

חומש קורן מקראות הדורות  
THE KOREN MIKRAOT HADOROT

פרשת וארא  
PARASHAT VA'ERA



KOREN



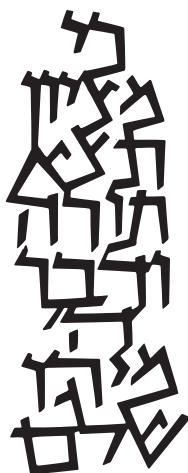
THE ROHR FAMILY EDITION

חומש קורן מקראות הדורות  
THE KOREN MIKRAOT HADOROT

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THE ZAHAVA AND MOSHAEL STRAUS EDITION OF PARASHAT VA'ERA

פרשת וארא עם מפרשים  
PARASHAT VA'ERA WITH COMMENTARIES



TORAH TRANSLATION BY  
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COMMENTARIES COLLECTED AND ABRIDGED BY  
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KMDVA01

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

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

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

and to the memory of his beloved wife

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

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

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

Dedicated with love by  
**The Rohr Family**  
NEW YORK, USA



עֲטֹרַת זְקִימֹת בְּנֵי בְנֵי  
(משלי יז, ו)

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

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

Zahava and Moshael Straus





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TURN TO THE OTHER END OF THIS VOLUME.



## PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### HOW TO USE THE KOREN MIKRAOT HADOROT

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

Opening from the Hebrew side offers:

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

Opening from the English side presents four sections:

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

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

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

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

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

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

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

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

Matthew Miller, Publisher  
Jerusalem, 5780 (2019)

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

## A NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

While we have thus done our best to aid the reader in finding and consulting the original Hebrew text of the commentaries we have translated, we emphasize that this is not a critical edition, and the scope and readership of the series do not permit us to fully cite every allusion and internal reference

that authors make to midrashim and other commentaries. Still, we have made a supreme effort to provide citations of talmudic passages, and of course biblical verses, quoted or referred to in the material included here.

Yedidya Naveh, Managing Editor  
Jerusalem, 5780 (2019)

1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY BCE

1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CE

2<sup>ND</sup> CENTURY

3<sup>RD</sup> CENTURY

4<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

5<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

6<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

7<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

8<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

9<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

10<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

11<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

12<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

13<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

PHILO, 25 BCE – 50 CE

TARGUM ONKELOS, 35 – 120

TARGUM YERUSHALMI, 3<sup>RD</sup> – 4<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

HALAKHIC MIDRASHIM, 3<sup>RD</sup> CENTURY  
(MEKHILTA, SIFRA, SIFREI)

SEDER ELIYAHU, 3<sup>RD</sup> CENTURY

TALMUD YERUSHALMI, 3<sup>RD</sup> – 5<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

TALMUD BAVLI, 3<sup>RD</sup> – 6<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

MIDRASH TANĦUMA, 5<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

PESIKTA DERAV KAHANA,  
5<sup>TH</sup> – 6<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

AVOT DERABBI NATAN, 7<sup>TH</sup> – 9<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

MIDRASH RABBA, 5<sup>TH</sup> – 12<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

PESIKTA RABBATI, 9<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

MIDRASH SHMUEL, 9<sup>TH</sup> – 11<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

MIDRASH TEHILLIM, 10<sup>TH</sup> – 11<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

BERESHIT RABBATI, 11<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

MIDRASH LEKAĦ TOV, 11<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

MIDRASH SEKHEL TOV, 1139

MIDRASH AGGADA, 12<sup>TH</sup> – 13<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

YALKUT SHIMONI, 13<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

פרשת וארא

PARASHAT VA'ERA

---

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

ו וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי יְהוָה: וְאַתָּה ד  
 אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אֶל־יִצְחָק וְאַל־יַעֲקֹב בְּאֵל שְׁדֵי יְשָׁמַי יְהוָה  
 ה לֹא נִודַעְתִּי לָהֶם: וְגַם הִקְמֹתִי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתָּם לְתַת לָהֶם  
 ה אֶת־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֶת אֶרֶץ מִגְרֵיהֶם אִשְׁר־גְּרוּ בָּהּ: וְגַם ו אֲנִי

## CHAPTER 6, VERSE 2

## MEKHILTA DERABBI SHIMON

אֲנִי יְהוָה – *I am the LORD*: [Of course Moshe was already acquainted with God.] Rabbi Yosei said: The Holy One, blessed be He, was saying to Moshe: I am the One who spoke and created the world, as the verse states: *God, the LORD has spoken, and called the earth* (Psalms 50:1). And the following verse continues: *Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty* (Psalms 50:2). [This refers to a tradition that

the world was created from Zion.] And I am the One who declared to Avraham at the covenant between the pieces: *Know surely that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs* (Genesis 15:13). That oath is finally coming swiftly to fruition, for I now seek to take Israel out of Egypt. But you delay and say to Me: *Please, my Lord, send someone else* (4:13)!

## SHEMOT RABBA

אֲנִי יְהוָה – *I am the LORD*: Rabbi Meir said: This may be compared to a king of flesh and blood who was marrying off his daughter. He summoned a commoner to serve as a mediator between himself and the groom. When the agent began to take on airs, the king said, “Who made you behave so haughtily? It was I, since I appointed you as my emissary!” So did the Holy One, blessed be He, say to Moshe: “Who caused you to talk like this? It is My doing.” [This is what God meant in declaring: *I am the LORD*.] And Rabbi Yehuda said: This is what

Moshe said when the Holy One, blessed be He, told him: *So go: I am sending you to Pharaoh* (3:10): You have addressed me with the attribute of Compassion [evoked by the name LORD, the tetragrammaton], declaring that I will be the one to lead Israel in their redemption. But I am afraid that before I arrived, Your attribute of Justice [evoked by the name God, *Elohim*] became dominant [causing Pharaoh to resist]. Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: *I am the LORD* – I remain firm in My attribute of Compassion. (Shinan, Va’era 6:3)

## VERSE 3

## MEKHILTA DERABBI SHIMON

אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אֶל־יִצְחָק וְאַל־יַעֲקֹב – *To Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov*: Rabbi Eliezer son of Rabbi Yosei the Galilean said: The prophecy of the patriarchs was distinct from that of Moshe and the other prophets. When the Holy One, blessed be He addressed the patriarchs, He was not accompanied by animals or chariots or other trappings of glory. Rather, His presence descended directly upon them. Rabbi Shimon said: The patriarchs are themselves

symbolized by the chariot, as the verses state: *And He finished talking with him, and God went up from Avraham* (Genesis 17:22) and *Behold the LORD stood above him* (Genesis 28:13) [indicating that God made His seat over their heads]. This is because the patriarchs had been consecrated to receive the Divine Presence. However, when God addressed other prophets, He did so with a retinue. The patriarchs never needed the inef-fable name to be expressed to them, whereas



6 <sup>2</sup> Then God spoke to Moshe. “I am the LORD,” He said to him. “As  
 3 El Shaddai I appeared to Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov – but  
 by My name the LORD I did not make Myself known to them.  
 4 And I made a covenant with them to give them the land of Ca-  
 5 naan, the land where they lived as strangers. And now, I have

MEKHILTA DERABBI YISHMAEL (cont.)

the other prophets had it revealed to them, because the people of their time required it. Moshe our teacher is proof of this, as the verse states: *As El Shaddai I appeared to Avraham,*

*Yitzhak, and Yaakov – but by My name the Lord I did not make Myself known to them.* I did not make it known to them as I have to you. (Hoffman, addendum 6:2)

TALMUD BAVLI

אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב – *To Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov:* The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moshe: How tragic that there are those who are lost and are no more. For I appeared to Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov several times assuming the name El Shaddai, and they did not challenge My methods, nor did they ask Me: “What is Your name?” To Avraham I said: *Arise, walk through the land across its length and breadth, for I will give it to you* (Genesis 13:17). And even when he had difficulty finding a place to bury Sara, being forced to buy a plot for four hundred silver shekels (see Genesis 23:16), he did not challenge My methods. To Yitzhak I said: *Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you* (Genesis

26:3). And even when his servants had trouble locating water to drink, and it came to blows, as the verse states: *And the herdsmen of Gerar fought with Yitzhak’s herdsmen, saying “The water is ours”* (Genesis 26:20), he did not challenge My methods. To Yaakov I said: *I will give you the land upon which you lie* (Genesis 28:13). And even when he sought a location to pitch his tent, and was compelled to buy land for a hundred pieces of silver (Genesis 33:19), he did not challenge My methods. Nor did they say to Me: “What is Your name?” But you – you opened with: *What is His name?* (3:13), and now you tell Me: *You have done nothing to deliver Your people* (5:23)! (Sanhedrin 111a)

TANHUMA

לֹא נִדְעַתִּי לְהֵם – *I did not make Myself known to them:* I did not reveal My personal name to them, but I have told it to you. For this information will help you succeed in your mission of redeeming Israel. The Holy One, blessed be

He, said: I have revealed My name only to select individuals in this world, but in the World to Come I will proclaim it to all Israel, as the verse states: *Therefore My people shall know My name* (Isaiah 52:6). (Buber, Va’era 5)

VERSE 4

TALMUD BAVLI

לָתֵת לָהֶם אֶת-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן – *To give them the land of Canaan:* Rabbi Simai said: From where do we learn about the future resurrection of the dead in the Torah? The verse states: *And I made a covenant with them to give them the land of*

*Canaan.* The text does not read: “to give you,” but “to give them” [indicating that the land will one day be delivered to the patriarchs themselves]. Thus resurrection is proved from the Torah. (Sanhedrin 90b)

שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת־נִאֲקַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר מִצְרִים מֵעַבְדִּים  
 אִתְּם וְאָזְכֹר אֶת־בְּרִיתִי: לָכֵן אָמַר לְבְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי יְהוָה  
 וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלַת מִצְרַיִם וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם  
 מֵעַבְדֵיכֶם וְגַאֲלֵתִי אֶתְכֶם בְּזֵרוּעַ נְטוּיָה וּבִשְׁפָטִים גְּדֹלִים:  
 וְלִקְחֹתִי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהָיִיתִי לְכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וַיִּדְעוּתָם כִּי

## LEKAH TOV

הִקְמֹתִי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתְּם – *I made a covenant with them:* Even though I created seventy nations, I did not make a covenant with any of them, but with Israel alone.

## VERSE 5

## SHEMOT RABBA

שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת־נִאֲקַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *I have heard the groaning of the Israelites:* Because they did not question me. What's more, even though the Israelites in that era did not behave properly, I took heed of their groans for the sake of the covenant I made with their ancestors. This is what God meant when He said: *I remember My covenant.* (Va'era 6:4)

## LEKAH TOV

שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת־נִאֲקַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *I have heard the groaning of the Israelites:* Even though the patriarchs have passed from this world, I have not forgotten My covenant with them. No, *I have heard the groaning of the Israelites...* and *I remember My covenant.*

## VERSE 6

## MEKHILTA DERABBI SHIMON

לָכֵן אָמַר לְבְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל – *Therefore, say to the Israelites:* Rabbi Yudin says: If the Holy One, blessed be He, had not sworn to rescue Israel, He would have allowed them to be assimilated into Egypt because they neglected to circumcise their sons and because they worshipped idolatry. But God said: *Therefore, say to the Israelites: I am the LORD.* The term “therefore” always introduces an oath, as the verse states: *And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli* (I Samuel 3:14). אֲנִי יְהוָה – *I am the LORD:* I know that the people will one day rebel against Me and anger Me, but for the sake of My name I will redeem them now nonetheless. Similarly, the verse states: *God saw the Israelites, and God knew* (2:25). Rabbi Yehuda ben Lakish said of that verse: What did God see? He saw that in the future, Israel would vex Him. God knew that Israel would eventually rebel and blaspheme against Him, but for the sake of His name, He determined to redeem them nonetheless, as the prophet states: *But I did so for My name's sake* (Ezekiel 20:9). Rabbi Shimon son of Rabbi Elazar says: The verse states: *For He said, “But they are My people, children who will not lie: so He was their deliverer* (Isaiah 63:8). Could it be that God did not know that Israel would lie in the future? Hence the verse states: “but” [indicating the statement was not true for all time]. But does that mean that God redeemed Israel when they were liars? Hence the verse states: *Children who will not lie*, to teach that at that point Israel had repented, and God judged them according to their current condition. (Hoffman, addendum 6:3)

heard the groaning of the Israelites whom the Egyptians are  
 6 holding as slaves, and I remember My covenant. Therefore,  
 say to the Israelites: I am the LORD, and I will free you from  
 the forced labor of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from slav-  
 ery. I will liberate you with an outstretched arm and with great  
 7 acts of judgment. I will take you as My people and I will be  
 your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God,

## TALMUD YERUSHALMI

וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם – *I will free you:* What verse serves as a source for the practice of drinking four cups of wine at the Passover Seder? Rabbi Yohanan said in the name of Rabbi Benaya: The four cups of wine are alluded to by the

four terms describing the redemption in these verses: *Therefore, say to the Israelites: I am the LORD, and I will free you... I will rescue you... I will liberate you... I will take you as My people* (6:6–7). (Pesahim 10:1)

## TALMUD BAVLI

מִתַּחַת סְבִילַת מִצְרַיִם – *From the forced labor of the Egyptians:* It was on Rosh HaShana that our ancestors ceased working in Egypt. It is written here: *I will free you from the forced labor [sivlot] of the Egyptians*, while elsewhere it is written [with

regard to Yosef]: *I removed his shoulder from the burden [sevel]* (Psalms 81:7). [It is derived by verbal analogy that just as Yosef was freed on Rosh HaShana, so labor ceased for the Israelites on Rosh HaShana.] (Rosh HaShana 11b)

## LEKAH TOV

אֲנִי יְהוָה – *I am the Lord:* It is I who said to Avraham your ancestor: *I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans* (Genesis 15:7).  
 וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם – *I will free you:* The four verbs of redemption: *I will free you... I will rescue you... I will liberate you... I will take you as My people* (6:6–7) were promised as reward for the four merits that Israel had accrued. For while they were in Egypt the nation did not change their language [but kept Hebrew as their spoken tongue], they did not change their dress [but continued to wear distinguishing clothing], they did not reveal their secret

[that they would ultimately despoil the Egyptians], stated in the verse *Every woman shall ask her neighbor... for objects of silver and gold, and clothing* (3:22), and they did not forgo the practice of circumcision. God offered Israel four terms of redemption parallel to the four cups appearing in Pharaoh's butler's dream [see the language of Genesis 40, where the word "cup" appears four times]. In the end the Egyptians would drink from the cup of divine fury while Israel would march forth under four standards [see Numbers 10:11–28].

## VERSE 7

## TALMUD BAVLI

וְלָקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם – *I will take you as My people:* Rabbi Simai says: The Torah states: *I will bring you as My people*, as well as: *I will bring you* (6:8). The text thereby juxtaposes the nation's exodus from Egypt with its entry into the land of Israel. It teaches that just as when

Israel came into the land, when only two out of the six hundred thousand desert travelers lived to see it [Yehoshua and Kalev; see Numbers 14:30], so too, only two out of every six hundred thousand Israelites survived [the plagues] to leave Egypt. (Sanhedrin 111a)

אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הַמוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סְבִלֹת מִצְרַיִם:  
 וְהֵבֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת-יְדֵי לַתָּה  
 אֲתָה לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וְלִיעֲקֹב וְנָתַתִּי אֹתָהּ לְכֶם מִדֶּשֶׁה  
 אֲנִי יְהוָה: וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה בֵּן אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל-  
 מֹשֶׁה מְקַצֵּר רוּחַ וּמַעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה:

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: בְּאֵ דַבֵּר אֶל-פְּרַעֲהַ מֶלֶךְ  
 מִצְרַיִם וְיִשְׁלַח אֶת-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרְצוֹ: וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה לְפָנָי

## TANHUMA

וְלָקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם – *I will take you as My people*: The Holy One, blessed be He, said [to Avraham, in praise of his hospitality]: By your life! You said, *Let now be fetched [yukkah] a little*

*water and wash your feet* (Genesis 18:4). With that very language I will redeem you from Egypt, as the verse states: *I will take [velakhahti] you as My people*. (Buber, Va'era 5)

## VERSE 8

## MEKHILTA DERABBI YISHMAEL

וְנָתַתִּי – *I will give*: The verse states: *When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He promised you and your ancestors, and He gives it to you [untanah lakh] (13:11)*. This means

that when you receive the land you should not see it as an inheritance from your ancestors, but as a gift that God is giving you right now. (Massekhta DeFis-ḥa 18)

## TALMUD YERUSHALMI

וְנָתַתִּי – *I will give*: Rabbi Yoḥanan raised an objection: The verse states: *And I will bring you to the land that I promised to give to Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov; to you I will give [venatati] it as a possession [morasha]*. [The word *morasha* denotes an inheritance.]

If the land is a gift, then why label it an inheritance? If it is an inheritance, why call it a gift? Rather, at first God gave it to them as a gift, but He then gave it to them as an inheritance [lasting for eternity]. (Bava Batra 8:2)

## VERSE 9

## MEKHILTA DERABBI YISHMAEL

וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה – *They did not listen to him*: Rabbi Yehuda ben Beteira says: Is there a person alive who does not rejoice upon receiving good news? If one hears that a son has been born to him, or that his master is emancipating him, is such an individual not overjoyed? Why then does the text state that they did not listen to Moshe? Rather, it was difficult for the

people to abandon their idolatry, for the text states: *Then I said to them: Let every man cast away the abominations of his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God. But they rebelled against Me and would not listen to Me. . . . But I acted for My name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations* (Ezekiel 20:7–9). This is

8 freeing you from Egyptian forced labor. And I will bring you to the land that I promised to give to Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov; to you I will give it as a possession. I am the LORD.” Moshe told this to the Israelites, but in the brokenness of their spirit and the brutal labor they did not listen to him.

<sup>10</sup>  
<sup>11</sup> Then the LORD said to Moshe, “Go, tell Pharaoh King of Egypt  
<sup>12</sup> to send the Israelites forth from his land.” But Moshe said to the

MEKHILTA DERABBI YISHMAEL (cont.)

what the Torah means when it states: *The Lord spoke to Moshe and Aharon; and He charged them with regard to the Israelites* (6:13); He commanded them to give up their idolatry. (Massekhta DeFis-ḥa 5)

LEKAḤ TOV

וּמַעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה – *And the brutal labor:* From here we learn that distress makes people irrational.

MIDRASH AGGADA

בְּקִצְרֵי רוּחַ – *In the brokenness of their spirit:* That generation lacked faith in God, declaring: *The Lord’s hand is shortened [katzra] so it cannot save* (Isaiah 59:1). Therefore they joined the practice of the idolaters.

VERSE 10

LEKAḤ TOV

וַיִּדְבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר – *Then the Lord said to Moshe:* [This common phrase ends with the word *lemor*. Untranslated here, it can mean “saying” or “to say.”] Whenever the Holy One, blessed be He, communicated to Moshe, He always told him: “Go, say!” The Sages learned from this that if one hears something from a friend, he may not repeat it to anyone else until that friend expressly permits it, saying: “Go, say.”

VERSE 11

TANḤUMA

בֹּא דַבֵּר – *Go, tell:* Moshe had begun complaining to God, first claiming: “I have fulfilled Your mission,” and then turning and sitting down. But the Holy One, blessed be He, chided him: “You’re sitting down? *Go, tell Pharaoh King of Egypt, etc.*” And so it was every time that God issued Moshe a command, as when He instructed him: *So go to Pharaoh* (7:15) or: *Rise up early in the morning and confront Pharaoh* (8:16). This teaches that Moshe shunned the exercise of power. But in the end he led Israel out of Egypt, split the sea for them, brought them into the wilderness, provided manna for them, summoned up the well for them, procured quail for them, and built the Tabernacle. (Buber, Vayikra 4)

LEKAḤ TOV

בֹּא דַבֵּר – *Go, tell:* [Literally, “come tell.”] Instead of saying: “Come tell Pharaoh,” God should have said: “Go tell Pharaoh.” The language here teaches that the Divine Presence exists in all places. The Holy One, blessed be He, was saying to Moshe: I will manifest

יְהוָה לֵאמֹר הֲזֶן בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ אֵלַי וְאִיךָ יִשְׁמְעֵנִי  
פְּרָעָה וְאֲנִי עֶרְל שְׁפָתַיִם:

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן וַיִּצְוֶם אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וְאֶל־פְּרָעָה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְהוֹצִיא אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל

יְ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: אֱלֹהֵי רָאשֵׁי בֵית־ שׁני

אֲבֹתָם בְּנֵי רְאוּבֵן בְּכֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲנוּךְ וּפְלוּא חֶצְרוֹן וְכַרְמִי

טו אֱלֹהֵי מִשְׁפַּחַת רְאוּבֵן: וּבְנֵי שְׁמֵעוֹן יְמוּאֵל וְיַמִּין וְאֶהֱד  
וַיְכִין וַיִּצְחַד וְשֹׁאֵל בְּן־הַכְּנַעֲנִית אֱלֹהֵי מִשְׁפַּחַת שְׁמֵעוֹן:

## LEKAH TOV (cont.)

My Divine Presence over there as well. This is like when an individual says to his friend: I

will be at such and such a place; come meet me there.

## VERSE 12

## SIFREI BEMIDBAR

לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ אֵלַי – *Have not listened to me:* Answer me definitively whether You plan on redeeming the people or not. This was when

the Holy One, blessed be He, replied: *Now you are about to see what I will do to Pharaoh* (6:1). (Behaalotekha 105)

## SHEMOT RABBA

לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ אֵלַי – *Have not listened to me:* At first Moshe deserved to be the sole conduit of God's word, but because he protested: *Please, my Lord, send someone else* (4:13), God responded: *Have you not a brother, Aharon the Levite? He, I know, is able to speak* (4:14). Here too, Moshe complained: *The Israelites, You see,*

*have not listened to me. How then will Pharaoh listen?* Moshe had been destined to perform all of the miracles himself, but because of this statement, he was made to share the prophetic mission with Aharon, as the verse states: *The Lord spoke to Moshe and Aharon* (6:13). (Shinan, Va'era 7:1)

## VERSE 13

## SIFREI BEMIDBAR

וַיִּצְוֶם אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *He charged them with regard to the Israelites:* Said God to Moshe and Aharon: I know that the people are contrary and

troublesome. Recognize that by accepting this position, you accept that they will curse you and pelt you with stones. (Behaalotekha 105)

## TALMUD YERUSHALMI

וַיִּצְוֶם אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *He charged them with regard to the Israelites:* What commandment did God instruct Moshe to transmit to the people? That of the emancipation of slaves [see 21:1–11]. In this vein Rabbi Hila stated: The people of Israel were only ever punished for

neglecting to emancipate their slaves, as the verse states: *At the end of seven years every one of you shall release his fellow Hebrew... but your fathers did not listen to me* (Jeremiah 34:14). (Rosh HaShana 3:5)

LORD, “The Israelites, You see, have not listened to me. How then will Pharaoh listen? And I am a man of uncircumcised lips.”

- 13 The LORD spoke to Moshe and Aharon; and He charged them with regard to the Israelites and to Pharaoh King of Egypt,  
 14 to bring the Israelites out of the land of Egypt. These SHENI  
 were the heads of their ancestral houses. The sons of Reuven, Yisrael's firstborn, were Hanokh, Pallu, Hetzron, and  
 15 Karmi; these were the families of Reuven. Shimon's sons were Yemuel, Yamin, Ohad, Yakhin, Tzoḥar, and Sha'ul, son of a

————— SHEMOT RABBA —————

וְאֶל־פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם – *To Pharaoh King of Egypt:* The Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: Although I really ought to punish Pharaoh, I command you to display deference to him and to the throne. And so Moshe did, as the verse states: *And all these officials of yours will come and bow down to me, saying, “Leave, you and all the people behind you”* (11:8). Moshe

did not disrespectfully assert that Pharaoh himself would come bow down to him, referring instead to his servants. Nevertheless, we see that Pharaoh ultimately humbled himself before Moshe, as the verse states: *Pharaoh arose that night, he and all his officials and... summoned Moshe and Aharon* (12:30–31). (Shinan, Va'era 7:3)

VERSE 14

————— TANḤUMA —————

רֵוֵן בְּכֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל – *Reuven, Yisrael's firstborn:* Rabbi Abba said in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan of Beit Guvrin: Because Reuven committed that act [sleeping with his father's wife Bilha; see Genesis 35:22], his firstborn status was forfeited to Yosef. As the verse states: *The sons of Reuven, the firstborn of Yisrael, for he was the firstborn; but, since he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Yosef the*

*son of Yisrael; but not so as to have the birthright attributed to him by genealogy* (1 Chronicles 5:1). Even though the birthright went to Yosef, nevertheless, in records of lineage, Reuven's status could not be taken from him, as the verse states: *The sons of Reuven, Yisrael's firstborn* (6:14). And the verse [in 1 Chronicles] does not read: “He had been the firstborn,” but: “He was the firstborn.” (Buber, Toledot 23)

————— LEKAḤ TOV —————

אֵלֶּה – *These:* The Torah uses the word “these” because the Israelites were intermingled among the Egyptians. These personages separated themselves from that people's impurity

and came to be counted as part of the lineage of Israel. The Torah therefore says “these” to exclude their neighbors.

VERSE 15

————— TARGUM YERUSHALMI —————

וְשָׂאוּל – *And Sha'ul:* This is Zimri, who lent [*ashil*] himself to sin when he fornicated with the Canaanites [see Numbers 25].

וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי-לוֹי לְתַלְדֹּתָם גְּרִשׁוֹן וְקֹהַת וּמְרָרִי  
 וְשִׁנַּי חַיִּי לְאֵי שִׁבְעַת וּשְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה: בְּנֵי גְרִשׁוֹן לְבָנָי  
 וְשִׁמְעִי לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם: וּבְנֵי קֹהַת עֲמָרָם וַיְצַהֵר וַחֲבֵרֹן  
 וְעִזִּיאֵל וְשִׁנַּי חַיִּי קֹהַת שָׁלֹשׁ וּשְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה: וּבְנֵי  
 מְרָרִי מַחְלִי וּמוֹשִׁי אֱלֹה מִשְׁפַּחַת הַלְוִי לְתַלְדֹּתָם: וַיִּקַּח  
 עֲמָרָם אֶת-יוֹכָבֵד בִּתּוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד לּוֹ אֶת-אֶהֱרֹן  
 וְאֶת-מֹשֶׁה וְשִׁנַּי חַיִּי עֲמָרָם שִׁבְעַת וּשְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה:  
 וּבְנֵי יְצַהֵר קָרַח וְנֹפֵג וְזִכְרִי: וּבְנֵי עִזִּיאֵל מִישָׁאֵל וְאַלְצָפָן  
 וְסִתְרִי: וַיִּקַּח אֶהֱרֹן אֶת-אֵלִישֶׁבַע בַּת-עַמִּינָדָב אַחֹת  
 נַחֲשׁוֹן לְאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד לּוֹ אֶת-נָדָב וְאֶת-אֲבִיהוּא אֶת-

## VERSE 18

## TARGUM YERUSHALMI

שָׁלֹשׁ וּשְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה – 133 years: Kehat the righteous lived 133 years, long enough to see Pinhas the High Priest, who is Eliyahu, who

will be sent to the Jewish people in exile at the end of days.

## VERSE 20

## MEKHILTA DERABBI SHIMON

שִׁבְעַת וּשְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה – 137 years: The Torah states: *The Israelites had lived in Egypt for 430 years* (12:40). But surely they had been in Egypt only 210 years. The Torah states that Kehat was a member of the company which came down to Egypt (Genesis 46:11), while we are later informed that he lived 133 years (6:18). Furthermore, his son Amram lived 137 years. Add both those figures to the age of Moshe at the exodus, which was 80 [see 7:7], and that yields 350 years. [Since the lives of these men must have overlapped, and Kehat lived the first part of his life outside of Egypt, the Israelite stay in Egypt must have been a

good deal less than 350, and much less than the Torah's claim of 430 years.] Rather, one must infer that the Torah's doubling of the verb "to live" [in 12:40, *umoshav... asher yashvu*] suggests multiple sojourns. This total [beginning from the time that the covenant was made with Avraham; see Genesis 15:13] includes Avraham's time in the land of the Philistines (Genesis 20:1), Yitzhak's dwelling in the land of Canaan (Genesis 25:11), and Yaakov's stay in the land in which his father had sojourned (Genesis 37:1). If one adds up the years included in all these periods, the sum will reach four hundred years. (12:40)

## TALMUD BAVLI

וְדִתָּהּ – *His father's sister*: [According to Leviticus 18:12–13, it is prohibited to marry one's aunt. The Talmud entertains the opinion that it was permitted to marry one's aunt before the Torah was given at Sinai:] The verse states: *Amram*

*married Yokheved, his father's sister. Was she not his full-blooded aunt? No, she was his aunt only through her father. [In other words, Yokheved was Kehat's half-sister, and was not considered a true aunt of Amram.] (Sanhedrin 58b)*



- 16 Canaanite woman; these are the families of Shimon. These are the names of Levi's sons by their lineage: Gershon, Kehat, and  
 17 Merari. Levi lived 137 years. The sons of Gershon were Livni  
 18 and Shimi, by their families. The sons of Kehat were Amram,  
 19 Yitzhar, Hֶֿֿevron, and Uzziel. Kehat lived 133 years. The sons  
 20 of Merari were Maḥli and Mushi. These are the families of  
 21 the Levites by their lineage. Amram married Yokheved, his father's  
 22 sister, who bore him Aharon and Moshe. Amram lived  
 23 137 years. The sons of Yitzhar were Korah, Nefeg, and Zikhri. The sons of Uzziel were Mishael, Eltzafan, and Sitri. Aharon married Elisheva, daughter of Amminadav and sister of Naḥshon, and she bore him Nadav and Avihu, Elazar and

## VERSE 21

## SEKHEL TOV

קֹרַח – *Korah*: He is the one who challenged Moshe and Aharon [see Numbers 16]. וְנֶפֶגַּ – *Nefeg*: So called because his fear of the Creator made his heart go faint

[*nafog*], and so Nefeg and his sons did not collaborate with Korah. זִיכְרִי – *Zikhri*: The Holy One, blessed be He, recalled him [*zakharo*] favorably.

## VERSE 22

## SEKHEL TOV

עֲזִיזֵאל – *Uzziel*: So named because God [*EI*] was his strength [*oz*], as it is written: *O LORD, my strength and my stronghold* (Jeremiah 16:19).

## VERSE 23

## TALMUD BAVLI

אֲחֹת נַחֲשׁוֹן – *Sister of Naḥshon*: Rava said: Before taking a wife, a man must investigate her brothers, as the verse states: *Aharon married Elisheva, daughter of Amminadav and sister of Naḥshon*. Since Elisheva is said to be the daughter of Amminadav, don't we know that her brother was Naḥshon? [In Numbers 1:7, the

Torah identifies the chief of the tribe of Yehuda as Naḥshon son of Amminadav.] Why then state that Elisheva was the sister of Naḥshon? To teach that before taking a wife, a man must investigate her brothers. It has been taught that boys take after their mother's brothers. (Bava Batra 110a)

## LEKAḤ TOV

וַיִּקַּח אַהֲרֹן אֶת־אֵלִישֶׁבַע – *Aharon married Elisheva*: With this union, the families of the priesthood and the monarchy were joined,

i.e., the tribes of Levi and Yehuda [Amminadav was the progenitor of King David and his royal line; see Ruth 4:18–22].

## SEKHEL TOV

וַיִּקַּח אַהֲרֹן אֶת־אֵלִישֶׁבַע – *Aharon married Elisheva*: The family of the priesthood and the family of royalty succeed together. [Naḥshon

was the ancestor of the Davidic line.] As the Sages advise: One should always seek to marry the descendants of Aharon.

כד אֶלְעָזָר וְאֶת־אֵיתָמָר: וּבְנֵי קֹרַח אַסִּיר וְאֶלְקָנָה וְאֶבְיָאֶסֶף  
 כה אֵלֶּה מִשְׁפַּחַת הַקֹּרְחִי: וְאֶלְעָזָר בֶּן־אֶהֱרֹן לְקַח־לוֹ מִבְּנוֹת  
 פּוּטִיאל לֹו לְאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד לּוֹ אֶת־פִּינְחָס אֵלֶּה רְאִשֵׁי אֲבוֹת  
 כו הַלְוִיִּם לְמִשְׁפַּחָתָם: הוּא אֶהֱרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה  
 לָהֶם הִזְצִיאוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם עַל־צְבֹאתָם:  
 כז הֵם הַמְדַבְּרִים אֶל־פְּרַעֲה מֶלֶךְ־מִצְרַיִם לְהִזְצִיא אֶת־בְּנֵי־  
 כח יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם הוּא מֹשֶׁה וְאֶהֱרֹן: וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם דָּבַר יְהוָה  
 כט אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּאָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה

## VERSE 24

## MIDRASH TEHILLIM

ובני קרח – *The sons of Korah*: Moshe told Israel: You are being redeemed not thanks to your good behavior, but in order that you may tell future generations, who in turn will sing God's praises among the nations, as it is written: *O sing unto the LORD a new song...declare His glory among the nations* (Psalms 96:1–3). What is "His glory"?

It is that His sons should sing His praises among the nations. And so the sons of Korah said: *We have heard with our ears, O God; our fathers have told us* (Psalms 44:2). Did not they themselves leave Egypt, as the verse states: *The sons of Korah were Assir, Elkana, and Aviasaf*? Rather, they were prophesying about these times. (44)

## VERSE 25

## TALMUD BAVLI

פוטיאל – *Putiel*: It was taught: Not for naught did Pinhas wage war against Midian. It was to exact revenge on behalf of his mother's father [i.e., Yosef], about whom the verse states: *And the Midianites sold him to Egypt* (Genesis 37:36). Shall we then say that Pinhas descended from Yosef? Is it not written: *Elazar, Aharon's son, married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Pinhas*? Does that not mean that Pinhas was descended from Yitro, who [was called Putiel because he] fattened [pittem] calves for his idolatry? No, the name actually refers to Yosef, who mastered

[pittet] his desires. But don't we know that the tribes disparaged Pinhas, taunting: "Have you seen how this son of Puti, whose grandfather fattened calves for idolatry, killed a prince of Israel [Zimri, in Numbers 25:7]? [These traditions are to be reconciled as follows:] If his mother's father descended from Yosef, then his mother's mother descended from Yitro; if his mother's mother descended from Yosef, then his mother's father descended from Yitro. The text itself supports this reading, for it states: *One of the daughters of Putiel*, which suggests two lines of descent. (Sota 43a)

## VERSE 26

## MEKHILTA DERABBI YISHMAEL

והוא אהרן ומשה – *These were the Aharon and Moshe*: The Torah states: *Then the LORD spoke to Moshe and Aharon in the land of Egypt; He*

*said* (12:1). Why was Aharon mentioned? Because an earlier verse had stated: *The LORD said to Moshe, "I am making you now like a god to*

24 Itamar. The sons of Korah were Assir, Elkana, and Aviasaf; these  
 25 are the families of the Korahites. Elazar, Aharon's son, married  
 one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Pinhas. These  
 26 were the heads of the Levite clans by their families. These were  
 the Aharon and Moshe to whom the LORD said, "Bring the Isra-  
 27 elites out of Egypt by their battalions." It was they who spoke up  
 to Pharaoh King of Egypt to bring the Israelites out of Egypt –  
 28 this same Moshe and Aharon. So it came to pass on the  
 29 day the LORD spoke to Moshe in Egypt. The LORD said SHELISHI

MEKHILTA DERABBI YISHMAEL (cont.)

*Pharaoh*" (7:1). From that verse we learn that only Moshe was appointed to judge Pharaoh. How do we know that Aharon too had that responsibility? The phrase "to Moshe and Aharon" equates Aharon with Moshe: Just as Moshe was tasked with judging Pharaoh, so too was Aharon. Just as Moshe spoke up

without fear, so did Aharon. Another interpretation: Generally speaking, the person mentioned first in the text took the lead in practice. But now that the verse states: *These were the Aharon and Moshe*, we learn that both men carried equal weight. (Massekhta DeFisḥa 1)

TALMUD BAVLI

הוּא אַהֲרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה – *These were the Aharon and Moshe*: They remained the same righteous

men from the start of their mission straight through to its end (Megilla 11a).

SHIR HASHIRIM RABBA

הוּא אַהֲרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה – *These were the Aharon and Moshe*: The verse *Your two breasts* (Song of Songs 4:5) refers to Moshe and Aharon. Just as the breasts are the glory and splendor of a woman's body, so Moshe and Aharon are the glory and splendor of Israel. Just as breasts are full of milk, so Moshe and Aharon sated Israel with Torah. Just as with the breasts, where the mother eats first and then through them passes the food on to her baby, so Moshe taught Aharon the entire Torah he

had learned, as the verse states: *Moshe told Aharon all that the LORD had said* (4:28). The Rabbis say: He revealed to Aharon the divine name. Just as the breasts are of equal size, so it was with Moshe and Aharon – neither was greater than the other. This is learned from the verse stating: *This same Moshe and Aharon* (6:27) right after it states: *These were the Aharon and Moshe*. [The reversal of their order indicates the two were interchangeable.] (4:5)

VERSE 28

MEKHILTA DERABBI YISHMAEL

אֶל־מֹשֶׁה – *To Moshe*: When the verse states: *On the day the LORD spoke to Moshe in Egypt*, it means that He would speak only to Moshe and not to Aharon. How then should we understand the verse *Then the LORD spoke to Moshe and Aharon in the land of Egypt* (12:1)? What this means is that just as Moshe was

worthy to receive God's word, so too was Aharon. God refrained from speaking to Aharon solely out of respect for Moshe. Ultimately, Aharon was excluded from all but three communications, when he was included out of necessity. (Massekhta DeFisḥa 1)

לֵאמֹר אֲנִי יְהוָה דִּבֶּר אֶל־פְּרַעֲהַ מִלֶּךְ מִצְרַיִם אֵת כָּל־  
 אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי דֹבֵר אֵלָיְךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לִּפְנֵי יְהוָה הֲאֵנִי עֶרְלָ<sup>ב</sup>  
 שְׂפָתַיִם וְאֵיךְ יִשְׁמַע אֵלַי פְּרַעֲהַ:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה רְאֵה נִתְתִּיךָ אֱלֹהִים לְפְרַעֲהַ וְאַהֲרֹן  
 אַחֶיךָ יִהְיֶה נְבִיאֶךָ: אַתָּה תְדַבֵּר אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר אֶצְוֶךָ וְאַהֲרֹן  
 אַחֶיךָ יְדַבֵּר אֶל־פְּרַעֲהַ וְשִׁלַּח אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרְצוֹ:  
 וְאֲנִי אֶקְשֶׁה אֶת־לֵב פְּרַעֲהַ וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֶת־אֲדֹתַי וְאֶת־מוֹפְתַי

## VAYIKRA RABBA

בְּיוֹם – *On the day*: When the Holy One, blessed be He, reveals Himself to the nations of the world, He does so only at night, as the verses states: *And God said to him [Avimelekh] in a dream* (Genesis 20:6) and: *And God came to Lavan the Aramean in a dream by night* (Genesis 31:24) and: *And God came to Bilam at night* (Numbers 22:20). But the prophets of Israel can receive divine visitations even during the

day, as the verse states: *And the Lord appeared to him [Avraham] by the terebinths of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day* (Genesis 18:1). Similarly, the verse states: *So it came to pass on the day the Lord spoke to Moshe in Egypt* and: *These also are the generations of Aharon and Moshe on the day that the Lord spoke with Moshe on Mount Sinai* (Numbers 3:1). (Vayikra 1:13)

## VERSE 29

## LEKAH TOV

דִּבֶּר אֶל־פְּרַעֲהַ – *Tell Pharaoh*: This verse uses the verb “tell” three times [*vaydabber, dabber,*

and *dover*], corresponding to the first three signs that were given to Moshe [see 4:2–9].

## SEKHEL TOV

אֲנִי יְהוָה – *I am the Lord*: When you speak to Pharaoh and relate to him all that I have told you, make sure to say it in My name. Not only

that, but it is critical that you cite My glorious name [the tetragrammaton], rather than one of My lesser appellations.

## VERSE 30

## SEKHEL TOV

עֶרְלָ שְׂפָתַיִם – *Uncircumcised lips*: Said Moshe before God: Master of the Universe! If I appear in front of Pharaoh like this, he will taunt me, saying: “Could your God not

find a more suitable messenger than you?” He will disparage me and not listen to me. That will certainly be a desecration of Your name.

## CHAPTER 7, VERSE 1

## PHILO

אֱלֹהִים לְפְרַעֲהַ – *A god to Pharaoh*: God is Lord and Master of both the evil and those who seek to better themselves. However, only the best and most perfect of mortals deserve to have God be

their “God and Lord.” Pharaoh is a prime example of impiety, and so God never calls Himself Pharaoh’s “God,” giving that title to the wise Moshe instead: *I am making you now like a god to Pharaoh.*

- to Moshe, “I am the LORD. Tell Pharaoh King of Egypt all that  
 30 I am telling you.” But Moshe replied to the LORD, “You know  
 that I have uncircumcised lips. How then will Pharaoh listen  
 to me?”
- 7 1 Then the LORD said to Moshe, “I am making you now like a  
 god to Pharaoh, and your brother Aharon will be your prophet.  
 2 All that I command you, you are to speak, and your brother  
 Aharon to convey to Pharaoh, that he send the Israelites forth  
 3 from his land. But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart and multiply

MEKHILTA DERABBI SHIMON

אֱלֹהִים לְפָרְעֹה – *A god to Pharaoh:* God said to Moshe: You shall speak in the sacred Hebrew

language like an angel, and Aharon your brother will translate into Egyptian. (6:2)

TANḤUMA

אֱלֹהִים לְפָרְעֹה – *A god to Pharaoh:* It is forbidden for a commoner to hold the scepter of even a mortal king. And yet here was Moshe taking hold of God’s scepter, as the verse states: *So Moshe took...in his hand the staff of God* (4:20). It is forbidden for a commoner to wear the crown of even a mortal king, but the Holy One, blessed be He, will lend His to the Messiah, as the verse states: *You set a crown of pure gold on his head* (Psalms 21:4). It is forbidden for a common citizen to wear the clothing of even a mortal king, but Israel dons the strength of the Holy One, blessed be He, as the verse states: *Awake, awake, put on strength of the LORD’s arm* (Isaiah 51:9), and *The LORD gives strength to His people; the LORD*

*blesses His people with peace* (Psalms 29:11). It is improper to give children the same name as that of a mortal king, such as Caesar Augustus, and such disrespect is punishable by death. Do you know anybody named Augustus? But the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moshe: I am making you like Me with regard to Pharaoh. I am called Elohim, and I used that name to create the world, as the verse states, In the beginning God [*Elohim*] created the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1). And behold, I am lending you that name, as the verse states: *I am making you now like a god [Elohim] to Pharaoh.* Who is this King of glory (Psalms 24:8) who shares His honor with those who revere Him? (Buber, Va’era 7)

SHEMOT RABBA

אֱלֹהִים לְפָרְעֹה – *A god to Pharaoh:* Why was Pharaoh punished? Because he bragged: *My Nile is my own, and I have made it for myself* (Ezekiel 29:3). Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to Moshe: *I am making you now like a*

*god to Pharaoh,* for there is One who looks down even on the mighty. God instructed Moshe to humble the ruler who had arrogantly made himself into a god. (Shinan, Va’era 8:2)

VERSE 3

LEKAḤ TOV

וְאֲנִי אֶקְשֶׁה אֶת־לִבְ פָּרְעֹה – *I will harden Pharaoh’s heart:* Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: If a person wishes to defile himself, he is given

the opportunity to do so. Pharaoh hardened his own heart [see e.g., 8:11], and afterward the Holy One, blessed be He, said: *I have hardened*

בְּאַרְצֵי מִצְרַיִם: וְלֹא־יִשְׁמַע אֶלְכֶם פְּרַעֲהַ וְנִתְּתִי אֶת־יָדֵי  
 בְּמִצְרַיִם וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶת־עַבְדֵי אֱתִי אֶת־עַמִּי בְּנִי־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 מֵאַרְצֵי מִצְרַיִם בְּשִׁפְטִים גְּדֹלִים: וַיִּדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה  
 בְּנִטְתִּי אֶת־יָדֵי עַל־מִצְרַיִם וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 מִתּוֹכָם: וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֹתָם בְּן  
 עָשׂוֹ: וּמֹשֶׁה בֶן־שִׁמְנַיִם שָׁנָה וְאַהֲרֹן בֶּן־שָׁלֹשׁ וּשְׁמֹנִים  
 שָׁנָה בְּדַבְּרֵם אֶל־פְּרַעֲהַ:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאַל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: כִּי יִדְבֹר אֲלֵכֶם ה' רביעי  
 פְּרַעֲהַ לֵאמֹר תִּנְנוּ לָכֶם מוֹפֵת וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל־אַהֲרֹן קַח אֶת־

## LEKAH TOV (cont.)

his heart (10:1). He took the initiative in hardening himself, and so I will increase his hard-heartedness and his stupidity in order to drive him out of existence. (10:1)

## VERSE 4

## AVOT DERABBI NATAN

אֶת־עַבְדֵי אֱתִי – *My battalions*: The Torah refers to Israel as battalions in the verse *Because on this very day I will have brought your battalions out of Egypt* (12:17), and the angels are likewise labeled battalions in the verse *Kings of battalions flee, they flee* (Psalms 68:13). And yet it

is unclear which of the two is the more important. Hence the verse states: *I will... bring My battalions, My people the Israelites, forth out of the land of Egypt*. Said God to Israel: You are dearer to Me than the ministering angels. (Nus-ḥa Bet 44)

## SEKHEL TOV

אֶת־עַבְדֵי אֱתִי – *My battalions*: These are the armies of ministering angels who went down to Egypt with the Holy One, blessed be He. And the phrase *My people the Israelites* means what it says. בְּשִׁפְטִים גְּדֹלִים – *With great acts of judgment*: As it is written [at the covenant

between the pieces]: *And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge* (Genesis 15:14). Thus God fulfilled his promise, as it is written: *Against all the gods of Egypt I will bring judgment* (12:12).

## VERSE 5

## LEKAH TOV

כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה – *That I am the LORD*: Against Pharaoh's pronouncement: *I do not know the LORD* (5:2). בְּנִטְתִּי אֶת־יָדֵי – *When I stretch out My hand*: How long was God's arm stretched out against Egypt? For twelve months. The verse states, *So the people spread out all over Egypt to collect stubble for straw* (5:12). [It is assumed that the plagues began soon afterward.] Now

consider: When is straw generally found in the fields? In the month of Iyyar; and Israel left Egypt the following Nisan [twelve months later]. And it was during this entire period that Job was tormented, as the verse states: *So I am allotted months of emptiness, and wearisome nights are appointed to me* (Job 7:3), indicating the duration of a year.