from the mountain. His self-communings and the halo of spirituality in which he moved prevented him from noticing the Israelites when they came to consult him. When the latter saw this, they were afraid to approach him, so wrapped up was he in his own thoughts. At this Moses called them and spoke to them. It was then he put on the veil — signifying that he tried to shake off his excess spirituality in order to bring himself down to an earthly level and converse with them. But when he communed with God, he removed the veil. He required no effort to reach the heights of communing with God. All his efforts were needed, in the opposite direction, in discarding his

spirituality in order to converse with ordinary human beings. It was this extraordinary level of godliness reached by Moses that the text wished to publicise.

Ralbag's explanation very plausibly takes the replacing of the veil to represent a deliberate act of disengagement from contact with the transcendental and holy. It further emphasises Moses' superlative degree of prophecy. Unlike Balaam and his fellow-sorcerers who had to manipulate their magical skills to an extraordinary extent in order to induce a prophetic state, Moses had to make a special effort to come down to earth, as it were, and descend from that coveted plane of inspiration.

One of Rashi's supercommentaries, Aaron Abu Alrabi b. R. Gershon shares this approach:

Moses had to tone down, as it were, the spirituality of his message which they were now unable to cope with in its pristine form on account of their sin. This process of adjustment or dilution is represented in the placing of a veil on his face. Moses however, was able to commune directly with the Divine face-to-face, without the necessity of any protective medium: "Wheneve<sup>r</sup> Moses entered the presence of God he would remove the veil".

Here the emphasis is on the didactic aspect. Moses adjusted the message to the level of his audience, so that they should not be confused and dazzled by its awesomeness.

But there is one unfortunate drawback to this type of explanation. It runs counter to the wording of the text. There quite the opposite is stated. He put the veil back on when he had finished speaking with them. In other words, whilst he was speaking to them he wore no veil.<sup>10</sup> Subsequent commentators expressed their astonishment at Ralbag's explanation, among them Arama, who went so far as to state that it gave the impression that he must have had another version of Scriptures in front of him!

But this suggestion is not necessary. Ralbag's mistake would seem to be in his reading of verse 34: "Wheneve<sup>r</sup> Moses entered

the Lord's presence he would remove the veil" — implying evidently that once outside the tent he covered his face. But this does not follow.

We therefore prefer Abravanel's explanation in which he divides Moses' time into three levels: when the Lord spoke with him, when he transmitted the Divine message to Israel, and when he was engaged in worldly affairs. It was only at the third level that he removed the veil.

Here are his words:

What is meant by Moses being unaware of the glow emitted by him is that he felt that it was not right for him to use this glow in ordinary everyday matters such as eating and drinking and sleeping and when talking to his wife and household on matters not connected with Judaism. But when he was engaged in imparting the message of the Torah to Israel he did not veil his face so that they would feel the full spiritual impact of his personality.

According to the above explanation, just as he received God's message without a veil so he transmitted it. He did not hide behind it or make Judaism into an esoteric cult for the initiated only, but imparted it to all Israel without discrimination, just as He received it at the hand of God. His was a generous giving over of his knowledge and the fruits of his inspiration in the spirit of: "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets!" It was only when he was not engaged either in gaining Divine knowledge or in teaching it that he covered the glow of his countenance.

### **Questions for Further Study:**

1. Cf. the Rashi cited above with the following rabbinic expositions:

**אלא פשטו יתלהם בעדרה, לא היו בהם נזירים ונטוראים; הנטורן היה  
ברובו – והוא דוחם גיבובים אנטומודמיים...  
...**

"Command the children of Israel that they send forth from the camp every leper and him that hath an issue . . ." R. Yose the Galilean exclaimed: Come and see how potent is the force of transgression! Before they committed transgression there were no lepers and diseased among them. Once they committed transgression they boasted lepers and diseased . . .

ମୁହଁରା କୁଣ୍ଡଳ ପାତା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା

"And they heard the voice of the Lord God . . . and they hid, the man and his wife from before the Lord God" (Gen. 3, 8). — Before man sinned, fear and dread were shown him and all creatures were afraid of him. Once he sinned, he was filled with fear and dread and was afraid of others. You may know this too from Rabbi's statement: Before man sinned he heard the Word whilst standing on his feet and was not afraid; once he sinned, when he heard the Word, he was afraid and hid, as it is said: "Your voice I heard and I was afraid."

Can you explain what prompted Rashi to cite the rabbinic exposition to Ex. 34, 30 in explaining the phrase: "And they were afraid to approach him", instead of citing their exposition to Gen. 3, 8 about Adam and Eve hiding in the garden or their exposition to Num. 5, 2 about the lepers? Surely the underlying thought in all these contexts is the same?

(=என முடிவை குற விரும்பு) யான்டை (= அப் பிரிடிஶர்) கூட தால் (வெளி அனுப்பி, அதை எடுக்க கூட வேண்டும் என்று) என : என முடிவை குற விரும்புவது மொத்தம் சாதியை பெற்று (அதை கூட கூடும்).

Where did Moses receive the beams of majesty? The Rabbis said: From the cave, as it is said: "And it shall come to pass; when My glory passes by, I shall put you in the cleft of the rock".

R. Judah b. Nehman stated in the name of R. Shimon b. Lakish: There was some ink still left on the pen with which he wrote the Torah and he passed it over his head (another version: he wiped it with his hair), and this was responsible for the beams of majesty.

Try to explain the two different approaches symbolised in the above expositions.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Medieval Christian artists were prompted by these translations to represent Moses as having horns. Even Michael Angelo's "Moses" reproduced these horns.

<sup>2</sup> With the apparent exception of Joseph Ibn Kaspī (not in his commentary to the Pentateuch: *Mishneh Keseṭ*, where he follows the traditional view "that his face shone and glowed from the luminosity of contact with the Divine") in his lexicographical work: *Sharsherot Keseṭ*:

*Keren* connotes strength and power combined with the advancement and elevation of a thing; the reverse of *regā* ("moment"). This accounts for it being used to refer to the projection on the heads of animals with which they butt, since that is their strength and power. It is also strong and powerful in being the toughest tissue of the body. By extension it is applied to a powerful and fierce person, even though he doesn't have any real horns. Cf. Daniel 8, 4; 8, 20 where the powerful monarchs are described as having horns. Cf. also Amos 6, 13.

In whatever form, this root always retains its connotation of strength and power. The verbal however, combines it with spiritual elevation. In the *Kal* form we have: "The skin of Moses' face shone" (*karan*) expressing the same idea of a change for the better in his looks which became more vigorous and dynamic than the norm. Cf.: Ecclesiastes 8, 1: "The wisdom of a man illuminates his countenance and changes the vigour of his looks". What happened to Moses was the opposite of "My skin is cracked and festering" (Job 7, 5). The Torah refers to the skin because that is the most sensitive and exposed part.

The sense is as follows: When Moses descended the mountain, the spiritual impact of his communion with the Supreme King clung to him giving a dimension to his personality which singled him out from all other men, overawing them and making them afraid to approach him. God forbids that the verb *karan* here should refer to something tangible to actual physical rays or brightness. It is a grave mistake to render it by any other equivalent in the vernacular than "force" — i.e. the strength and power of the human will or personality.

<sup>3</sup> In his introduction to: *Maḥberet*, where he cites a list of homonyms. On *keren* he writes:

"It has two separate meanings, (1) "these are the horns (*karnayim*) with which they will scatter Judah" (Zech. 2, 4); "We took for ourselves horns" (*karnayim*, Amos 6, 13)... (2) "His face shone" (*karan* 34, 29); "rays (*karnayim*) from His hand to him" (Hab. 3, 4) connoting glory (Maḥberet Menahem: Philipowsky London 1854, pp. 8-9; 159).

<sup>4</sup> Hiwi the Balchite (derogatively referred in Jewish sources as Hivi Ha-calbi ("Hiwi the dog") who derided the Bible and the fundamentals of Judaism. Data regarding him have reached us only through the polemic references of Saadya and Ibn Ezra.

<sup>5</sup> The same idea of the degenerative impact of sin is frequently found alluded to by our Sages in their comments on Scripture. Cf.: Before David committed that sin (with Bathsheba) "The Lord is my light and salvation" (Psalm 271). The moment he had committed it "he is weary and dispirited (2 Sam. 17, 2). Cf. Job 2, 13; 3, 1: "They sat with him for seven days and seven nights and none exchanged a word with him... afterwards Job opened his mouth and cursed his day".

<sup>6</sup> Ramban in this way disposes of the difficulty posed by the phrase "he spoke to them" in its failing to spell out what exactly it was that he spoke.

<sup>8</sup> Note how Ramban explains the difference between v. 31 "And Moses spoke to them" and v. 32: "... he commanded them . . .".

<sup>9</sup> See Ki Tissa (6), p. 627, footnote 5.

<sup>10</sup> Aaron Abu Alrabī did take account of this by understanding the second sentence of verse 33 in a past perfect sense: "He *had already* put the veil back on his face" before he summoned them and spoke. Proof of this is in the next verse: "whenever Moses came into the presence of the Lord he would remove the veil". This commentator adopts a device frequently resorted to by Ibn Ezra who often explains the Hebrew "past" tense in a past perfect sense. But there is here no necessity for it. His proof from the next verse is also not valid as we note further.

bounds of morality and modesty and this was punished by death because of their elevated position. Later I noted this dictum of our Sages: "as soon as they saw new fire they stood forth to heap love unto their love", and this, indeed, coincides with our explanation that, out of a superabundance of joy, they wished to show greater affection and zeal in ministering to God, through burning more incense, in addition to the dedicatory sacrifices which they had offered that day.

Their guilt, we may therefore note, was not as a result of a formal transgression of any of the regulations involved in the sacrificial service, but rather lay in man's desire to break through, as it were, to the Almighty and cleave to his Creator not in accordance with the prescribed ordinances, but rather in conformity with the dictates of his own heart. The acceptance of the yoke of heaven which is the aim of the whole Torah is here replaced by a religious ecstasy which is free from the trammels of normative religious discipline, unrestrained, and unsubservient to the divine will. For this reason they were punished.

Hirsch introduces a topical note into his explanation:

Closeness and nearness to God can only be attained by being disciplined to His will — this is the chasm separating Judaism from idolatry. The idolator wishes to bend his god to his own will and heart's desire by means of the sacrifice, whilst the Jew wishes, through his sacrifice, to stimulate himself to fulfil the will of the Creator ...

We may understand the death of the sons of Aaron on the eighth day of their consecration, as a warning to future generations of priests to avoid personal and subjective predilections and ordinances of their own invention in their approach to the service in the Sanctuary which belongs to God and is governed by His law and not by any new fangled innovations introduced into the order of service. Only by observance of the precepts of the Torah can the priest of Israel remain true to his principles.

### Shemini 3

In the preceding chapters we dealt with the death of the two sons of Aaron, their sin and Moses' reassurance of the latter with the phrase: "This is that the Lord spoke..." (Leviticus 10, 3). The Torah describes Aaron's acceptance of the Divine judgement on his sons in the brief phrase:

וְיִשְׁאַל מֹשֶׁה :

**And Aaron held his peace.** (Ibid.)

**The Birur appends this explanation:**

This implies patience and resignation as in the text: "Resign (*לְזִמְרָה*) thyself unto the Lord; and wait patiently for Him" (Psalm 37, 7). Aaron regained his peace of mind and his soul did cleave to God who is sanctified through his holy ones.

But this silence or resignation is followed, on the same day, by another incident in which Aaron does not appear in such a patient mood:

וְיִשְׁאַל מֹשֶׁה לְאָבָר :

וְיִשְׁאַל מֹשֶׁה :

ପିଲାର୍ଦା ଧଳିମ କେତେ ଏହିବୁ;  
ମନେତା ହେବିଲେ ଏହିବୁ;  
ଶେଷକୁ ମନେମ ହେବି  
ପିଲାର୍ଦା ଧଳିମ ଏହିବୁ;  
ମନେତା ହେବିଲେ ଏହିବୁ;  
ଶେଷକୁ ମନେମ ହେବି  
ପିଲାର୍ଦା ଧଳିମ ଏହିବୁ;  
ମନେତା ହେବିଲେ ଏହିବୁ;  
ଶେଷକୁ ମନେମ ହେବି

Then Moses made searching inquiry about the goat of the sin-offering and found that it had been burnt. He was angry with Eleazar and with Ithamar Aaron's surviving sons, saying: Why did you not eat the sin-offering in the sacred place, seeing it is most sacred, and He hath given it to you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord? Behold the blood of it was not brought into the sanctuary within; ye should certainly have eaten it in the sanctuary as I

And Atton makes unto Morsus  
commendation.

Behold, this day have they offered their sin-offering and burnt-offering before the Lord, and there have befallen me such things as these; and if I had eaten the sin-offering today, would it have been well-pleasing in the sight of the Lord? When Moses heard that, it was well-pleasing in his sight.

The above passage calls for careful study. What prompted Moses' anger against Aaron at this tragic moment? In what way did Aaron's

Out of respect for Aaron, Moses directed his anger to the sons.

Alshekh explains that Moses' anger was engendered by his reaction to the tragedy that had happened the same day, when the other sons of Aaron had called down Divine retribution for their disobedience. He was afraid of a recurrence of the tragedy. Once bitten twice shy. The text purposely adds he was angry with the two sons of Aaron *that were left*. Out of his deep concern for them, he wanted to be extra careful.

Our Sages however did not conceal their disapproval of Moses' anger and consider that it had been misplaced:

Our Sages however did not conceal their disapproval of Moses' anger and consider that it had been misplaced:

Our teacher Moses we led into error by his anger. R. Eliezer said: On three occasions Moses' anger led him into error. You find: "And Moses was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron that were left". What does it say? — "Why did you not eat the sin-offering . . ." You find also: "And he said, Hear now, ye rebels" (Numbers 20, 10). What does it say? — "And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his rod twice". You find here too (*ibid.* 31, 14): "And Moses was angry with the officers of the host".

1

What does it say? — "And Eleazar the priest said unto the men of war . . .". Our teacher Moses was led into error by his anger.

(Sifrei)

Our Sages were no respector of persons and if the text indicated that the patriarchs and prophets, even the greatest of them, were guilty of transgression, they made no bones about it. Moses was by nature hot-tempered, as we see from his killing the Egyptian, reproofing his quarrelsome brethren and upbraiding the Israelites. In every case, his anger was prompted by injustice. Nevertheless, our Sages did not gloss over his weaknesses. At the same time, they were quick to note his greatness of character which is also revealed in our context:

**וְנִזְבַּח אֶלָּא שֶׁבָּרְךָ בְּעֵינֵינוּ**

"And when Moses heard that; it was well-pleasing in his sight". He admitted his mistake and was not ashamed to say, 'I didn't know.'

(Rashi)

Rashi's source adds that he was not ashamed to say: "I knew but I forgot". The Midrash goes even further to underline Moses' modesty and extraordinary strength of character:

**וְנִזְבַּח אֶלָּא שֶׁבָּרְךָ בְּעֵינֵינוּ**

Moses issued a proclamation throughout the camp and said: I misinterpreted the law and my brother Aaron came and put me right.

(Yayikra Rabbah 13, 1)

Another commentary (*Ha'amek Davar*) adds that this Midrash wished to teach scholars in every age to be modest and ready to admit publicly their mistakes.

Accordingly, Aaron had behaved correctly and it was Moses who had forgotten the law. Earlier, Moses had, indeed, transmitted to them the ruling that the "meal-offering that remaineth of the

offering" should be eaten "beside the altar; for it is most holy" (Leviticus 10, 12—14). But that applied only to the special sacrifices ordained for that particular occasion. Their bereavement did not override carrying-out these rites as ordained. It was here that Moses and Aaron differed. Moses presumed that Aaron and his sons had to carry on with the service, in every respect, as usual, in spite of their bereavement. But Aaron knew that the sin-offering which he burnt was part of the regular sin-offering of the New Moon. In such case, their state of mourning precluded them from partaking of it. Some will take issue with this reading into the text of a legal discussion. The plain sense seems to support the thesis that Aaron was merely giving expression to his personal feelings, engendered by the tragedy that had overtaken his sons. So Luzzatto explains:

I and my four sons offered up the sin-offering to atone for ourselves. In spite of this, look what happened! My two sons died! Evidently we are not acceptable to God. If then our partaking of the sin-offering is to atone for the congregation, is it conceivable that we can atone for the congregation whilst we are thus out of favour with God! If we had insisted on partaking of the sacrifice, congratulating ourselves that we still enjoyed the Divine favour, "would it have been well-pleasing in the sight of the Lord?" Would He not rather have been even more angry with us?

They were not then prompted by legal exactitude to refrain from partaking of the sacrifice but rather by their conscience. They felt morally unfit. But does a sense of guilt free man from responsibility to perform his duties. Rashbam's explanation sounds more plausible:

"Behold, this day have thy offered their sin-offering and their burni-offering" — this refers to the sin- and burnt-offering of Aaron and his sons alluded to previously: "Take thee a bull-calf for a sin-offering and a ram for a burni-offering" (ibid. 9, 2). His sons had assisted in receiving the blood. Aaron thus argued, 'Why are you angry with my sons?' Only today did we make our dedication offerings which were marred by a great personal tragedy and: "there have befallen me such things as these". How then can I partake of the most holy sin-offering on the day when our joy has been thus marred and suspended?

The *Biur* adds:

If I restrained myself and did not weep in order to show publicly my acceptance of the Divine judgement, would it be well-pleasing in the sight of the Lord to partake of the sin-offering in joy, whilst my heart is full of grief and sorrow; especially, when the meat of the sacrifice has to be eaten in joy and not in grief.

Aaron was not afraid that he had lost the favour of God. But his personal grief interfered with him carrying out the service in the right spirit. He was forbidden to rend his clothes as a sign of mourning, but he was not obliged to force himself to rejoice. The sacrifice does not bring the worshipper nearer to the Divine, automatically, without it being accompanied by the proper state of mind. The sacrifice symbolises the joyful consecration of he who offers it. The Almighty who sees into the hearts of all his creatures and protects the broken in spirit appreciated Aaron's argument. Moses as the Divine emissary, faithful to Divine principles therefore concurred:

לְעֵינָךְ תַּעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט

And when Moses heard that, it was well-pleasing in his sight.  
(10:20)

*Questions for Further Study*

- Rashi cites Rabbi Eliezer's dictum regarding the three occasions on which Moses was led into error in commenting on Numbers 31, 21:

"אָמַר אַלְעֹזֵר הַכֹּהן אֶל־אַבְנָזֵר: לְעֵינָךְ תַּעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט כִּי־אַתָּה שָׁוֹרֵת מִשְׁמְרָת מִלְּאָמִרָה, שָׁאוֹרָה (וְקָרָא) שְׁוֹרָת מִשְׁמְרָת גִּזְעָלָת. וְאַתָּה אַתָּה מִצְחָא בְּשִׁמְמִינָה נִצְחָא בְּגִזְעָלָת. אֲבָל לְכָל כַּעַס — בְּגִזְעָלָת." (ת"ז: ז' שְׁנָצְרָעָה עַל־אַלְעֹזֵר אֲחָרָה בְּגִזְעָלָת. וְאַבְנָזֵר בְּגִזְעָלָת. וְאַתָּה שְׁנָצְרָעָה אֶת־רוֹן — אֲבָל לְכָל כַּעַס — בְּגִזְעָלָת.)

"And Eleazar the priest said unto the men of war" — Moses was led into error by his anger and forgot the laws governing the cleansing of heathen utensils . . .

Can you explain why Rashi did not cite the *Sifrei* in our context (Leviticus 10, 17) or in the second case (to Numbers 20, 10) and why he only quotes it with reference to the case of the spoils of war in Numbers 31, 21?

- Where else in the Torah do you find that Moses forgot the law and had to be instructed by others, not being ashamed to admit his mistake?
- What is the difference between *va-yidom* and *va-yishok* — Both are expressions of silence? See Psalm 37, 7 and Lamentations 3, 18.

<sup>1</sup> See *Studies in Bereshit*, p. 195.

### WOULD THE LORD'S PEOPLE WERE PROPHETS

The Torah is at pains to present both sides of the Biblical heroes, not concealing their but human faults. Even Moses is not described as the perfect man, but we see him also in his moments of impatience and weakness. Though he displayed these in reaction to the provocation of the generation of the wilderness, their grumblings and lack of faith, the Torah does not excuse them or gloss over them.

In our sidra, too, Moses is depicted in a mood of impatience, descending as it were from his perfection, denouncing the rebelliousness of the people and protesting, as it were, against the Almighty's treatment of him:

תְּהִנֵּן אֶת־מִצְרָיִם לְשֹׁם אֶת־עֲבֹדָתֵךְ  
לְאַתָּה אָנוּ בְּבָרָךְ שְׁאָתָה כְּלַיְלָה  
אָמֵן קְרָב אֶל־עַלְמָה יְיָ  
תְּהִנֵּן אֶת־מִצְרָיִם לְשֹׁם אֶת־עֲבֹדָתֵךְ  
לְאַתָּה אָנוּ בְּבָרָךְ שְׁאָתָה כְּלַיְלָה  
אָמֵן קְרָב אֶל־עַלְמָה יְיָ

... Wherefore hast Thou dealt ill with Thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in Thy sight, that Thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? I am not able to bear all this people myself alone, because it is too heavy for me.

And if Thou deal thus with me,  
kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand,

if I have found favour in Thy sight;  
and let me not look upon my wretchedness.

(11, 11, 14—15)

Isaac Arama makes an illuminating comment on Moses' protestations in his *Akedat Yizhak*:

See how far removed these words of Moses are from those he uttered after the deed of the Golden Calf! — “Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin —; and if not blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written” (Exodus 32, 32). Here his anger brought Him to sin in that he spurned his mission and office over the people of the Lord with which he had been entrusted. This constituted somewhat presumptuous conduct vis à vis his Creator, for who would say to his earthly sovereign: Take your appointment and office in which I have no desire; all the more so in the case of the Sovereign Creator!

What was Moses' punishment? We do not find that Moses was punished on account of this demand, but rather that it was acceded to. Is then the above verdict on his conduct erroneous? Since his request was acceded to, perhaps this is a sign that it was in order?

There are other instances in Scripture where individuals fell short of the desired standard of conduct, and made unjust demands. But the Almighty in acceding to their request transformed His favourable response into a new challenge more difficult than the previous. If they withstood the new test, their success cancelled out their previous moral failure which ultimately proved a blessing.

This is the inner implication of the story in the first book of Samuel (chapters 8—12) where it is related how the people requested a king and how the Almighty, ultimately, but not willingly acceded to their request. After Samuel had remarked that: “Your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking you a king,” he continued:

תְּהִלָּה תְּהִלָּה שֶׁאָמַר בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם אֱלֹהִים  
בְּלֹא עֲלֹת בְּלֹא כְּלֹל :  
אָמַר קָדוֹשׁ אֱלֹהִים תְּהִלָּה  
תְּהִלָּה תְּהִלָּה רְאֵבָן אָמַר  
בְּלֹא עֲלֹת בְּלֹא כְּלֹל :

Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have asked for;

and, behold, the Lord hath set a king over you.

If ye will fear the Lord, and serve Him,  
and hearken unto His voice,  
and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, and both  
ye and also the king that reigneth over you be followers of the  
Lord your God.

(1 Samuel 12, 13—14)

Similarly, the Almighty acceded to Moses' request, providing him with loyal helpers to assist him in his task:

תְּהִלָּה תְּהִלָּה שֶׁאָמַר בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם אֱלֹהִים  
בְּלֹא עֲלֹת בְּלֹא כְּלֹל :  
אָמַר קָדוֹשׁ אֱלֹהִים תְּהִלָּה  
תְּהִלָּה תְּהִלָּה רְאֵבָן אָמַר  
בְּלֹא עֲלֹת בְּלֹא כְּלֹל :

And the Lord said unto Moses:  
Gather unto Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tent of meeting, that they may stand there with thee.

And I will come down and speak with thee there; and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them;

and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.

(11, 16—17)

But the new situation confronts him with another challenge and more difficult test of his sincerity. How would he regard those newly appointed to share the burden of office and the inspiration of leadership that had been vouchsafed him? An episode, small in the number of verses devoted to it, but highly significant in its implications, is recounted in the context of the execution of the Divine command to assemble the seventy elders:

And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the Lord; and he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the Tent. And the Lord came down in the cloud, and spoke unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and put it upon the seventy elders; and it came to pass, that when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, but they did so no more. But there remained two men in the camp, the name of one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad; and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were recorded, but had not gone out unto the Tent; and they prophesied in the camp. And there ran a

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*Would the Lord's people were prophets!*

young man, and told Moses, and said: "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp". And Joshua the son of Nun, the minister of Moses from his youth up, answered and said: "My lord Moses, shut them in". And Moses said unto him: "Art thou jealous for my sake? would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His spirit upon them!" (11, 24—29)

What had happened here? In particular what is meant by the story of the two men of whom it is stated that they were left behind in the camp and on whom the spirit rested:

...And they were of them that were recorded, but had not  
gone out unto the Tent...

There is a difference of opinion in the Talmud regarding the interpretation of this passage and the implication of the phrase as applied to the two men.

"But there remained two men in the camp . . ." Some maintain that they were left at the ballot boxes. For when the Holy One blessed be He said to

Moses: "Gather unto me seventy men", Moses said: How should I go about it? If I select six from each tribe there will be two too many. If I select five from each tribe there will be ten short. If I select six from one tribe and five from another, I shall sow envy between the tribes. What did he do? He selected six from each tribe, and brought seventy two slips. On seventy he wrote the word "elder" and two he left blank. He shuffled them and put them in the ballot box. He said to them: Come and pick out your slips. Whoever picked out a slip marked "elder" was told by Moses: Heaven has already consecrated you. Whoever picked out a blank was told by him: The Omnipotent does not desire you, so what I can do for you?

R. Shimon said: They were left in the camp. When the Holy One blessed He said to Moses "Gather unto me seventy men". Eldad and Medad therupon said: We are not worthy of this honour. Said the Holy One blessed be He: Since you belittle yourselves, behold I shall add honour unto your honour. What was the honour that he added to them? That all the prophets prophesied but did so no more, whilst they prophesied but did not cease.

(Sanhedrin 17a)

Most commentators accept the view of R. Shimon that they were left in the camp. Here is how Abravanel elaborates on the view of R. Shimon:

Our Sages have already related that Moses selected six elders from each tribe making seventy two in all, in order not to sow envy between the tribes. Eldad and Medad, knowing that God had only commanded the appointment of seventy, in their humility and so as not to shame the two who would not be chosen remained, of their own free will, in the camp and did not come to the Tent of Meeting with the rest of the elders. The Holy One blessed be He does not withhold just reward from His creatures. These two worthies were rewarded with prophetic bounty for their action in not coming to the Tent of Meeting.

If then the Almighty rewarded them for their behaviour why did Joshua want to shut them up? Joshua thought that their inspired volubility smacked of prophetic license. Only those around the Tent of Meeting on whom Moses would bestow his spirit were authorised to prophesy. But Moses did not share his opinion. Note each word of his reply:

תְּהִלָּה תְּהִלָּה מִשְׁפַּט תְּהִלָּה  
אֲכֹרֶב אֲכֹרֶב אֲכֹרֶב  
מִצְרָיִם מִצְרָיִם מִצְרָיִם  
בְּמִצְרָיִם בְּמִצְרָיִם בְּמִצְרָיִם

And Moses said unto him:

"Art thou jealous for my sake?  
would that all the Lord's people were prophets,  
that the Lord would put His spirit upon them!"

(11, 29)

Isaac Arama explains to us how Moses withstood the test of jealousy:

In my view the prophet's words, on this occasion, constitute a remarkable example of humility. Apart from not envying those who were his disciples and the work of his own hands (as alluded to in the Talmud Sanhedrin 105b: "A man envies everyone except his own son and disciple"), he earnestly desired that all the people of God should be prophets and that the Almighty should bestow His spirit upon them without him. Although this was a thing which every other man would be jealous of, he did not display jealousy.

There is just one more detail to note, seemingly insignificant, but, in reality, profoundly instructive. Buber draws attention to the fact that Moses in his reply does not use the same form of the verb which the lad reporting the matter did when he said: "Eldad and Medad are prophesying (מִתְנִגְדָּה) in the camp". Moses does not answer: "Would that the Lord's people would prophesy" but rather:

תְּהִלָּה תְּהִלָּה מִשְׁפַּט

*Would that all the Lord's people were prophets . . .*

In other words, Moses does not ask, on their account, that the spirit of the Lord should rest on them momentarily, that they should be seized by a sudden prophetic frenzy, as it were, but rather that they

should attain the permanent status of prophets, the status to which he had attained, involving direct communion with God, receiving the Divine orders directly from Him (See Buber's *Moses*, p. 150). Moses here then expresses the same desire worded by the prophet Joel, in his vision of the latter days:

בְּעִירָה אֲמַתְּנָה  
לְלֵבֶן כְּלֵבֶן  
וְאַשְׁרָה אֲשְׁרָה  
מִצְרָיִם מִצְרָיִם  
וְאַתְּנָה תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה

**And it shall come to pass afterward,**  
**That I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh;**  
**And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,**  
**Your old men shall dream dreams,**  
**Your young men shall see visions.**

(Joel 3, 1)

Hirsch explains the significance of Moses' words as follows:

We are shown that there is no monopoly of spiritual leadership. The spiritual powers granted by God are not the privilege of any particular office or status. The lowest of the nation shares with the highest the opportunity of being granted Divine inspiration.

Moses' failure to rise to the occasion, in the first place, when he spurned the mission and high office of leadership bestowed on him by God is transformed into victory. His unwillingness to bear the burden of leadership alone, led the Almighty to confront him with a severer test. Moses proved however that his heart was completely untouched by envy, and that he was ready to bestow his spirit elsewhere, and even regard without envy the granting by God of His spirit directly to whomsoever He chose.

תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה

וְאַתְּנָה תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה  
וְאַתְּנָה תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה  
וְאַתְּנָה תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה  
וְאַתְּנָה תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה  
וְאַתְּנָה תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה

### BLACKENING THE BEAUTIFUL

(12, 1)

A very puzzling situation is described in our sidra. Miriam the prophetess committed a sin and was severely punished for it. But her offence is not explicitly stated. What was her sin? Commentators differ regarding the exact content of Miriam's offensive utterance which is not recorded for us in the Torah. The only thing which is quite clear to all of them was that her utterance was an offensive one. This is evident from the wording of the Torah where the phrase "speak against" or disrespectfully of Moses is used. This is implied in the Hebrew: *dabber be...*

A distinction must be made however, as the translators do, between the use of *be* in the first verse: *be-Moshe* — "And Miriam... spoke *against*" and in the second verse where it is rendered by: "Hath the Lord indeed only spoken *by* Moses".

There, *be* is an adverb expressing agency "by means of" as the construction of the sentence indicates.

Both verses have formed the basis on which commentators have built their surmises as to the exact contents of Miriam's utterances, utilising the hints contained in verse 1 and the actual words of Miriam and Aaron in verse 2.

# **T'RUMATH TZVI**

**The Pentateuch**

with a translation by

**SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH**

and excerpts from

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steadily southward. 10. There was a famine in the land, and Abram went down into Mitzrayim to sojourn there, because the famine was severe in the land. 11. And it came to pass when he was close to entering Mitzrayim that he said to his wife, Sarai: "Look, I do know that you are a beautiful woman to look upon. 12. And it will come to pass when the Mitzrites will see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife,' and they will kill me, but they will keep you alive. 13. Therefore please say that you are my sister, so that, in order for them to

אֲבָרְם הַלֹּךְ וְנִסְעֵן הַמְגַבָּה: ס' וַיֹּאמֶר רֹאשׁ  
בָּאָרֶץ וַיַּד אֲבָרְם מִצְרַיָּה לְגֹור שֶׁם כִּי־כָבֵד  
הַרְעָב בָּאָרֶץ: י' וַיֹּאמֶר קַאֲשֶׁר הַקְּנִיב לְבָוֹא  
מִצְרַיָּה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־שְׂרֵךְ אֲשֶׁר־הַגְּהָגָנוּ  
דְּעַמִּי כִּי אָשָׁה יִפְתַּח־מִרְאָה אַתָּה: יב וְהַיָּה פִּי־  
יְרָא אַפְקָל הַמְצָרִים וְאַמְרוּ אֲשֶׁר־זָאת וְהַרְגָּנוּ  
אָתָּי וְאַתָּה יְמִינָּא אֲתָּה אֶת־לְמַעַן

spiritual metropolis of the people was set not in the north, the most prosperous region, but in the south, the most arid part of the land. The success of the Torah is not dependent on physical conditions. God says, "Out of the rock do I satisfy you with honey." And ¶, the command given to Abraham, drew him farther and farther into the inhospitable south.

10-13. *There was a famine in the land.* With these words we come to a story that at first glance seems more than a little strange. That Abraham should have abandoned the land that had been assigned to him, instead of putting his trust in God, Who knows how to provide for men even in the midst of famine and wilderness! That he—or so, at least, it seems—should have so compromised the moral welfare of his own wife in order to save himself! Yet, even if we were not capable of explaining away the strange events in this story and even if, indeed, we would have to say with Ramban [Nahmanides] that by his behavior toward his wife Abraham had inadvertently committed a grievous sin, indeed, that even his abandoning, at a time of famine, the land to which he had been directed was a sinful act, all this should not embarrass us. The Word of God does not seek to portray our great men as paragons of virtue; it deifies no man. It says of no one: "This is the ideal; in this man did the Divine assume human form." It does not set before us the life of any one human being as the model from whom we might learn what is good and right, and how we should conduct ourselves. When the Word of God wishes to put before us a model to emulate, it does not choose a man who is born of dust. Instead, God presents Himself as the model, saying, "Look upon Me! Emulate Me! Walk in My ways!" It gives us no occasion to say, "This must be right, because So-and-So did it." The Torah is not an "anthology of paragons." It relates events not because they are necessarily worthy of emulation but simply because they took place.

The Torah does not attempt to hide from us the

faults, errors and weaknesses of our great men, and precisely thereby it places the stamp of credibility upon the happenings it relates. The fact that we are told about their faults and weaknesses does not detract from our great men; indeed, it adds to their stature and makes their life stories even more instructive. Had they all been portrayed to us as models of perfection, we would have believed that they had been endowed with a higher nature not given to us to attain. Had they been presented to us free of human passions and inner conflicts, their nature would seem to us merely the result of a loftier predisposition, not a product of their personal merit, and certainly no model we could ever hope to emulate. Take, for instance the *תִּתְנַשֵּׁא* [humility] of Moses. If we did not know that he was capable also of flying into a rage, his humility would seem to us an inborn trait not within our capacity to emulate. It is precisely his outburst *תִּתְנַשֵּׁא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־עַמּוּדָיו* [Hear now, you rebels . . . —Numbers 20:10] that lends his humility its true greatness, for it shows us his humility as the product of a mighty labor of self-control and self-refinement which we should all emulate because it is within our own capacity to do so. Also, the Torah relates no sin or error without telling us also of its consequences, great or small.

Hence let us learn from our great teachers of Torah—among whom Nahmanides certainly is one of the most outstanding—that we must never attempt to whitewash the spiritual and moral heroes of our past. They are not in need of our apologetics, nor would they tolerate such attempts on our part. *תְּהֻמָּה*, truth, is the seal of our Word of God, and truthfulness is the distinctive characteristic also of all its genuine great teachers and commentators. All this would still be true even if we were compelled to agree with the Nahmanides that "Abraham had inadvertently committed a great sin."

But before we attempt to pass sentence [on Abraham] let us study the facts in the case more closely.

Abraham leaves Canaan after the onset of a severe famine. He does not wait to see whether God will pro-

- Korah 2

malcontents of all kinds. Included were Levites who felt aggrieved at being appointed to minister to the priests, Reubenites who considered they had been deprived of the birthright which had been transferred to the tribe of Joseph. According to Ibn Ezra they suspected Joshua (an Ephraimite) of using his influence to favour his own tribe over others. Then there were the firstborn of Israel who felt aggrieved because the privilege of priesthood had been taken from them and granted to the Levites who had not served the golden calf. It is easy to fan the flame of discontent and such a procedure would be made unusually easy if we accept Nahmanides' timing of the rebellion straight after the incident of the spies. Nahmanides states:

וְאַתָּה קֹרֶב בְּנֵי אַנְשֵׁים וְאַנְשֵׁת בְּנֵי אַנְשֵׁים  
בְּנֵי אַנְשֵׁים וְאַנְשֵׁת בְּנֵי אַנְשֵׁים וְאַנְשֵׁי אַנְשֵׁם

Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kehath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Pelet, sons of Reuben took men:

And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown.

And they gathered themselves up against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, ye take too much upon ye, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?

(16, 1—3)

Who were the two hundred and fifty men who followed Korah, Dathan and Abiram to rebel against Moses who led the children of Israel out of Egypt through the desert, the prophet of the Lord who received the Torah at Sinai? What was their grievance? According to Ibn Ezra, this rebel band contained grumblers and

THE GRIEVANCES OF KORAH AND COMPANY

Were anyone to have questioned Moses' authority at any other time, the people would have stoned him outright, since they ardently loved Moses their leader and obeyed him. Consequently Korah put up with the high office filled by Aaron, the firstborn with the lofty station of the Levites and all Moses' deeds. But when they arrived at the wilderness of Paran and the Israelites were burnt at Taberah (Num. 11, 1—3) and died at Kibrot Hataavah (verses 33—34) and sinned with the spies, the princes of the tribes being killed by the plague and the people condemned to die in the wilderness, then the people became bitter and some began to doubt the wisdom of Moses' leadership. It was this moment that Korah found opportune to start his mutiny and this was the significance of his reference to them being brought to be killed in the wilderness.

Korah wished to channel all this simmering discontent to his own benefit. But the Torah does not afford us details of the way he went around fanning their discontent against Moses. This our Sages reconstructed for us applying the following verses to the situation.

אֲשֶׁר־אָשֶׁר לֹא־לֹא־בְּשִׂירְבְּנִים  
בְּנֵרֶךְ אֲמִים לֹא־צָקָן  
וְבְמִשְׁבֵּב־לְזִים לֹא־שָׁבָב:

**Happy** is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the wicked and in the way of the sinners hath not stood and in the seat of scorers hath not sat.

(Psalms 1, 1)

Commenting on this verse the Midrash (*Shoher Tov*) states:

"In the seat of scorners . . ." this refers to Korah who made scorn of Moses and Aaron. What did Korah do? He assembled all the congregation as it said: "And Korah gathered all the congregation against them". He began to speak to them words of scorn, saying: There was once a widow in my neighbourhood who had two fatherless daughters and one field. When she came to plough, Moses said to her: "Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together" (Deut. 22, 10). When she came to sow, he said to her "Thou shalt not sow thy field with divers seeds" (Leviticus 19, 19). When she came to reap and stack the corn, he said to her, Leave gleanings (*leket*) the forgotten sheaf (*shikkhezah*) and the corner of the field (*pe'ah*) for the poor. When she came to church, he said to her, Give tithes (*maaser*) from your

In the above excerpt, the Torah, whose ways are the ways of peace is seen through distorted spectacles. All Korai's ranting contains the familiar rabble-rousing ingredients of demagogy. In the first place, there is no constructive criticism of the law, no reasoned argument but merely a hardship story containing personal details regarding how a particular person suffered from the rigours of the law. Naturally, the hero of the story has to be someone whose very name will excite compassion, a widow. Whose heart would not melt at the sight of a widow's suffering? Yet the Torah's decree knows no mercy!

Second, the story omits to mention that that same oppressed and wronged widow victimised, as it were, by the cruel decrees of the

Torah is together with the orphan and stranger, the subject of very special concern and protective legislation —

the Torah to the malcontents as demanding, extorting and giving nothing in return.

Third, Korah's speech does not lack the familiar stock-in-trade of the demagogue, the weapon of personal abuse. Aspersions are cast on the legislator bringing the law or its executor into disrepute

Thou shalt not take a pledge of a widow's garment

(Deut. 24, 17)

ପ୍ରମାଣିତ

**Thou shalt not afflict any widow and the fatherless**

The very same widow who when she owns property is obliged to give *leket*, *shikhehah* and *pe'ah*, is entitled to them, when in need.

ଏ ପରିମାଣ କେବଳ ଦ୍ୱାରା ପରିଷାର କରିବାକୁ ପାଇଁ ଦେଖିଲୁଛି ଏହାରେ ଏହାରେ ଏହାରେ

When thou reapest thy harvest and hast forgotten a sheaf in  
the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it. It shall be for the  
stranger, fatherless and widow.

When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the  
boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless and  
widow.

(Deut. 24, 19—20)

So much they do in the name of the Holy One...

Accordingly, not the Torah was to blame but rather its administrators, Moses and Aaron who had distorted its regulations to

This was how our Sages pictured Korah's methods of misleading  
and then own needs, and that of their officials and mimics.

the people, of the way he "took" implying as Rashi explains "took with words", that is, seduced the people. Many will ask how is it possible to conceive that the people who had been redeemed from slavery, for whom the waves of the sea had parted, who had received the Torah at Sinai, amidst thunders and lightnings, led by the cloud by day and pillar of fire by night — how was it conceivable that a people vouchsafed such miracles could succumb to the guile and abuse of one such as Korah?

This was indeed the case. Though two hundred and fifty officially took the plunge and went over to Korah, many more were influenced by his words, as the succeeding chapters indicate. True:

କ୍ଷେତ୍ର, ଏ, କ୍ଷେତ୍ର ଅନୁଭବ-ୟ ଦେଖିବ, ଏ ଯେ କ୍ଷେତ୍ର କୌଣସି

The precepts of the Lord are upright — making glad the heart.  
The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

(Psalms 19, 9)

But the heart of man is crooked and there is no light which man through his stupidity and shortsightedness, cannot succeed in dimming and darkening.

Like any demagogue, Korah stresses the obligations rather than the privileges. Just as the taxpayer only sees the burden imposed on him and not the benefits in the way of health, education, public security and other public services that he enjoys in return, so Korah depicts

## Questions for Further Study

1. "Now Korah... and Dathan and Abiram... and On took  
And they rose up before Moses with certain of the children of  
Israel, two hundred and fifty men..." (Numbers 16, 1—2)

The author of *Tzedah La-derekh* queries the odd word order in the above two verses. Why does it not say simply that Korah, Dathan, Abiram, On, took certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes and they rose up against Moses? Can you suggest an answer?

2. "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation,  
every one of them, are holy..." (Ibid. 3)

Why does not the text read "all the congregation is, all of it, is holy" in the singular, as the grammar would dictate; *edah* being singular?

3. Korah jumped up and said to Moses: Is a *tallit* completely blue free from the requirement of *tzitzit*? Moses replied: it still requires *tzitzit*. Whereupon Korah retorted: A *tallit* that is all *tzitzit* (i.e. blue) still requires them and yet four threads free an ordinary *tallit* from the requirement of *tzitzit*? He then asked: Does a house full of Torah scrolls require a *mezuzah*? Yes! replied Moses. Whereupon Korah retorted: The whole Torah with its 278 chapters does not free the house, yet the two chapters inside the *mezuzah* do? You were never given such ordinances. You fabricated them yourself!

(Midrash Tanhumah)

"And Dathan and Abiram". What did Korah do? He assembled 250 heads of the sanhedins mostly from the tribe of Reuben, his neighbours, ... clothed them each with a *tallit* completely blue and presented them to Moses. They asked: Does a *tallit* completely blue require *tzitzit* or not? It does! replied Moses. Whereupon they began to mock him: Is it conceivable

that a *tallit* of another type only requires one thread of blue, yet a *tallit* wholly blue still requires a blue thread?

(Rashi)

- (a) Why did our Sages above put a question on the subject of *tzitzit* in the mouth of Korah? In what way is it appropriate as the pretext for his rebellion?  
(b) Why did Rashi in citing from the Midrash omit the question relating to the house full of Torah scrolls, resting content with the first question?

### THE ISRAELITES' ROLE IN THE KORAH MUTINY

In the previous chapter we discussed the respective grievances — of "Korah's congregation". We shall devote ourselves on this occasion to one passage in the story which is simple in its wording but difficult to understand.

In the first half of the chapter the struggle involves Moses, on the one hand, and Korah and his congregation, on the other. The whole of this congregation airs its views:

וְכִרְבֵּן קָרְבַּן מִזְבְּחַת אֱלֹהִים וְעַל־מִזְבְּחַת כָּל־עֲדֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
: כ רַבְנָתָן כָּל־עֲדֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

You take too much upon yourselves; all the congregation is holy, every one of them and the Lord is among them; why do you then lord it over the assembly of the Lord?

(16, 3)

Moses replied, harangued, reproved, strove to placate them. They retorted, Dathan and Abiram with greater impudence than the rest, till Moses made his final proposition regarding the firepans "for the morrow". Where were the rest of the Israelites? On whose side did they range themselves? Were they swept along in the murky current of the malcontents, joining Korah's hand or did they remain loyal to Moses their teacher and prophet? The text has hitherto paid no attention to them.

In verse 19 we do have an allusion to an attempt by Korah to influence them to join forces with him:

וְקָרָב אֶל־מִשְׁבַּח אֱלֹהִים לְפָנֵי קְרָב אֶל־מִזְבְּחַת מֹשֶׁה

**And Korah assembled all the congregation against them (i.e. Moses and Aaron) to the door of the tent of meeting.**

Rashi observes:

With words of scorn. The whole of that night he repaired to the tribes and seduced them: Do you imagine that I am concerned only for myself. I am concerned for you all. They are monopolising all the high offices: him the kingship, his brother, the priesthood! — till all of them were won over.

But we are still uninformed as to the extent of their acceptance of Korah's point of view. Did they merely agree to come to the tent of meeting and watch the proceedings to see how things would work out or did they share his views? Perhaps subsequent verses will clarify matters:

וְקָרָב אֶל־מִזְבְּחַת אֱלֹהִים לְפָנֵי קְרָב אֶל־מִזְבְּחַת כָּל־עֲדֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

**And Korah assembled all the congregation against them to the door of the tent of meeting**  
**Whereupon the glory of the Lord appeared to all the congregation.<sup>1</sup>**

The suddenness of this Divine revelation portrayed His indignation. Let us study the contents of the message accompanying the Divine revelation:

וְקָרָב אֶל־מִשְׁבַּח אֱלֹהִים לְפָנֵי קְרָב אֶל־מִזְבְּחַת מֹשֶׁה  
וְקָרָב אֶל־מִזְבְּחַת כָּל־עֲדֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל : כ רַבְנָתָן כָּל־עֲדֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

**And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron saying:**  
**Separate yourselves from this congregation**  
**that I may consume them in a moment.**

(16, 20)

This verse raises many problems. First of all, who is the congregation? Who were faced with the threat of retributive extinction? Our commentators differ. Nahmanides cited the view of Rabbenu Hananel only to repudiate it, prefacing first another question:

It may be asked, if the Israelites had in no way sinned or rebelled against their master why the anger against them and the threat to consume them in an instant? If they too had rebelled like Korah and his band how could Moses and Aaron say: "Shall one man sin and wilt Thou be wrath with the whole congregation?"

Rabbenu Hananel explained the demand to "separate from the congregation" to refer to the congregation of Korah and not that of the children of Israel. "And they said. O God, the God of all spirits . ." Whereupon the Almighty immediately informed Moses that he had intended to consume not all the children of Israel but merely the congregation of Korah. For this reason the Almighty clarified His original message. When I said "separate yourselves", I meant "Get you up from about the dwelling of Korah" (v. 24).

According to this interpretation, Korah only succeeded in winning over his own immediate followers, his congregation, whereas Moses had misunderstood the Divine threat to refer to the whole people. The second message of God in verse 24 is merely a clarification of the first one. Shadal (Luzzatto) takes a similar attitude—the congregation referred to by God were the incense offerers whom God did not wish Aaron to join because they would not wait for the morrow. Moses, on the other hand, had thought that God had meant to involve the whole or the major part of the people. But besides the difficulty of attributing to Moses such a mistake in understanding the prophetic message, Nahmanides objects to R. Hananel's interpretation on other grounds.

He is not correct since the term "congregation" could not be applied to three individuals — Korah, Dathan and Abiram, since they did not constitute a congregation and the Israelites were not with them, whereas Aaron was with the congregation of incense offerers. Further, the command "separate yourselves" referred to Moses and Aaron alone, as in 17, 10: "Get you up". The threat to consume them in a moment alluded to the plague which would consume a great multitude in an instant. Far be it for Moses to misunderstand a prophecy and be misled.

But this is the true explanation. At the beginning all the people supported Moses and Aaron. It was only when Korah and his band assembled with their firepans at the entrance of the tent of meeting with Moses and Aaron and told the people that he was fighting not for himself but for their rights, that they began to be won over and imagined that perhaps it would please God to restore the priesthood to their firstborn. This is the force of "And Korah assembled all the congregation against them". By this they all merited destruction since they had doubted their leader which was tantamount to doubting the Divine Presence, repudiating the message of the prophet in their heart, making themselves liable to death at the hands of Heaven. Moses and Aaron defended them by arguing that they had not sinned in deed, but that Korah was to blame for seducing them. He alone should die as a public example. This is the way of the intercessor to extenuate the sin as regards the community, as a whole, and place the blame on the individual who is, on all counts, guilty. Compare David's plea: "Behold I have sinned and done perversely, but these sheep, what have they done? let thy hand, I pray Thee be against me and against my father's house" (2 Sam. 24, 17).

According to Nahmanides the Almighty had meant to consume the whole congregation who were guilty of inner rebellion against Moses His prophet, but the latter had endeavoured to extenuate their conduct. But Moses's intercession raises another problem alluded to by Isaac Arama in his *Akedat Yizhak*.

"Shall one man sin and will Thou be wroth with all the congregation? What was unusual in this? Surely not all of them had sinned with the Calf, yet it is stated (Ex. 32, 10): "Leave Me and let My anger be kindled against them that I may consume them". Similarly with Achahn it is stated (Joshua 22, 20): "Did not Achahn commit a trespass concerning the devoted thing and wrath fell upon all the congregation of Israel? and that man perished not alone in his iniquity?" The individual is a part of the whole just as the whole man is sick even when only one part of the body is affected.

**On the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron saying, You have killed the people of the Lord.**

(17, 6)

*Questions for Further Study*

It is reasonable to assume that the Almighty had never intended to punish those who had not sinned but only referred to the congregation of Korah, whereas Moses understood that He referred to the whole-congregation of Israel since it is stated that "Korah assembled against them all the congregation". Moses imagined the Almighty assumed that the whole of Israel had followed Korah, and for this reason threatened to destroy them in a moment. Moses therefore interceded "God, God of all spirits . . ." since he saw nothing criminal in the conduct of the people. The fact that Korah had assembled them did not mean that they had all been won over by his words. But he understood from the fact that God wished to destroy them that in their hearts they really had been influenced by Korah, since God is the God of all spirits and knows what is going on in men's minds.

Nevertheless Moses placed the chief blame on Korah who had misled them. God should therefore not be angry with the whole congregation. He defended them on the grounds that they had not spontaneously committed his sin but had been misled into it. They did not merit being destroyed in a moment in the same way as the misleader himself.

"Speak unto the congregation, Get you up from about the dwelling of Korah". It never entered My mind to punish all the congregation. On the contrary, I know that they were not won over by Korah. When I said separate yourselves from the congregation, I meant that all Israel should separate themselves from the congregation of Korah. This is indicated by the wording of the text "And God spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying". What is the force of the word *saying*? To whom should they say? But God wanted them to instruct all the Israelites to separate themselves. Moses however misunderstood the Divine message.

1. Does the *Kli Yakar* follow Rabbenu Hananel or Nahmanides or elaborate a third interpretation?

(*Kli Yakar*)

**On the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron saying, You have killed the people of the Lord.**

(17, 6)

*Questions for Further Study*

It answered him that his wrath was caused by the fact that their standing near the wicked implied that that they condoned their actions. They had to show by keeping away that they did not share their views.

(Malbim)

According to the foregoing commentators, the Israelites were in the dangerous situation characteristic of many people to this day.\* They neither agreed with Korah nor actively opposed him, but stood aside to see how things would work out. (Our Sages condemned this attitude and regarded Abraham's brother, Haran, as the archetype of the opportunist. In a well known Midrash they describe how Haran debated with himself whether to follow Abraham into the furnace to which Nimrod had resolved to cast him as punishment for his iconoclastic activities. He said, If Abraham comes out alive I shall proclaim my monotheism like Abraham. If not, I shall support Nimrod. Abraham came out unscathed but when Haran was thrown into the furnace, he was burnt). The Almighty therefore demanded that the congregation get up from about the dwelling of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. But again the question arises, why did Moses the faithful mediator between God and Israel not transmit the Divine order in exactly the same words as he had received it? Instead he said:

סִרְאָה אֶת־עַל־אֲדֹנֵי תְּמִימָדִים דְּלָא־לְגַעַב  
לְאַל־עַשְׂרָה קְרַב־לְעַדְתָּךְ כְּבָדָה  
לְאַל־עַדְתָּךְ כְּבָדָה קְרַב־לְעַדְתָּךְ :

\* [Cf. Bunyan's Mr. Facing-both-ways] T.

**Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men  
and touch nothing of theirs,  
lest you be swept away in all their sins.**

(16, 26)

Ashlukh suggests that Moses' substitution of the phrase *suru na* (depart I pray you) for *he'alu* (get you up) implied a softening of the Divine order. He tried to persuade them for their own good, in order to placate them.

I am not asking you to get away from them completely but just to move away a little. The succeeding verse states, "they got them up" implying that they left unwillingly, as if they had been forced to leave, shamed by Moses. For this reason, Moses had himself gone to the place and stood by Korah, Dathan and Abiram to make sure they would be shamed into moving, and did not communicate the Divine message through an intermediary.

(Aishlikh)

On the other hand, another commentator gives the very opposite explanation. *He'alu* implies merely to move away a little, whereas Moses, who understood the Divine intention gave it greater force by asking them to depart or turn aside completely, both physically and spiritually, from all connected with Korah and his evil doctrines. The Israelites however contented themselves with moving away — physically — from the place from fear of the immediate consequences, but inwardly did not repudiate Korah's evil path and the material greed symbolised by it. In proof of this, we may cite what happened immediately after the miracle and dreadful punishment meted out to Korah and his followers:

מִתְאַחֲרֵי קָרָה וְאֶבְרָה כִּי יְלִשְׁאָל מִתְנַדְּרָה עַל אֶבְרָה : נִמְצָא אֶבְרָה

Arama's answer explains the connection between verse 22 — Moses' intercession — and verse 23 — the Divine answer and reaction:

(16, 26)

Divine anger is directed against the community for the sin of the individual as in Achan's case when the individual is knit to his group and is identified with it (since in such a case we blame the community for not having warned him or disassociated itself from his acts. Further if the community is all of one mind, it is more likely they will be influenced by the misdeeds of the guilty person. They are indeed like the body which is affected by the sickness of one of its limbs — it quickly spreads further — Commentary of Haim Joseph Falk). But when the sinner has separated himself from the community and taken himself to one side to take issue with them, the burden of sin is already removed from them. We no longer hold the public guilty then for the misdeed of the individual. It is like a limb that has been severed from the living body, having no further connection with it.

We may now understand Moses's plea: "Shall one man sin and wilt Thou be wroth with all the congregation". For according to Arama, Korah did not succeed in winning over all the Israelites. On the contrary he separated himself from the congregation to dispute with Moses (as Rashi explains, the first words of our sidra: "And Korah took . . ." — he took himself to one side to dispute the priesthood.) Now we may understand how apt is the Divine reply in the next verse:

God rightly demanded that just as Korah and his band had separated themselves from the rest of the congregation so should the congregation actively separate and disassociate themselves from Korah.

(Akedat Yizhak)

This also solves another difficulty raised by Ibn Atar (*Or Ha-Hayyim*). Why should the Israelites merit instant destruction even if they happened to be standing among Korah's band. Surely Aaron who was with them was unharmed when the ground opened underneath them. What was the purpose of the Divine demand to

2. Proof that the punishment for the seducer is not the same as that of his victim is brought from *Beha'otkha*. Where?
3. In what way does *Kli Yakar* deviate from the usual interpretation in his understanding of the term "God of all spirit?"
4. In what way does he deviate from the usual sense in his understanding of the word "saying?"

NOTE:

<sup>1</sup> The appearance of the Divine glory was evidently a sign of His indignation. Hizkuni explains: Moses told Korah in the name of God: "Turn up before the Lord you and Aaron on the morrow". Korah did otherwise, "assembled all the people" (i.e. did not wait for the morrow). On account of this he was angry with them, immediately.

DATHAN AND ABIRAM

In the previous chapter we dwelt on the content of the grievances aired by Korah and his company, the causes of the rebellion, its timing and the attitude of the people. This time we shall endeavour to get to know the persons who headed it.

Four of them are named:

תְּאֵלֶּה וְאַתָּה וְאַבִּירָם וְאַתָּה וְאַתָּה

Korah, Dathan and Abiram and On the son of Peleth...

(16, 1)

The last-mentioned is referred to but once in the account, and nothing more is heard of him. As for Korah himself — his words are recorded for us on one occasion only, and then not as the only spokesman, but as one of the whole company of malcontents, together with Dathan, Abiram and others.

תְּאֵלֶּה קָדְשָׁךְ כָּל־עֲדָתֶךָ בְּרִית  
וְאַתָּה כָּל־עֲדָתֶךָ בְּרִית  
וְאַתָּה כָּל־עֲדָתֶךָ בְּרִית  
וְאַתָּה כָּל־עֲדָתֶךָ בְּרִית

You take too much upon yourselves, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them; why then do you lord it over the assembly of the Lord?

(16, 3)

MOSES' SIN

Again in a later sidra, *Pinhas*, evidently in order to arouse Moses to the need for a successor, after Aaron was no longer with him,

କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ପାଇଁ ଏହା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା କିମ୍ବା

ପୁରୁଷାଦିକ, ହୃଦୟ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା  
ଜୀବନ ଧୂର୍ପା କା ହୃଦୟରେତରୁ ଧୂର୍ପା ପିଲ୍ଲା  
ହୋ ମୁଖ୍ୟ ହୃଦୟ ଜୀବନ ଅନ୍ତିମ ମୁଖ୍ୟ  
ପିଲ୍ଲା ଧୂର୍ପା ହୃଦୟ

And the Lord said unto Moses and Aaron,  
Because ye believed not in Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of  
the children of Israel,  
therefore ye shall not bring this assembly into the land which I  
have given them.

These are the waters of Meribah, where the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and He was sanctified in them.

(20, 12-13)

And the Lord said unto Moses,  
Get thee up into this mountain of Abarim, and behold the land  
which I have given unto the children of Israel.  
And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto  
thy people

as Aaron thy brother was gathered; because ye rebelled against My commandment in the wilderness of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify Me at the waters before their eyes.

(27, 12-14)

And on the fourth occasion near the end of the Torah on the eve of Moses' death in *Ha'azin:*

And the Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mountain of Abarim, and behold the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people as Aaron thy brother was gathered; because ye rebelled against My commandment in the wilderness of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify Me at the waters before their eyes.

And the Lord spoke unto Moses that selfsame day, saying, Get thee up into this mountain of Abarim, unto Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession; and die in the mount whither thou goest up and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered

Because ye trespassed against Me in the midst of the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified Me not in the midst of the children of Israel.

The accusations leveled against Moses were grave indeed:

Because ye believed not in Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of  
the children of Israel,  
ye rebelled against Me,  
ye rebelled against My commandment . . . to sanctify Me . . .  
at their eyes  
ye trespassed against Me . . .

The place where the sin occurred is clearly located in our text — the waters of Meribath-Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin. The

His whole sin lay in erring on the side of anger and deviating from the mean of patience, when he used the expression “hear ye now ye rebels!” The Holy One blessed be He censured him for this, that a man of his stature should give vent to anger in front of the whole community of Israel, where anger was not called for. This behaviour in such a man constituted a profanation of the Name (*Yeshua ha-shem*), since he was the model of good conduct for all the people, who aspired to find their worldly and other-worldly happiness in emulating him. How would they regard anger in him, when as we have explained, that it is an evil springing from an evil side of one’s character. The text “Ye have rebelled against My commandment” implies that Moses was not just addressing anyone, but an assembly the most ignorant housewife of which was reckoned as the prophet Ezekiel, as our Sages observed. Whatever he did or said would be subject to scrutiny. When they saw him thus in anger, they must certainly have concluded that he was not displaying personal animus or pique but, on the contrary, had not God been angry with them at their demand for water, Moses would not have been provoked. Yet we do not find that God was angry or showed disapproval when he told Moses to take the staff and assemble the people. We have thus in dressing

from our main topic succeeded in solving one of the obscurities of Scripture — the nature of Moses' sin.

Maimonides refers to two sins — one a personal one of Moses in inclining to anger. But since this could not be read into the text "ye have rebelled against My commandment" he emphasises another offence, that of misleading the people by his display of anger with regard to the nature of the Deity. They would imagine that God was angry with them for demanding water and the All-Merciful was wrathful even when the occasion did not warrant it. They would imagine the Deity was a cruel forbidding God and not the Compassionate Father of all, hastening to quench the thirst of His people by commanding water from the flinty rock. In this sense Moses and Aaron had rebelled against God's commandment. Nahmanides takes Maimonides to task and refutes his arguments, citing the wording of the text.

The Torah speaks of Moses not believing in God and nowhere mentions that Moses was angry or waxed wroth. Aaron was never guilty of anger — his whole life was one of peace-making and yet both Moses and Aaron were guilty of the same sin.

Nahmanides concludes:

We must admit that God was angry with His people for their disbelief "because ye despised the word of the Lord in your midst and wept before Him saying, Why did we leave Egypt?" Other texts refer directly to the Israelites striving with God "they are the waters of Meribah wherein the children of Israel strove with the Lord". What greater transgression could there be than this? Moses also remarked that the Lord was angry with him "For your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not come there". How can Maimonides therefore maintain that God was not angry with them and it was Moses who gave the wrong impression?

Nahmanides also rebuts the argument based on the fact that no allusion is made to God's anger in His command to Moses to speak to the rock and satisfy the people's thirst. He observes:

Know that when men are in dire need of sustenance, even if they murmur and sin against Him, He the All-Merciful forgives iniquity and does not give vent to all His displeasure, does not refer to it but accedes to their request. The same happened on the first occasion when He answered calmly "Pass in front of the people . . . and smite the rock that water should go forth from it and the people may drink" (Ex. 17, 5), although the demand was accompanied by trials and strivings which were an example for all time.

Nahmanides notes too that God did not show his anger with regard to the manna but sent it, in spite of His displeasure, merely informing them of their sin:

"I have heard the grumblings of the children of Israel". But when they grumbled for no cause whatever, then he poured out His anger on them. There was a difference between the Divine displeasure at complaints which had some basis and the anger at arbitrary grumbblings as in the case of Korah and the spies.

Nahmanides ends his attack on Maimonides' explanation with a triumphant quotation from the Psalms:

"And they angered Him at the waters of Meribah, and it went ill with Moses for their sakes" (Ps. 106, 32). The "ext thus includes this sin under the great trials with which they tried God in the wilderness.

Nahmanides offers therefore another explanation citing **Rabbenu H. Hananel**.

Moses made the fatal mistake of saying, "Shall we bring you forth water", instead of saying "Shall God bring you forth water", as in all the other miracles where the authorship of God is always explicitly stressed (cf. Ex. 16, 8 "when the Lord giveth you meat in the evening to eat"). The people might have been misled into thinking that Moses and Aaron had extricated the water for them, by their own skill. Thus they failed to "sanctify Me in the midst of the children of Israel".

This explanation gains in plausibility when we recall that the children of Israel had, but a short while previously, left a land of

enchantments and sorcery and were very likely to attribute the production of water to Moses and Aaron's magical skill. Thus the two great leaders of Israel were liable to defeat the purpose of the whole Torah by their sin of omission. Their whole life was directed at propagating the idea of the omnipotence and providence of God and here was another golden opportunity of driving the lesson home. It may be argued, however, that the people had been shown the hand of God on so many previous occasions that there was no reason to doubt that they would fail to discern the hand of God on this one. Nahmanides anticipates this argument and endeavours to show that, on all other occasions, the hand of God was plainly visible. The last occasion on which they had been provided with water was accompanied by the appearance of the pillar of cloud standing over the rock (Ex. 17, 6). But here they saw nothing and by this the people were misled.

Nahmanides adduces further proof for his explanation from the phrase: "Because ye trespassed against Me", since whoever benefits from holy things is called a trespasser. Moses and Aaron had benefited from a kind of misrepresentation, by not making clear that it was God who brought the water out of the rock. They arrogated to themselves something belonging to God.

How does Nahmanides explain the other passages about "rebelled against Me", "did not believe Me?" —

They violated the express command of God to "speak to the rock before their eyes" in order to sanctify Him publicly thereby. They rebelled in the sense of deviating from the command of God in not taking every step that was necessary to publicise the power of God. Or perhaps the phrase "because you did not believe Me" refers to the children of Israel.

Ibn Ezra takes a different view and sees the fault of Moses and Aaron not in their actions at the rock or in any deviation from the Divine instruction but in their undignified reaction to the people's grumblings and threatenings. He comments that "Moses and Aaron came before the assembly (verse 6) — "as fugitives" instead of

sanctifying the name of God and showing initiative. There was no greater desecration of God's name than this. Joseph Albo reinforces this explanation, similarly taking issue with Maimonides and not accepting that the sin lay in the anger displayed by Moses, but rather in his display of lack of faith stressing the text, "because ye did not believe in Me".

A fundamental principle of the Torah and the root of faith emanating from the belief in His providence is that He subjugates nature to the will of the faithful, a thought which occurs in the Psalm to Moses (Ps. 91), the man of God that "He who dwelleth in the shelter of the Most High and sheltereth in the shadow of the Almighty" promises to deliver him from all snares, from all natural plagues, even to the extent of treading on the adder, viper, whelp and dragon. This is true of some righteous people, and how much more so of the prophets, for whose benefit miracles were constantly performed at their bidding! Elijah said: "As the Lord liveth surely there shall be no dew or rain these years except according to my word" (1 Kings 17, 1) ... Moses himself said, "If like the common death of all men . . . but if the Lord will create a new thing . . . and it came to pass when he had finished speaking all these words that the ground beneath them did cleave asunder and the earth opened its mouth" (Num. 16, 29 ff.). Yet we do not find that God had previously given him command regarding this matter. Thus said Isaiah (44, 26) "He establisheth the word of His servant and the counsel of his messengers perfecteth".

Whoever doubts that the Lord will implement the word of the prophet casts doubts, as it were, on the Torah, especially where sanctification of the Lord is involved, when it is proper to publicise that nature is subjugated to the will of those who observe the Law. The failure of a prophet to perform miracles to save the nation is liable to make people doubt the truth of the text that the Lord establishes the words of His servants, especially when the prophet through whom the Torah was given, would not rely on the efficacy of his own faith to invoke a miracle, changing the order of nature . . . this is the implication of the text "because ye did not believe in Me . . ." had Moses and Aaron invoked a miracle to cleave the rock, the Lord would have undoubtedly established the word of his servant and been sanctified in the eyes of all the people. As it was, they appeared as fugitives at the entrance to the tent of meeting, as Ibn Ezra observes, as if they were at a loss what to do. This certainly profaned the name of God and caused a diminution of faith. Ye did not believe, in the sense of you had not sufficient faith to invoke a

change in the natural order. Aaron and Moses acted, as they did, out of a sense of their own unworthiness; they did not wish to usurp such authority. Nevertheless it was accounted an iniquity and a symptom of lack of faith because it gave rise to a profanation of the name of God . . . You will find that Joshua, in similar circumstances did not wait for God to give him authority but relied on Him to do his will, and on his own initiative said, "sun stand still at Gibeon", and the Lord established his word. The Torah thus ascribes to Moses and Aaron the sin of insufficient faith, condemning them for not acting on their own initiative, without God.

Arama is thoroughly disgusted with this explanation and notes how what Rabbenu Hananel regards as trespass and rebellion is held by Albo to be desirable and creditable.

Moses never did anything except at the express bidding of God who never once disapproved of such obedience. Cf. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold I shall rain down on you bread from the heavens". The Almighty showed no disapproval of the fact that Moses had not produced, on his own initiative, bread and meat from heaven and earth. Afterwards at Rephidim the people asked for water — the same thing that happened in our context. Moses said: "Why do you strive with me and Moses cried unto the Lord saying, What wilt thou do unto this people? a little longer and they will stone me". By rights God should have been very angry at Moses' frenzied and impotent reaction. Yet God took no offence but said, "Pass before the people . . . behold I stand before thee there on the rock and thou shalt smite the rock and water shall flow therefrom that the people may drink".  
(Akedat Yizhak)

Arama likewise disposes of the argument that Moses and Aaron were perhaps prompted by a sense of their own unworthiness, by observing that it would have been the height of impertinence and folly for them to have desisted from sanctifying the name of God out of such considerations. Indeed, Moses and Aaron were perfectly correct in not anticipating a miracle from God. Arama is at pains to show that Moses had never acted on his own initiative not even in the case of Korah where the text explicitly notes that "it was not from my heart". Even the most trivial matter required a prior command of

God, "The Lord shall command thee and thou shalt be able to stand up" (Ex. 18, 23). Joshua also had not ordered the sun to stand still, but had previously prayed to God for help, and it was only when he was answered, that he acted and spoke as he did. It distinctly says that the Lord hearkened to the voice of man (Joshua 10, 14) and not that the sun hearkened to the voice of man, as Albo would have it. It is highly significant for us to observe how the approach of humility and discipline reflected in the *Akedat Yizhak* triumphs over the ecstatic miracle-working approach of Albo. We have to obey the commands and precepts of God and must certainly avoid any resort to miracles, to a revolution in nature. Even the greatest prophet has but to carry out the commands of His creator.

If Moses was neither guilty of arrogating to himself too much or not showing enough initiative wherein had he sinned? We are thus left in the position of the commentator (*Or Ha-Kayyim*) who, having exhausted all the original explanations, decided to revert to the simplest one known to every child, that Moses struck the rock instead of speaking to it, as the Midrash explains:

Four sins are referred to: "Ye did not believe" — wherein I did not tell you strike, yet you did strike; "Ye did not sanctify" to bring forth water from *any* rock they desired; "ye trespassed" — that you said "Shall we bring forth from *this* rock"; "ye rebelled" — wherein I told you to speak to the rock, yet you violated my words.

Nahmanides who refuses to accept all the other explanations we have outlined likewise attacks this one. He regards the approach of the Midrash as purely homiletical and not at all supported by the plain sense of the text. Since God had explicitly bidden Moses to "take the staff" that itself implied that he should strike the rock. Had He insisted on him speaking to the rock, there would have been no need for the staff. Nahmanides cited Moses' carrying out the bidding of God in sending the plagues in Egypt, where he was ordered to take his staff and always for the purpose of striking with it. The text doesn't have to be so explicit but leaves it to be understood that he

was to strike the rock. In any case, the miracle gained nothing by consisting of speaking rather than striking.

Nahmanides also observes that the text itself records that Moses spoke in the hearing of the rock regarding the bringing forth of water from it. Moses' action could therefore not be termed trespass. He did speak to the rock. In spite of all this, the simple explanation is the most plausible and is accepted by one our later commentators Luzzatto:

Moses our teacher committed one sin, but our commentators have heaped on him thirteen and more, each one of them having invented a fresh one... I have therefore hitherto refrained from going into this problem, for fear I might attribute a new sin to Moses!

Luzzatto remarks that he had accepted for fifteen years the explanation that Moses and Aaron had acted like cowards and failed to sanctify the name of God by prompt and courageous action but in the end had to admit that it did not fit the text, which speaks of rebellion and not of cowardice. He therefore accepted the interpretation of Rashi that Moses should have spoken to the rock. Admittedly, as far as the rock was concerned, it was all one whether he addressed it or struck it. But to the ordinary folk it certainly seemed more miraculous if the rock gushed water at Moses' oral command rather than at his physical blow, and the name of God would have been accordingly sanctified to a greater extent. It but remains for us to refer to the ingenious interpretation advanced in *Ha-ketav Ve-hakabalah* based on the text, "speak ye unto the rock before their eyes" (20, 8).

It should really have said "their ears" since speech is apprehended by the organ of hearing. We must therefore conclude that not external sight is meant but rather insight — the mind's eye, just as the phrase "And their eyes were opened" in the case of Adam and Eve implied that they became conscious inwardly of a new state of affairs, and not that any physical blindness of theirs was suddenly cured. Moses and Aaron were bidden to act

in a way calculated to impress the people with the omnipotence of God — appeal to their insight, that they should be made aware of God's providence. Rashi's comment, in the light of this becomes clearer: "Had you spoken to the rock to bring forth water I would have been sanctified in the eyes of the congregation who would have argued, If this rock which can neither speak nor hear yet fulfills the word of the Omnipotent, how much more so we".

We have cited many different explanations of the problem of Moses' sin. We can do no better than conclude with Maimonides' own closing words to this subject:

Set what we have said, against what has already been said about it, and let the truth have its way.

**פירוש שד"ל**  
**ר' שמואל דוד לוצאטו**  
**על**  
**חמשה חומשי**  
**תורה**



הוצאת דבר תל-אביב

\* - LIETZ, A TACKER GLASS GLD L.

ପାଦରେ କାହିଁ କାହିଁ ନାହିଁ : ତାଙ୍କ ମହିଳାଙ୍କଙ୍କ ମହିଳା କାହିଁ ନାହିଁ ।

ପାଇଁ ଅପ୍ରଯେ ଦେଖିଲୁ କଥା କଥା ହୁଏ ତାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ କଥା କଥା ହୁଏ : ସମ୍ମାନ କଥା କଥା ହୁଏ :

ପ୍ରକାଶକ - ଏମ୍‌ଆଲ୍



כִּי בָּאֲמָרָם : הַמָּן הַסְלָעָה הָתָה וְגַם לֹא רִיחָה תְּכִמָּנוּ אֶלָּא לֹרֶר : הַיְתִיכָּנֵ בְּדָרֶךְ הַטְּבָרָה  
שֶׁמְנַחַת הַתָּה יְצַא מִים ? לֹא ! וְעוֹתָה גַּוְיִצְבּוּ וּרְאוּ אֲתָה אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלָה הַ  
הָאָרֶץ יְצַא לִכְמָם מִמְּבֹר הַלְּלָשׂוֹן — וְאַתָּה בֹּהָה חֲסִירָה אֱמֹנוֹת כָּלָל . אֲבָל  
מָאֵר יָצַע לֹא אֱמֹנוֹת בַּיּוֹתְקָרָבָה שֶׁנֶּרְבָּה : יָצַע לֹא קְדוּשָׁתָם . אָתָּה (לְזֹבֶר)  
אֶל הַסְלָעָה, שְׁדָבֵר מִתְמָתָה כֵּזה תְּהִלָּה גּוֹרָם קְדוּשָׁה הַשְׁמָנוֹת  
אֲלֵיכָו אֱמֹנוֹת בַּיּוֹתְקָרָבָה (שָׁאָכֵל לְעַשְׂתָה כְּדָבֵר הַתָּה, לְהַזְכִּיאָה מִם בְּדִיבָר), תָּהִלָּה  
תְּהִלָּה דָּרֶךְ מִלְיצָה גְּבוּרָה, וְהָא הַגְּרוֹא Metonymia, (הַחַלְפָתָה מִילָּה אֶתְחָדָה  
בְּאַחֲרָה מִתְהָרֵךְ סְמִכּוֹת הַשְׁמָנוֹת אוֹ לִשְׁם קִינְגָּרָה), גְּרוּגוּמָה כָּל  
מִשְׁנָאִי אֲהָבוֹ מִוּתָה (מִשְׁלֵי חַדְלָה לְלִיָּה), אַזְּנָה כְּהָנוֹתָה שֶׁמָּה מִשְׁאָה אֶתְחָדָה  
אֶתְחָדָה רַעַת עַצְמָם, כִּי הָה בְּלִי אַמְשָׁנָה, בְּנֵי חַדְשָׁן שְׁבָטוֹן שְׁנָאָה בָּנוֹ (שְׁמֵן

**[ב]** בראה כי המאורע הזה איננו אותו שבסתומים (אי. יי'), אלא עכשו לquo. קצונו מעציריהם והasher בימי קדש. **[ג]** ותקזר נפש: קידר גרש מוד קידר אפיק, והוא הפל ארך אפיק, וgesch מוד אפיק, נשימה, כן ארכ אפיקים לר' תבורנה וקצבי רוח מרפים אלה (משלי י"ד ט), ולמעלתן מגנו (פסוק י"ז) קידר אפיק עשתה אלה. **[ח]** חילוק: כמה אגדות (יקרא א"ג מ"ב) מסאה (ישעיה ב"ז ח'). כתוב בספר התורה להו זה לעודות לשלא מלבדו! ששה מביאו מה שרים **[ט]** על כל יאמר בעפער מליחמות ה': כתוב מלבדו! ששה מביאו מה שרים כתוב בספר התורה להו זה לעודות לשלא מלבדו, שלא בטענו בגבול מואב; ולא

TABLE C-5-CONT

גראת קדשה

of his flock Israel — “that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd” (*ibid.*).

However our Sages in the Midrash who always sought the universal application in the Biblical account and not merely its immediate, transitory implications detected a hint of Moses' own sense of grievance at being so summarily dismissed, before he had finished his mission. Moses, the greatest of prophets but nevertheless human, could not resign himself to the cruel fate that "decreed his bones should fall in the wilderness on the threshold of the promised land, after he had run like a horse before the people for forty years" (Midrash).

## A SHEPHERD FOR THE CONGREGATION

**Qualify thyself to study Torah, since it doth not come to thee by inheritance.** (Pirke Avot 2, 12)

**Qualify thyself to study Torah, since it doth not come to thee by inheritance.**  
**(Pirke Avot 2, 12)**

שלא אמרו חורה ירושה היא להם.

**Why do not the children of scholars usually turn out to be scholars? Said Rabbi Yosef: That it should not be said that the Torah came to them by inheritance.**

The same principle embodied in the above citation from the words of our Sages governed the question of Moses' successor which is treated in our siddur. Moses' children did not inherit their father's exalted position, nor were they, indeed, granted any appointment. Their names are not even referred to in the passage concerned where it is stated that a man be appointed over the congregation "who may go out before them and who may go in before them and may lead them out and bring them in" (Numbers 27, 17). Nowhere in Moses' prayer regarding his successor is there any echo of the faithful shepherd's grievance that he had brought his flock thus far, and was not even granted to lead them to the longed-for, final goal. Neither do we find any trace of a suggestion by Moses to nominate his sons to succeed him. All that finds expression is his concern for the welfare

କୁଳ ପରିମା କୁଳ ପରିମା

**Who may go out before them, and who may go in before them,  
who may lead them out and bring them in.**

(27, 17)

It may be compared to a king who saw a certain orphan maiden and wished to take her to wife. When he sent to seek her hand in marriage she answered: I am not worthy to become the wife of a king! Whereupon he sought her hand seven times, but she still did not accede. In the end she married him. Subsequently the king became angry with her and wished to divorce her. Whereupon she said: I did not seek to marry you; you sought me! Since however you have thus decreed to divorce me and take another, do not bear as you have done.<sup>4</sup>

It was the same with the Holy One Blessed be He. Said Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani: Seven times did the Lord seek to entice Moses to accept His mission but he (Moses) replied: "Send I prithee with whom thou wilt send I am not eloquent..." (Exodus 4). Subsequently, the Lord prevailed upon him and he went on His mission and performed all those miracles through him. In the end He said to him: "Thou shalt not bring this assembly to the Land" (Numbers 20, 12). Said Moses to him: Lord of the Universe! I did not seek to go in the first instance; Thou didst begin. Since, however, Thou hast thus decreed regarding me, him who will enter, do not to him as Thou didst to me, but "who may go out before them and *so* in *before them*"<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, our Sages assumed that Moses did not lightly give up the idea of seeing his sons succeed him:

"Let the Lord . . . set a man over the congregation" (27, 16). What prompted Moses to make this request immediately after the chapter dealing with the laws of inheritance? — Since the daughters of Zelophehad inherited their father, Moses said: Now is the time to make my claims. If daughters inherit, then it is only right that my sons inherit my glory! Said the Holy One blessed be He to him: "Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof" (Proverbs 27, 18). Thy sons idled away their time and did not occupy themselves with study of the Torah; but, as for Joshua, much did he minister to thee and much honour did he apportion thee. He would betake himself

This drives home to us the lesson that "the Torah doth not come to thee by inheritance". Only those who labour in it inherit it. Now let us note how Moses ordained his successor in front of the congregation. For this purpose we shall carefully compare the ordination rite as commanded by God with the way it was implemented by Moses.

The Implementation

27 22-23

(27, 13-23) (22, 22-23)

1. Take thee Joshua... And he took Joshua
2. And lay thine hand on him And he laid his hands on him
3. And set him before Eleazar And set him before Eleazar...
4. The priest and before all the congregation And before all the congrega-tion

And gave him charge.

thine honour upon him.  
Our Sages drew attention to the difference between the command "lay *thine hand*" in the singular, and Moses' implementation in the plural: "He laid *his hands*".

Let us quote Bassi on this point:

אָמַר אֶל-אָבִיו: בְּרוּךְ הוּא שֶׁבָּרָא כָּל-הָעוֹלָם וְבָרוּךְ הוּא שֶׁבָּרָא כָּל-הָעוֹלָם.

"And he laid his hands" — generously (literally — with a generous hand), in much greater measure than he had been commanded. For the Holy One blessed be He said to him: "Thou shalt lay thine hand" in the singular, and he had done it with both his hands, making him as a vessel full to the brim and heaned not: so he filled him with a generous helping of his wisdom.

However, in one particular detail in the command to give of his honour or majesty to Joshua, there is no equivalent in the ordination ceremony, as carried out by Moses. This would seem to imply that, in this matter, Moses did not behave generously. But this is far from being true. The Italian Jewish commentator Isaac Reggio has aptly explained this omission:

"And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him". This refers to the charisma and authority with which the ruler should be endowed. Compare: "And bestowed on him royal majesty" (I Chronicles 29, 25 with reference to Solomon's assumption of sovereignty). Similarly Joshua was charged with charisma when Moses ordained him and appointed him. This charisma gave him the respect of the children of Israel. This is the force of the text: "That the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient" (Numbers 27, 20). Now it layeth not with any man to bestow his spirit on others. The Lord, however, promised that if Moses laid his hands on Joshua and set him before the congregation and gave him a charge in their sight, then He would grant him some of Moses' charisma.

Moses overcame all pangs of envy, and it was in no jaundiced spirit, but generously and magnanimously that he ordained his successor. Truly "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses" (Deut. 34, 10).

#### *Questions for Further Study*

1. "And Moses spoke unto the Lord, saying: Let the Lord the God of the spirits of all flesh . . ." (Numbers 27, 15—16) — To reflect credit on the righteous who, when they depart the world, leave their own affairs, and concern themselves with the public welfare.  
(Rashii)
  - What prompted the above comment of Rashii?
  - "Who may go out before them . . ." (ibid. 17). Note like the kings of the nations who sit at home and send their armies into battle; but as I did, when I fought Shon and Og, as it is stated (Numbers 21, 34): "Fear him not", and as Joshua did . . . and regarding David (1 Samuel 18, 16) "for he went out
2. "And lay thy hand upon him" as one who kindles one lamp from another. "And thou shalt put of thy honour upon him" — as one who empties from one vessel to another.  
(Bamidbar Rabbah 21, 16)
  - Explain the difference between the two similes.
  - Explain why the simile of the lamp is used with regard to the laying of hands and that of the emptying from a vessel with reference to the putting of honour.

and came in before them", the first to lead them out and the first to bring them in.

(Rashii)

- What difficulty does the text present?
  - Where can you find in Rashii on another text in the Torah an allusion to this same idea of "not like the kings of the nations who sent their armies into battle?"
  - The expression of "going out" almost invariably precedes that of "coming in" in a description of movement to and from a city, in the Bible. Cf. our text 27, 17; Deuteronomy 2, 2; Joshua 6, 1. Can you explain the reason for this?
  - "Take thee Joshua . . . a man in whom is spirit" (Numbers 27, 18). Every living person has spirit, but what is meant is, as in 1 Kings 2, 2 "be thou strong, and show thyself a man".  
(Ibn Ezra)
  - "A man in whom is spirit" — receptive to the light of the King, as in Exodus 21, 6: "In the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom".  
(Sforno)
  - What difficulty did both the above commentators detect in the text?
  - How does Ibn Ezra try to overcome the difficulty and what do we gather from 1 Kings 2, 2?
  - What other difficulty do you find in the text?
- "And lay thy hand upon him" as one who kindles one lamp from another.  
"And thou shalt put of thy honour upon him" — as one who empties from one vessel to another.  
(Bamidbar Rabbah 21, 16)
    - Explain the difference between the two similes.
    - Explain why the simile of the lamp is used with regard to the laying of hands and that of the emptying from a vessel with reference to the putting of honour.

fulfils the Torah holds all wisdom and all the Torah in his heart.' Whence this? For it is written, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, a good understanding have all they that do thereafter* (Ps. cxii, 10); *The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever* (*ib.* xix, 10); *Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom* (Job xxviii, 28).

7. And why did Moses merit that God should 'busy Himself with his burial?' Because when God went down to Egypt and the time for the redemption of Israel had come, all Israel were occupied with gathering silver and gold, but Moses was going round the city, and for three days and three nights was labouring to find Joseph's coffin, for the Israelites could not leave Egypt without Joseph. Why? Because he so bound them by oath before his death, as it is said, *And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, etc.* (Gen. L, 25). After Moses had tired himself out, a certain Segulah<sup>1</sup> met him and observing that he was weary from his efforts she said to him: 'My lord Moses, why are you tired?' He replied: 'For three days and three nights I have been going round the city to find Joseph's coffin and I cannot find it.' Said she to him: 'Come with me and I will show you where it is.' She took him to the river and said to him: 'In this place have the magicians and astrologers made for him a coffin of five hundred talents in weight and cast it into the river; and thus have they spoken to Pharaoh: "If it is your wish that this people should never leave this place, then as long as they will not find the bones of Joseph, so long will they be unable to leave." Immediately Moses' placed himself by the bank of the river and called out: 'Joseph, Joseph, you know how you have adjured Israel [with the words], *God will surely remember you* (*ib.*); give honour to the God of Israel and do not hold up the redemption of Israel; you have good deeds to your credit, intercede then with your Creator and come up from the depths.' Whereupon

immediately Joseph's coffin began to break through the waters and to rise from the depths like a stick. Moses took it and placed it upon his shoulder and carried it, and all Israel followed him. And whilst Israel carried the silver and gold which they had taken away from Egypt, Moses was carrying Joseph's coffin. God said to him: 'Moses, you say that you have done a small thing; by your life, this act of kindness is a great thing; since as you ignored silver and gold, I too will do unto you this kindness in that I will busy Myself with your burial!'

8. When Moses was about to depart this world, God said to him: 'Behold, thy days approach.' Whereupon Moses replied: 'Master of the Universe, after all my labour, Thou sayest unto me, "Behold, thy days approach"; I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord' (Ps. cxvii, 17). Thereupon God said: 'You cannot prevail [in this matter]. For this is [the destiny of] all men' (Eccl. xii, 13)! Moses then said: 'Master of the Universe, I ask of Thee one favour before I die, that I may enter,<sup>2</sup> and that all the gates of heaven and the deep be opened and people shall see that there is none beside Thee.' Whence this? For it is said, *Know this day, and lay it to thy heart, that the Lord, He is God . . . there is none else* (Deut. iv, 39). Whereupon God replied: 'You declare: "There is none else ('od)"; I too say, *And there hath not arisen a prophet since ('od) in Israel like unto Moses*, etc. (*ib.* xxxiv, 10); *In all the signs and the wonders*, etc. (*ib.* 11); *And in all the great terror, which Moses wrought in the sight of all Israel*' (*ib.* 12).

9. BEHOLD, THY DAYS APPROACH THAT THOU MUST DIE. R. Aibu said: 'Master of the Universe, with the word [Behold] with which I have praised Thee in the midst of the sixty myriads who hallowed

<sup>1</sup> E.V. 'For this is the whole of man.'

<sup>2</sup> It is not clear to what this refers. Radak and E.J. explain: that I may enter Eretz Israel. It is more likely, however, that he is referring to death: that I may enter the future life. \* Cf. *sipra*, ix, 9.

Thy name, hast Thou decreed death upon me, as it is said: BEHOLD; THY DAYS APPROACH THAT THOU MUST DIE. In all Thy acts [one sees] measure for measure; [then why dost Thou repay me] a bad measure for a good measure, a short measure for a full measure, a grudging measure for an ample measure? Whereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, answered: 'Moses, My use of the expression "behold" is also a good measure, as it is said, Behold, I send an angel before thee (Ex. xxii, 20); Behold, *the righteous shall be required in the earth* (Prov. xi, 31); Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet (Mal. iii, 23). And just as you have exalted Me before sixty myriads of people, so too will I exalt you in the time to come in the midst of fifty-five myriads of altogether righteous men, as it is said, *hen* (behold), the numerical value of *hen* being as follows, [the letter] hé, five and nun, fifty.

10. R. Johanan said: Scripture refers ten times to the death of Moses, as follows: *Behold, thy days approach that thou must die* (Deut. xxxi, 14); *And die in the mount* (ib. xxxii, 50); *But I must die* (ib. iv, 22); *For I know that after my death* (ib. xxxi, 29); *And how much more after my death* (ib. xxxi, 27); *Before his death* (ib. xxxiii, 1); *A hundred and twenty years old when he died* (ib. xxxiv, 7); *So Moses the servant of the Lord died there* (ib. 5); *Now it came to pass after the death of Moses* (Josh. i, 1); *Moses My servant is dead* (ib. 2). This teaches that ten times was it decreed that Moses should not enter Eretz Israel, but the harsh decree was not finally sealed until the High Court<sup>1</sup> revealed itself to him and declared: 'It is my decree that you should not pass over,' [as it is said,] *For thou shalt not go over this Jordan* (Deut. iii, 27). Moses, however, made light of this, saying: 'Israel have many times committed great sins, and whenever I prayed for them, God immediately answered my prayer, as it is said, *Let Me alone, that I may destroy them* (ib. ix, 14); yet what is written there? *And the Lord repented of the evil* (Ex. xxxii, 14); *I will smite them*

<sup>1</sup> i.e. God as Head of the Court on High.

*with the pestilence, and destroy them* (Num. xiv, 12); What is written there? *And the Lord said: I have pardoned*, etc. (ib. 20). Seeing then that I have not sinned from my youth, does it not stand to reason that when I pray on my own behalf God should answer my prayer? And when God saw that Moses made light of the matter and that he was not engaging in prayer, He seized the opportunity to swear by His great Name that Moses should not enter Eretz Israel, as it is said, *Therefore (laken) ye shall not bring this assembly* (ib. xx, 12), and 'laken' always implies an oath, as it is said, *And therefore (laken) I have sworn unto the house of Eli* (I Sam. iii, 14). When, however, Moses saw that the decree against him had been sealed, he took a resolve to fast, and 'drew a small circle'<sup>1</sup> and stood therein, and exclaimed: 'I will not move from here until Thou annullest that decree.' What else did Moses do then? He donned sackcloth and wrapped himself with sackcloth and rolled himself in the dust and stood in prayer and supplications before God, until the heavens and the order of nature were shaken. Said they: 'Perhaps it is the desire of God to create His world anew.' Whereupon a heavenly voice was heard proclaiming: 'It is not yet God's desire to renew His world . . . but, *In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind*—ish' (Job xii, 10), and 'man' must surely refer to Moses, as it is said, *Now the man Moses was very meek, above all men that were upon the face of the earth* (Num. xii, 3). What did God do? At that hour He had it proclaimed in every gate of each of the heavens,<sup>2</sup> and in every Court, that they should not receive Moses' prayer, nor bring it before Him, because the decree against him had been sealed. Now at that hour God hastily summoned the Angel in charge of Proclamations, Achzeriel by name, and He commanded the ministering angels: 'Descend quickly, bolt all the gates of every heaven, because the voice of the prayer threatens to force its way to heaven. And the angels sought to ascend to heaven because of the

<sup>1</sup> This is reminiscent of the exploits of Honi the Circle Drawer, cf. Ta'an. 23a. <sup>2</sup> There are seven heavens.

sound of Moses' prayer, for his prayer was like a sword which tears and cuts its way through everything, and spares nothing, seeing that his prayer was of the nature of the Ineffable Name which he had learnt from Zagzagel the Master Scribe of the children of heaven. It is to that hour that [the prophet] alludes when he says, *And I heard behind me the voice of a great rushing: Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place* (Ezek. iii, 12); and 'rushing', surely means trembling, and 'great' surely refers to Moses, as it is said, *Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people* (Ex. xi, 3). What is the meaning of, '*Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place?*' When the wheels of the Chariot and the fiery Seraphim saw that God commanded that Moses' prayer should not be accepted and that He did not respect [Moses'] person, nor grant him more life, nor bring him into Eretz Israel, they exclaimed: '*Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place,*' for before Him there is no respecting of persons, great or small. And whence do we know that Moses prayed at this juncture five hundred and fifteen times? For it is said, *And I besought (wa-ethhanan) the Lord at that time, saying* (Deut. iii, 23), the numerical value of 'wa-ethhanan' is this number. Moses said to God: 'Master of the Universe, the labour and the pains which I have devoted to making Israel believe in Thy name are manifest and known to Thee, to what trouble have I gone with them in connection with the precepts in order to fix for them Torah and precepts. I thought, just as I witnessed the woe, so too will I behold their weal; but now that the weal of Israel has come, "Thou sayest to me, "Thou shalt not go over this Jordan'" (Deut. xxxi, 2); lo, Thou makest of Thy Torah a fraud. Therein it is written, *In the same day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it, for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it; lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin in thee* (*ib.* xxiv, 15). Is this the reward for the forty years' labour that I went through in order that [Israel] should become a holy and faithful people, as it is said, *But Judah yet ruleth with God, and is*

*faithful with the saints'* (Hos. xii, 1)?<sup>1</sup> Sammael the wicked angel, the chief of all the accusing angels, was awaiting the death of Moses every hour, saying, 'When will the time or the moment arrive for Moses to die, so that I may descend and take away his soul from him.' And it is of him that David said, *The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him* (Ps. xxxvii, 32). There is no one among the accusing angels so wicked as Sammael and there is none so righteous among the prophets as Moses, as it is said, *And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face* (Deut. xxxiv, 10). He was like a man who has been invited to a wedding feast, and looks forward to it, saying: 'When will their rejoicing come that I may share therein.' So, Sammael the wicked was waiting for Moses' soul saying, 'When will Michael<sup>2</sup> be weeping and I be filling my mouth with laughter?' Whereupon Michael replied: 'What, you wicked one, I shall cry, and you laugh!' as it is said, *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; though I am fallen, I shall arise; though I sit in darkness, the Lord is a light unto me* (Micah vii, 8). '*Though I am fallen,*' because of the demise of Moses, yet, '*I shall arise,*' on account of the leadership displayed by Joshua when he shall have defeated the thirty-one kings.<sup>3</sup> '*Though I sit in darkness,*' because of the destruction of the first and the second Temples, yet, '*The Lord is a light unto me,*' in the days of Messiah. Meanwhile there remained unto Moses only one hour. Whereupon Moses said to God: 'Master of the Universe, if Thou wilt not bring me into Eretz Israel, leave me in this world so that I may live and not die.' God thereupon said to Moses: 'If I will not stay you in this world, how can I bring you back to life in the World to Come? And what is more, you make of My Torah a fraud, for in My Torah it is written by your hand, *And there is none that can deliver out of My hand*' (Deut. xxxii, 39). Said Moses to God: 'Master of the Universe, if Thou wilt not bring me into Eretz

<sup>1</sup>The A.V. has been retained here, as the Midrash obviously understands it in that sense. <sup>2</sup>Michael is one of the angels who save people. Cf. Ex. R. xviii, 5. <sup>3</sup>Cf. Josh. xii.

Israel, let me become like the beasts of the field that eat grass and drink water and live and enjoy the world; likewise let my soul be as one of them.' Whereupon God replied: 'Let it suffice thee' (*ib.* iii, 26). Moses then prayed: 'Master of the Universe, if not, let me become in this world like the bird that flies about in every direction, and gathers its food daily, and returns to its nest towards evening; let my soul likewise become like one of them.' Whereupon God answered: 'Let it suffice thee.' What is the meaning of 'Let it suffice thee'? God said to him: 'You have spoken sufficiently.' When Moses saw that no creature could save him from the path of death, he thereupon exclaimed, '*The Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice; a God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and righteous is He*' (*ib.* xxxii, 4). What did Moses do? He took a scroll and wrote down upon it the Ineffable Name, nor had the Book of Song<sup>1</sup> been completely written down when the moment of Moses' death arrived. At that hour God said to Gabriel: 'Gabriel, go forth and bring Moses' soul.' He, however, replied: 'Master of the Universe, how can I witness the death of him who is equal to sixty myriads, and how can I behave harshly to one who possesses such qualities?' Then [God] said to Michael: 'Go forth and bring Moses' soul.' He, however, replied: 'Master of the Universe, I was his teacher, and he my pupil, and I cannot therefore witness his death.' [God] then said to Sammael the wicked: 'Go forth and bring Moses' soul.' Immediately he clothed himself with anger and girded on his sword and wrapped himself with ruthlessness and went forth to meet Moses. When Sammael saw Moses sitting and writing down the Ineffable Name, and how the radiance of his appearance was like unto the sun and he was like unto an angel of the Lord of hosts, he became afraid of Moses and declared: 'Of a surety, angels cannot take away Moses' soul.' Now before Sammael showed himself to Moses, Moses knew of his coming, and when Sammael caught sight of Moses trembling, fear took hold of him, as of a

woman in travail, and he had not the effrontery to speak to Moses, until Moses said to Sammael, 'There is no peace, saith God, concerning the wicked' (*Isa.* lvii, 21). What are you doing here?' He replied: 'I have come to take away your soul.' Moses asked him: 'Who sent you?' He replied: 'He who created all the creatures.' Moses then said to him: 'You shall not take away my soul.' Whereupon he replied: 'The souls of all who come into this world are delivered into my hands.' Whereupon Moses said: 'I have greater strength than all who come into this world.' He then asked: 'And wherein lies your strength?' Moses replied: 'I am the son of Amram,' and came out from my mother's womb without prepuce, and had no need to be circumcised; and on the very day on which I was born I found myself able to speak and was able to walk and to converse with my father and mother, and I did not even take suck of [my mother's] milk; and when I was three months old I prophesied and declared that I was destined to receive the law from the midst of flames of fire; and [once] when I was walking in the street I entered the palace of the king and removed the crown from his head; and when I was eighty years old I wrought signs and wonders in Egypt and brought forth sixty myriads before the eyes of all Egypt; and I divided the sea into twelve divisions, and I made the bitter waters sweet; and I ascended heaven and trod out a path there, and engaged in battle with the angels, and received the law of fire, and sojourned under [God's] Throne of fire, and took shelter under the pillar of fire, and spoke with God face to face; and I prevailed over the heavenly *Familia*,<sup>2</sup> and revealed unto the sons of man their secrets,<sup>3</sup> and received the Law from the right hand of God, and taught it to Israel; and I made war on Sihon and Og,<sup>4</sup> the two giants of the heathens to whose ankles the waters of the flood did not reach because of their [great] stature; I caused sun and moon to stand still on high, and I smote them<sup>5</sup> with the staff in my hand and killed them;<sup>6</sup> is there

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sot. 12a.<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ex. R. xxviii, 1.<sup>3</sup> Cf. Shab. 89a.<sup>4</sup> Cf. Deut. ii, 17-18, 11.<sup>5</sup> I.e. Sihon and Og.<sup>6</sup> Cf. Sifre on Deut. par. 101.

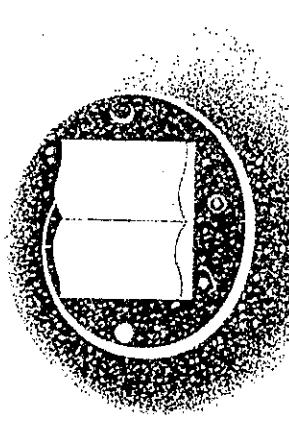
any one amongst mankind who is able to do likewise? Away, wicked one, from here, you must not speak thus, go, flee before me, I will not surrender my soul to you.' Immediately Sammael went back and reported to God. Whereupon God commanded Sammael, 'Go, and bring Moses' soul.' Straightway he drew his sword from the sheath and placed himself at the side of Moses. Immediately Moses became wroth, and taking hold of the staff on which was engraved the Ineffable Name he fell upon Sammael with all his strength until he fled from before him, and he pursued him with the Ineffable Name and removed the beam of glory [halo] from between his eyes and blinded him. Thus much did Moses achieve. At the end of a moment, a heavenly voice was heard, declaring: 'The end, the time of your death has come.' Said Moses to God: 'Master of the Universe, remember the day when Thou didst reveal Thyself unto me in the bush and didst say to me, *Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel from Egypt* (Ex. iii, 10); remember the time when I abode on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights, I implore Thee, do not hand me over into the hand of the Angel of Death.' Thereupon a heavenly voice was heard saying to him: 'Fear not, I myself will attend to you and your burial.' At that hour, Moses arose and sanctified himself like the Seraphim, and God came down from the highest heavens to take away the soul of Moses, and with Him were three ministering angels, Michael, Gabriel, and Zagzagel. Michael laid out his bier, Gabriel spread out a fine linen cloth at his bolster, Zagzagel one at his feet; Michael stood at one side and Gabriel at the other side. God said: 'Moses, fold your eyelids over your eyes,' and he did so. He then said: 'Place your hands upon your breast,' and he did so. He then said: 'Put your feet next to one another,' and he did so. Forthwith the Holy One, blessed be He, summoned the soul from the midst of the body, saying to her: 'My daughter, I have fixed the period of thy stay in the body of Moses at a hundred and twenty years; now thy end has come, depart, delay not.' Whereupon she replied: 'Master

of the Universe, I know that Thou art the God of all spirits and all souls, the souls of the dead and the living are in Thy keeping, and Thou hast created and formed me and placed me within the body of Moses for a hundred and twenty years. And now, is there a body in the world purer than the body of Moses in which there has never been an offensive smell, nor worm nor maggot, nor any kind of vermin; therefore I love him and I do not desire to leave him.' Whereupon God exclaimed: 'Soul, go forth, do not delay, and I will raise thee to the highest heavens and will place thee under the Throne of Glory next to the Cherubim, Seraphim, and other troops of angels.' Thereupon the soul replied: 'Master of the Universe, two angels, Uzah and Azael, came down from near Thy divine Presence and coveted the daughters of the earth and they corrupted their way upon the earth until Thou didst suspend them between earth and heaven. But the son of Amram from the day Thou didst reveal Thyself unto him at the Bush had no marital relations with his wife,' as it is said, *And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married; for he had married a Cushite woman* (Num. xii, 1).<sup>1</sup> 'I implore Thee let me remain in the body of Moses.' Thereupon God kissed Moses and took away his soul with a kiss of the mouth, and God, if one might say so, wept [as it is said], *Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?* (Ps. xciv, 16). And the Holy Spirit said, *And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses* (Deut. xxxiv, 10). The heavens wept and said, *The godly man is perished out of the earth* (Micah vii, 2). The earth wept and said, *And the upright among men is no more* (*ib.*). And when Joshua was looking for his master and did not find him, he also wept and said, *Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men* (Ps. xii, 2). And the ministering angels said, *He executed the righteousness of the Lord* (Deut. xxiii, 21). And Israel said, *And His ordinances with Israel* (*ib.*). These

<sup>1</sup>V. Shab. 87a; Yeb. 62a; Ex. R. xxi, 3

and those said, *He entereth into peace, they rest in their beds; each one that walketh in his uprightness* (Isa. LVII, 2); *The memory of the righteous shall be for a blessing* (Prov. X, 7). and his soul for the life of the World to Come. Amen. May this be His will. Blessed be the Lord for ever. Amen and amen.

## MIDRASH RABBAH



## LAMENTATIONS

Later, the people saw him entreating the gate-keeper to let him enter the palace, and he would not permit him. Everyone was amazed at this and said, 'Yesterday he was appointing generals, governors, and commanders-in-chief and now he in vain begs the gate-keeper to let him enter the palace.' The answer given to them was: '[His] hour is past.' So too with Moses. [Once] whatever he ordered God would fulfil, [as for example he said], *Rise up, O Lord* (Num. x, 35); *Return, O Lord* (*ib.* 36); *But if the Lord make a new thing* (Num. xvi, 30), that is to say, if an opening had been created for the earth during the six days of creation, it is well, and if not, *let God create one*<sup>1</sup>; and now he supplicates and prostrates himself to be permitted to enter the Land of Israel, and his prayers are not accepted. His hour is past [as is implied in the words], **AND I BESOUGHT THE LORD AT THAT TIME**.<sup>2</sup>

**4. AND I BESOUGHT THE LORD.** This bears out what Scripture says, *The poor useth entreaties; but the rich answereth harshly* (Prov. xviii, 23). R. Tanhuma said: '*The poor useth entreaties*'; this refers to Moses who approached his Creator with entreaties. '*But the rich answereth harshly*'; this refers to the richest Being in the world, God, who answered him harshly, as it is said, **SPEAK NO MORE UNTO ME** (III, 26). Another explanation: R. Johanan said: '*The poor useth entreaties*'; this refers to the prophets of Israel. '*But the rich answereth impudently*'<sup>3</sup>; this refers to the prophets of the other nations. R. Johanan said: There was no more righteous man amongst the nations of the world than Job, and yet he addressed God with reproaches, as it is said, *I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments* (Job xxxii, 4); there are no greater prophets than Moses and Isaiah, and yet both of them approached God with

<sup>1</sup> Num. R. xviii, 20. <sup>2</sup> I.e. because he prayed **AT THAT TIME**; when his hour was gone, his prayer was not accepted.  
<sup>3</sup> The Hebrew 'azith' may mean both harshly and impudently, as E.V. 'Harshly' is more suitable to the preceding interpretation, while here the E.V. can be retained.

supplications. Isaiah said, *O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for Thee* (Isa. xxxiii, 2); and Moses said: **AND I BESOUGHT THE LORD.**

Another explanation: **AND I BESOUGHT THE LORD.** This can be compared to a noble lady who gave birth to a son; so long as he was alive she used to enter the palace by right; when, however, her son died she began to seek entry through supplications. Similarly, so long as Israel remained alive in the wilderness Moses used to address God peremptorily<sup>1</sup> [as for example], *Lord, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people* (Ex. xxxii, 11); *Pardon, I pray Thee, the iniquity of this people*, etc. (Num. xiv, 19). When, however, the Israelites had died out in the wilderness Moses began to entreat [God] with supplications to be permitted to enter the Land of Israel, [as it is said], **AND I BESOUGHT**, etc.

**5. AT THAT TIME.** At which time? At the time when Joshua was appointed leader, as it is said, *And I commanded Joshua at that time* (Deut. iii, 21). R. Huna said: As soon as God said to Moses, 'Hand over your office to Joshua,' immediately Moses began to pray to be permitted to enter the land. He can be compared to a governor who so long as he retained his office could be sure that whatever orders he gave, the king would confirm; he redeemed whomsoever he desired and imprisoned whomsoever he desired. But as soon as he retired and another was appointed in his place, he had in vain to ask the gate-keeper to let him enter [the palace]. Similarly, so long as Moses remained in office he imprisoned whomsoever he desired, as it is said, *So they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit* (Num. xvi, 33); and he released whomsoever he desired, as it is said, *Let Reuben live, and not die* (Deut. xxiii, 6). But when he was relieved of his office and Joshua was appointed in his stead, as it is said, *Take Joshua, the son of Nun* (Num. xxvii, 18), he began to supplicate to be permitted to enter the land. God replied: **LET IT SUFFICE THEE** (III, 26).

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ymrz. Lit. 'with (a mighty) arm'.

6. Another explanation: AT THAT TIME, SAYING (LE'MOR). What is the force of the word LE'MOR? R. Azariah said: It is an intimation to the future generations to pray in time of trouble; for although to Moses it was said, *For thou shalt not go over this Jordan* (Deut. III, 27), yet he began to supplicate [God].

Another explanation: What is the force of the word LE'MOR? R. Akiba said: Master of the Universe, give me an answer to my words, whether I am to enter the land or not.<sup>1</sup>

Another explanation: What is the force of the word, LE'MOR? [Moses] said before God: 'Master of the Universe, let my [actual] sin be written down for future generations.'<sup>2</sup> R. Samuel said: This may be compared to a king who issued a decree that whosoever should gather and eat from the [unripe] fruits of the Sabbatical year<sup>3</sup> should be made to walk around the public assembly grounds [in disgrace]. One woman went and gathered and ate of the fruits; and she was made to walk around the public assembly grounds. She said to the king: 'Your Majesty, I implore you, let these unripe fruits be suspended from my neck so that the people of the city shall not say that I am guilty of witchcraft or some act of immorality; and when they see the unripe fruits around my neck they will know that it is on their account that I am made to walk around the public assembly grounds.' So Moses said before God: 'Let my actual sin be written down for future generations that Israel may not say, "Moses falsified something in the Torah," or, "he spoke something which

<sup>1</sup> Interpreting: 'And I besought the Lord' (beseeching Him) to say (whether I should enter the Promised Land).

<sup>2</sup> Now rendering: 'And I besought the Lord to say' (what my real sin was). In this and the preceding passage the subject of LE'MOR is God, not Moses, as in E.V.

he had not been commanded'<sup>4</sup>; and they shall know that it was merely because of the water<sup>5</sup> [that I was punished]. This is the force of the words, AT THAT TIME, SAYING.

7. O LORD GOD, THOU HAST BEGUN (III, 24). What is the force of the words, O LORD GOD? R. Joshua b. Karhah said: On two occasions Moses compared himself to Abraham and it was of no avail to him. How? God called to Abraham, and he answered 'Here I am', as it is said, 'And said unto him, Abraham; and he said: Here am I' (Gen. xxii, 1). What is the force of, 'Here am I'? Here am I ready for priesthood, here am I ready for kingship. And he received both priesthood and kingship. Whence do we know that he received priesthood? For it is said, *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent: Thou art a priest for ever after the manner of Melchizedek* (Ps. CX, 4). He also merited kingship, as it is said, *At the vale of Shaveh—the same is the king's vale* (Gen. xiv, 17).<sup>6</sup> Moses, too, desired to do the same, as it said, *And said: Moses, Moses. And he said: Here am I* (Ex. III, 4); here am I for priesthood, here am I for kingship. God, however, said to him: *Glorify not thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men* (Prov. xxv, 6). God said to him: 'Draw not nigh hither' (Ex. III, 5); you have no title to priesthood, as it is said, *And the common man that draweth nigh shall be put to death* (Num. I, 51); you have no title to kingship, as it is said, '[Who am I, O Lord God . . .] that thou hast brought me thus far?' (II Sam. VII, 18).<sup>7</sup> Abraham said: *O Lord God, what wilt Thou give me* (Gen. xv, 2)? R. Levi said: Abraham said to God: 'Master of the Universe, if it is due to me that I should have children, then give them to me, and if not, give them to me for

<sup>1</sup> And for that he was punished by not being permitted to enter Eretz Israel.      <sup>2</sup> Num. xx, 7 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Which according to the Rabbis was so called because Abraham was unanimously made king there; cf. Gen. R. XLII, 5.

<sup>4</sup> The first is based on the phrase 'drawing nigh' found in the first and second verses quoted; the second on the word *halom* (hither, thus far), which occurs in the first and third verses quoted.

mercy sake.' God answered him: 'I swear, that it is due to you,' [as it is written], *And behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying: This man shall not be thine heir* (*ib.* 4). Moses likewise said: 'O LORD GOD, THOU HAST BEGUN; if it is due to me that I should enter the Land of Israel, let me enter, and if not, let me enter for mercy sake.'<sup>1</sup> God, however, answered him: '"Glorify not thyself in the presence of the king, etc.'" FOR THOU WILT NOT PASS OVER THIS JORDAN.' And when Moses saw how emphatic God's words were, he began to plead strenuously.<sup>2</sup>

8. O LORD GOD, THOU HAST BEGUN: [Moses] said to God: 'Master of the Universe, why may I not enter the land? Is it because I said [to Israel], "Hear now, ye rebels"? (Num. xx, 10). Thou hast made use of these words before I did, viz. *To be kept there for a token against the rebellious children*' (*ib.* xvii, 25).<sup>3</sup> Another explanation: THOU HAST BEGUN. R. Reuben said: Moses said to God: 'Why dost Thou act thus towards me? It was Thou who didst first approach me.' Whence this? For it is said, *And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush* (Ex. iii, 2). Moses continued: 'Having made me great, wilt Thou now degrade me?' God replied: 'Behold I have sworn.' Said Moses: 'Master of the Universe, THOU HAST BEGUN (HAHILOTH). Didst Thou not break (*hahillata*) Thine own oath when Thou didst desire it? Didst Thou not swear to destroy Thy children because of the [Golden] Calf and yet Thou didst retract,' as it is said, *And the Lord repented* (Ex. xxxii, 14)?<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This comment is based on the designation 'Lord God'. According to the Rabbis 'Lord' (the Tetragrammaton) depicts Him under His Attribute of Mercy; 'God' (*Elohim*), under His Attribute of Justice; cf. Gen. R. XII, 15.

<sup>2</sup>The passage that follows is really a continuation of this, explaining what his harsh words were. It is erroneously made the commencement of a new section in the Wilna ed., but the Warsaw ed. runs the two together.

<sup>3</sup>Thus interpreting THOU HAST BEGUN, 'Thou wast the first to speak thus.'

<sup>4</sup>The verse is now rendered: Thou didst break (Thine oath on a previous occasion), '*hahillata*' being now derived from *hellel*.

Another explanation: R. Levi said: Moses said to God: 'Master of the Universe, the bones of Joseph are entering the Land, and am I not to enter the Land?' The Holy One, blessed be He, answered him: 'He who acknowledged his native land is to be buried in that land but he who did not acknowledge his native land does not merit to be buried in his land.' Whence do we know that Joseph acknowledged his native land? His mistress exclaimed of him, *See, he hath brought in a Hebrew*, etc. (Gen. xxxix, 14); and he did not deny it, but in addition said, *For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews* (Gen. XL, 15); he is to be buried in his native land. Whence do we know this? For it is said, *And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem* (Josh. xxiv, 32). 'But you who did not acknowledge your native land will not be buried in that land.' When was this? When the daughters of Jethro said, *An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds* (Ex. II, 19), and Moses heard and kept silence; therefore he is not to be buried in his land.

9. FOR THOU SHALT NOT GO OVER THIS JORDAN (III, 27). God said to Moses: 'If you are buried here, near those [who died in the wilderness], then they will enter the land for your sake [at the time of Resurrection].'<sup>1</sup> R. Levi said: 'This may be compared to a man who dropped some coins<sup>2</sup> over the floor in a dark place; he thought to himself, "If I call out, "Bring me a light so that I may pick up my coins," no one will take notice of me." What did he do? He took a gold piece and threw it amongst his coins and began calling out, "Bring me a light, I had a gold piece and I dropped it here," and they brought him a light. What did he do? As soon as he picked up the gold piece he said to the people, "I adjure you, wait for me until I have picked up my coins"; and he collected them. Because of the one golden piece all his smaller coins were collected. Similarly, God said to Moses: 'Should you be buried near those who

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Num. R. xix, 13.

<sup>2</sup>Of small denomination.