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Report on the Rabbinic Dissertation Submitted by

Michael A. White

A Literary and Source-Critical Analysis of Midrash Vayosha

This thesis entails the presentation of the text of Midrash Vayosha together with an English translation that is easily readable and a detailed analysis of its content. The text analysis is both literary in nature, focusing on the key themes repeated throughout the compilation and upon its major thematic thrust, and source-critical. In attempting to trace the primary sources used by the editor of the text as well as the recurring theme-words, symbols and emphases in the text, Mr. White has increased both the reader's understanding of the nature of Midrash Vayosha and its agenda, as well as his appreciation for the genre of narrative Midrash.

After closely studying the extant printed versions of Midrash Vayosha, the author decided to present the version of the text which is included in J.D. Eisenstein's Ozar Midrashim (Vol. I, pp. 146-156) as Chapter One. In providing the reader with the full text of Midrash Vayosha, the author has made the analysis of and reflection upon the text much easier.

In Chapter Two we find the translation of Midrash Vayosha into English. The translation is not word for word, though the author did stay very close to the original text. While maintaining the flow of the original, Mr. White has divided the text into thematic units, thereby underscoring the thematic progression in the text and its emphases. In addition, the Biblical quotations are italicized so as to show how the narrative of the Bible serves as the fabric upon which the midrashic tapestry is sewn.

Chapter Three involves a very detailed analysis and comparison of all the sources used by Midrash Vayosha's compiler. Our author points to the fact that much material is drawn from other narrative midrashim, such as Pirke d'Rabbi Eliezer and Sefer ha-Yashar, as well as from such works as Pesikta Rabbati, Midrash Tanhuma and the Babylonian Talmud. The utilization of these sources helps corroborate a 10th-11th century dating for our text. In addition to his source analysis, Mr. White also closely examines the

different themes developed in this compilation. Proceeding through the midrash section by section, our author pinpoints the overriding themes developed through a picture of the juxtaposition of the three events: the Akedah, the Exodus and the coming of the Messiah. The salvational power of the three moments is clarified and God's power to insure Israel's survival and guarantee the ultimate redemption is underscored.

In Chapter Four of this thesis, Mr. White demonstrates how closely the three redemptional moments are intertwined in this compilation by isolating the theme words, symbols and literary devices which appear in the descriptions of all three. We note, for example, how Israel's relationship with God is highlighted in all three events by the text's use of the term "ohavei" (My beloved) to describe the people of Israel as well as individuals like Abraham. Similarly, characters like the ministering angels appear throughout the text to underscore God's providence and ongoing involvement in Israel's life.

In Chapter Five, our author brings together all the information he has garnered from the text in an effort to demonstrate what is in his perception the overall purpose of Midrash Vayosha - God's guaranteeing Israel's salvation and the certainty of the coming of the Messiah based on the Binding of the Isaac story and the Exodus from Egypt. He summarizes in this chapter all the evidence linking the three events which demonstrate God's concern for Israel and God's power to redeem. In recreating the Biblical narratives of the Akedah and the Exodus, the author of Midrash Vayosha expands God's providential role beyond the description in the Bible.

In his Conclusion, Mr. White posits that the themes of this rabbinic compilation are consistent with the situation of the Jewish people as they lived under Islam and Christianity in the early medieval period. The author of Midrash Vayosha emphasizes God's salvational plan by weaving together three moments which highlight God's tests of Israel, and God's providence, thereby trying to convince his constituents that they, too, will experience God's redemptive power.

Although it is very difficult to give a clear sense of the purpose of a work such as Midrash Vayosha and to determine its provenance and dating, the author nevertheless has helped us come to a greater appreciation of the nature of the compilation and its development. In the context of this limited study, realizing that much of the potential historical backdrop is not considered and that the thematic analysis does not take into consideration similar themes in possible parallel works, the author has handled the textual material in a creative manner. He has clearly isolated its main ingredients and demonstrated forcefully their interrelationships. By highlighting the associative purpose of the three historical moments, Mr. White has given us a perspective with which to view the work as a unit that fits thematically together rather than a mere assemblage of disconnected pieces. Although he

may overstate a bit the pattern of connectedness, he has enabled the reader to see a clear flow in the overall text which could be easily missed.

Mr. White is to be commended for his translation and his analysis. It is occasionally quite insightful. He has shown that he does have the ability to deal in a quite sophisticated way with rabbinic textual material and bring a degree of creativity to the enterprise. Though much more could be done in analyzing this rabbinic compilation and setting it in its historical context, this thesis provides us with a fresh angle with which to read it. Mr. White deserves praise both for his diligence and his achievements.

Respectfully submitted

Dr. Norman J. Cohen
Professor of Midrash

April 19, 1989

A Literary and Source Critical Analysis of

Midrash Vayosha

Michael A. White

**Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination**

**Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Graduate Rabbinic Program
New York, New York**

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Referee: Dr. Norman J. Cohen

These words of acknowledgement represent the conclusion of my formal Rabbinic School education. I write them with a combined sense of accomplishment, and of humility. For the past five years, I have engaged in the exciting and fulfilling process of Talmud Torah. I have learned a great deal. And now, as I stand at the door, making preparations for departure, I realize that life has greater meaning for me because of my study.

The rabbis tell us that study, like water, gives us life. It nurtures us, it quenches us, and it adds sweetness to our lives (Cant. R. 1:2). I believe this to be true. Through my years of study here, my exposure to caring and dedicated teachers, my immersion in the sacred texts of our tradition, I have grown. My years at HUC have given me a greater awareness of my strengths and weaknesses, and my priorities, and my mission as a rabbi.

I have studied Torah, but not enough. I pledge to myself that traditional study will always occupy a central and pivotal place in my life. But I will not simply study Torah for its own sake. I will study so that the messages of the rabbis can transform my life and my work. Their words must leave the pages and impact the world. The rabbis stress that study must lead to action (Num. R. 13:16). It must bring holiness into the world. It must warm and strengthen the world. And it must heal the world.

As I stand at this point of transition from Student Rabbi to Rabbi, I wish to thank Dr. Norman Cohen for all that he has given me over the past four years. He has served as a powerful role model for me. As a teacher, he makes Torah live and breath. As a Dean and Rabbi, his dedication, commitment, and energy, have created a community at HUC

none. I will always strive to achieve the level of excellence in my own life and work that he has achieved in his.

I constantly offer thanks to God for blessing me with two loving and supportive parents. Alan and Susan White have always been there for me. Their love and commitment has been my greatest source of strength. They have given of themselves to me unconditionally. All that I have achieved in my life, I owe to them.

As a small token of my love and respect for my parents, I dedicate this thesis to them. May it serve as a sign and symbol of my deep and humble appreciation for all that they have done for me.

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Introduction

The Aggadah, which is to bring heaven nearer to the congregation and then to lift man heavenward, approves itself in this profession on the one side as glorification of God and on the other as consolation to Israel. Hence the chief contents of the addresses are made up of religious truths, maxims of morality, colliquies on just retribution, inculcation of the laws which mark off national coherence, descriptions of Israel's greatness in past and future, scenes and legends from Jewish history, parallels drawn between the institutions of God and those of Israel, praises of the Holy Land, edifying accounts and all kinds of consolation. ¹

These words written by the great Jewish scholar Leopold Zunz, capture the intent and purpose of the rich world of midrashic literature. Midrash is a window into the Jewish soul throughout the centuries. Its descriptions allow us to witness the spectrum of Jewish experience, from the pain of persecution to the joy of celebration. The ideas expressed in Midrash inform us of the progression of the Jewish intellect throughout the ages.

A very important and common element found within all Midrash is its close relationship to the Bible. The authors of the Midrash engaged in the process of explaining and enhancing the Biblical text--filling in what they perceived to be lacunae in the text, changing the outcomes of certain Biblical events, expanding the influence of certain characters, all in attempt to keep the Bible alive and contemporary for their age.

Engaging in the study of Midrash taught me of the centrality of Torah in the Jewish past, and of the effort to maintain Torah as a living document in the hearts and minds of Jews throughout the ages. Midrash has helped me to take the study of Torah seriously, and to see that the process of keeping Torah alive, a process in which I engage, has always been a part of Jewish

¹ As quoted in Hermann Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1931, pg. 202.

life. This is why I have always been drawn to Midrash, and why I chose to write my thesis in the area of midrashic literature.

The original impetus for this thesis came in a course at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in the Narrative Midrashim. I found this particular genre of Midrash compelling, and I wished to study it further. Authors of Narrative Midrash follow the story line of the Biblical narrative and frequently weave verses from the Biblical text throughout the midrash. Although Narrative Midrashim may greatly alter or embellish the Biblical story, two common characteristics of this genre of Midrash are its close relationship to the Biblical account, and the generous inclusion of Biblical material into the midrash. Narrative midrash is, in a sense, a rewriting of the Biblical story on which it is based. Examples of Narrative Midrashim include Pirke de Rebbe Eliezer, Seder Olam, Sefer haYashar, and our own text, Midrash Vayosha.¹

Midrash Vayosha is a Narrative Midrash which explores redemptive moments in the life of Israel. In order to demonstrate God's salvific powers, the author of Midrash Vayosha has woven together three important moments of redemption in the history of the Israelites--the Akedah, the Exodus from Egypt, and the coming of the Messiah, and highlighted God's role in them.

Modern scholarship suggests that the text of Midrash Vayosha was first redacted in late tenth or early eleventh century.² It was first published in Constantinople in 1519.³ Printed editions of the text appear in three midrashic compilations: Divrei Chachamim, edited by J. Meyer Samuel Metz

¹Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash, pgs. 225-229.

²See Herr, "Smaller Midrashim," in Encyclopedia Judaica, New York, Macmillian Company, 1971, Vol. 16, p. 1516.; Eisenstein, Ozar Midrashim, New York: J.D. Eisenstein, 1915, Vol. I, p. 146.

³Ibid. Also see Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash, pg. 342.

and published in Warsaw in 1846; Beit ha Midrash, edited by Adolph Jellineck and published in Leipzig in 1853; and Ozar Midrashim, edited by J.D. Eisenstein and published in New York in 1915. The latter edition was the primary text used for this thesis.

This thesis includes five chapters. The first provides the Hebrew text of Midrash Vayosha from Eisenstein's Ozar Midrashim. The second chapter is a translation of Midrash Vayosha into English. Midrash Vayosha is a beautiful text. Through its translation into English, it is my hope that the midrash will be more accesible to the American Jewish Community, if only through my own teaching in the future. In translating the text, I endeavored to strike a balance between fidelity to the Hebrew text and the importance of providing a readable English text. My main goals in the translation process was to create a readable English document while maintaining the spirit and the intent of the Hebrew text.

The third chapter is a detailed literary and source critical analysis of the compilation. My first goal in writing this chapter was to discover the rabbinic source material for the midrash. Both Moshe David Herr and Hermann L. Strack point out that the editor of Midrash Vayosha borrowed extensively from Pirke de Rebbe Eliezer and Pesikta Rabbati.¹ Material was also taken from Midrash Rabba, Sefer ha Yashar, Tanchuma ha Nidpas, and the Babylonian Talmud, and there are also common elements found within Yalkut Shimoni. Where Midrash Vayosha and another rabbinic compilations share a common motif, a comparison will be made between the two. Often times, parallel material in other rabbinic sources will assist us in the analysis of our own text. Other times, the two parallel sources take a common theme

¹Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash, pg. 342.

or symbol in two completely divergent paths. This, too, will be discussed because it is helpful to see how different rabbinic authors dealt with common elements in different ways.

The literary analysis in Chapter Three carefully examines the important events described in Midrash Vayosha, and discusses how the author's descriptions of these events contributes to the overall themes of the midrash. By carefully and critically analyzing the important events of the midrash, I sought to draw some general conclusions as to the major objectives of the midrash, and how the author is able to achieve them.

Chapter four is a discussion of how the author weaves common words, symbols, and characters through his descriptions of all three events. The author of the midrash demonstrates the close relationship that the Akedah, the Exodus, and the messianic age share as common moments of Divine redemption. One of the most noticeable methods employed to express this relationship is to repeat key words in his description of each event. Words like "fear (אִימָה)," "Here I am (הִנְנִי)," and "my beloved (אוֹהֲבִי)," take on added meaning because they are repeated throughout the midrash and serve as a means of connection among the three events described.

Chapter five crystalizes two of the major overarching objectives of Midrash Vayosha. Evidence from within the text will be presented that the author has connected these three salvific moments in order to demonstrate that the Akedah and the Exodus actually predict the coming of the Messiah. In other words, if one examines closely the details in the midrash of the Akedah and the Exodus, one can anticipate the events of the messianic age. The second theme discussed is the enhanced role that Divine providence plays in all these stories. Ultimately, Midrash Vayosha contends that these three events are all the direct result of God's active will in the life of Israel,

and that they are all part of God's divine plan for us. In this chapter, evidence from the text will demonstrate that the author has expanded the role that God plays in these stories, when compared with the Biblical narrative, in order to highlight the role of Divine providence in these stories and within the life of the Jewish people.

Chapter One

The Hebrew Text of Midrash Vayosha¹

¹As quoted in Eisenstein's Otzar Midrashim, Vol. I, pgs. 146-156.

וירשע מוכא כס' כח' פ' בשלח, וו"ל: וע"ד המדרש והנה
מדרש נוסע אחרים, שר של מדרש רבא שחיה נוסע מן
השמים לעזר את מדרש ומוא היה עומא, וכן ראוי במדרש
וירשע עומא שר של מדרש צ"ל, ומוכא ג"פ בספר מנחת
ש' לר' רפאל מנורכי פ' בשלח.

מדרש וירשע נרשם ראשונה בקדמא שנת רע"ט
בקובץ י"ח מדרשי אגדה, גם בקובץ דברי חכמים שח"ל
ר"א אשכנזי סכ"י מונח ע"ש ר"ש מונק (סוף תר"ס). ועוד
ע"י יעלנצק בבית המדרש ה"א, ובלשון יהודה אשכנזי
בפראג (כל שנת הרשום). גם פירש בית הגדול לר' מנחם
מעטל בלסאן (ווארשא תרמ"ו), וגם ביאר חדש לר' חיים
אברהם אבא גאלדבלאט (ווילנא תרנ"ג).

מדרש וירשע

[ע"פ מונק בדברי חכמים צד א']

וירשע ה' אמרו חז"ל בשעת שרדמו המצריים את
בני ישראל וראו אותם ישראל אחום אימח ורערה, ואז
נמשלו ישראל ליונה (ו) שבורחת מן הנץ וכשכאח
לקנה מצאה שם נחש, כך ישראל בשעת שראו את
המצריים אמרו למשה, משה רבינו! אנה נלך, הרי
מצרים לאחרנו והים לפנינו! אז נשאו קולם בבית
ואף משה בכה עמם, מיד נתלנלו רחמיו של הקב"ה
ואמר למשה, משה! כבר זכור אני התפלל שהתפלל
אברהם אוהבי בשעת שאמרתי לו לך שחום יצחק בנך,
מיד קבל באהבה ולמחר הימים לעשות רצוני, שנאמר
וישכם אברהם בבקר ויחבש את חמורו ויקח את שני
נערו אתו ואת יצחק בנו, ומי היו הנערים האלו (א)
אליעזר עבד אברהם וישמעאל. אמר יצחק לאביו לאן
אנו הולכים לברכו? אמר לו אביו עד כה עד מקום
קרוב, וכתוב ויקח אברהם את עצי העולה, וישם על
יצחק בנו, ויקח בידו את האש ואת המאכלת וילכו
סניהם יחדיו. אמר יצחק לאביו אבא לאן נלך יחדים?
אמר לו בני להקריב קרבן, אמר לו הרי שם שהוא
כהן גדול והוא יקריב את העולה (א). מיד נפלה אימח
גדולה על יצחק מפני שלא ראה כלום בידו לעולה.
ויאמר יצחק אל אברהם אביו ויאמר אבי ויאמר הנני
בני ויאמר הנח האש והעצים ואיה השח לעולה, מיד
נודעו יצחק ורננו אבריו שהביר וירשע מחשבת אביו
כי לא היה בידו כלום, ואעפ"כ נתחזק ואמר לאביו
אתה אמת שכחתי הקב"ה הרי נפשי נתונה לו.
ותמייס יצחק כמותו בעבור לקיים מצות יתרו ואמר
לו אברהם, אני יודע כך בני שאינך מעבב צווי יתרו
וצווי, השיב יצחק לאביו, אביו! מחר עשה רצון קונך

וסמאחי שכולן לשון ארז וכו', גם מוכא איזה פעמים
בתוספות (תולין ק"ו: ר"ה אמר רב ומנחת ל"ו, ר"ה
קינות, וסם ק"ס, ר"ה לא שמשו), בסס"ג (ר' קי"ב ג')
הלכות נבילת ידים, וו"ל וזוהי שכתב בספר והוזהר אמר
שכחל לעלות כל יחד וכו', וכן ברוקח בסוף ס' פ',
רש"ח ובאשרי פרק כל תבשר, ולפעמים יחליפו שם הספר
והוזהר בשלח והוזהר או הבחיר, ואיזה מחברים שהביאו
המבקים בשם ספר והוזהר לא נמצא בנוסחא שלפנינו, וזה
בראת לנו לדעת כי היה להם כ"י שונים, לש רעת המגיל
שם הכתב הוא מר הפך אלוף ו"ל והוא רב חפץ ב' ו
יצל"ח שיהיה אלוף וירשע כלל וכתב ספר הכעות (ע"ע
באוצר ישראל), אך שביישינדיד תולין ע"ו כי ספר הכעות
נכתב בערבית ואינו ספר והוזהר, המגיל בהקדמתו ישתל
להוכיח שספר והוזהר הוא המדרש השכם ורק שני שמות
יש לו, ר' שמואל גאכץ יאמר; ובעל מדרש השכם העתיק
דברי ר' שפינק קירא התקת כלל בשלח לא הוסיף ולא
גרע הוץ כסח שהוציא כלשון ארמית ללשון הקדש, והוא
הדרך אשר הלך בה מר הפך אלוף ו"ל (ע"י בביאר ענשי
יתרה רף ג"כ ציון ר'), וכאמרת והדנים מהלכות גדולות
שנכתבו בלשון ארמית נכתבו בספר והוזהר ללשון הקדש
כמו הרונסאות שהראת המגיל בהקדמתו, ועוד ראיות אחרות
שהביא שם, אך כביא ג"כ ראיות שספר השכם וספר והוזהר
הם שני ספרים, כי בספר מנורת הכאור הנרשם בסוף ספר
ראשית חכמה מביא בשם מדרש השכם שמונה ותולך מצות
עשה ול"ת, אבל כתב ס' והוזהר אינו מונח רק האמין.
וכן עוד איזה מאמרים הנוכחים בשם מדרש השכם ולא נמצאים
בס' והוזהר, אולם אפשר שהדברים האלו היה בס' והוזהר
נוסחא אחרת כג"ל, ר"ש באבעד כתב הערות על הספר
ועל הכאור בסכ"ע הלבנון שנת עשירית ובסבא ללך מוכ
(דף כ"א) ודעתו נוכח להכריע כי ס' השכם לתודוס' והוזהר
לעד רשני מתברים שאבו מסקור אשר, ר' יעקב רייפמאן
בסכ"ע הסגיד (הצופה לסגור שנת כ' 14, 23, 32) סותר
ראיות הכול' כי ס' והוזהר אינו מדרש השכם, כמאת כי
הכ"י מינצק שהשתמש בו הוא חסר ונחסר בו גם פרשיות
שמות וארם ופראשי פרשיות בא תצות ויקחל סקור נחסר
המאמרים המתחילים בשלח והוזהר, ואפשר שלפני ר' שמואל
נאמץ ומתברים אחרים היה הספר יותר שלם, רייפמאן מעיד
עוד כי מנפת המתבר היתה אך על העלאת, אך לבשה בגד
אגדה למען תערב ותגעם להחמק, ונאלץ כענינו כי המאמרים
אשר לקח המתבר מהנפרא הבבילית העתיק ללשון המסנה,
אך לא כן המאמרים שלקח מהנפרא הירושלמית, כמו מה
שהביא בסס' שקלים כ"ה השא.

וירשע: מדרש על שירת דוד וציאת מדרש, ונקרא
ע"ש המסך וירשע ה' ביום תעזא (שמות י"ד ל'), וכנראה
תחילת המדרש בעיקרו מהמסך הוה עם סיפור האגדה של
עומא שר של מדרש ברט עם מיכאל שר ישראל לפני כסא
הכבוד אדות אורח שנות השעבוד, ואח"כ נוסף עליו בתחלת
הסיפור של עקדת יצחק אשר באמת אין פה מקומו, מדרש

(1) שיר רבת מסך יונתו ברגי המלך והנחמא פ'
שופטים ס' י"ג, (2) מנחת פ"ט, פ"ר פ"ו, פיקוד"א
פ"א, (3) ב"ר פ"ה איתא שאמר אברהם להקב"ה יש
קרוב בלא נח? ואמר לו הקב"ה כבר פניתיך שרתא כח
וכו'.

והוא יעשה רצונך. בעוד יהיו מהלכין בדרך נכנסה מריבה בין שמעאל ובין שטן לאברהם ונרמה לו לזקן ואמר לו אנה חלך? אמר לו להתפלל, אמר לו אם להתפלל מה אתה צריך לישא עצים על כתפך ואש וסאכלת בידך? אמר לו ישא נשמה יום אחד או יומים ונשחט ונאפה ונאכל. אמר לו עני לא שם הייתי כשאמר לך המסמין קח נא את בנך את יחידך והעלהו לי לעולה. חקן כמותך יאבר בן חמור כזה ובחור שנחן לך הקב"ה לסאה שנה. אמר לו אברהם לא היה מסמין אלא הקב"ה בכבודו ובעצמו אמר לי קח נא את בנך את יחידך אשר אהבת את יצחק ועשה לפני עולה. אמר לו השמן הלא יראתך כסלתך תקותך ותום ריבך (איוב ד.). אמר לו אברהם מי הוא נקי אבר ואיפה ישרים נכחדו. כיון שראה השמן שלא קבל אברהם את רבריו אמר לו. תרע אברהם אומר לך בשורה תעשה עולה [היפה] ולא מן יצחק. אמר לו כך עונשו של כחב שאפילו אומר אמת אין שומעין לו. ואיני מאמינך. אלא הקב"ה הטוב בעיניו יעשה. בא השמן ועמד לפני יצחק ונרמה לו לנער כמותו. אמר לו להיכן אתה הולך. אמר לו ללמוד תורה. אמר לו בחייד או כמותך? א"ל ובי יש אדם שלומד תורה אחר מותו? א"ל אי בן עלובה! היכן שני ילדותך ואתה אינך יודע כי לזבח אותך מוליך אביך בזה הדרך. א"ל אני בעצמי יודע והרי נפשי מסורה ביד הקב"ה וכיד אבי. כל מה שירצה לעשות ממני יעשה. רטוב הלך השמן לשרה ונרמה לה לזקן. אמר לה אברהם בעלך היכן הלך? אמרה לו למלאכתו הלך. ויצחק בנך היכן הלך? אמרה לו עמו הלך ללמוד תורה. אמר לה עלובה וקנה! איך יקהו שיניך על בנך שאינך יודעת שלזבח אותו הוליכו בדרך. באותה שעה הורעו מתניה ותחללו איבריה ולא היתה בעולם. ואעפ"כ התחזקה ואמרה. מה שאמר לו הקב"ה יעשה לשלום ולחיים. וכיון שראה אותה שטן שלא עלתה בידו מהיטבות ותאות לבו לבטל קרבנו של אברהם. מה עשה? הלך העשות עצמו כנהר נדול וכיון שהגיע לאותו נהר אמר אברהם ליצחק הסתן לי מעם ואכנס אני תחלה לנהר ואראח אם הוא עמוק. וכן עשה. ירד לתוך הנהר עד חצי הנהר ואין מים סניעין עד ברביו. אמר ליצחק רד אחרי אל תירא שהמים אין סניעין עד ברביו. ירד יצחק אחריו. ולא הספיקו לרדת עד חצי הנהר עד שנברו המים והנישו עד צואריהם. באותה שעה ניא עיניו לשמים ואמר רבש"ע נלך וידע לפני כסא כבודך שאתה הוא אלוה בעליותי ובתחתונתי ונלית עלי ואמרת לי אני יחיד ואין כמותי בעולם ואתה יחיד שאין כמותך צדיק בעולם. הודע שמי בעולם והעלה יצחק בנך לעולה לפני. ואני מהרתי לומר שמעאל (4). כי על יצחק אמרת לי כי יצחק יקרא לך זרע. תבכשו אם אנו מוכעין בנהר מי יחד ששך בעולם! מיד נער הקב"ה בשמן וחברו המים על הארץ ומצאו טעם כיבשה. בעוד שהיו אברהם

יצחק מהלכין בדרך נכנסה מריבה בין שמעאל ובין אליעזר עבר אברהם שהיו שומרים את הכלים ואת בהמתם. אמר שמעאל עכשיו יקריב אבא את יצחק ואני אירש כל הנכסים שישארו מאבא. א"ל אליעזר אתה כבר נרשך כאשה נרשה מבעלה ושלחך במדבר. אבל אני עבדו נשמן ביתו ביום ובלילה. ורוח הקדש משיבה ואומרת להם לא זה יירש ולא זה יירש. כתיב ויבואו אל המקום אשר אמר לו האלהים ויבן שם אברהם את המזבח ויערוך את העצים ועקוד את יצחק בנו וישם אותו על המזבח ממעל לעצים. אברהם היה בונה את המזבח ויצחק מושיב לו את העצים ואת האבנים; אברהם היה דומה לאדם שהוא בונה בית חתונה לבנו. ויצחק היה דומה לאדם שמכין חומה לעצמו יעשה בשמחה. ואמר יצחק לאביו אבא ורעצמך וחיטוף ורועך ואסור ידי ורגלי יפה יפה שאני בחור בן שלשים ושבע שנים ואתה זקן וכשאראה את הסכין אכנס בך מפחד הסכין. שהנפש צופה (חצופה). ושמא אעשה כי מום ואפסל מקרבן. אלא בבקשה מסך אבא מהר ועשה רצונך ואל תעכב ונלול בנרדך וחזר מתניך. ושרפני יפה יפה. ויטול אפר שלי והוליכו אצל שרה אמי וחניחו בחיבה בחדר שלה. ויכלל שעה יסעה שהיא נכנסת בחדר שלה תזכור את יצחק בנה בבכי. ועוד אמר יצחק לאביו יותר מזה כשתשחטני ותברל ממני ותלך אצל שרה אמי אם תשאל מסך אנה יצחק בני מה תאמר לה ומה תעשו לזנותכם? אמר לו אברהם אנו יודעים שאחריר יהיו ימינו מוטמים. הוא שנחמנו עד שלא נולדה הוא ינחמנו מיום זה ואילך. מיד ערך את העצים ועקר אותו על המזבח ממעל לעצים. אמן ורעותיו ונלל בנרדו ונתן שתי ארכבותיו עליו בכח נדול. והקב"ה יושב על כסא רם ונשא ראה היאך לב שניהם (אברהם ויצחק) שוח היו רמעות מאברהם נושרות ונופלות על יצחק ומיצחק נופלות על העצים והיה הסכין נסבלת ברמעות. מיד וישלח אברהם את ידו ויקח את המאכלת לשחוט את בנו. אמר הקב"ה למלאכי השרת. ראיכם אברהם אהבי היאך יחד את שמי בעולם הזה. אם הייתי שומע לכם בשעה שאמרתם בבריתא עולמי מה אנוש כי תזכרנו ובן אדם כי תפקדנו מי היה מייחד שמי בעת? כאברהם? (5). באותה שעה בכו מלאכי השרת במד נפש. ומה היו אומרים? נשמו מסלות שבת עובר אורה הפך ברית (ישעיה ל"ג ח') היכן הוא מתן שכן של מכניסי אורחים. האורחין שהיו באין מכל מקום אברהם אבינו מכניסין בתוך ביתו ומאבילין ומשקין ומלוח לדרכים. היכן הוא השכר שנמל אברהם? הפך ברית. הופך אותו ברית שאמרת לו כי יצחק יקרא לך זרע. ואת

(4) פ' חשבתי כי כוונתך על שמעאל. ואף כשאמרת שותף יצחק לא תרדתי אחר מזה. (5) פ' מדרש תהלים מוסר ה' ויחזקת פ' ורא פ' י"ת

בריתי אקים את יצחק, והרי המאכלת על צוארו. וכבו מלאכי השרת ונפלו דמעותיהן על הסכך ועמד הסכך ולא שלם בצוארו של יצחק, מיד פרחו נשמתו, אמר לו הקב"ה למיכאל מפני מה אתה עומד, אל תניחו לישוחמו! מיד קרא מיכאל ואמר אברהם אברהם! ויאמר אליו הנני. ומפני מה קראו שני פעמים לפי שאברהם מספר והמלאך צוח כאדם שצוח ואומר פלתי פלתי מה אתה עשה? אל תשלח ירך אל הנער! אמר לו אברהם למלאך לא אשחטו אלא אחנקהו? אמר לו ואל תעש לו מאומה, אמר לו אברהם למלאך, הקב"ה אמר לי לישוחמו ואתה אמרת לא תשחטנו, דברי הרב ודברי התלמיד דברי מי שומעין? מיד ויקרא מלאך ה' אל אברהם שנית כי נשבעת נאם ה' כי יען אשר עשית את הדבר הזה ולא חשכת את בנך את יחידך כי ברך אברך והרבה ארכה את זרעך ונ', מיד הניחו וחזרה בו נשמתו ועמד על רגליו וברך ברוך מתייהר כתיב, באותה שעה נשא אברהם את עינו לשמים ואמר רבש"ע כשעה שיעמדו בני בצער תזכור להם זאת השעה שאני עומד לפניך.

דבר אל בני ישראל ויסעו, ויען משה לפני הקב"ה רבש"ע ואני מה אעשה? אמר לו מול הסמטה אשר נתתי לך ולך אל הים בשליחותי ואמור לו אני שלוחו של יצחק בראשית, נלה דרכיך לבני שיעברו בך, מיד הלך משה אל הים ואמר לו דברי הקב"ה, ויען הים אל משה לא אעשה כדרכיך לפי שאתה ילוד אשה, ולא זו בלבד אלא שאני נדול ממך שלשה ימים שאני נבראתי ביום השלישי ואתה לא נבראת עד יום הששי (ט), מיד השיב משה דברי הים אל הקב"ה, ואמר לו הקב"ה עבר המסרב ברבו מה עושן לו? אמר לו משה מלקן אותו כמטת. א"ל הקב"ה אף אתה הרם את ממך ונמטה את ירך על הים ובקעהו, מיד ויס משה את ידו על הים ויבקעהו, והיו יראין ישראל לבא בים עד שקפץ נחשון בן עמינדב וירד תחלה בים (י), ואחריו באו כל ישראל תוך הים והמים להם חומה מימנם ומשמאלם, וירשע ה' ונ', אמרו חכמינו ז"ל וכי ישראל היו מסורים ביום ההוא ביד מצרים שהוא אוסר וירשע ה' ביום ההוא את ישראל מיד מצרים? אלא בשעה שיצאו ישראל ממצרים עמד עמא שר של מצרים לפני הקב"ה ואמר לפניו רבש"ע אומה זו שאתה מוציא ממצרים יש לי דין עליהם, אם רצונך יבא מיכאל שר של ישראל וידן עמי לפניך, באותה שעה אמר הקב"ה למיכאל צא לדרך עמו לפני, פתח עמא שר של מצרים לפני הקב"ה ואמר רבן העולמים אתה גזרת על אומה זו שיהיו משועבדים תחת יד אומתי ארבע מאות שנה תעדין לא עברו מהם אלא יסמונים רשש שנים מיום שנולדה מרים (ט), ולפיכך נקראת מרים ע"ש שמררו המצריים את חייהם, וכשם שאתה קיים כך תהא נוירתך קיימת, תעדין לא הנע זמן יציאתם, כששמע כך מיכאל

נשתתק ולא היה לו מענה לעמא, ביקש עמא רשות להחזיר את ישראל למצרים, כיון שראה הקב"ה שהיה רצונו להחזיר את ישראל למצרים אמר לו מפני מה אתה רוצה להחזיר את בני למצרים לעבוד את בניך? כלום נתחייבו בני לעבוד את בניך אלא כעבור רבך אחד שדבר אברהם אביהם כשעה שאמרתי לו אני ה' אשר התאחזך מאור כשדים לתת לך את הארץ הזאת לרשתה, ואמר לפני רבן העולמים במה אדע כי אירשנה, תל זה אמרתי לו ידוע תדע כי גר יהיה זרעך בארץ לא להם, כלום אמרתי לו גרים יהיו בארץ מצרים? לא אמרתי אלא בארץ לא להם; נלוי ידוע שמינים שנולד יצחק היו נרים, וכבר עברו אותן ארבע מאות שנה ואין לך עוד רשות לשעבד אותם, חזק האמר הכתוב וירשע ה' ביום ההוא את ישראל מיד מצרים, וירא ישראל את מצרים מת על יפת הים.

(ט) ע"י ערך הלל דף 130, (ז) ע"י מנחם ל"ו, שמות רבה פ"ג ופרקי דר"א פ"ב, (ח) כשנולד משה היתה או מרים ח' שנים כדאיתא בשמות רבה פ"א וכתוב ומשה בן שמונים שנה ונ', בדברים אל פרעה (שמות ו'), ח"ב דף שס"ד חסכות כדאיתא בעדות פ"ב.

הצפינה אותי כמו שנאמר ולא יכלה עוד הצפינו ותקח
לו תיבת נוסא ותחמרה בחסר ובזפת ותשם בה את
הילד, ותשם בסוף על שפת היאור, ותתנב אחותו
מרחוק לדעה מה יעשה לו, והקב"ה יתעלה שמו לעד
עד הוריד חום גדול במצרים עד שירדה בת פרעה
לרחץ על היאור, ותרא את התיבה בתוך הסוף ותשלח
את אמתה ותקחה ותפתח ותראני ותחטול עלי, והקב"ה
נתן לי חן בעיניה לבלתי המיתני, ולקחה אותי לינק את
שדיה והקב"ה נתן לי דעת שלא רציתי לינק שדיה
מחלב סמא, והחזירה אותי לחיק אמי ותתנה לה
בשכילי שכר גדול, וכשהייתי בן שלש שנים הלבישה
אותי בת פרעה בנדי צבעונן ושנרה אותי לאביה,
וכשראה אותי פרעה שהייתי נאה לקחני בחיקו, ותטלתי
הכתר מעל ראשו וסמתי אותו בראשי, והיו יושבין
לפניו כל חרטומי מצרים וחכמיה ואמרו לו תינוק זה
שנטל הכתר מעל ראשך ותתנו בראשו מתידיאן אנו
שלא ירא אותו שעתיד להוציא מלכות זו מידך, מהם
אומרים להרנני בחרב ומהם אומרים לשרפני, עד שענה
אחד מהם ויתרו שמו, ואמר תינוק זה אין בו דעת,
אלא אם רצונך אומר לפניך דבר אחר, ישימו לפני
הילד הזה דינר זהב ונחלת של אש, אם ישלח ידו
יקח הדינר תרע שיש בו דעת ותעשה ממנו משפט,
ואם ישלח ידו ויקח הנחלת תרע שהוא נער ואולת
קשורה בלבו ותניחנהו, כששמע פרעה תעבדו דבר זה
כשר הדבר בעיניהם ויעשו כן, ושמו הדינר, ובא נבריא
במזק אחד, ואני רציתי ליטול הדינר, ובא נבריא
ורחף יד לתוך הנחלת ותטלתי והבנפתי לתוך פי,
ובשביל זה אני ערל שפתים, וכשנדלתי יצאתי לראות
רחק אחי וראיתי איש מצרי מכה איש עברי מאחי
והרנתי ומסנתיו בחול, וכששמע פרעה כך בקש להרוג
אותי והביא חרב שנתה שבכל העולם לא היה כמותה
והכני בה עשר פעמים, תעשה לי הקב"ה נס ותעשה
צוארי כעמוד של שיש ולא שלסה בי החרב, וברחתי
אצל יתרו ואף הוא חבשני בבזר שבע שנים, כשיצאתי
ממצרים בן ארבעים שנה הייתי תעמרתני על הבאר
ומצאתי צפורה בת יתרו, וראיתי אותה שהיא צנועה
ביותר אמרתי לה שאשאנה לאשה והיא ספרה לי מנהג
אביה ואמרה לי כל אדם שבקש לישא מבנותיו של
אביה מנסה אותו באילן אחד שיש לו בננתו, וכשמגיע
לאילן מיד בולעו (10), אמרתי לה אילן זה מאין היה
לו? אמרה מקל הוא שברא הקב"ה אותו בערב שבת
[מששת ימי בראשית] כשברא את עלמו והקב"ד
הפקידו לאדם הראשון, ואדה"ר הפקידו לחנוך, וחנוך
הפקידו לנח, ונח הפקידו לשם, ושם הפקידו לאברהם.

(9) חיד הנחלה זו מרת חזק, ע"י רבינו בדי"ר.

(10) ע"י מכה י"א, שמות רבה פ"א ופכ"ג לקום יחזקאל
רסו שג"ד, (11) ע"י פרק ד"א פ"א, גם ע"י עזר רש"ם

בידו, השיב ואמר לשלחני לא יש אלוה כוח בכל
העולם שעשה אלו המעשים אלא אני לבדי שאני
בראתי עמי תילוס נהרי, תעל דבר זה ישכפר בי
שלחתי בו עשר מכות עד שישלח בניי בעל כרחו, ועם
כל זאת לא מנע עצמו מרשעו וחרד ורודף אחריהם
להחזירם לשעבודו, ולפי שנעשה בו כל זאת ולא הכיר
אותי אנו רוצים לסבוע בים הוא וכל חילו, מיד
ענו כל פמליא של מעלה ואמרו רין גדול יש לך להטביעם
בים, כשראה עמא כך פתח ואמר רבן העולם יודע
אני שחייבים הם לך אלא יהי רצון מלפניך שתתנהג
עמם במדת רהמים ורחם על מעשה ירך כמו שכתוב
ורחמיו על כל מעשיו, ובקש הקב"ה לרחם עליהם,
עד שבא נבריא ותמל דפוס של לבנים שהיו עושין ישראל
במצרים והראה אותה לפני הקב"ה ואמר לפניו רבן
העולמים אומה ארורה שבזו עבודה קשה שעבדו בניך
תרחם עליהם? וחזר הקב"ה מן מרת רחמים וישב
עליהם בכסא רין יטבעם בים, לכך נאמר וירא ישראל
את היר הנדולה (9) אשר עשה ה' במצרים ויראו העם
את ה' ויאמינו בה' ובמשה עבדו.

אז ישיר משה, אמרו חז"ל כשעה שכאו
ישראל ליתן שירה להקב"ה אמרו למשה: משה רבינו!
אמור תתלה ואח"כ נאמר אנו, מיד ענה משה לישראל
אתם אמרו תתלה ואח"כ אומר אני, שאני יחיד ואתם
רבים, וכבוד רבים גדולה משל יחיד, מיד פתחו ישראל
ומשה ואמרו ביחד נשירה לה' שעשה לנו נסים
ונפלאות, בשעה שנזרו עלינו המצריים ואמרו כל הבן
הילוד היאורה תשליכוהו, והיו אמותינו יוצאות לשדה
ואתה מפיל עליהם תרדמה והיו יולדות כלי צער,
ויורדים מלאכים מן השמים ורוחצין וסוכן אותנו, והיו
מלבישים אותנו בנדי צבעונן ומשישים בידינו שתי
חתיכות אחת של חסאה ואחת של רביש, וכאשר
אמותינו רואות אותנו רוחצין וסוכן ומלובשין משי
היונותנן שבח לשמך הגדול והיו אוסרות, ברוך המקום
שלא הניח חסרו ואמתו מזרעו של אברהם אבינו,
היו אוסרות הרי הם בידך עשה מה שאתה חפץ
בהם והולכות להם, וכשהיו המצריים רואים אותנו באו
להרננו, ואתה כרחמך היית מצוה את האדמה ובלעה
אותנו ופולסות אותנו במקום אחד (10), והיית מציל
אותנו מידם, וכשהיינו גדולים היינו נכנסים למצרים
חבורות חבורות וכל אחד ואחד היה מכיר אביו ואמו
ומשפחתו, כל זאת עשית לנו ולפניך נשיר, לכך נאמר
אז ישיר משה ובני ישראל את השירה הזאת לה'
ויאמרו לאמר אשירה לה' כי נאה נאה,

עזי וזמרת יה, אמרו חז"ל אמר משה
לישראל אתם נתתם הודאה להקב"ה שעשה עמכם
נסים ונפלאות, אף אני אתן שבח והודאה להקב"ה
שעשה עמי נסים ונפלאות, בשעה שבאה מרים אחותי
ואמרה לאבי, אביו נאמר לי בנבואה שיצא ממך בן
שינאל את ישראל מעבודה זו, וכשילדה אותי אמי

ואברהם המקיר לזחק. ויצחק המקיר ליעקב ויעקב
הורירו למצרים והמקיר ליוסף בנו. וכשמת יוסף שללו
המצרים את ביתו והביאו אותו מסה (המקל) בפלטרין
של פרעה, ויתרו היה אחד מגדולי חרטומי מצרים וראה
אותו מסה וחסרו בלבו וגנבו והביאו לביתו. ואותו
מסה חקק עליו שם המפורש ואותן עשר מכות שהביא
הקב"ה על המצריים, והיה כתוב בו רצ"ך עד"ש
באח"ב. ועוד כמה ימים וכמה שנים היה המסה
מונח בבית יתרו אבי, עד שאבא פעם אחת לקחו
בירו ונכנס לננה ונעצו בקרקע, רשב בגינה ללקחו
ומצאו שפרח ויצץ ציץ וינסול יקדים, והניחו שם.
ובו היה בורק כל מי שביקש לישא אחת מבנותיו.
וכששמעתי דבריה הסובים וראיתי שהרועים נרשו את
צפורה ואחותיה הצלתי אותן מיד הרועים וגם דלה
דליתי להם והיסקתי את צאנן. ותבאנה אל רעואל
אביהן ואני באתי עמהן ונכנסו הן תחלה ואני עמדותי
בחוץ. כישראה אותן יתרו אמר להן מרוע מהרתן בא
היום? ותאמרנה איש מצרי הצילנו מיד הרועים.
ואני שמעתי מבחוץ שהן מעידות עלי שאני מצרי,
ובשביל שלא נכנסתי ואמרתי איש עברי אני לא
אזכה ליכנס לארץ ישראל. וכיון שאמרו בנות יתרו
איש מצרי הצילנו אמר להן. אדם שעשה עמכם טובות
אתן נמלתן לו נמול כזה? קראן לו ויאכל לחם. כיון
שנכנסתי לבית אכלתי ושתיתי ודברתי ליתרו שיתן לי
צפורה בתו לאשה, וענה לי אם תוכל להביא לי את
המסה העומד בגנתי אני אתננה לך, והלכתי ופישפשתי
את הנן ומצאתיו והבאתיו ביד, מיד הררה יתרו ואמר
בודאי זה הוא איש נביא שכל חכמי מצרים מסמסין
עליו שעתיד נביא לצאת מיישראל, שעל ידו תחרב מצרים
וכל המצריים שבתוכה. מיד כעס עלי יתרו יתפסני
והכניסני לבור שהיה בתוך ביתו. אמרה צפורה בלבה
היאך אני יכולה להציל את הצדיק ממיתה משונה?
אמרה לאביה אבא רצונך שתשמע לי, אתה אדם שאין
לך אישה ויש לך שבע בנות, אם רצונך תעמודנה שיש
אחיותי בבית ואני אלך עם הצאן, ואם לאו תלכנה
ישש אחיותי עם הצאן ואני אתקן את הבית, אמר לה
אביה יפה את אומרת תלכנה אחיותיך עם הצאן ואת
שבי בבית רשמו את ביתי וכל מה שיש לי, וככל יום
היתה צפורה מפרנסת אותי מכל מעדני אביה יתרו.
עד שהשלימו שבע שנים בבור. לאחר שבע שנים אמרה
צפורה לאביה וזכרת אני אבי פעם אחת שלקחת איש
אחר שהביא לך את המקל והשלכתו לבור ועשית עון
גדול ברב, אם רצונך פתח את הבור וראה, אם הוא
מת הוציאו משם והשליך נבלתו בחוץ כדי שלא יהא
עומו מוסר בביתך, ואם הוא חי תדע שהוא צדיק
נמור, אמר לה בתי יפה את אומרת, כלום את וזכרת
מה שמר? אמרה לו וזכרת אני ששמו משה בן עמרם,
מיד הלך יתרו ופתח את הבור וקרא משה משה!
ענית ואמרתי לו הנני, והוציאני משם, ותשקני על

ראשי ואמר ברוך המקום שישמרך בבור שבע שנים.
מעיר אני עליו שהוא סמית וסחיה ומעיר אני בך שאתה
צדיק נמור ועל ידך עתידה מצרים שתחרב. ועל ידך
עתיד הקב"ה להוציא את ישראל ממצרים ועל ידך
עתידים המצריים להסבך בים, פרעה וחילו, ותתן לי
ממך הרבה ואת צפורה בתו לאשה ותתנה עמי זה התנאי
כל מה שתוליד בביתי יהא מחצה יהודים ומחצה
ישמעאלים. אחר זמן נתעברה צפורה ותלד נרשום
בחלקי, מלתי אותו וינק ישרי אמו שתי שנים. לשנה
השלישית נולד אליעזר, אמרתי איך אעשה עכשיו לא
יניחו לי למול, מיד לקחתי אשתי ובגו לשוב לארץ
מצרים. באותה שעה בא יטכן בדמות נחש ופגע בי
ובלעני מראשי ועד המילה, ומעולם לא היה יכול ליגע
בבית מילה, הררה צפורה בלבה ואמרה יודעת אני
שאין דבר זה אלא בישביל העץ שלא מלנו אליעזר
בנו, מיד לקחה צפורה צור ותכרות את ערלת בנה
ונמלה מן הרם חרקה על רגלי, באותה שעה יצאה בת
קול ואמרה לנחש הקיא אותו וכן עשה, חה שאמר
הכתוב וירף ממנו אז אמרה חתן רמים למולות, הרי
הצילתני אשתי מסתי מיתות, כיון שבאתי למצרים
פגעו בי רתן ואכירם שהיו ראשי ישראל ואמרו להרוג
אותנו באת, או שפא אתה באת לעשות אותנו כמו
שעשית למצרי, מיד חזרתי לסדן ועמדותי שם שתי
שנים עד שנגלה לי הקב"ה בחורב ואמר לי להוציא
את בני ישראל ממצרים, וכל זאת עשה לי הקב"ה,
ולכך אני מחויב לסודר לפניו ולכך נאמר עני חסרת
יה יהי לי לישועה זה אלי ואנוהו אלהי אבי וארוממו.
ח' איש מלחמה, אמרו חז"ל במכספי מלך
ב"ו הביא עליהם את המכות, מלך ב"ו כשהמדינה
מורדת בו מה עושה? בתחלה משלח לנינות ומקיפין
עליה, וסוכר אמת המים שלה כדי שימיתו, אם חוזר
בהם הרי מוב ואם לאו הוא מביא עליהם קולנים (בעלי
קול), אם חוזר בהם מוסב ואם לאו הוא מורה בהם חצים,
אם חוזר בהם מוסב ואם לאו הוא מוליך עליהם ברברים,
ואח"כ דרססיות, ואח"כ זורק עליהם נפס, ואח"כ משליך
עליהם אבני בליסטרא, ואח"כ מנח בהם לנינות
ואוכלוסין, ואח"כ אוסר אותם בבית האסורים, ואח"כ
הורג את הגדולים שבהם, — כך הקב"ה בא על המצריים
במכספי מלכים, בתחלה סכר את המים שלהם שנאמר
ויהפוך את יאוריהם לדם, לא עזבו את ישראל הביא
עליהם קולנים אלו הצמרדעים שהיו מקרקרין במעיהם,
לא עזבו את ישראל הביא בהם חצים אלו הכנים
שהיו נכנסין בגופן בחצים, לא עזבו את ישראל הביא
עליהם ברברים אלו ערוב, לא עזבו את ישראל הביא
עליהם דרססיות הוא הדבר שהרג את מקניהם, לא
עזבו את ישראל זרק עליהם הנפס זה השחין, לא
עזבו את ישראל הביא עליהם אבני בליסטרא זה הברד,
אח"כ הביא עליהם לנינות זה הארבה, אח"כ נתן אותם
בבית האסורים זה החשך, אח"כ הרג את הגדולים אלו

הבכורים. ולפי מה שחשבו המצריים לעשות לישראל הביא הקב"ה עליהם המכות. הם חשבו על ישראל שיחשבו להם מים לפיכך הפך מימיהם לדם. הם חשבו שיהיו מעונן פרנסתיהם (סחורה) לפיכך שלח בהם צפרדעים (י) שיהיו מרדן במעיהן. הם חשבו שיהיו עובדים ארסתם ופיכך חזר עפרם לכנים. הם חשבו על ישראל שיהיו מעונן בניהם לפיכך שלח בהם ערוב אריות חאבים ודובים ונמרים. והיה למצרי עשרה בנים ונותנן ליהודי למיל עמהם בשוק ובא ארי חמץ אחד והרוב אחד והנחש אחד עד שנתן לו חשבון מכלם. הם חשבו לעשות מישראל רועים למקניהם לפיכך שלח בהם דבר שהרג כל מקניהם. הם חשבו להשקיע את ישראל במים לפיכך שקע אותם במים. לפי שאין הקב"ה רן את האדם אלא מדה כנגד מדה. ורעו שכל המכות שהביא הקב"ה על המצריים כמו כן יביא על אדם כשיצאו ישראל מן הנלות בימות המשיח. במצרים הביא עליהם מכת רם תחלה כמו כן יביא על אדם כשתקער שנאמר ונתתי מופתים בשמים ובארץ דם ואש צפרדעים עשן (יואל נ'). והשמש יהפך לחשך והירח לדם לפני בוא יום ה' הנורא והנורא (שם ד'). במצרים הביא צפרדעים שהיה קולם גדול כמו כן יעשה על אדם ישלח בהם קולות שנאמר קול שאן מעיר קול מהיכל ה' משלם נמול לאויביו (ישעיה סו'). במצרים הביא אדם עוֹלָהם שהיו שורפין אותם כמו כן יעשה לאדם שנאמר ותרפכו נחליה לופת תעפרה לנפירת (שם לד'). במצרים הביא עליהם ערוב אף באדום יעשה כן דכתיב וירשוה קאת וקפור וינשוף ועורב יטכנו שם (שם). במצרים הביא הקב"ה רבר אף באדום יעשה כן. דכתיב וינשפמתי אתו בדבר וגו' (יחזקאל ל"ח כ"ב). במצרים הביא שחן אף באדום יעשה כן שנאמר חאת תהיה המנפה אשר ינוף ה' את כל הגוים אשר צבאו על ירושלם המק בשרו וגו' (זכריה י"ד י"ב). במצרים הביא ברד כמו כן יעשה באדום שנאמר ואבני אלנזיש איש ונפריה אכסיר עליו (יחזקאל ל"ח). במצרים הביא ארבה כמו כן יעשה באדום שנאמר אמור לצפור כל כנף ולכל חית הארץ הקבצו ובאו (ישעיה ל"ד). במצרים הביא חשך כמו כן יעשה באדום שנאמר ונסת עליה קו תוהו ואבני בווה (שם). במצרים הביא מכה על בכוריהם אף באדום יעשה כן שנאמר שמה נסיכי צפון כולם וגו' (יחזקאל ל"ב). במצרים פרע מאלהיהם ואח"כ פרע מהם. אף באדום יעשה כן. שיפרע מהשר שלהם תחלה ואח"כ יפרע מהם שנאמר והיה ביום ההוא יפקוד ה' על צבא המרום במרום ועל מלכי הארמה על הארמה (ישעיה נ"ד) לכן כתיב ה' איש מלחמה.

מרכבות פרעה וחילו. אמרו חז"ל כשהיו ישראל במצרים היו המצריים משעבדן אותם בכל עבודה קשה שבעולם בחומר ובלבנים. ובכל יום ריום היו אומרים לישראל לעשות כל אחד ואחד מהם שש מאות לבנים. וכשהיו ישראל פוחת אפילו אחת משימין

אותו בקיר כנגד מה שפחת. כנגד לקו המצריים ברדםם אחריהם בשיש מאות רכב. שנאמר ויקח שיש מאות רכב. וכשראו ישראל שהמצריים נוסעים אחריהם נבהלו ופרחה נשמתם. אמרו מלאכי השרת לפני הקב"ה רבש"ע נרד תעשה נקמה במצרים ונשמוד בניך מידם. תענה להם הקב"ה אני בעצמי ארד ואשמוד את בני ישראל. בשבר שעשה אברהם אביהם רצוני. שנאמר וישכם אברהם בבקר. וכשהגיע אותה שעה שעמד אברהם בתפלה לפניו הסתכל הקב"ה במחנה מצרים בעמוד אש ענן ויהוהם וינערם כמו שנאמר והי באשמודת הבקר וישקף ה' אל מחנה מצרים ויר' לכך נאמר מרכבות פרעה וחילו ירה בים ומבחר שלישו טבעו בים סוף. תהומות יבס' יוסו. אמרו חז"ל: יתברך וישתבח שמו של הקב"ה שברא עולמו בחכמה ובתבונה. לנפלאותיו אין חקר ולתבונתו אין מספר. דכתיב בתם כנר מי הים נותן באצרות תהומות. כישרא הקב"ה את עולמו אמר לשר של ים פתח פיה ובלע כל מימות שבעולם. אמר לפניו רבש"ע די שאעמוד כשלי והתחיל לבכות. בעט בו הקב"ה והרגו שנאמר בבחו רגע הים ובתבונתו מחץ רהב (איוב ל"ח ח'). מה עשה הקב"ה כבשן וקבלן הים (את מימי העולם) שנאמר ויסך ברלתיים ים וגו' (שם). א"ל הים רבש"ע אם כן יתערכו מימי המטוקים במלחים. א"ל כל אחד ואחד יהיה אצור בפני עצמו. שנאמר נותן באצרות תהומות. בא וראה כמה חסדים עשה הקב"ה עם ישראל כשהלכו במדבר היה הולך לפניהם יומם בעמוד ענן לנחותם הדרך וליילה בעמוד אש להאיר להם וגו'. תודר שהיו שם נחשים תוקרים ושרפים והקב"ה מרוב אהבה שאהב את ישראל היה שולח לנחשים שיעשו עצמם כנשר וישראל עוברין עליהם כאדם שעובר על הנשר. תודרין מרוב אימה מן הנחשים שהיו במדבר ומספר ואימה שהיה להם מן המצריים. אמרו למשה אתה אומר שמבעו המצריים בים מתייראין אנו שמא יעלו מן הים כשים שעלינו אנחנו (י). אם רצונך הראם לנו מתיים ונראה נקמה מסוגאנו. מיד אמר משה לפני הקב"ה רבש"ע מרוב אימה ופחד שהיה להם מן המצריים אינם מאמינים שנמבעו בים. אם רצונך עשה להם נפלאות והראם להם ויראו נקמה מאויביהם. מיד אמר הקב"ה לשרו של ים השליכם ליבשה. אמר שרו של ים רבש"ע יש אדון שנותן מתנה לעבדו שימלט ממנו? אמר הקב"ה לשרו של ים אני אפרע לך אחד וחצי כמותם. אמר לפניו רבש"ע יש עבד שתובע ארונו לרין בשביל חובו? אמר לו הקב"ה נחל קישק יהא לך ערב. מיד התציאם הים אל שפת הים וראו ישראל והכיר כל אחד ואחד שגאו וגמלו כל כספם

(י) שהיו מכלות את הצורה שלהם. (יג) כך שם

של שר הים רהב (כ"ב ע"ד). (יד) ע"י פסחים ק"ת. ילקוט שופטים רמז נ"ג.

אוצר מדרשים

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מהבם, ולאחר שראו נקמתם הצליחם הקב"ה כאבן, לכך נאמר תהומות יכסימו ירדו במצולות כמו אבן. יסינג' ה' נאדרי בכח, אמרו חז"ל בשעת שהביא הקב"ה סכת בכורות על המצריים במצרים, מקודם באה הסכה על אלהיהם ועל צלמיהם, אותן שהיו י"ל כסף ושל זהב ונחשת וכדל' ועופרת נתוכן תמסין וכל צלמים של עץ נרקבים ונשרפין, כשראה פרעה כך עמד בחצי הלילה וקרא למשה ולאהרן וצחק והולך בכל חצות ישראל ואמר היכן משה ואהרן עומדים? ונערים קטנים י"ל ישראל משחקין ואומרים לו היכן אתה הולך ומי אתה מבקש? ואומר להם משה אהבי אני מבקש, והם אומרים בבאן הוא עומד, ואחרים אומרים בבאן הוא דר, ואחרים אומרים במקום אחד עד שמצא את הבית, ואמר לו משה! קומו צאו מתוך עמי, אמר משה וכי ננבים אנו שנצא בלילה, הקב"ה אמר לנו לא תצאו איש מפתח ביתו עד בקר, א"ל בבקשה מסך קומו צאו מהר, והיה בחצי הלילה, זו שנאמרה ברוח הקדש על ידי דוד שנאמר חצות לילה אקום להודות לך על משפטי צדקך, א"ר יוחנן מלמד שאמר דוד לפני הקב"ה רבש"ע מודה אני לפניך על אותו הלילה שעשית נס לישראל במצרים ואמר דוד בוא וראה מה שעשה הקב"ה במצרים לישראל, יתברך שמו ותעלה זכרו, י"ל נמר דינו במצרים עד שהוריע משפטי למשה ולישראל, אמר לו הקב"ה למשה משה לך אמור להם לבני, תדעו שאני יוצא בתוך מצרים, ואני בעצמי אפרע מהם ואשחוט בכוריהם בשעה אחת, ואתם שחטו את פסחיהם ותנו דם הפסח על המשקוף ועל שתי המזוזות ועל נגות בתיכם ועל הבתלים, והיה זאת סימן לחיים, משל למח"ד למלך שהיה לו צאן והפריש מהן לחיים ומהן למיתת, מה עשה נטל את הסיקרא וסקר אותן שהפריש לחיים אבל אותן שהפריש למיתת לא סקר, כך הקב"ה הצאן שרצה לשחוט אלו המצריים והצאן שהפריש לחיים אלו ישראל שנתן עליהם סיקרא סימן לחיים, זה הדם שנאמר ולקחו מן הדם ונתנו על שתי המזוזות ועל המשקוף (שמות י"ב), וכן עשו ישראל שחטו את פסחיהם ונתנו מן הדם על המשקוף ועל שתי המזוזות ועל כותלי בתיהם, אמר להם משה כך אמר לי הקב"ה זאת חקת הפסח כל בן נכר לא יאכל בו, כששמע ישראל דבריו של הקב"ה עמדו על דגליהם בשמחת ובישירות ומלו כל הערלים שהיו בהם במחירות והקב"ה מיהר ורפאם, כשהיה חצי הלילה עבר הקב"ה בתוך מצרים וראה ישראל מלוכלכים בדם מילה ובתייהם מלוכלכים בדם פסח, ברך אותם ואמר להם בני תהיו בחיים לשנה הבאה, שנאמר ואעבור עליך ואראך ונ"י ואומר לך ברמ"ד ח"י (יחזקאל מ"ו), ואמר ריב"ל כשאמר משה לפרעה דע שבכורי מצרים ימותו כלילה התחיל להלעין עליו ואמר כמה יהיו בכורי מצרים

מאתים או שלש מאות, ומפני זה לא היה ידוע שכולם בכורים, מפני שהם שמונים בוסח וחיו כלם מצרים, וכל אחד ואחד היה בכור לאביו [ואם לא היה בכור מת גדול הבית], וכיון שמתו הבכורים וגדולי הבית במקום הבכורים וראה פרעה שמתו רוב בניו ובני עבדיו ובני יספחותיו אמר פרעה בלבו משה מעולם לא אמר לי יסקר, ואמר לעבדיו כל הימים שהיה משה אצלי הייתי מפיץ אותו והתפלל עלינו והיינו מתרפאים, עכשיו כעשתי עליו ואמרתי לו אל תוסף ראות פני, דין הוא שאלך אני בעצמי, מיד עמד ממטתו בבכיה גדולה והלך עם שריו לפני פתחו של משה, צעק פרעה בקול גדול ובכח במר נפש וקרא למשה: משה אהבי! בבקשה מסך התפלל עלי לפני הקב"ה, ומשה ואהרן וכל ישראל אוכלין פסחיהם ושותין יין בהסבה ואומרים יירות ותישבחות להקב"ה ויתשבין בבתיהם, ואין אחד מהם יוצא לחוץ, שכך אמר להם הקב"ה ואתם לא תצאו איש מפתח ביתו עד בקר, וכשקרא פרעה לפתחו של משה א"ל מי אתה ומה שמך? א"ל: פרעה המושפל, א"ל משה למח באת אלי אתה בעצמך וכי דרנו של מלך לקום בלילה ולחזור על פתחי בני אדם? אמר פרעה למשה בבקשה מסך אדוני בא והתפלל עלינו עכשיו [ואם לא] לא יצא איש במצרים, א"ל לא אוכל לצאת כי הקב"ה צוה אותנו ואמר לנו ואתם לא תצאו איש מפתח ביתו עד בקר, אמר פרעה למשה בבקשה מסך בא אל החלק ודבר עמי, וכן עשה, ואמר לו פרעה הלא אתמול אמרת לי ומת כל בכור בארץ מצרים ועכשיו תישע ידות מתים, אמר לו משה אעפ"כ אם תרצה אלמוד לך דבר ותנצל אתה ולא תטות, הרם קולך ואמור: בני ישראל! הרי אתם ברשותכם, קומו צאו מתוך עמי, עד עכשיו הייתם עבדי פרעה מכאן ואילך הרי אתם ברשות ח', לבו עבדו את ח' אלהיהם, וכן עשה אחז פעמים, והקב"ה השמיע קולו של פרעה בכל ארץ מצרים, שנאמר ויקם פרעה לילה הוא וכל עבדיו וכל מצרים ותהי צעקה גדולה במצרים כי אין בית ונ"י ויאמר קומו צאו מתוך עמי, אמר לו משה לפרעה למה אתה ממריח עצמך, א"ל אני מתירא שמא אמות לפי שאני בכור, וא"ל משה אל תירא מדבר זה, לגדולת מו אתה מוכן (15), ולא תאמר פרעה לכך היה דוחק אלא כל המצריים היו דוחקין שנאמר ותחזק מצרים על העם למהר לשלחם מן הארץ כי אמרו בולנו מתים, א"ר שמואל בר נחמני בהערסא ואת באו המצריים על ישראל לשעבדם תחת ידם ולטפסם, אמרו אם משעבדים אנו אותם באש יכול אלהיהם להלחם בנו באש כשם שהביא על סדום ועל עמורה, אבל נשעבדם במים שאינו יכול להלחם בנו במים שכבר נשבע שלא יביא מבויל לעולם, ואמר להם הקב"ה שומים! אני נשבעתי שלא אביא

(15) לשבוע בים.

אוצר מדרשים

וירשע

מבול לעולם, חייכם אתם עצמכם תלכו אל המבול, לפיכך נמנעם בים, לכך נאמר ימינך ה' נאדרי בכח ימינך ה' תרעץ אויב.

וברוב נאונך, אמרו חז"ל עשר מכות הביא הקב"ה על המצריים במצרים, מכה ראשונה הביא עליהם דם, ולמה הביא עליהם דם, מפני שהיו המצריים מונעין בנות ישראל מלעשות טבילה לכך הביא עליהם דם. מכה שניה הביא עליהם צפרדעים שהיו נופלות במשארותם ובר"י מסביותם ומשכבם, והיו מקרקרין בפניהם, והיתה מכה צפרדעים קשה מכולן, ולמה הביא עליהם צפרדעים? לפי שהיו המצריים אומרים לישראל לכו צודו לנו דגים (נ"א שקצים ורמשים) מן הים ולכך הביא עליהם צפרדעים. מכה שלישית הביא עליהם כנים, והיו הכנים ברום אמה על הארץ, וכשהיו המצריים לובשים כנדיהם נקיים מיד נתמלאו כנים, ולמה הביא עליהם כנים? לפי שהיו המצריים אומרים לישראל לכו ופאטאו את כתינו ואת חצרינו והשווקים, לכך נהפכה עפר הארץ לכנים. מכה רביעית הביא עליהם ערוב אריות חאבים ודוכים וגמרים, ונכנסים בבתיהם והמצריים סוגרים דלתותיהם, והקב"ה שלח להם חיה מן הים ושמה סילוני והיתה נכנסת בחלונות ופותחת הדלתות והיו החיות נכנסין ואוכלות המצריים, ומפני מה הביא עליהם ערוב? לפי שהיו המצריים אומרים לישראל לכו תצודו לנו חיות מן השרה, לכך הביא עליהם ערוב. מכה חמישית הביא הקב"ה עליהם דבר, ומפני מה הביא עליהם דבר? לפי שהיו המצריים אומרים לישראל לכו ורעו לנו בהמתנו, לכך הביא עליהם דבר שמתו כל בהמתם. מכה ששית הביא הקב"ה עליהם שחין באדם ובבהמה, ומפני מה הביא עליהם שחין? לפי שהיו המצריים אומרים לישראל לכו תקנו לנו מרחצאות לעון עצמנו, ולכך הביא עליהם שחין שהיה מחמם את בשרם. מכה שביעית הביא הקב"ה עליהם ברד על הארץ ועל הבהמה, מפני מה? לפי שהיו המצריים אומרים לישראל לכו חרשו חרעו את שדותינו וארצנו, ולכך הביא עליהם ברד ששבר את האילנות והזרעים, ואמרו חז"ל בשעה שנשא משה ידיו להקב"ה עמד חברר בין השמים ובין הארץ, שנאמר ויצא משה מעם פרעה את העיר ויפרש כפיו אל ה' ויחדלו הקולות והברד ומטר לא נתך ארצה, אלא הוטל בין שמים וארץ, עד שבא יהושע ונלחם עם אותן שלשים ואחד מלכים והשליכם הקב"ה עליהם, שנאמר רבים אשר מתו באבני הברד מאשר הרגו בני ישראל בחרב (יהושע י"א). והנשאר ימסיד הקב"ה על גו ומנו שנאמר ויצא ה' ונלחם בנים ההם כיום הלחמו ביום קרב (זכריה י"ד ג'). מכה שמינית הביא הקב"ה עליהם ארבה שהיו שינוי כשיני אדיה ומתלעות לביא לו. מפני מה הביא עליהם ארבה? מפני שהיו המצריים אומרים לישראל לכו ונמנו לנו אילנות ושמרו פירותיהם, לפיכך הביא עליהם ארבה.

ואכל מה שנשאר מן הברד. מכה חשעית הביא עליהם הקב"ה חשך של גיהנם, ומי שהיה יושב לו יכול לעמוד ומי שהיה עומד לא היה יכול לישב מפני כוכב החשך, ומפני מה הביא עליהם חשך מפני שהיו מרשעים בישראל ובקש הקב"ה להמיתם בשלש ימ אפלה כדי שלא יראו המצריים במפלגתם וישמחו עליהם, לפיכך הביא עליהם חשך, ומכה עשירית זו מכה בכורות, וקודם שבאה המכה הלך משה אצל בכורי מצרים ואמר להם כה אמר ה' כחצות הלילה אני יוצא בתוך מצרים ומת כל בכור בארץ מצרים, מיד הלכו כל בכורי מצרים לאביהם ואמרו להם תרעו שכל המכות שאמר משה כולם באו ועכשיו אמר ומת כל בכור בארץ מצרים, ענו להם אביהם לכו אצל פרעה כי הוא בכור נ"כ, וכן עשו, ואמרו לו שלח את העם הזה ואם לא תשלחם ימות כל בכור בארץ מצרים, אמר פרעה לעבדיו אני אמרתי או נפשי תצא או נפשם תצא (16), ואמר לעבדיו הכוס בכל מיני מרדות, מיד הלכו כל בכורי מצרים ונטלו איש חרבו והרגו אבותיהם שנאמר למכה מצרים בבכוריהם, ועל כל זאת בחצי הלילה נהרג כל בכור מצרים, לכך נאמר וכוונת נאמן תהרוס קמך תשלח חרוגך יאכלמו כקש, וברוח אפיך נערמו מים, אמרו חז"ל כשראו מים של ים אהבה שאהב הקב"ה את ישראל השפילו המים עצמן בשביל כבוד ישראל, ואף הים השפיל עצמו ועשה את עצמו לשנים עשר קרעים (דרכים) כנגד שנים עשר שבטי ישראל, והגביה את נליו למעלה שש מאות אמות (מיל), והקפיד את עצמו מלמטה והמתיק את מימיו, ועשה עצמו כחומה ונעשה בה חלונות שהיו ישראל דואים זה את זה ומהללים להקב"ה בשירות ותשבחות, ומהלכין בתוך הים כאדם שמהלך בביתו עד שיצאו ליבשה, לכך נאמר וברוח אפיך נערמו מים נצבו כמו נד נחלים קפאו תהומות בלב ים.

אמר אויב, אמרו חז"ל בשעה שרדפו המצריים אחרי ישראל על הים נעשו שלש כתות, כת ראשונה אומרת נמנע עצמנו בים, וכת שניה אומרת נשוב למצרים, וכת שלישית אומרת נערוך עמהם מלחמה; כת שאומרת נמנע עצמנו בים אמר להם משה התיצבו וראו את ישועת ה', כת שאומרת נחזור למצרים אמר להם משה לא תוסיפו לראותם עוד עד עולם, כת שאומרת נערוך עמהם מלחמה אמר להם משה ה' ילחם לכם ואתם תחרישון, וכיון שנבקע הים נשמע שמעתו מסוף העולם ועד סופו, ונבהו המים אלף ושלש מאות מיל (17), ונבהלו כל העולם ואחוזים אימה ורעדה, באותה שעה עמדו כל השבטים על שפת הים והיו אומרים מי ירד בים תתלה, עד שקפץ שבט

(16) פ' אמות גני או ימותו ישראל במים ושלחם, (17)

בחרטום יונתן פ' כשלה איתא הלת מאח מילין.

ביום תכבני יום חמשים יום, ולאחר כן העליני מן הים, ולבסוף האמנתי בו בעל כרחי, לכך שררו ישראל ואת השיבה ואמרו כולם יחד מן כמזכה באלים ה' מי כמזכה נאדר בקדש נורא תהלות עשה פלא.

נמית ימינך, אמרו חז"ל יכולין אתם ללמוד מפסוק זה שלא רצה הים לקבלם ולא רצתה הארץ לבלועם, הים היה משליכם לארץ והארץ משליכם בים, ולמה? שהיה הים מתיירא מיום הדין שלא יבקש אותם הקב"ה ממנו, והארץ היתה מתייראה כמו כן שלא יקללנה הקב"ה בשם יקללה כשברא עלמו. שבשעה שברא את עלמו היתה רחבה רחבה ככל מקום, וכשעמד קין והרג את הבל אחיו היתה תוסס רסו בארץ וקללה הקב"ה, מיד נעשו ההרים והנבעות (18), ובשביל כך לא רצתה הארץ לבלועם, או אמר הקב"ה אל הארץ אל תיראי, מיד פתחה האדמה את פיה ובלעת אותם, לכך נאמר נמית ימינך תבלעם ארץ.

נחית בחסדך, אמרו חז"ל יתברך יסו של הקב"ה שאין מדותיו כמדת בשר ודם, מדת ב'ו בשעה שיצא בלילה שריו תבריו מליכין לפניו נרות ואכזות, וביום עושן לו על מפני החסד כדי שלא ימצא עור בנופו, אבל הקב"ה אינו כן, כי ברוב אהבה שאהב את ישראל הוא בעצמו הלך לפניו, ואולם מקרא בתוב אי אפשר לאומרו, שכן כתיב וז' הולך לפניו יוסם בעמוד ענן לנחותם הדרך ולילה בעמוד אש להאיר להם ללכת יוסם ולילה, לכך נאמר נחית בחסדך עם זו נאלת נהלת בעוד אל נוח קדשך.

שמוע עמי, אמרו חז"ל אמר להם משה לישראל, ראיכם כל הנסים האלה שעשה לנו הקב"ה בזמן הזה כך עתיד לעשות לאדום בשעה שהוא טאל את ישראל, שכך אמרו חכמים שלשה ימים קודם שיבא משיח יבוא אליהו בתחלה ויעמוד על הרי ציון ויעקב במד ובוכה וסופר עליהם ואומר עד מתי יהיו חרבים, וקול בכיתו נשמע מסוף העולם עד סופו, ואח"כ יבא ויאמר בא שלום לעולם שנאמר מה נאח על ההרים רגלי מבשר משמיע שלום, וכשישמעו הרשעים בניהם מיד יהיו שמחים ויאמרו בא שלום לעולם, ביום השני יבא ויעמוד על הרי ישראל ויאמר בא טובה לעולם שנאמר מבשר טוב, ואפילו הרשעים יאמרו, ביום השלישי יבא ויאמר יתעב באה לעולם שנאמר משמיע יתועב, וכיון שראוים הרשעים שבניהם

בנימין יורד תחלה וכל השבטים אחריו, לפיכך זכה בנימין ויצא ממנו מרדכי הצדיק שנפדו ישראל על ידו מן מות לחיים, כיון שראו המצריים שנבנסו ישראל לים סוף, אף הם נחלקו לשלש כתות, כת ראשונה אוסרת נחזירים למצרים, כת שניה אוסרת נהרגו אותם, כת שלישית אוסרת נמשיטם ונעזבם ערומים, כת יאוסרת נחזירים למצרים נישף הקב"ה עליהם ברוחו וכסח אותם הים שנאמר נישפת ברוחך כססו ים, וכת יאוסרת נהרגם מבעם הקב"ה שנאמר ומבחר ילשינו מבעו בים סוף, וכת יאוסרת נמשיטם ונעזבם ערומים ניער הקב"ה אותם בים שנאמר וינער ה' את מצרים בתוך הים, כיון שראו המצריים שהתחיל בהם הפורענות אמרו אלהיהם של ישראל נרול הוא מאד נחזור ונברח למצרים, כיון שראה הקב"ה כך ישנר לשניהם מלאך ברמות סוס נקבה ונכנסה לים ורצו אחריה כל הסוסים ונכנסו לים בעל כרחם, מיד אמר הקב"ה למשה נסה ידך על הים וישבו המים על מצרים, ויום משה את ידו על הים, ומיד כחו ישראל את ממונם של מצרים, לכך נאמר אמר אויב ארדוף איני אחלק שלל תמלאמו נפשי אריק חרבי תורישמו יד.

נשפת ברוחך כססו ים, אמרו חז"ל בשעה שמכעו המצריים בים היו בהם שני מכשפים רשעים יוחני ומסרוא ואמרו למרעה אם ביד הקב"ה נס זה אין אני יכולין לו, אבל אם ביד מלאכים הוא אנו יכולין לנערם (המלאכים) בים, עשו כשפים והורידו אותם אל הים, או אמרו המלאכים השיענו אלהים כי באו מים עד נפש (19), ואתה כמאמר מבעת אותם בים במים אדירים, לכך נאמר נשפת ברוחך כססו ים צללו כעופרת במים אדירים.

מי כסוף, אמרו חז"ל בשעה שאמרו ישראל זאת השירה לפני הקב"ה שמע אותה פרעה כשהיה מסורף בים ונישא אצבעו לשמים ואמר מאמץ אני בך שאתה הצדיק ואני תמי הרשעים ואין אלוה בעולם אלא אתה, באותה שעה ירד נבראל והסיל על צוארו שלשלת של ברזל ואמר לו רשע! אחסול אמרת מי ה' אשר אשמע בקולו ותכשיו אתה אוסר ה' הצדיק, מיד הורידו למצולות ים תכבו שם חמשים יום ותרעד אותו כדי שיכיר נפלאותיו של הקב"ה, ולאחר כן העלו מן הים והמליכו על נינוה, וכשבא יונה לנינוה ואמר עוד ארבעים יום ונינוה נהפכת מיד אחזו אימה ורעדו וקם מכםא ויכס ים וישב על האפר והוא בעצמו זעק ואמר האדם והבהמה הבקר והצאן אל יעצמו מאומה אל ירעו ומים אל ישתו, כי יודע אני שאין אלוה אחר בכל העולם כמוהו, וכל רבריו אמת וכל משפטיו באמת ובאמונה, תעדין פרעה חי תעמוד בפתחו של ניהנם, וכינכנסין מלכי אר"ה מיד הוא מודיע להם נבירותיו של הקב"ה, ואומר להם שומים שבעולם מפני מה לא למדתם ממני דעת, שהרי אני במדתי בוקב"ה לכן שלח בי עשר מכות, ואף מבעני

(18) חסד פה כי חקב"ה בא לעזרת המלאכים ואז הוזה המלאכים להקב"ה כי הצילם, ותתוהוה הפסד את יוחני ומסרוא, וכלקום בשלח רמז רל"ה, טובא כי יוחני ומסרוא עשו להם כשפים בכשפים ופחדו בארץ ונתלו ברסו של עולם, אמר נבראל ברוב גאון תהרוס קמך, מיד אמר הקב"ה למכאול לך ויעש בהם רין, הפסד מיכאל כעצת ראשן וקעקע על פני המים, תה"ד אתה צורית בעוד ים שבת ראשי תצנים על המים, (19) ע"י מדרש תהלים מוסר צ"ג וצ"ד ח"ה פ"ה שמונה שם באופן אחר.

הקב"ה רחץ את ישראל שנאמר וארחצך במים.
עבר נתל את אדוניו אבל הקב"ה נתל את ישראל
שנאמר ואנעלך תחיש. תל כל זאת כשגלו למצרים
שכינה עמהם שנאמר אנכי ארד עמך מצרפתה. גלו
לעילם שכינה עמהם שנאמר ושמתי כסאי בעילם.
גלו לבבל שכינה עמהם שנאמר למענכם שלחתי בבבל.
ותיד הקב"ה להחזיר את ישראל להר קדשו שנאמר
והביאותים אל הר קדשי (ישעיה נ"ה). וכתיב בתריה
ותמעתים על ארמיתם (סוף עמוס). כיון שראה משה
אהבתו של הקב"ה שאהב את ישראל. אמר לפניו
רביש'ע תביאם ותמסעם שם ותהיה אותה נסמיה שלמה
שלא תהיה לה נתישה לעולם. ותוריד ירושלם כן
השמים ולא תהרוס אותה לעולם. ותכנס גליותיהם
של ישראל לתוכה וישבו עליה לבטח. לכך נאמר
תביאמו ותמסעמו בהר נחלתך מכת לשבתך פעלת ה'

מקדש ה' כוננו ירדך.
ה' ימלוך לעולם ועד. אמרו חז"ל אמר
להם משה לישראל ראיתם הנסים והנבואות שעשה
לכם הקב"ה. יותר ויותר הוא עתיד לעשות לכם
לעתיד לבוא בעולם הזה ובעולם הבא. בעולם הזה
מלחמות וצרות וצד רע. ושמן ומלאך המות שיש
להם רשות לשלוט בעולם. אבל לעולם הבא אין בו
לא צרות ולא אנוחות ולא שעבוד ולא צד הרע ולא
שמן ולא מלאך המות שנאמר וסחה ה' אליהם דמעה
מעל כל פנים (ישעיה כ'). וכתיב ואמר ביום ההוא
תנה אליהו זה קרניו לו ורשענו זה ה' קרניו לו
ננילה ותשמחה בישועתו (שם כ"ה). וכשיגיע ימות
המשיח יעלה גז ומנוע על ארץ ישראל לפי שישיע
ישראל הם בלא מלך ורשבין לבטח. מיד יקח עמו
שבעים ואחד אוסה ועלה לירושלם. ויאמר פרעה שומה
היה שנור להרוג את הזכרים והגיה את הנקבות. ובלק
ממש היה שרצה לקללם ילא היה יודע שאלהיהם היה
מברכם. הסן היה משונע שרצה להרנם ולא היה יודע
שאלהיהם יכול להצילם. אבל אני לא אעשה להם
כן. אלא אעלה ואלחם עם אלהיהם תחלה ואח"כ
אהרוג אותם שנאמר יתצבו מלכי ארץ ורחנים
נוסדו יחד על ה' תל משיחו. ואמר לו הקב"ה רשע!
עמי אתה מבקש לעשות מלחמה? בחיך אני
אעשה עמך [כלה]. מיד יורד עליו אנכי אלנביש
שהם ננחות ברקע רנוף אותם סנפה גדולה.
שנאמר חאת הסנפה אשר ינוף ת' את כל העמים
אשר צבאו על ירושלם הסק בשרו והוא עומד
על רגליו תעניו תמקנה בחוריהן ולשנו חסק בפייהם
(זכריה י"ד י"ב). ואחריו יקום מלך אחר רשע ועו
פנים ויעשה מלחמה עם ישראל שלשה חרשים. ושמו
ארמילוס. ואלו חן אוותותיו: יהיה קרד תעניו אתה
קמנה ואחת גדולה חרש של יסין מפת רשל שמאל
ימתי אמות חצי יהיה לו צרעת במצחו ואזנו הימנית
סתומה והשמאלית פתוחה. וכשיבא האדם לרברר אליו

שכך יאמר אליהו. אומר לציון מלך אלהיך. ללמדך שעל
ציון ובניה תבא הישועה ולא לרשעים. תאחזבו חיל
ואימה. באותה שעה יראה הקב"ה מלכותו וכבודו
לעדיקים ולכל אוסה ולשון. ומיד נואל את ישראל
וירשו את הר ציון. לכך נאמר ישמעו עמים ירננוק חיל
אחז יושבי פלשת.

אז נבהלו. אמרו חז"ל מפני מה נתייראו
יושבי פלשת? מפני שהרעו מכני אפרים מאתים
אלף איש שכונו את הקץ בציאת מצרים ומעו בשלישים
שנה וצאו בכח נכורתם. וכעס עליהם הקב"ה ומסרם
ביד פלשתים (20). תתה נתייראו ואמרו עתה יגללו
עלינו ישראל ויהרגו אותנו וירשו את ארצנו. ומפני
מה נתייראו אלופי אדום? אמרו עכשיו יפקדו עלינו
אותה שנאה שהיתה בין עשו ובין יעקב ויהרגו אותנו
וירשו את ארצנו. ומפני מה נתייראו אילי מואב?
אמרו עכשיו יפקדו עלינו אותה מריבה שהיתה בין
רועי אברהם ובין רועי לוז אבינו. וכיון שראו מלכי
כנען שכולם היו מתייראין אמרו ומה אלו שאין ישראל
רעים לשוב אל ארצם יש להם אימה ופחד. אנחנו
שארצנו נתנה הקב"ה לאברהם אביהם והם באים על
אותה הבטחה. על אחת כמה וכמה. לכך נאמר אז
נבהלו אלופי אדום אילי מואב יאחזבו רעד נמוט כל
יושבי כנען.

תפול עליהם. אמרו חז"ל אמר להם משה
לישראל: אחיו אתם תרעו שלא בחכמה ולא בתבונה
ולא בכח ולא בעשר יבול אדם לכבוש אפילו עיר
אחת אלא בנבירותיו של הקב"ה. שהרי כמה נבורים
עתידים להלחם עליכם ותתיד הקב"ה ליתן פחדכם
ומוראכם עליהם ולא יתצב איש בפניכם. תתיד הקב"ה
לכתוב בתורתו אל יתהלל הנבור בנבירותו (ירמיה ט'). ואם
אתם עושים רצונו של מקום הוא ישיעכם מיד ארביכם.
ואמר משה לפני הקב"ה רביש'ע כשיבא עמלק להלחם
עם ישראל תפול עליהם אימתה ופחד. וכשיבואו מלכי
האמורי להסמין עצמן כנחלי ארנת בגדול ורוע ירשו
כאבן. עד יעבור עם זו קנית עם יהושע את הירדן
ריבואו וירשו את ארצם וישולם נדר שנדרת לאברהם
אביהם. ואף לימות המשיח עשה להם נסים ונפלאות.
כמו שכתוב כימי צאתך מארץ מצרים אראנו נפלאות
(מכה ו' ט"ו). ולכן נאמר תפול עליהם אימתה ופחד
בגדול ורוע ירשו כאבן עד יעבור עמך ה' עד יעבור
עם זו קנית.

תביאמו ותמסעמו. אמרו חז"ל ישתבח שמו
של הקב"ה שמרוב אהבה שאהב את ישראל קרא להם
בני בכורי. בוא וראה כמה חסדיו של הקב"ה. עבר לובש
את רבו אבל הקב"ה לובש את ישראל. שנאמר
ואלבישך רקמה (יוחאל ט"ו). עבר רחץ אדוניו אבל

(20) בשרי הד"א וכן בתרגום יונתן פ' בשלח
כאתן אלפין. ובשכנות רבת פ"ב שלשים ריבוא.

ויכלו ע"ר שני תיאל לאביגיל, גם מביא ר"א בעל תוספתא (ס' שכ"ו) וליק מנחם שדחתה מתפללת י"ח ברכות בלוקס [שמואל רמז פ'] הביא זה בשם מדרש למדנו, ובעל הלכות גדולות (חל' ברכות פ"ח) מביא מדרש זה בלשון אחר, במערכת ומצוין בעזר מדרש למדנו, בעל תוספתא (שבת קס"ו, ד"ח פורענות) מביאים: נדאמרין במדרש שנסעו מדר ח' רדך שלשת ימים כתינוק היוצא מבית הספר וכו' (ע"ר ג"כ תוס' סנהדרין ג"ס). במדרש ר"ש על רמז (פ"ד ב') נזכר, ויכלו רבנן אך מצות הוא ת"ל ויקרא רבנן, גם נזכר מדרש ויכלו בל' הניספראות של תלמיד ר' יהודה ותוס' בל' על קלף (שם תהלים), רוב רבני המדרש ויכלו לקח הספד מן מדרש למדנו, שם הספד ווסט לא נזכר, אך כנראה נסדד אחר הסמך ד"א כי לא נזכר אצל הסופרים שחזו קורם חוסן הווא, גם בעל הלוקס שמעוני אינו מוכיח את מדרש ויכלו (ע"ר רב עזרים 62; צונץ בספר הדרשות עדי 293 הערה ר', ובאוצר ישראל בערכו), ר"א גרינרוס כספר הלוקס (ח"ב) אקף את כל המאמרים שנזכרו במאמרים חנ"ל בשם מדרש ויכלו, ואלה הם:

מדרש ויכלו

[בספר הלוקס]

בראשית: א' אמר רבנן פסעים חייב אדם לומר ויכלו, אחד בתפלה ואחד לאחר התפלה ואחר על הכוס (רוקח סי' ס"ט, ב') וה' הסמך על סרום על עמורה (בראשית י"ט) בכל מערבין ערובי תחומין חוץ ממים ומלח לפי שהוא מין קללה ואין הנוף נזוק היסוד. ג' ברח"י כתיב שני תיאל לאביגיל (דחי"א ג' א'), ובשמואל כתיב ומסנהו כלאב לאביגיל (ש"ב ג' ו') לפי שרוד נשא אביגיל אחר מות נבל והיו חורשין אותו הבן שהוא של נבל לכך קראוהו ב' שמות כלאב ודניאל, דניאל, כלאב כלראב.

ויקרא: ד' חברתם את כל מצות ה' (שלה-ס"ו ל"ט), צריך לרקק מן יקרא ושכרתם, הקורא ק"ש באותיותיה מצננן לו ניהנם, שנאמר תשלג בצלמך (ע"ר ברכות ס"ו).

בסדר ברי: ה' רסעו (י' ל"ג) שנמש מדר סיני רדך שלשת ימים כתינוק היוצא מבית הספר שבועה והולך לו, כך היו בורחים מדר סיני רדך שלשת ימים לפי שלמדו הרבה תורה בסיני. אמר הקב"ה נסמך פורענות לפורענות? לא, אלא נפסק פ' ודחי בנסמך הארץ (י' ר') מה אקוב לא קבת אל (כ"ג ח'), שלא תזכיר שמו (שם ישראל) על הפורענות, אדם כי יהיה בעור בשרו ונר נגע צרעת כי תהיה באדם (ויקרא י"ג) ולא בישראל, אלו יעמדו לברך את העם (דברים כ"ז) וגבי פורענות אלה יעמדו על הקללה (שם, ד') מי מנה עמר יעקב (דברים י') עמר, שישראל מטמין ערלתו בעמר (בתל), ח' כשחטאו בעגל עלה משה

(י' ע"ר תוס' שבת ק"ו, ד"ח פורענות.

מוכות מסה לו אונו הסתעפה ואם ידחה אדם לרבר אליו רשע יסח לו אונו הפתחה, ויעלה לירושלם ויהרג משיח בן יוסף, שנאמר והביטו אלי את אשר דקרו ונספדו עליו כמספר על היחיד (זכריה י"ב י'), ואח"כ יבא משיח בן דוד בענן שנאמר וארו עם ענני שמיא כבר אנש (דניאל י') וכתיב בתריה ואלה יהב שלמן יקר ומלטו, רמית ארמילוס הרשע, שנאמר וברוח שפתיו ימית רשע (ישעיה י"א), ואח"כ יקבץ הקב"ה נדחי ישראל המפחדים לכאן ולכאן, שנאמר אשרקת להם ואקבעם כי מדיתים ורבו כמו רבו (זכריה י"ח), והיו תלמים בירושלם שבעים ושנים מרגלים שהן מבהיקות מסוף העולם ועד סופו, ואח"כ ילכו לאותה אורה, שנאמר והלכו גרים לאורך ומלכים לנגח ורחק (ישעיה ס'). וההיכל יוריד הקב"ה מן השמים כמו שהראהו הקב"ה למשיח שנאמר תביאמו ותטעמו בהר נחלתך מכן לשבתך פעלת ה', וישבו שם ישראל אלפים שנה ואוכלין את לוחתן, ולקץ אלפים שנה יסב הקב"ה על כסא דין בעמק יהושפט, ומיד השמים והארץ נחלפים וחמה ולבנה ברשים שנאמר והמרח הלבנה וברשה החמה (ישעיה כ"ד), ומנן שביום השלישי (כאלף השלישי) יהיה הרין? שנאמר ביום השלישי יקיימו ותחיה לפניו (הושע י'), זה הרין, והקב"ה מביא כל אומה ולשון, ויאמר להם למי עבדתם בעולם שהלך ולמי השתחויתם? והם אומרים לאלילי כסף ולאילילי זהב, ויאמר להם הקב"ה עבדו אתם באש הזה ואלהיכם אם יכולין להציל אתכם צילו, מיד הם עוברים ושרפים שם שנאמר ישובו רשעים לשאול כל גרים שחתי אלהים (תהלים ס'), ואח"כ ישראל באים ואומר להם הקב"ה למי עבדתם? מיד עונים כי אתה אבינו כי אברהם לא ידענו וישראל לא יכירו אתה ה' אבינו נואלנו מעולם שמך (ישעיה ס"ג), מיד הקב"ה צילם מדינה של ניהנם וירשבין בנן עזר ומתעדנן מפורותיה שנאמר תנונן יירשו ארץ והתענו על רוב שלום (תהלים ל"ו), ואח"כ מחרש להם הקב"ה שמם וארץ שנאמר כי הנני בורא שמם חדשים וארץ חדשה (ישעיה ס"ח), והארץ שעתיד הקב"ה לחדשה תצא אילנות מובות וכל מיני מנרים, והכל חיון לשלם ולעלמי עולמים, מי שעשה נסים ונפלאות בימים ההם הוא יעשה נסים ונפלאות עמנו בימים האלה ובזמן הזה ויקבץ אותנו מארבע כנפות הארץ ויוליכנו לירושלם, תבנה ותבנות במהרה בימינו, אמן.

הם מדרש וירשע

ויכלו: המדרש הזה נקרא כן על שם שפתו במספר יכלו השמים (בראשית כ' א'), והוא אחד מהמדרשים שאבדו ואחנו, ונשארו לנו כמנו רק מאמרים מקובעים שהביאו רבנים קדמונים, שהיה בידם המדרש הזה, במדרש המיוחס ש"י על דברי הימים (דחי"א ג' א') מביא בשם מדרש

Chapter Two

An English Translation of Midrash Vayosha

I. Israel as a Dove

"And God saved (Ex. 14:30)." The sages of blessed memory said that when the Egyptians pursued the children of Israel and saw them, Israel was seized with fear and trembling, and so the rabbis compared Israel to a dove fleeing from the hawk. And when it came to its nest, it found a snake there. So, too, Israel---When they saw the Egyptians, they said to Moses, "Moses our teacher! Where shall we go?! The Egyptians are behind us and the sea is before us!" And so they cried outloud, and Moses also cried with them.

II. Abraham's Prayers and their connection to the Exodus

Immediately, the mercy of the Holy One, Blessed be He unfolded, and God said to Moses, "Moses! I am reminded of the prayer that Abraham, my beloved, uttered at the moment that I told him, "Go and slaughter Isaac, your son! He immediately acquiesced, lovingly. And the next day, he rose early to do my will, as it is said, "*And Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his ass and took his two boys with him, and Isaac his son* " (Gen 22:3).

III. Eliezer and Ishmael

And who were these two boys?--Eliezer, Abraham's servant, and Ishmael. Isaac said to his father, "Where are we going to bless (God)?" His father responded, "Yonder, to a place that is near." And it is written, "*And Abraham took the wood for the offering and placed it on Isaac, his son. He took the flint and the knife in his hand, and the two of them walked together*" (Gen. 22:6).

IV. The Introduction of the High Priest

Isaac said to his father, "Father, where are we walking together?" Abraham responded, "My son, to offer a sacrifice." He said to him, "There is Shem. He is a high priest, and he will offer up the sacrifice." Isaac immediately became seized with a great fear because he didn't see any of the implements in Abraham's arms for the sacrifice. Isaac said to Abraham, his father, "My father." (Abraham) said, "Here I am, my son," Isaac said, "*Here is the flint and the wood, but where is the land for the offering,*" (Gen.22:7).

V. Isaac Knows His Fathers Intentions

Isaac immediately trembled, and his limbs shook as he became aware of the thoughts of his father because there was nothing in his arms (for his sacrifice). But, inspite of this, Isaac strengthened himself and said to his father, "Now¹, if it is true that the Holy One, Blessed be He has chosen me, then behold, my soul is His." And Isaac reconciled his death in order to fulfill the commandment of his Creator. And Abraham said to him, "I know you, my son, that you won't hinder the command of your Creator, and my command," Isaac responded to his father, "My father! Quickly perform the will of your creator, and He will act in accordance with Your will.

¹Possible textual error; should read וְלִנְתָּה instead of וְאִתָּה

VI. Satan

VI A. Satan and Abraham

Later, as they were walking on their way, Satan appeared before Abraham as an old man and said to him, "Where are you going?" (Abraham) said to him, "To pray." (Satan) said, "If you're going to pray, why do you need to carry wood on your shoulders and flint and a knife in your hand?" (Abraham) said to him, "Perhaps we will stay a day or two and have to perform a slaughter, cook, and eat." (Satan said to him, "My poor one! Was I not there when the seducer said to you, "Take your son, your precious one,, and offer him to me as a burnt offering," And one who is as old as you will give up his beloved son like this...and the first born whom the Holy One, Blessed be He, gave to him at the age of one hundred years?" Abraham said to him, "It was not the seducer, rather it was the Holy One, Blessed be He, in all His glory and by himself, who said to me, "Take your son, your only one, whom you love, Isaac and make (him as) an offering before Me." Satan said to him, "*Isn't your piety your confidence (and your foolishness), your integrity your hope (and your demise)?*" (Job. 4:6). Abraham said to him, "Who is innocent who has been uprooted? And where are the upright who have been cut off?" When Satan saw that Abraham was not persuaded by his arguments, He said to him, "Know Abraham, I tell you good news. You will make an offering (of a lamb) and not of Isaac." (Abraham) said to him, "Such is the punishment of a liar, that even if he speaks the truth, no one listens to him. I don't believe you. Rather, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will do what is good in His eyes."

VI. B. Satan and Isaac

Satan and stood before Isaac and appeared to him as a young boy like him. Satan said to him, "Where are you going?" Isaac said to him, "To study Torah." Satan said to him, "Can a man study Torah before his death?" Satan said to him, "Oh you poor boy!! Where are your childhood years, and you don't know that your father led you here to sacrifice you." (Isaac) said to him, "I myself know. My soul is delivered into the hand of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and into the hand of my father. All that He wishes to do with me, let Him do."

Undaunted, Satan went to Sarah and appeared to her as an old man. He said to her, "where did Abraham your husband go?" She said to him, "He went to study Torah." He said to her, "Your poor woman, don't you care about your son? You don't know that (Abraham) is going to slaughter him?" At that moment, her loins shook and her limbs quaked, and she lost consciousness. In spite of this, she strengthened herself and said, "What the Holy One, Blessed be He said to (Abraham), Let Him do, in peace and in life."

And when Satan saw that his plan and intention to annul Abraham's offering did not come to pass, what did he do? He went and made himself into a large river, and when they arrived at that river, Abraham said to Isaac, "Wait here for a while, and I will enter the river first and see if it is deep." And so he did. He went down into the river to the middle, and the water didn't come up to his knees. He said to Isaac, "Enter after me. Don't be afraid; the water isn't as high as my knees." And Isaac went down behind him and didn't stoop until he went as far as the middle of the river, where the water rose and reached their necks. At that same time, (Abraham) lifted his eyes toward the heavens and said, "Master of the Universe, it is revealed and known before the throne of glory, that you are God in the high places

and on earth. And You revealed yourself to me and said to me, 'I am unique, and there is none like me in the world. and you are unique and there is none who is righteous like you in the world. Make my name known in the world, and slaughter Isaac your son as an offering before Me.' And I hurried to (correct you and) say ('You mean) Ishmael, since you told me that *'Through Isaac shall your seed be called'* (Gen. 21:12). And now, as we drown in this river, who will declare the unity of God in the world!" Immediately, the Holy One, Blessed be He, rebuked Satan and dried up the water, and they found themselves on dry land.

Eliezer and Ishmael, Con'd.

Later on the journey, Abraham and Isaac were walking on the way, an argument erupted between Ishmael and Eliezer, Abraham's servant, who were watching the implements and the animals. Ishmael said, "Now that father is going to sacrifice Isaac, I will inherit all the property that will be left by father." Eliezer said to him, "You were already banished, like a woman who is thrown out by her husband, and he sent you into the wilderness, but I am the faithful servant of Abraham's household, ever present day and night." And the Holy Spirit responded and said to them, "Neither you nor you will inherit."

VII. Abraham and Isaac as the Alter is Built

It is written, "*And they came to the place of which God had spoken, and Abraham built an alter there. He arranged the wood and bound his son Isaac and placed him on the alter on top of the wood*" (Gen. 22:9). Abraham was building the alter, and Isaac was handing him the wood and the flints. Abraham was similar to a man who built a wedding home for his son, and

Isaac was similar to a man who prepared a wedding canopy for himself, which he made with joy. And Isaac said to his father, "Father, hurry and uncover your arm and tie my arms and legs very well. I am thirty seven years old, and you are elderly. And when I see the knife, I will kick you from fear of the knife because the instinct to live is strong. And perhaps I will inflict a blemish in myself and disqualify the sacrifice. Rather, please father, hurry and do your will. Don't dawdle, roll up your sleeves and be brave (gird your loins)! Burn me up very well and take my ashes to Sarah, my mother. Place them in an urn in her room, and each and every time that she enters her room, she will remember her son Isaac tearfully." Isaac also said to his father, "More than this, when you slaughter me, leave me (separate from me) and to to Sarah, my mother. If she asks you, 'Where is Isaac, my son,' what will you tell her? And what will you do in your old age?" Abraham said to him, "We know that I will fear that our days will be few. The One who comforted us when (Sarah) was barren, will comfort us from this day on." Abraham immediately arranged the wood and bound (Isaac) on the alter on top of the wood. (Abraham) strengthened his arms, rolled up his sleeves, and placed his two knees on top of Isaac with great strength.

VIII. Tears

(Meanwhile) the Holy One, Blessed be He, sits on His high and exalted throne and say how the hearts of Abraham and Isaac were equal (in their resolve to fulfill God's command), and tears were falling from Abraham onto Isaac, and from Isaac, there were tears falling from Isaac onto the wood. And the knife was bathed in tears. *"Immediately, Abraham stretched out his arm and took the knife to slaughter his son"* (Gen. 22:10). The Holy One,

Blessed be He, said to the ministering angels, "Did you see Abraham my beloved? How he declared the unity of My name in this world? If I would have listened to you when you said at the creation of the world, 'What is humankind that you will remember it?' Who will declare the unity of My name in this world as Abraham?" At that moment, the ministering angels cried bitterly, and what did they say? " ' *The highways are desolate, wayfarers cease, and the covenant is renounced* " (Is. 33:8). Where is the reward for those who bring in guests, the guests who would come from all over? Abraham our father would bring them into his house, feed them and give them drink and accompany them on their way. Where is the reward that Abraham deserved? The covenant is broken. You invalidate the very covenant in which you told him, ' *Through Isaac shall your seed be called* ' " (Gen. 21:12).

IX. Ministering Angels

And ' *I will establish My covenant with Isaac* (Gen. 17:12)." And behold, the knife is at his throat!!" The ministering angels cried, and their tears fell on the knife. And the knife stood, but it didn't conquer Isaac's throat. His soul immediately fled. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Micha'el, "Why are you standing?!? Don't let (Abraham) slaughter him!!" Micha'el immediately called out and said, " *Abraham, Abraham* ! (Gen. 22:11)" Why did he call him twice? Because Abraham was hurrying, and the angel cried out as a man who cries out and says, "Ploney, Ploney!! What are you doing!!! ' *Lay not your hand on that child*!!' (Gen. 22:11)" Abraham said to the angel, "I will not slaughter him, but rather, just wound him." The angel said to him, " *Don't do anything to him* (Gen. 22:11)." Abraham said to the angel, "The Holy One, Blessed be He, told me to slaughter him, and you told me not to slaughter

him. The words of the teacher and the words of the student: To whom does one listen?" Immediately, "*an angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time saying, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only one; therefore I will exceedingly bless you and greatly multiply your seed*" (Gen. 22:16). Immediately, (Abraham let go), and (Isaac's) soul returned to him. And he stood up and recited the blessing, "Blessed be the one who resurrects the dead." At that moment, Abraham raised his eyes to the heavens and said, "Lord of the Universe, when my children experience trouble, remember in their favor this moment when I stand before you."

X. The Sea Refused to Part

"Speak to the children of Israek, that they will go forward" (Ex. 14:16).

Moses responded before the Holy One, Blessed be He, "Lord of the Universe, as for me, what shall I do?" (God) said to him, "Take the staff that I gave you, and go into the water as My emmisary, and say to (the water), 'I am the messenger of the Creator of the Universe. Reveal your paths to my children that they will be able to cross you.' " Immediately, Moses walked into the sea and spoke the words of the Holy One, Blessed be He. The sea answered Moses, "I will not do as you say because you were born of a woman; not only this, but I am three days older than you; for I was created on the third day, and you weren't created until the sixth day!!" Moses immediately repeated the words of the sea to the Holy One, Blessed be He. And the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him, "A servant who refuses his master, what does one do to him?" Moses said to Him, "One punishes him with a staff." The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him, "So you raise your staff and extend

your arm over the water and split it." Immediately, "*Moses extended his arm over the water*" (Ex. 14:26) and split it.

XI. Nachshon

But Israel was afraid to enter the water, until Nachshon ben Aminadav went down first into the water, and all of Israel came into the water after him, "*And the water was a wall for them to their left and to their right*" (Ex. 14:29).

XII. Michael and Uzah: Ex. 14:30-31

XII A. Exodus 14:30

"*And God saved*" (Ex. 14:30). Our sages of blessed memory said, "Is it really that Israel was delivered on that day into the hand of Egypt, that scripture says, "*And God saved Israel on that day from the hand of Egypt*" (Ex. 14:30)? Rather, at the moment that Israel left Egypt, Uzah, ministering angel of Egypt, stood before the Holy One, Blessed be He, and said to him, "Lord of the Universe, this people whom You are bringing out of Egypt, I have a judgement against them. May it be Your will, to bring Micha'el, ministering angel of Israel, and he will adjudicate with me before You." At that moment, the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Micha'el, "Go and adjudicate with him before Me." Uzah, ministering angel of Egypt, began to speak before the Holy One, Blessed be He, saying, "Master of the Universe, you have decreed on this people, that they would be enslaved under the hand of my nation for four hundred years, and they have only served eighty six years from the day that Miriam was born. And therefore, she is called by the name of Miriam--that the Egyptians embittered their lives. And just as You exist (in perpetuity), so too will your decree stand. And the time of

their departure has not yet arrived." When Micha'el heard this, he was quiet and would not answer Uzah. Uzah requested permission to return Israel to Egypt.

When the Holy One, Blessed be He, saw that he wanted to return Israel to Egypt, (God) said, "Why do you wish to return My children to Egypt to serve your children? Nothing obligates My children to serve your children except one word that Abraham, their father, said at the time when I said to him, "*I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to assign this land to you as a possession*" (Gen. 15:7). And he said before Me, "Master of the Universe, *How will I know that I will inherit it?*" (Gen. 15:8). And because of this, I said to him, "*Surely know that your seed will be a stranger in a land that is not theirs*" (Gen. 15:13). Did I say to him that they would be strangers in Egypt? I only said *in a land that is not theirs*. It is revealed and known that from the day that Isaac was born, they were strangers, and those four hundred years have already passed, and you may no longer enslave them." And this is what Scripture says, "*And God saved Israel from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel say Egypt dead on the shore of the sea*" (Ex. 14:30).

XII B. Exodus 14:31

"And Israel saw the great power that God had thrust upon Egypt" (Ex. 14:31). The sages of blessed memory said that at the time that the Holy One, Blessed be He, sought to drown the Egyptians in the sea, Uzah, ministering angel of Egypt, stood before the Holy One, Blessed be He, and said, "Master of the Universe, You are called righteous and upright, and there is niether injustice nor discrimination before You. But why do You want to drown my children in the sea? Has anyone drowned one of Your children or killed even one of Your children? And if it is because of the hard oppression with which

they enslaved (the Israelites) that you want to drown them, Your children have already received their reward--(The Israelites) took all the silver and gold that (the Egyptians) had."

The Holy One, Blessed be He, immediately gathered the ministering angels from on high and said to them, "Judge, please, between Me and Uzah, the ministering angel of Egypt. It is true, in the beginning, that I brought famine upon them, and raised Joseph my beloved for them to save them through his wisdom. And all of them became slaves. And afterwards, Israel came (to Egypt) as strangers because of the famine in their land, and they served (the Egyptians) in all of the types of hard labor that exist in the world. And they cried out from their great oppression, and their cries ascended before Me. And I sent to Pharoah My faithful messengers, Moses and Aaron. And they came before Pharoah and said to him, 'Thus says to the Lord. Let My people go that they may serve me.' And the kings of the east and west were sitting before that evil one (Pharoah), and he began to gloat and said, '*who is this God that I should listen to him,*'" (Ex. 5:2) and how is it that you didn't bring gifts before me, in the manner that all the kings brought me gifts?" But this God, about whom you speak, (Pharoah) didn't recognize him. What did Pharoah do? He returned and checked his register, and he didn't find anything written about My mission. He returned to his servants and said, "This God, have you ever heard of him?" His wiseman answered him, saying, "we heard that He is the son of sages and the son of sages, and the son of kings of the east." He said to My messengers, "What are the deeds of this God?" They responded to him saying, "He is the God of Gods, the Lord of the Lords, and He created the Heavens and the earth, and He brings death and life, and the souls of all the living are in His hands." He responded to My messengers saying, "There is no god like this in all the world who can

perform these deeds but me alone, for I created myself and the Nile river." And because of this word, that he denied me, I sent upon him ten plagues until he released my children, against his will. And in spite of all this, he didn't turn from his evil, but rather, he turned and pursued after them (the Israelites) to return them to his enslavement. So because all this was done to him, and he didn't recognize me, we want to drown him in the sea, he and all his soldiers." All the ministering angels from on high immediately answered and said, "You are truly justified to drown them in the sea."

When Uzah saw this, He began to speak, "Master of the World, I know that they are to be held accountable by you, but may it be Your will to treat them with a measure of justice and compassion on the works of Your hands, as it is written, '*And His mercy is on all His works*' " (Ps. 145:9). And (Uzah) requested that the Holy One, Blessed be He, have mercy on him, until Gabriel came and took the mold of bricks that Israel had made in Egypt and showed it to the Holy One, Blessed be He, and said to Him, "Master of the Universe, this cursed nation, who through this hard labor enslaved Your children; should you have mercy upon them?" The Holy One, Blessed be He, moved from the measure of mercy and sat to judge them on the throne of justice, and drowned them in the sea. And for this it is said, "*And Israel saw the great power that God thrust upon the Egyptians, and the nation feared God and believed in Him and in Moses His servant*" (Ex. 14:31).

XIII. Exodus 15:1

XIII. A Who Sang First

Then Moses sang" (Ex. 15:1). The sages of blessed memory said that when Israel came to offer a song to the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses, "Moses our teacher!! You sing first, and afterward, we will sing."

Moses immediately answered Israel, "You sing first, and afterwards I will sing. For I am an individual and you are many, and the honor of the many is greater than that of the individual."

XIII B. How the Israelite Children Survived

Immediately Israel and Moses began to speak together, "We will sing to God who has performed miracles and wondrous things for us. When the Egyptians decreed upon us and said, "Throw every newly born son into the river, and the mothers would go out to the fields, and you would cause them to sleep and they would give birth without pain. And the angels would come down from the heavens and wash and cover us, and they would dress us in colorful clothing, and place two containers in our hands--one of butter and one of honey. And when our mothers would see us washed, covered, and dressed in linen, they would give praise to the great name and would say, "Blessed is God who didn't withhold His grace and truth from the seed of Abraham our father." And they would say, "Here they are in Your hand. Do with them what You wish." And they would go their way. And when the Egyptians would see us, they would come to kill us. And You, in Your mercy, would command the earth to swallow us, and deliver us to another place. And you would save us from their hands. And when we had grown, we would enter Egypt in groups, and each and every one of us would recognize his father and his mother and his family. You did all this for us, and (therefore) before You we will sing, " *Then Moses and the children of Israel will sing this song to God, saying: I will sing to God for He has triumphed gloriously*" (Ex. 15:1).

XIV. Exodus 15:2

XIV A. Miriam's Prophecy

"The Lord is my strength and my song " (Ex. 15:2). The sages of blessed memory said that Moses said to Israel, "You gave praise to the Holy One, Blessed be He, for performing miracles and wonders for you, but I will give praise and thanks to the Holy One, Blessed be He, who performed miracles for me when Miriam my sister came and said to my father, 'My father! I was told in a prophecy that a son would come from you who would redeem Israel from this slavery.' " And when my mother gave birth to me, she hid me, as it is said, *"And when she could no longer hide him, she took for him a box made of papyrus and daubed it with slime and with pitch and placed the child in it. and she placed it in the reeds by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off to know what would happen to him"* (Ex. 2:3-4).

XIV B. Why Pharoah's Daughter was at the River

The Holy One, Blessed be He, may He be praised forever, brought a great heatwave upon Egypt until the daughter of Pharoah went down to wash in the river. *"And whe saw the basket in the reeds. And she sent her made to get it. And when she opened it ,"* (Ex. 2:5) and she saw me and had mercy on me. And the Holy One, Blessed be He, caused me to find faver in her eyes so that she wouldn't kill me. And she took me and nursed me in her bosom. But the Holy One, Blessed be He, gave me knowledge so that I would not want to nurse from her bosom, from unclean milk, and she returned me to the bosom of my mother, and she gave her a great reward because of me.

XIV C. Pharoah Loved Moses

And when I was three years old, the daughter of Pharoah dressed me in colorful clothing and sent me to her father. And when Pharoah saw me, that I was beautiful, he took me to his bosom. And I removed the crown from his head and placed it on my head.

XIV D. Jethro and the Magicians

And all the magicians of Egypt and her sages were seated before him, and they said to him, "This child who took the crown from your head and placed it on his head, we fear that this one may be the very one to come in the future and take your kingdom from you." Some of them said to kill me with a sword, and some of them said to burn me, until one of them answered, and Jethro was his name, and he said, "This boy has no intelligence. Rather, if it be your will, allow me to say one thing before you. Place before the boy a golden dinar and a burning coal. If he extends his arm and takes the dinar, you will know that he has intelligence, and you will dispense justice upon him. If he extends his arm and takes the coal, you will know that he is a boy with foolishness in his heart, and you will let him alone." When Pharoah and his servants heard this, they deemed the matter fit in their eyes, and they acted accordingly. And they placed a dinar and a coal in one bowl. And I wanted to take the dinar, but Gabriel came and pushed my hand onto the coal, and I picked it up and placed it inside my mouth. And because of this, I am a studderer. And when I grew, I went out to see my brothers' suffering, and I saw an Egyptian man hitting an Israelite man, one of my brothers. And I killed him and hid him in the sand. And when Pharoah heard this, he wanted to kill me. And he brought a sharp sword--there was none like it in all the world, and he struck me ten times with it. And the Holy

One, Blessed be He, performed a miracle for me and made my neck as a pillar of marble, and the sword didn't kill me.

I fled to Jethro. And even he imprisoned me in a dry well for seven years. And I fled from Egypt when I was forty years old. And I stood on the well, and I saw Tzipora, the daughter of Jethro. And I saw that she was modest. And I told her that I would marry her. And she told me of the ways of her father. And she said to me that (her father) tests every man who has asked to marry one of the daughters of her father at a tree in his vineyard. And when one arrives at the tree, it immediately swallows him.

XIV E. The Staff

I asked her what kind of tree it is, and she told me that it is a staff that the Holy One, Blessed be He, created on Shabbat eve when He created His world. And the Holy One, Blessed be He, entrusted it to the first man. And Abraham entrusted it to Isaac, and Isaac entrusted it to Jacob, and Jacob brought it down to Egypt and entrusted it to Joseph his son. And when Joseph died, the Egyptians plundered his house and brought that same staff to the palace of Pharaoh. And Jethro was one of the great magicians of Egypt, and he saw that staff, and he coveted it. And he stole it and brought it to his house. That is the same staff that has God's name (the Tetragramaton) inscribed on it. And those ten plagues that the Holy One, Blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians were written on it...T'zach, A'dash, B'achav. And for several more days and several years, the staff remained in the house of Jethro, my father, until, one time, father took it in his hand and entered the orchard and inserted it into the ground. And he returned to the orchard to take it, and he found that it had sprouted blossoms, and it

brought forth almonds. And he left it there. And, through (this staff) he would check everyone who requests to marry one of his daughters.

XIV F. Tzippora

When I heard her good words, and I saw that the shepherds drove away Tziporah and her sisters, I saved them from the shepherds, and I drew water for them and watered their flock. And they came to Reu'el their father. And I came with them. And they entered first, and I stood outside. And when Jethro saw them, he said to them, "Why did you hurry in coming today?" And they said to them, "An Egyptian man saved us from the shepherds." And I heard from outside that they gave witness that I am an Egyptian. And because I didn't enter and say, "I am a Hebrew," I will not merit entering the Land of Israel. And when Jethro's daughters said, "An Egyptian man saved us," he said to them, "A man who has dealt so well with you, and you rewarded him with a reward like this? Call him and he will break bread (with us)." And when I entered the house, I ate and drank, and I spoke to Jethro requesting that he give me Tzipora, his daughter, as my wife. And he answered me saying, "If you are able to bring me the staff that stands in my garden, I will give her to you." And I walked and I searched the garden, and I found it and brought it back. Jethro immediately thought, and he said, "This is definately the prophet that all the sages of Egypt predict, regarding him; that in the future, a prophet would emerge from Israel; that through him, Egypt and all Egyptians therein would be destroyed." Jethro immediately became angry at me, and he grabbed hold of me and placed me in a cistern that was inside his house. Tzipora said to herself, "How am I able to save this righteous one from on unnatural death?" She said to her father, "Father, may it be your will that you listen to me. You

are a man who has no wife, and you have seven daughters. If it is your will, my six sisters will stay at home, and I will go with the flock, and if not, my six sisters will go with the flock, and I will take care of the household." Her father said to her, "You speak well. Your sisters will go with the flock, and as for you, stay at home and keep my house and all that I have." And every day, Tzipora would provide for me from all of her father Jethro's delicacies, until the seven years in the hole had passed. After seven years, Tzipora said to her father, "I remember, my father, one time when you took a man that brought you the staff and sent him into the dry well. And you sinned greatly in this matter. If it be your will, open the well and see: if he is dead, pull him up from there and put his corpse outside so that his body won't stink up your house; and if he is alive, know that he is completely righteous." (Jethro) said to her, "My daughter, you speak well. Do you remember his name?" She said to him, "I remember that his name is Moses ben Amram." Jethro immediately went and opened the well and called, "Moses, Moses!" I answered and said, "Here I am."¹ And he brought me up from there, and he kissed me on my head, and he said, "Blessed is God who guarded you in a well for seven years." I give testimony to the fact that He causes death and life. And I give testimony for you that you are completely righteous, and it is by your hand in the future that Egypt will perish, and it is by your hand that in the future the Holy One, Blessed be He, will bring Israel out of Egypt, and it is by your hand that in the future, the Egyptians will be drowned in the Sea, Pharoah and his soldiers." And he gave me a great sum of money, and Tzipora his daughter as a wife. But he established with me this

condition: Of all the children that will be born in my house, half of them will be Jews and half of them will be Ishmaelites.

Some time later, Tzipora became pregnant and gave birth to Gershom. I circumcized him, and his mother breastfed him for two years. In the third year, Eliezer was born. I said, "What will I do now? He (Jethro) will not allow me to circumcize him!" I immediately took my wife and my sons and returned to the land of Egypt. At that moment, Satan came in the image of a snake and hit me and swallowed me from my head to my groin. But he was never able to reach the point of circumcision. Tzipora thought to herself and said, "I Know that this is only happening because of the sin that we committed by not circumcizing Eliezer our son." Immediately, "*Tzipora took a flint and cut off the foreskin of her son*" (Ex. 4:25). She took a drop of blood and threw it on my leg. At that moment, a voice from heaven came out and said to the snake, "Vomit him up." And he did. And this is what Scripture says, "*So he let him go. Then she said, you are a bridegroom of blood.*" (Ex. 4:26). And so my wife saved me from two deaths. When I came to Egypt, Datan and Avaram, who were the heads of Israel, confronted me and said, "You came to kill us. Or perhaps you came in order to do to us what you did to the Egyptian." I immediately returned to Midian and stayed there for two years until the Holy One, Blessed be He, revealed Himself to me at Horev and told me to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt. The Holy One, Blessed be He, did all of this for me, and therefore I am obligated sing before him. And therefore, it is written, "*The Lord is my strength and my song, and He will become my salvation. He is my God and I will praise Him; my father's God and I will exalt him.*" (Ex. 15:2).

XV. The Plagues

XV A. God is a Man of War

"The Lord is a man of war" (Ex. 15:3). The sages of blessed memory said that God brought the plagues [upon the Egyptians] in the manner of a human king (a king of flesh and blood). What does a human king do when his nation revolts against him? First, he sends legions and surrounds it, and dams its water ducts in order that they should die. If they retreat, good. If not, the king brings archers upon them. If they retreat, good. If not, he shoots arrows at them. If they retreat, good. If not, he leads barbarians upon them, and after this, they deprived them of their source of food¹, and after this, he throws explosives on them, and afterwards, he hurls catapult stones on them. And afterwards, he incites legions and armies against them. After this, he incarcerates them in prison, and after this, he kills the eldest among them. The Holy One, Blessed be He acted similarly by using the tactics of kings. At first, he damned their water, as it is written, "*And God changed their rivers to blood.*"² But they didn't leave Israel alone, so God brought shouters upon them, and these were the frogs who would croak from their bellies. The Egyptians didn't leave Israel alone, so God brought upon them arrows, and these were the lice who would attack their bodies like arrows. But the Egyptians didn't release Israel, so God brought barbarians upon them--these were the wild animals, but the Egyptians didn't leave Israel alone, so God deprived them of their source of food, and this is the plague that killed their cattle. But they didn't leave Israel alone,

¹Translation of דרמסיות. See Broude, *Pesikta de Rav Kahana*, pg. 151.

²Not an exact Biblical quote, but similar to Ex. 7:17, Ex. 7:20, Ps. 78:44, Ps. 105:29,

so God threw explosives upon them, and this is the boils. But they didn't leave Israel alone, so God hurled catapult stones upon them, and this is the hail. After this, God sent upon them legions, and this is the locust, and afterwards, He placed them in jail, and this is the darkness. Afterwards, he killed the eldest, and this is (the plague of the killing of) the first born.

XV B. The Plagues as Revenge for Egyptian Slavery

God brought the plagues upon the Egyptians to correspond to what the Egyptians intended to do to Israel. They intended that Israel would draw water for them, therefore God changed their water into blood. They intended that Israel would carry their merchandice, and therefore God sent frogs to them who would croak from their bellies. The Egyptians intended that the Israelites would carry their children, and so God sent packs of lions, wolves, bears, and tigers to them. And if an Egyptian had ten children, and they commanded a Jew to travel with them to the market, a lion would come and snatch one, and a bear would snatch one, and a snake one, until God had reckoned punishment for each of them. The Egyptians intended to make the Israelites shepherds for their flocks. So God sent a plague upon them that killed all their flocks. They intended that they would drown Israel in water, so God drowned them in water. Because God only judges a man measure for measure.

XV C. Plagues Predict What Will Happen to Edom in the Days of the Messiah

And know that all of the plagues that the Holy One, Blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians, so, too, will He bring upon Edom when Israel goes out from the exile in the days of the Messiah. In Egypt, God brought upon them the plague of blood first. So too will He bring it upon Edom when it is

eradicated, as it says, "*And I will bring wonders in the heavens and on earth--blood and fire and pillars of smoke. And the sun will change to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord*" (Joel 3:3-4). In Egypt, God brought frogs with loud voices upon them. So too will He bring upon Edom. He will send loud voices, as it is said, "*A voice of tumult from the city, a voice from the temple, the voice of the Lord rendering recompense to His enemies*" (Is. 66:6). In Egypt, God brought lice upon them that would burn them. So too will He do to Edom, as it is written, "*And it's rivers turned to tar, and the dirt to brimstone*" (Is. (34:9). In Egypt, God brought wild animals upon them, and so too will He do to Edom, as it is written, "*And wild birds of the night will possess it; the owl and the raven will dwell there*" (Is. 34:11). In Egypt, the Holy One, Blessed be He brought pestilence, and so too will he do to Edom, as it is written, "*And I will judge him by pestilence*" (Ez. 38:22). In Egypt, God brought pox upon them. So too will He do to Edom, as it is written, "*And this will be a plague with which God will smight all the peoples who fought against Jerusalem, their flesh shall consume away*" (Ze. 14:12). In Egypt, God brought hail. So too will he do to Edom, as it is written, "*I will cause great hailstones and fire and brimstone to rain down upon it*" (Ez. 38:22). In Egypt, God brought locusts. So too will He do to Edom, as it is written, "*Speak to every feathered bird, and to every beast of the field. Assemble yourselves and come*" (Ez. 39:17). In Egypt, God brought darkness. So too will he do to Edom, as it is written, "*And He will stretch on it a line of confusion and a plummet of emptiness*" (Is. 34:11). In Egypt, He brought the plague of the slaying of the first born. So too will he do to Edom, as it is written, "*There are all the princes of the north*" (Ex. 32:30). In Egypt, God exacted punishment from their Gods, and afterwards, He punished them. So too will

He do to Edom: first God will punish their leader, and afterwards He will punish them, as it is written, "*And it will come to pass on that day that God will punish the hosts on high in the heavens and the kings of the earth on the earth*" (Is. 24:21). Therefore it is written "*God is a man of war*" (Ex. 15:3).

"*Pharoah's chariots and his soldiers*" (Ex. 15:4). The sages of blessed memory said that when Israel was in Egypt, the Egyptians would oppress them with all the kinds of hard labor in the world--with materials and bricks. Every day they would tell Israel that each and every Israelite to make six hundred bricks. And when Israel was deficient, even one Israelite, the Egyptians would place him against a wall equal to the number of bricks that were missing. To correspond with this number, the Egyptians pursued after the Israelites in six hundred chariots, as it is written, "*And Pharoah took six hundred chariots*" (Ex. 15:7).

And when Israel saw that the Egyptians were chasing after them, they became frightened and deathly afraid. The ministering angels said to the Holy One, Blessed be He, "Master of the Universe, let us down and exact revenge from Egypt and protect your children from them." And the Holy One, Blessed be He answered, "I Myself will descend and protect the children of Israel as a reward for how Abraham their father acted according to My will," as it is written, "*And Abraham rose early in the morning*" (Gen. 22:3).

And at that same moment when Abraham stood in prayer before God, the Holy One, Blessed be He, gazed (in the future) upon the Egyptian camp through a pillar of fire and cloud. God stirred them and brought confusion to them, as it is written, "*God has thrown Pharoah's chariots and soldiers into the sea. His chosen captians have drowned in the Red Sea*" (Ex. 15:4).

"*The depths covered them*" (Ex. 15:5). The sages of blessed memory said: Blessed and praised is the name of the Holy One, Blessed be He, who created

His world in wisdom and understanding. There is no end to His wonders, and no limit to his understanding, as it was written, "*[God] gathers the waters of the sea together like a rampart. He lays up the depths like a storehouse*" (Ps. 33:7). When the Holy One, Blessed be He created His world, He said to the ministering angel of the sea, "Open your mouth and swallow all the waters in the world." The ministering angel said to God, "Master of the Universe, it is enough that I stand, on my own account, and begin to cry." The Holy One, Blessed be He conquered him and killed him, as it is written, "*He stirs up the sea with his power, and by his understanding, He smites Rahav* (Job 26:12)." So what did the Holy One, Blessed be He do? He pressed and accepted all the waters of the world, as it is written, "*And he shut up the sea with doors* (Job 38:8)." The sea said to Him, "Master of the Universe, if you do this, the sweet waters will mix with the salty waters." God responded to the sea, "Each will be stored according to its own kind," as it is written, "*He lays up the depths in storehouses*" (Ps. 33:7).

Come and see how many acts of love the Holy One, Blessed be He has done for Israel. As they travelled through the desert, God "*would walk before them during the day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light*" (Ex. 13:21). And there was more. There were snakes, scorpions and serpents there. And the Holy One, Blessed be He, in the great love with which He loved Israel, would cause the snakes to turn themselves into a bridge. And Israel would cross them as a man would cross a bridge. And still, because of their great fear from the snakes that were in the desert, and from their fear of the Egyptians, [the Israelites] said to Moses, "You say that the Egyptians drowned in the sea. We fear that perhaps they will rise up from the sea the way that we rose up.

If it be your will, show us that they are dead, and let us have revenge against our enemies."

Moses immediately spoke before the Holy One, Blessed be He saying, "Master of the Universe, because they were greatly afraid of the Egyptians, the Israelites don't believe that they drowned in the sea. If it be Your will, perform a wondrous act for them and show the Egyptians to them. Then they will see revenge against their enemies." The Holy One, Blessed be He immediately said to the [angelic] minister of the sea, "Cast them upon the dry land." The minister of the sea said, "Master of the Universe, is there a master who gives a present to his servant and then would take it from him?" The Holy One, Blessed be He said to the minister of the sea, "I will exact punishment for you one and a half times theirs." The minister said before God, "Master of the Universe, is there a servant who asks his Master to judge on behalf of his debt?" The Holy One, Blessed be He said to him, "The Brook of Keshon will be your surety." The minister immediately raised up the Egyptians onto the shore of the sea. Israel saw them and recognized each one of those who hated them. [The Israelites] took all of their silver and gold. And after they saw their revenge, The Holy One, Blessed be He, drowned them like a stone. Therefore scripture says, "*The depths covered them. They sank to the bottom like stone.*" (Ex. 15:5).

"*Your right hand, O Lord, is glorious in strength*" (Ex. 15:6). The sages of blessed memory said that at the time when the Holy One, Blessed be He, brought the plague of the slaying of the first born upon the Egyptians in Egypt, the plague first fell upon their gods and their idols--those that were made of silver, gold, copper, iron, blown and molten lead, and all the idols made of decayed and broken wood. When Pharaoh saw this, he stood, at midnight, and called to Moses and to Aaron. And he screamed and walked

throughout all the Israelite settlements and said, "Where are Moses and Aaron?" The little children of Israel were playing and said to him, "Where are you going and whom do you seek?" Pharoah responded, "It is Moses my beloved whom I seek." And they said, "He is in here." And others said, "He lives in here." And others told him he is in another place, until Pharoah found the house and said, "Moses! Arise and leave my nation!" Moses said, "Are we thieves, that we should leave at night? The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to us, "*None shall leave the door of his house until morning*" (Ex. 12:22). Pharoah said to him, "Please, arise and leave quickly." And it was midnight. This is what was said through the holy spirit by David in Scripture, "*At midnight, I will rise to give thanks to You for Your righteous judgements*" (Ps. 119:62).

Rabbi Yonatan taught that David spoke before the Holy One, Blessed be He, "Master of the Universe, I give thanks before you for the very night that you performed a miracle for Israel in Egypt." And David said, "Come and see what the Holy One, Blessed be He did in Egypt for Israel, may His name be praised and His memory be exalted. God didn't complete his decree against Egypt until he made known his judgement to Moses and to Israel." The Holy One, Blessed be He said to Moses, "Moses, go and say to my children, 'You will know that I came out from Egypt, and I myself will punish them, and I will slaughter their first born all at once. And you, slaughter your Pesach offerings, and place the blood of the Pesach on the crosspiece and on the two doorposts and on the roofs of your house and on the walls.'¹ And this will be a sign for life.'" An analogy: to what is this similar? To a king who had a flock, and separated those who would live from those who would die. What

¹Similar to Ex. 12:7 and Ex. 12:22.

did he do? He took some red paint and marked those that he separated to live. But those whom he separated for death, he didn't mark. So too with the Holy One, Blessed be He: the sheep that He wanted to slaughter are the Egyptians. And the flock that He separated to live is Israel, to whom He gave red paint as a sign for life, and this is the blood, as it is written, "*And take from the blood and place it on the two doorposts and on the crosspiece*" (Ex. 12:7). And this is what Israel did. They slaughtered their Pesach offerings, and placed the blood on the crosspiece and on the two doorposts and on the walls of their houses. Moses said to them, "This is what the Holy One, Blessed be He said to me. This is the law of the Pesach. No stranger will eat with you." And when Israel heard the words of the Holy One, Blessed be He, they stood on their feet in happiness and with songs. And they circumcized the flesh of their foreskins that were among them quickly. And the Holy One, Blessed be He healed them quickly. At midnight, the Holy One, Blessed be He, passed through Egypt and saw Israel stained with the blood of circumcision and their houses stained with the blood of the Pesach offering. God blessed them and said to them, "My children, You will be alive for the coming year," as it is written, "*And I passed by you and saw you...and I said through your blood you shall live*" (Ez. 16:6).

And Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said that when Moses said to Pharoah, "Know that the first born of Egypt shall die at night," [Pharoah] began to mock Moses, and he told him that the numbering of first born in Egypt would be two hundred or three hundred. But this idiot didn't know that they were all first born! Because the Egyptians became carried away with lust, they were all bastards. Each and every one of them was the first born to his father, and when the first born died, the eldest of the household took the place of the first born. And when Pharoah saw that most of his sons and the sons of

his servants and the sons of his female servants had died, he said to himself, "Moses never lied to me." And he said to his servants, "All the days that Moses was with me, I would appease him, and he would pray for us and we would become healthy. Now, I became angry with him, and I said to him, '*See my face no more*' (Ex. 10:28). It is only fair that I myself should go." Pharoah immediately arose from his bed, crying greatly, and went with his ministers to the entrance of Moses' [house]. Pharoah screamed loudly and cried bitterly and called to Moses, "Moses my beloved! Please, pray for me before the Holy One, Blessed be He!" Moses, Aaron, and all of Israel were eating their Pesach offerings, drinking wine, reclining, reciting poems and praises to the Holy One, Blessed be He, and sitting in their homes. Not one of them went outside because the Holy One, Blessed be he told them, "*Don't leave the doorway of your house until morning*" (Ex. 12:22). When Pharoah called at Moses' doorway, Moses responded, "Who are you and what is your name?" Pharoah responded, "Pharoah the humble." Moses said to him, "Why have you come to me, you yourself. Is it the manner of a king to rise in the night and visit the homes of human beings?" Pharoah said to Moses, "Please my lord, come and pray for us now. If you don't, not one will remain alive in Egypt." Moses said to him, "I can't leave because the Holy One, Blessed be He, commanded us saying, "*And you shall not leave the doorway of your house until morning*" (Ex. 12:22). Pharoah said to Moses, "Please, come to the window and speak with me." And Moses did. Pharoah said to him, "Didn't you tell me yesterday that each first born male in Egypt would die? Now see the hands of the dead!" Moses said to him, "In spite of this, if you want, I will teach you something and you will be saved and not die. Raise your voice and say, 'Children of Israel! You have permission, rise and leave my nation! Until now, you were the slaves of Pharoah. For now on you are

servants of the Lord. Go and serve the Lord your God!' " Pharoah said this many times, and the Holy One, Blessed be He, broadcast Pharoah's words throughout the Land of Egypt, as it is written, "*And Pharoah arose in the night, with all his courtiers and all the Egyptians--because there was a loud cry in Egypt; for there was no house....And Pharoah said, 'Arise and leave my nation' "* (Ex. 12:30-31).

Moses said to Pharoah, "Why do you cause yourself so much trouble?" Pharoah replied, "I fear that I will die because I am a first born." Moses said, "Don't be afraid because of this. You are prepared for something greater." And don't say that Pharoah alone was impatient but rather, say that all Egyptians were impatient, as it is written, "*And Egypt urged the people on, impatient to expell them from the land because they said, 'We will all be dead' "* (Ex. 12:33).

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani said that with this trickery, the Egyptians came after Israel to enslave them under their rule and to oppress them. The Egyptians said, "If we enslave them in fire, their God will be able to fight us with fire just as He brought fire upon Sodom and Gemorrah. But let us enslave them with water, He will not be able to fight us with water because He already swore that he would never bring a flood to the world." And the Holy One, Blessed be He said to them, "Idiots!!! I swore that I would not bring another flood to the world.¹ By your lives, you yourselves will walk into the flood and therefore drown in the sea, as it is said in Scripture, "*Your right hand, Lord, has broken the enemy*" (Ex. 15:6).

¹Similar to Is. 54:9

XV D. A Final Explanation of the Plagues

"And in the greatness of Your excellence" (Ex. 15:7). The sages of blessed memory said that the Holy One, Blessed be He, brought ten plagues upon the Egyptians in Egypt. The first plague that He brought upon them was blood. And why did God bring the plague of blood upon them? Because the Egyptians prevented the daughters of Israel from performing the commandment of immersion. Therefore, God brought the plague of blood upon them.

The second plague that God brought upon them was the frogs that would fall in their kneading troughs and in the places where they keep their worship idols and in their beds. And they would croak in front of [the Egyptians]. The plague of the frogs was the most difficult for all. Why did God bring the plague of frogs upon them? So the Egyptians would say to Israel, "Go and hunt fish for us in the sea." Therefore, God brought the plague of frogs upon them.

The third plague was the plague of lice, and the lice were an two feet high on the land. And when the Egyptians would dress in their clean clothes, they would immediately become infested with lice. Why did God bring the plague of lice upon them? Because the Egyptians would say to Israel, "Go and sweep our houses, our yards, and our courts. Therefore, the dirt of the earth changed to lice.

The fourth plague that God brought upon them were the packs of lions, wolves, bears and camals. They entered in to their households, and the Egyptians closed their doors. So the Holy One, Blessed be He, sent them animals from the sea. He placed them in the water ducts and they would enter through the windows and open the doors. The animals would then

enter and eat the Egyptians! Why did God bring the plague of wild animals upon them? Because the Egyptians would say to Israel, "Go and hunt wild animals for us in the fields." Therefore, God brought them the plague of wild animals.

The fifth plague that the Holy One, Blessed be He brought upon the Egyptians was the plague of pestilence. Why did God bring pestilence upon them? Because the Egyptians would say to Israel, "Go and herd our animals." Therefore God brought upon them the plague of pestilence, and all their animals died.

The sixth plague the Holy One, Blessed be He brought upon the Egyptians was the plague of pox on both man and animal. Why did God bring a pox upon them? Because the Egyptians would say to Israel, "Go and prepare baths for us to refresh us. Therefore, God brought the plague of pox upon them, which inflamed their skin.

The seventh plague that the Holy One, Blessed be He brought upon the Egyptians was hail--upon man and animal. Why? Because the Egyptians would say to Israel, "Go, plow and sow our fields and our land." Therefore God brought hail upon them which destroyed the trees and the crops. The sages of blessed memory said that at the moment when Moses raised his arms to the Holy One, Blessed be He, the hail stood suspended between the heavens and the earth, as it is written, "*And Moses left Pharaoh and the city, and he stretched out his arms toward God, and the thunder and the hail stopped, and the rain ceased to pour upon the earth*" (Ex. 9:33). Rather, the hail was suspended between heaven and earth, until Joshua came and fought with those thirty one kings. Then the Holy One, Blessed be He sent the hail upon them, as it is written, "*And there were more who died from the hailstones than had been killed by the children of Israel by the sword*" (Jo.

10:11). Those hailstones which remained, the Holy One, Blessed be He will rain upon Gog and Migog,¹ as it is written, "*And the Lord will go out and fight those nations as when He fought on the day of battle*" (Za. 14:4).

The eighth plague that the Holy One, Blessed be He brought upon the Egyptians was the locust, that had teeth like the teeth of a lion keeping worms off of their baby lion. Why did God bring the locust upon the them? Because the Egyptians would say to Israel, "Go and plant trees and guard their fruit." Therefore, God brought the locust upon them, and it ate what had remained from the hail.

The ninth plague that the Holy One, Blessed be He brought upon them was the darkness of Gehenna. And one who sat was not able to stand, and one who stood was not able to sit because of the heaviness of the darkness. Why did God bring darkness upon the Egyptians? Because there were sinners in Israel, and the Holy One, Blessed be He wanted to kill them in three days of darkness so the Egyptians would not see their demise and rejoice over them. Therefore God brought the plague of darkness.²

The tenth plague was the slaying of the first born males. Before the plague came, Moses went to the first born of Egypt and said to them, "*Thus says the Lord: At midnight I will go into the midst of Egypt, and every first born in the land of Egypt shall die*" (Ex. 11:4-5). Immediately, all first born sons went to their fathers and said to them, "Know that all of the plagues that Moses spoke--all of them came true. And now he said that every first born son in the land of Egypt will die." Their fathers answered, "Go to Pharaoh because he is also a first born son." They went to him and said, "Release this nation. If you don't release them, every first born son in the land of Egypt

¹See Exodus chapters 38,39 and the book of Ezekiel for material about this king.

²Notice the literary shift. This plague was inflicted upon the Israelites.

will die." Pharoah said to his servants, "Either I will die or they will die," and he told his servants, "Inflict them with all kinds of subjugation." Immediately, all the first born of Egypt went, and each man took his sword, and they killed their fathers, "as it is written, "*[To God] who smote the Egyptian first born*" (Ps. 136:10). After all this, at midnight, each first born in Egypt was killed. Therefore, it is written, "*And in the greatness of Your excellency, You have overthrown those who rose up against You. You sent forth Your anger which consumed them as stubble*" (Ex. 15:7).

"*And with a blast of Your nostrils, the water was piled up* (Ex. 15:8)." The sages of blessed memory said that when the water of the sea saw the love with which the Holy One, Blessed be He, loved Israel, the water lowered itself in honor of Israel. And the sea also lowered itself and made itself into twelve paths to correspond to the twelve tribes of Israel. And it raised its waves to a height of six hundred cubits, and it congealed itself from below and sweetened its waters. And the sea made itself as a fortification, and it made windows in its walls so the Israelites could see one another and give praise to the Holy One, Blessed be He in songs and adorations. And they walked in the sea the way one walks in his house, until they reached dry land. Therefore it is said in scripture, "*And with a blast of Your nostrils the water were piled up. The floods stood upright like a heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea*" (Ex. 15:8).

"*The enemy said*" (Ex. 15:9). The sages of blessed memory said that at the time when the Egyptians chased after Israel into the sea, Israel was divided into three separate groups. The first group said, "We ourselves will drown in the sea." The second group said, "Let us return to Egypt." And the third group said, "Let us make war with them." Moses said to the group that said, "We ourselves will drown in the sea," *Stand still and see the salvation of*

the Lord" (Ex. 14:13). To the group that said, "Let us return to Egypt," Moses said, "*You will not see them again forevermore*" (Ex. 14:13). To the division that said, "Let us make war upon them," Moses said, *The Lord shall fight for you, and you will hold your peace*" (Ex. 14:14). And when the sea split, its news was heard from one end of the world to the other. And the water rose one thousand six hundred miles high. Everyone in the world became excited, fear and trembling seized them. At the same time, all of the tribes stood on the shore of the sea and would say, "Who will enter into the sea first?" Until the tribe of Benjamin jumped and descended into the water first, and all the tribes went in after them. Therefore, Benjamin merited, and Mordechai the righteous, by whose hand Israel was redeemed from death to life, descended from him. When the Egyptians saw that Israel had entered into the Red Sea, they also divided into three separate groups. The first group said, "Let us bring them back to Egypt." The second group said, "Let us kill them." And the third group said, "Let us strip them naked and abandon them." God blew on the group that said, "Let us bring them back to Egypt," and the sea covered them, as it is written, "*You blew with Your wind; the sea covered them*" (Ex. 15:10). The Holy One, Blessed be He drowned the group that said, "Let us kill them," as it is written, "*And Pharaoh's chosen captains¹ are drowned in the Red Sea*" (Ex. 15:4). And God shook in the sea the division that said, "Let us strip them naked and abandon them," as it is written, "*And the Lord shook Egypt in the midst of the sea*" (Ex. 14:27). And when the Egyptians saw that retribution began against them, they said, "The God of Israel is very strong. We must return and flee to Egypt." When the Holy One, Blessed be He saw this. An angel in the form of a horse ran before the

¹Notice play on שלישין

Egyptians and entered into the sea. All the Egyptian horses ran after it, and the Egyptians entered the sea against their will. The Holy One, Blessed be He, immediately said to Moses, "*Extend your arm over the sea, that the waters may come back on Egypt* (Ex. 14:26). "*And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea*" (Ex. 14:26-27). Israel immediately pillaged the treasures of Egypt. Therefore it is said in Scripture, "*The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake. I will divide the spoil, my lust will be satisfied upon them. I will draw My sword, My hand shall destroy them* (Ex. 15:9)."

"*You blew with Your breath. The sea covered them.*" (Ex. 15:10). The sages of blessed memory said that at the time that the Egyptians drowned in the sea, there were two sorcerers among them. And their names were Yochani and Mamre. They said to Pharaoh, "If this miracle was performed by the Holy One, Blessed be He, than we are not able to overcome it. But if this miracle was performed by the hand of angels, then we are able to overthrow these angels in the sea.¹" They made charms and lowered them into the sea. Then, the kings said, "Save us, God, because the water will kill us. And You, by your command, drowned them in sea, in mighty water." Therefore it is written, "*You blew with your wind. The sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters*" (Ex. 15:10).

"*Who is like you*" (Ex. 15:11). The sages of blessed memory said that at the time that Israel sang this song before the Holy One, Blessed be He, Pharaoh heard it as he was being torn apart in the sea. And he lifted his finger to the heavens and said, "I believe in You, that You are righteous, and I and my nation are evil. There is no God in the world but You." At that time, Gabriel descended and placed an iron ring around Pharaoh's throat and

¹Note play on Ex. 14:27

said to him, "Evildoer!! Yesterday you said, '*Who is this god that I should listen to him?*'" (Ex. 5:2). And now you say, "God is the righteous one." Gabriel immediately lowered Pharoah into the depths of the sea and held him there for fifty days and tortured him so that he would know the wonders of the Holy One, Blessed be He. And after this, Gabriel brought him up from the sea and installed him as ruler over Nineveh. And when Jonah came to Nineveh and said, "*Another forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown,*" (Jo. 3:4) Pharoah was seized with fear and trembling. He rose from his throne, "*put on a sackcloth and sat in ashes*" (Jo. 3:6) and he himself screamed and said, "*Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock taste anything. Let them not graze nor drink anything*" (Jo. 3:7) because I know that there is no other God in the world like him, and all his words are true, and all his judgements are made in truth and faithfulness." And Pharoah still lives and stands at the entrance of Gehenna. And when the kings of the nations of the world enter, Pharoah immediately makes known to them the mighty acts of the Holy One, Blessed be He. And he says to them, "Idiots in the world!! Why don't you learn anything from me? Behold, I denied the Holy One, Blessed be He, and therefore He inflicted ten plagues upon me, and He even drowned me in the sea and kept me there for fifty days. And after this God raised me from the sea, and, in the end, I believed in him against my will." Therefore, Israel sang this song, and all said together, "*Who is like You among the Gods, Oh Lord. Who is like You, glorious in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders*" (Ex. 15:11).

"*You stretched out Your right hand*" (Ex. 15:12). The sages of blessed memory said, "We are able to learn from this verse that the sea didn't want to accept them, and the land didn't want to swallow them. The sea would send them to the land, and the land would send them into the sea. Why?

The sea was afraid of the judgement day, that the Holy One, Blessed be He, would not ask for them from Him. And the Land was likewise afraid of the judgement day, that the Holy One, Blessed be He, would not curse it the way He cursed it when He created the world. At the time when God created His world, it was wide and equal in every place. And when Cain arose and killed Abel, his brother, his blood would bubble in the world, and the Holy One, Blessed be He cursed it. Immediately, the mountains and the valleys were formed, and because of this, the land didn't want to swallow them. So the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to the land, "Don't be afraid." The land immediately opened up its mouth and swallowed them. Therefore it is written, "*You stretched out Your right hand, the earth swallowed them*" (Ex. 15:12).

"In Your mercy You have guided them" (Ex. 15:13). The sages of blessed memory said, "May the name of God be blessed, that He is not like mankind." As for humans, when one goes out at night, one's ministers and one's servants carry flames and torches. And during the day, they shade him from the sun so that he won't feel pain in his body. But, the Holy One, Blessed be He, is not like this. Because in the abundant love with which God loves Israel, God Himself walks before Israel. And if it were not written in scripture, it would be impossible to say this. But it is written, "*And God went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them on the way; and at night by a pillar of fire to give them light, that they may go by day and by night*" (Ex. 13:21). Therefore it is written, "*In Your mercy You have led forth the people whom You have redeemed: You have guided them by Your strength to Your holy habitation*" (Ex. 15:13).

XVI. The Coming of the Messiah

XVI A. Exodus 15:14: Elijah's Announcement

"The nations shall hear" (Ex. 15:14). The sages of blessed memory said that Moses said to Israel, "You have seen all these miracles that the Holy One, Blessed be He, has done for us now. So too will He do to Edom at the time when He will redeem Israel." This is what the sages say: That three days prior to the coming of the Messiah, Elijah will come first, and he will stand at the mountains of Zion and shout bitterly and cry and mourn for them and say, "How much longer will they lay in waste?!" And his crying voice will be heard from one end of the earth to the other. And afterward, he will come and say, "Eternal peace has come," as it is written, *"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the one who brings good tidings, who announces peace"* (Is. 52:7). And when the evildoers in Gehenna hear, they will immediately be happy and say, "Peace has come to the world." On the second day, Elijah will come and stand on the mountains of Israel and say, "Goodness has come to the world," as it is written, *"Who brings tidings of goodness"* (Is. 52:7). And even the evildoers will rejoice. On the third day, Elijah will come and say, "Salvation has come to the world," as it is written, *"Who announces salvation"* (Is. 52:7). And when the evildoers see that Elijah will say to Zion, "Your God is King to teach you that salvation will come upon Zion and its children, and not to the evildoers," they will become seized with fear and trepidation. At that time, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will show His kingdom and His glory to the righteous and to every nation and language. And He will immediately redeem Israel and they will inherit

Mount Zion. Therefore it is said, "*The nations will hear and be afraid: trembling shall take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia*" (Ex. 15:14).

XV B. Who Will Fear Retribution?

"*And they will be amazed*". (Ex. 15:15). The sages of blessed memory said, "Why were the residents of Philistia afraid? Because they killed two hundred thousand people of the children of Ephriam who counted the end at the Exodus from Egypt, and erred by thirty years. And they left by their own strength.¹ And the Holy One, Blessed be He, was angry at them and delivered them into the hand of the Philistines. And now they are afraid. They said, "Now Israel will turn on us and kill us and inherit our land!" And why did the chiefs of Edom fear? They said, "Now Israel will visit the very hatred upon us as was between Esau and Jacob. Israel will kill us and inherit our land."

And why did the mighty men of Moab fear? They said, "Israel will war with us the way shepherds of Abraham battled with the shepherds of Lot our father." And when the kings of Canaan saw that everyone was afraid, they said, "What is this?! If Israel doesn't want to return to its land because they are afraid, then we should fear all the more so--for our land was given to Abraham their father by the Holy One, Blessed be He, and they return on that same promise. Therefore it is written, "*Then the chiefs of Edom will be amazed. The mighty men of Moab, trembling, shall take hold of them. All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away*" (Ex. 15:15).

"*(Fear and dread) will fall upon them*" (Ex. 15:16). The sages of blessed memory said that Moses said to Israel, "My brothers! You will know that not

¹and not God's.

by wisdom and not by understanding and not by strength and not by wealth is a man able to conquer even one city, but, rather, by the might of the Holy One, Blessed be He. Many mighty men are ready to battle against you, and in the future, God will instill them fear, and not one man will stand before you. And in the future, God will write in His Torah, '*Don't praise the hero for his heroism*' (Je. 9:22). And if you perform the will of God, He will immediately redeem you from your enemies." And Moses said before the Holy One, Blessed be He, "Master of the Universe, when Amalek comes to battle with Israel, '*Fear and dread will come upon them*'" (Ex. 15:16). and when the Amorite Kings will come to hide themselves in the Arnon River, '*By the greatness of Your arm, they will be as still as a stone...till the people whom You established pass over*'" (Ex. 15:16) the Jordan. And they will come and inherit their land, and the vow that You made with Abraham will be complete." And even in the days of the Messiah, God will perform miracles and wonders for them, as it is written, "*As in the days of your coming out of the land of Egypt, I will show them wonders*" (Mi. 7:15). Therefore it is written, "*Fear and dread will fall upon them, By the greatness of Your arm they will be as still as a stone until your people pass over, till the people pass over whom You have acquired*" (Ex. 15:16).

XVI C. Exodus 15:17: God Loves Israel

"*You will bring them in and plant them*" (Ex. 15:17). The sages of blessed memory said, "Praised be the name of the Holy One, Blessed be He, who with the great love with which He loved Israel called them 'my first born children.' Come and see the many acts of love of the Holy One, Blessed be He. A servant dresses his teacher, but the Holy One, Blessed be He dresses Israel, as it is written, "*I will dress you with embroidered cloth*" (Ez. 16:10). A

servant washes his master, but the Holy One, Blessed be He washes Israel, as it is written, "*I will wash you with water*" (Ez. 16:9). A servant shods his lord, but the Holy One, Blessed be He shods Israel, as it is written, "*I will shod you with dolphin skin*" (Ez. 16:9). And more than this, when Israel was exiled to Egypt, the Shechinah was with them, as it is said, "*I will go down with you to Egypt*" (Gen. 46:4). And when Israel was exiled to Elam, the Shechinah was with them, as it is said, "*And I will set my throne in Elam*" (Je. 49:38). And when Israel was exiled to Babylonia, the Shechinah was with them, as it is said, "*For your sake I have sent to Babylonia*" (Is. 43:14).

And in the future, the Holy One, Blessed be He will return Israel to His holy mountain, as it is written, "*And I will bring them to My holy mountain*" (Is. 56:7). And it is written later, "*And I will plant them on their land*" (Am. 9:15). And when Moses, beloved one of the Holy One, Blessed be He, saw that God loved Israel, he said to God, "Master of the universe, bring Israel and plant them there, and they will be solidly entrenched, that they will never be uprooted. And lower Jerusalem from the heavens, and never destroy her. And bring Israel's exiled into her, that they may dwell there forever." Therefore it is said, "*And You will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which You have made for You to dwell in. In the sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established*" (Ex. 15:17).

"*The Lord will reign forever*" (Ex. 15:18). The sages of blessed memory said that Moses said to Israel, "You have seen the miracles and the mighty acts that the Holy One, Blessed be He has done for you. He will perform many more for you in the future, in this world and in the world to come. In this world, wars, persecutions, the evil inclination, Satan, and the angel of death have permission to rule, but in the world to come there will be no

persecutions, no grief, no oppression, no evil inclination, no Satan, and no angel of death, as it is said, "*And the Lord God will wipe tears off all faces*" (Is. 25:8). And it is written, "*And it will be said on that day, behold, this is our God, we have waited for Him and He has saved us. This is our Lord, we have waited for him. We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation*" (Is. 25:9). And when the days of the Messiah arrive, Gog and Migog will rise up upon the land of Israel because he will have heard that Israel is without a King, and they dwell in safety. Immediately, he will take seventy one nations with him and go up to Jerusalem. And he will say, "Pharoah was stupid for decreeing that the males should be killed and leaving the females. And Balak was an idiot for wanting to curse Israel and not knowing that their God would bless them. Haman was crazy for wanting to kill them without knowing that their God could save them. But I won't act like this regarding them. First I will go up and fight their God, and then I will kill them, as it is said, "*And the kings of the world will position themselves, and the rulers will take counsel together, against the Lord and against His annointed one*" (Ps. 2:2), and the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him, "Evil One! You wish to make war with Me? By your life, I will take care of you!" Immediately God threw catapult stones down upon him that had been stored up on heaven. And God will smite them with a great plague, as it is said, "*And this will be the plague with which the Lord will smite all the peoples who fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh will consume away while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will consume away in their sockets, and their tongue will consume away in their mouth*" (Za. 14:12). After him, another evil and insolent king arrive. He will make war with Israel for three months. His name is Armilos, and these are his signs: He will be bald, and one of his eyes will be small and the other will be large. His right arm will be the length of

one handbreadth, and his left arm will be two and a half cubits long. and he will have leprosy on his forehead. His right ear will be closed, and his left ear will be open. And when the man comes to speak well of him, he will extend his closed ear. And if a man wants to speak poorly of him, he will extend his open ear. He will go up to Jerusalem and kill the Messiah, son of Joseph, as it is written, "*And they will look towards me, regarding those who the nations have thrust through. And they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son*" (Za. 12:10). And after this, the Messiah, son of David, will come in a cloud, as it is written, "*One like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven*" (Da. 7:13). And it is written after this, "*And he was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom*" (Da. 7:14). And he will kill Armilos the wicked, , as it is said, "*And with the breath of his lips will he slay the wicked*" (Is. 11:4). And after this, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will gather the banished of Israel, who are dispersed in every direction, as it is written, "*I will whistle to them, and I will gather them; for I have redeemed them, and they shall increase as they have increased before*" (Za. 10:8). And seventy two jewels that glow from one end of the world to another, will be suspended in Jerusalem. And the nations of the world will go toward that same light, as it is said, "*And the nations will walk to Your light, and the kings to the brightness of Your light*" (Is. 60:3). And the Holy One, Blessed be He, will lower the Temple from the heavens, just as the Holy One, Blessed be He showed to Moses, as it is said, "*You will bring them and plant them in Your own mountain, the place, O Lord, which You have made to dwell in*" (Ex. 15:17).

And Israel will dwell there for a two thousand years and eat Leviathan. And at the end of two thousand years, the Holy One, Blessed be He will sit on the throne of judgement at the valley of Jehosephat. And immediately, the

heavens and the earth will become mixed up, and the sun and the moon will be ashamed, as it is said, "*And the moon will be confounded and the sun ashamed*" (Is. 24:23). And from where do we know that the day of judgment will come on the third day (in the third thousand)? As it is said, "*On the third day He will raise us up and we will live in His presence*" (Hos. 6:2).

This is the judgement. and the Holy One, Blessed be He, will bring every nation and tongue and will say to them, "Whom did you serve in the world that has gone, and to whom did you bow down?" They said, "To silver idols and gold idols." And the Holy One, Blessed be He said to them, "Pass through this fire, and your gods, if they are able to save you, will save you." Immediately they passed through and were burned there, as it is said, "*The wicked will be turned back to Sheol, all the nations that forgot God*" (Ps. 9:18). After this, Israel comes, and God says to them, "Whom did you serve?" And they immediately answer, "*You are our Father, though Abraham is ignorant of us and Israel doesn't recognize us. You, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer. Your name is everlasting*" (Is. 63:16). Immediately, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will save them from the judgement of Gehenna and place them in the Garden of Eden, where they are nursed from its fruit, as it is said, "*The meek shall inherit the earth and delight in abundant peace*" (Ps. 37:11). And after this, the Holy One, Blessed be He will renew the heavens and the earth for them, as it is said, "*Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth*" (Is. 65:11). And the land that the Holy One, Blessed be He, will renew in the future will bring forth good trees, all kinds of fine fruits, and everyone will live forever and ever. The One who performed miracles and wonders for us in those days will perform miracles and wonders for us in these days and at this time. And He will gather us from the four corners of the world

and lead us to Jerusalem. May You build and establish this quickly in our days. Amen.

Midrash VaYosha is complete.

Chapter Three

A Detailed Literary and Source Critical Analysis

I. Israel as a Dove

Midrash VaYosha begins as Israel is fleeing from Egypt. We are told that the Israelites were terrified and that they were to be compared to a dove fleeing from a hawk who, upon returning to his nest, finds it inhabited by a snake. The metaphor here is very clear. Israel, the peaceful and vulnerable dove, is trapped between two predators: The hawk, meaning the soldiers of the Egyptian Army, and the ravaging waters of the Red Sea, metaphorically represented here by the snake. This metaphor, the comparison of Israel to a dove caught between a hawk and a snake at the moment of their escape from Egypt, is found in two other midrashic sources.¹ Both of these midrashim drash on the phrase **יוֹנָתִי בַּחֲגוּי הַסֵּלַע**, from Song of Songs 2:15. In the Song of Songs, the word **יוֹנָתִי** is found in parallel with such words as **רַעִי** and **יָפְתִי**, thus making *my dove* (יוֹנָתִי) an object of love. For the rabbis, this referred to God's love for Israel. This background strengthens the comparison of Israel to a dove in our midrash. Israel, God's beloved dove, is sandwiched between the hawkish Egyptian army and the venomous teeth of the Red Sea.

II. Abraham's Prayers and their connection to the Exodus

As Israel finds itself trapped in a predicament which seemingly would lead to their demise, they and Moses tearfully begin to cry outloud. God compassionately responds by telling Moses that there is no need to pray because God remembers the prayer that Abraham uttered at the moment of the Akedah.

¹Tanchuma haNidpas Shoftim 13; Song of Songs Rabba 2:15.

This statement by God; "I have already remembered the prayer which Abraham my beloved offered when I told him; 'Go and sacrifice Isaac your son,'" provides a literary link between the Akedah and the Exodus. It, in essence, explains why the two stories are joined together. The implication here is that Abraham's prayer would save the Israelites at the Red Sea. In the Akedah, Abraham demonstrated a faith and an obedience to God that is unsurpassed in our history. The Biblical account, and the midrashic material in Midrash Vayosha clearly demonstrate this. God's statement suggests that Abraham's righteousness was so great that Israel merited salvation because of it. Abraham's faith and obedience to God convinced God to save the Israelites at the Red Sea. This concept--that of future generations benefiting from the merit of our patriarchs, is called **זכות אבות**; the merit of the fathers.

III. Eliezer and Ishmael

The midrashic material in Vayosha which identifies the two lads mentioned as accompanying Abraham to Moriah, in Genesis 22:3, is also found elsewhere in midrashic literature.¹ The following dispute that erupts between Eliezer and Ishmael, which occurs later in the midrash,² adds further convincing evidence that the sacrifice of Isaac should not take place.

Later, while Abraham and Isaac were walking on the way, an argument erupted between Ishmael and Eliezer, Abraham's servant, who were watching the implements and the animals. Ishmael said, "Now that father is going to sacrifice Isaac, I will inherit all the property that will be left

¹See Pirke d'Rebbe Eliezer chapter 31; Sefer Hayashar to Vayera; and Yalkut Shimoni, Vol. I, 98.

²See page 19 of the translation.

by father." Eliezer said to him, "You were already banished, like a woman who is thrown out by her husband, and he sent you into the wilderness, but I am the faithful servant of Abraham's household, ever present day and night." And the Holy Spirit responded and said to them, "Neither you nor you will inherit [Abraham's possessions]."

Neither boy seems worthy of continuing Abraham's mission, that of declaring the unity of God in this world, which is stated in the midrash twice--once by Abraham and once by God. First, both boys are only interested in the property which they would inherit rather than Abraham's, and his descendent's, mission in the world. Second, each boy has a unique reason which disqualifies him. Eliezer was Abraham's servant, and therefore is not a blood relative of Abraham. Ishmael was banished from Abraham's household making clear his unworthiness of the right of inheritance. When the Holy Spirit declares that neither Eliezer or Ishmael will inherit Abraham's property, and, implicitly, his mission, we are left with only two possible outcomes. Either Isaac will be spared, or God's promise will go unfulfilled.

Eliminating both Eliezer and Ishmael from the right of inheritance, and from the right to carry on Abraham's mission and relationship with God, more clearly indicates that it was within the divine will for Isaac to survive. This episode provides further evidence of God's special role in Abraham's and Isaac's life.

IV. The Introduction of the High Priest

As they begin their journey to Moriah, Isaac asks his father where they are going, and Abraham responds that they are going to offer a sacrifice.

The introduction of Shem as High Priest adds a new dimension to the drama. First, his presence strengthens the authenticity of the sacrifice to be offered in the rabbis' eye. If there is a priest, then there can be a sacrifice.

Shem also, however, presents us with an internal inconsistency. For although we are told here that he is to offer the sacrifice, it is Abraham who ultimately raises the knife to slaughter his son. In other midrashim, the rabbis wish to maintain the authenticity of having a priest present but want to avoid the inconsistency of introducing another character. In these cases, Abraham himself is made a High Priest. In *Pesikta Rabbati*,¹ Abraham tells God that he is not fit to offer the sacrifice and that Shem should, since he is the progenitor of the Priesthood. God then responds that He has sanctified Abraham as a priest so that he would be fit to offer the sacrifice himself. This same theme appears elsewhere in midrashic sources.² B.T. *Nedarim* 32b deals with the question; if Abraham is made a priest, aren't his descendants also priests? This midrash concludes with the words; "He is a priest, but his descendants are not priests," thus emphasizing that Abraham is a priest for the moment, but his seed will not inherit the priesthood.

V. Isaac knows his father's intentions

Early in their journey, Isaac discerns Abraham's plan for him. We are told that he trembles, and that his limbs shake as he becomes aware of the thoughts of his father.³ As the dialogue progresses, Isaac tells his father that he is prepared to die in order to fulfill God's command. Abraham then

¹*Pesikta Rabbati* 40:6.

²See *Bereshit Rabbah* 55:5; *Yalkut Shimoni Vayera*; Vol. I: 101; and *Pirke d'rebbe Eliezer* 1

³See also *Tanchuma haNidpas Vayera* 26.

responds, "I know you, my son, that you would not hinder the fulfillment of the command of your Creator, and my command." Isaac then ends the conversation by saying, "My father! Quickly perform the will of your creator, and he will act according to your will!"

Isaac's awareness of God's, and his father's, command here heightens the role that obedience and willingness play in this drama. Now, all the participants, fully knowledgeable of what awaits them at Moriah, are proceeding of their own free will to perform the sacrifice. Isaac is now a conscious participant in the sacrifice. It is interesting to note that Abraham and Isaac express no feeling whatsoever in the text of Genesis 22. In fact, the text doesn't indicate that Isaac has any idea of his fate. The introduction of the element of fear expressed here heightens the drama because it acknowledges the danger associated with fulfilling God's command, and it makes the ultimate salvation more meaningful.

VI. Satan

The introduction of Satan as the antagonist along the journey again introduces the element of awareness into the narrative. Satan raises the important questions which assure the reader that the characters in the drama fully understand the ramifications of their actions. When the dialogue with Satan ends, the characters have overcome their ambivalence toward the sacrifice and proceed on their journey.

It is important to note that Satan appears to Abraham as an old man but to Isaac as a young boy--mirror images of themselves, so to speak. This allows for the possibility that Satan really represents an aspect of Abraham's and Isaac's persona--perhaps the yetzer harah or their alter ego. Perhaps Abraham and Isaac, in truth, are asking Satan's questions of themselves in an attempt to understand, and to come to terms with God's command. As the

author portrays them confronting Satan, they are really struggling with their own ambivalence. When they overcome their doubts, Satan disappears, and they continue on their journey.

VI A. Satan and Abraham

It is important to note that the confrontation between Abraham and Satan is a common motif in midrashic literature and appears in many other sources.¹

When Satan first appears to Abraham and asks him where he is going, Abraham lies and states that he is going to pray, rather than to honestly state that he is going to offer up a sacrifice. He further says the wood and the knife are for the preparation of food, rather than to slaughter his son.

Satan then launches into a tirade attempting to dissuade Abraham from fulfilling his mission. He reminds Abraham that Isaac was a gift to him in his old age, implying that if Isaac dies, Abraham will not be granted another son. He also attempts to convince Abraham that it was not God, but rather, Satan (הַמְּשַׁתֵּן) who uttered the command to sacrifice Isaac. Finally, when Satan realized that his arguments were failing, he concludes by telling Abraham that, ultimately, a ram will be slaughtered, and not Isaac.

Abraham's retorts to Satan show a progressive sense of conviction in his resolve to fulfill the Divine command. First, as was mentioned above, he lies to Satan, potentially displaying a lack of desire to confront his task. When Satan forces the issue, however, Abraham expresses a firm sense of faith in God's will with the quotation from Job, "Who is innocent who has been uprooted? And where are the upright who have been cut off?" At the end

¹See Tanchuma haNidpas Vayera 92; B.T. Sanhedrin 89b; Genesis Rabba 56:5; and Yalkut Shimoni Vol. I: 96-97.

of the confrontation with Satan, Abraham expresses total commitment to fulfill God's command with the line, "rather, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will do what is good in His eyes."

Whether or not one assumes that Abraham is confronting an actual antagonist named Satan, or if this is an internal dispute within Abraham himself, one can see the transition in his resolve from a state of denial, expressed in his lying, to acceptance and commitment at the end of the encounter.

VI B. Satan and Isaac

Here, too, we see a progression within Isaac from a state of denial to a state of resignation and commitment to fulfill the command. When Satan first confronts Isaac, as a young boy, and asks where he is going, he falsely responds; "to study Torah." After Satan attempts to convince Isaac to rebel against his father, Isaac then displays his sense of resolve to participate in the fulfillment of God's command by saying, "I myself know. My soul is delivered into the hand of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and into the hand of my father. All that He wishes to do with me, let him do."

Although in our midrash Isaac acquiesces immediately to his fate, in other midrashic compilations which show an encounter between Isaac and Satan, Isaac does show signs of questioning and rebellion. In Genesis Rabba 46:4, immediately after Satan confronts Isaac with his fate, Isaac turns to his father and cries, "My father! Why! My father! My father!" Similarly, in other compilations,¹ Isaac, seemingly unable to believe what Satan has suggested, turns to his father and asks, "My father, did you see what this man said to me?"

¹See Pesikta Rabati 40:6; Tanchuma Nidpas Vayera 22; and Yalkut Shimoni Vol. I: 22

VII. Abraham and Isaac as the alter is built

One of the more powerful metaphors is employed at this section of the midrash. The alter is compared with a wedding canopy prepared with joy. The author attempts to convince us that, as Isaac and Abraham construct the alter, they were as happy as if they were preparing for Isaac's wedding. This metaphor expresses that there is joy in the fulfillment of God's command, no matter what the command may be.

As Isaac is about to be placed on the alter, he is concerned about two other factors: the fitness of the sacrifice, expressed in his suggestion that his father tie him tightly, and how his mother will react. As for the former concern,¹ Isaac suggests to his father that he be tied tightly, so as not to inflict a blemish and disqualify the sacrifice. And, as Isaac was concerned with his father's state of mind as he performed this difficult act, Isaac encourages his father with, "Please father, hurry and do your will. Don't dawdle, roll up your sleeves and be brave (gird your loins)!"

As to the second concern, Isaac first suggests that his ashes be placed in an urn near his mother's room. Then, noting how difficult that would be for his mother, Isaac withdraws the suggestion and leaves his father with an important question, "What will you tell her, and what will you do in your old age?" In the Tanchuma Vayera parallel,² Isaac tells his father not to let his mother near a roof or a well, lest she kill herself by jumping.

¹Also see Tanchuma haNidpas Vayera 22; Pesikta Rabbati 40:6; and Yalkut Shimoni Vol. I:101

²Tanchuma hanidpas Vayera 22.

This second concern raises two issues. First, it displays Isaac as an amazingly level headed and caring person at the moment of his supposed demise. Rather than being concerned with his own mortality, Isaac worried about the fitness of the sacrifice, and the feelings of his mother. Second, and even more important, it points to the lack of involvement of Sarah in the drama, and it suggests that she would not be as fully committed to the fulfillment of the command as Abraham and Isaac were. Earlier in the midrash, we were told that Abraham and Isaac prepared the altar joyfully, and now we are told that Sarah would react with tears, or, according to the Tanchuma passage, Sarah might even commit suicide. In the Biblical text, the juxtaposition of the Akedah with the Torah portion Chaye Sarah could suggest that she died as a result of the Akedah.

VIII. Tears

As God sits on His throne watching Abraham prepare Isaac for sacrifice, seeing that their hearts were prepared for the forthcoming act, Abraham and Isaac began to cry, and their tears fell on the knife. So, too, in heaven, the ministering angels began to cry as they lamented the destruction of the covenant (הפסח הברית, Isaiah 33:8). The tears of the ministering angels fell upon the knife, and the knife stood still.

Other midrashic sources carry the effect of the tears even farther. In Genesis Rabba 66:2, the tears actually melt the knife. And in Yalkut Shimoni Vol. I:101, the tears cause the knife to fall from Abraham's hands. In both cases, the result is that Isaac's life is saved.

IX. Ministering Angels

Michael and the ministering angels play very important roles throughout Midrash Vayoshah. Here, the angels do three things to effect Isaac's salvation. First, they utter a verse from Isaiah, "The highways are desolate, wayfarers cease, and the covenant is renounced." Second, as was mentioned above, they cry. Their tears prevent the knife from severing Isaac's throat. Finally, Michael is dispatched to halt the sacrifice.

Two other midrashic compilations present a similar motif.¹ Here, the angels tearfully utter another verse from Isaiah, "They will shout mightily outside (הן אראלם צעקו חוצה)." The midrashim go on to suggest that we not read חוצה, but rather חיצה, meaning "irrational"--that it is irrational for a father to slaughter his son, or "anomaly,"--that God would intend not to fulfill His promise to establish His covenant with Isaac. In yet two other versions, the angels plead to God for mercy, suggesting that Isaac lies bound below like an animal.² The important common thread that unites all of these midrashim is that the ministering angels, through their tears and their persuasion, play an important role in saving Isaac's life.

X. The Sea Refused to Part

This literary unit begins with Exodus 14:15: "Speak to the children of Israel, that they will go forward." God tells Moses to serve as His emissary and to say; "I am the messenger of the Creator of the Universe. Reveal your

¹See Genesis Rabba 56:9; and Yalkut Shimoni Vol. I: 101.

²See Pirke deRebbe Eliezer 31 and Yalkut Shimoni Vayera 100. See Tanchuma haNidpas Vayera 18 for yet another version.

paths to my children that they will be able to cross you." Moses immediately fulfills God's command, but the sea refuses to comply. In its refusal, the sea gives Moses two reasons: First, Moses was born of a woman. The implication here is that, while Moses was the product of another creature, the sea was created directly by God. Second, the sea claims to be three days older than Moses, thereby giving it the privilege of refusing Moses' command. When Moses reports the sea's insubordination to God, God suggests that Moses punish the sea with his staff. The midrash then quotes Exodus 14:26; "Moses extended his arm over the water," and the sea split.

As was mentioned above, when Moses first speaks to the sea, he claims to be the emissary of the Creator of the Universe. This command is not Moses'. Moses was simply delivering a message from the One who created the sea--the Creator of the Universe. This would seem to abrogate the sea's contentions that it need not part because of its relative age or stature to Moses.

Other versions of this story depict God responding differently to the sea's refusal. Mekhilta Beshallah 4-5 states that it was ordained from the beginning of time that the sea would part. God then scared the sea into parting. Moses then responds; "All day long I have been talking to you in the name of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and you wouldn't submit. Now, why are you fleeing?" [The sea responded; "It is not because of you Moses, son of Amram. It is because; "Tremble, O Earth at the presence of the Lord" (Ps. 114:7).]¹

¹Also see Exodus Rabbah 21:6.

XI. Nachshon

We are told that after the water split, the Israelites were afraid to enter. Nachshon ben Aminadav was the first to enter, and all of Israel came into the water after him. Nachshon was the head of the tribe of Judah (Numbers 1:7) and appears elsewhere in midrashic literature as the first person to descend into the sea. In B.T. Sotah 37a, for example, it says: "Each tribe was unwilling to enter the sea, then sprang forth Nachshon ben Amminadab and descended into the sea, as it is said; "Ephriam surrounds me with deceit, and the House of Israel with falsehood, but Judah stands firm with God (יְהוּדָה עוֹד רַד עִם אֱל) (Hos. 12:1). Note the play on רַד עִם אֱל--Nachshon descended with God.

Mekhilta Beshallach 5 has Nachshon plunging into the waters of the sea before they part. As he is about to drown, Nachshon cries out to God; "Save me, God, the water is approaching my throat!!" God then tells Moses to extend his staff over the waters, and they part.

The common thread among all of these midrashim is Nachshon's courage. In our midrash, Nachshon is the first person to enter the path created by the sea's parted waters, and in the Mekhilta parallel, in an even more daring move, he plunges into the waters themselves. Nachshon is the first human to display his faith in God by literally placing his life in God's hands. Nachshon stepped into the unknown, and when he survived, all of Israel felt that it was safe to follow him.

Nachshon demonstrates the human element in Israel's redemption. Although the primary theme of Midrash Vayosha is divine providence and salvation, without the initiative and assistance of faithful human beings, redemption never would have happened. Had Nachshon not stepped into the water, the sea may never have parted. Other examples of supportive

characters whose actions help effect Israel's salvation are Miriam, Tziporah, and Jethro. All three will be discussed later in this chapter.

A Note About the Form of the Rest of the Midrash

Beginning with the quotation from Exodus 14:30; "And God saved," a set literary pattern is used. The author will begin a section of midrash with a quotation from the Biblical text, follow it with a section of midrash, and complete the section by repeating the same Biblical quotation with which the section began. The verses are quoted consecutively from Exodus 14:30 to Exodus 15:18 in the abovementioned pattern.

As will be noted in the analysis discussing each section, oftentimes the midrashic material is unrelated to Biblical verse which it follows, and occasionally one narrative line will continue through several Biblical units.

XII. Michael and Uzah: Ex. 14:30-31

XII A. Exodus 14:30

This section begins with a Biblical quotation from Exodus 14:30; "And God saved, from which the entire midrash derives its name. The narrative begins as the Israelites leave Egypt. Uzah, the ministering angel of Egypt, requests that he be allowed to bring a judgement against Israel, and God asks Michael, the ministering angel of Israel, to defend Israel.

Before we turn to this section of the analysis some information on both Uzah and Michael may be helpful. B.T. Yoma 67b tells us that Uzah and another angel named Uzziel were sinners in the eyes of God and had hearts

of fire.¹ B.T. Sotah 35a tells us of the fate of Uzah. God will kill him as the Israelites enter Israel over the Jordan river. It is interesting that Uzah attempts to prosecute Israel as they approach one body of water at the beginning of their journey, the Red Sea, and is killed by God as they cross another body of water at the end of their journey.

Exodus Rabbah 18 tells us that Michael and Gabriel are the guardian angels of Israel. In Pirke d'Rebbe Eliezer chapter 42, Michael plays a crucial role in the drama at the Red Sea.² With Israel trapped between the Sea on one side and Egyptian army on the other, Michael transforms himself into a wall of fire between Israel and Egypt, thus saving Israel from their impending slaughter. In Numbers Rabbah 2:10 we are told that the Song of the Sea was a tribute to both God and the angel Michael. The midrash states that Israel actually sang "Who is like God (מי כאל)" instead of "Who is like You (מי כמוך)."

In our text, Uzah puts forth an argument as to why Israel should remain in Egyptian hands. He tells God that He decreed that Israel should serve Egypt for four hundred years when, in fact, they had only served eighty. Uzah tells God that the time for Israel's departure had not yet arrived. Michael, upon hearing Uzah's argument, was silent. The text states that Michael "would not answer Uzah."³ Michael's silence here poses two questions. Did he feel that Uzah was justified in wishing to return Israel to Egyptian bondage? If not, why didn't he speak up? Michael's silence is especially noteworthy given the activism that he displays in the abovementioned Pirke d'Rebbe Eliezer parallel, and the tribute given to him

¹Also see Pesikta Rabbati 34.

²Also see Yalkut Shimoni vol. I:141.

³See page 24 of the translation.

in the passage from Numbers Rabbah. One could conclude that Michael was in agreement with Uzah and felt that Israel should not be redeemed.

Upon seeing Michael's silence, God takes up the role of defense council and cites three Biblical statements which He claims definitively indicate that Israel should be released. The most important of these quotations is the third. God said to Abraham, "Surely know that your seed will be a stranger in a land that is not theirs" (Gen. 15:13). God, in his defense of Israel's salvation, told Uzah that this statement didn't refer specifically to Egypt, but rather referred to the fact that Israel had been strangers since Isaac's birth. Therefore, the four hundred years had already passed. This unit concludes with the repetition of Exodus 14:30, this time quoting more of the verse. Here, the verse serves as a logical close to God's argument. Since the four hundred years had passed, and Egypt was no longer eligible to enslave Israel, "God saved Israel..." (Ex. 14:30)

This section addresses an important question: Why were the Israelites redeemed when they were? Uzah doesn't seem to be disputing the fact that Israel would be redeemed. He is simply concerned that they would be saved sooner than was decreed. God makes it clear that the redemption was not taking place because of Israel's suffering in Egypt alone. Israel would be saved, and the promise of the land fulfilled, after living as strangers for virtually their entire history.

The other very important message expressed here is that Israel was redeemed at exactly the intended time. Although, as Uzah indicated, we may wish to think that Israel's redemption took place at an inappropriate time, God assures us that the moment of salvation was deliberate. Israel's redemption, including the exact time when it would take place, were all part of the overall divine plan.

XII B. Exodus 14:31

In keeping with the established literary pattern, this section begins and ends with a quotation from Exodus 14:31; "And Israel saw the great power that God had thrust upon Egypt." The expression of that "great power" in the text, which is discussed in this section, is the drowning of the Egyptian soldiers. Again, the dialogue is between Uzah and God, this time with the ministering angels serving as jury. Uzah, pointing to God's attributes of righteousness and justice, asked God why the Egyptians had to drown. Uzah, claiming that since Israel had taken all of Egypt's gold and silver, they had received their retribution. Anything beyond this would exceed the bounds of justice.

God's argument, which the ministering angels ultimately found more persuasive, was threefold. First, God noted that He had sent Joseph down to Egypt to save the Egyptian empire from famine, and, inspite of this, Pharoah enslaved Joseph's descendents. Second, Pharoah mocked God. When his advisors told Pharoah that God was "the Lord of the Lords, and He created the heavens and the earth, and He brings death and life, and the souls of all the living are in his hands," Pharoah replied, "There is no god like this in all the world who can perform these deeds but me alone, for I created myself and the Nile river."¹ This divine rivalry between the God of the Egyptians and the God of Israel was a rivalry that God was destined to win, and win big. This, claimed God in our text, was the justification for the plagues.

¹See page 26 of the translation.

At this point in our text, Uzah begs God for mercy, and one could infer from the narrative that God was amenable to Uzah's request, for a few lines later, we are told that God was seated on the throne of mercy. However, Gabriel then brought the final argument to bear, which was the intensity of the slavery itself. Gabriel brings a selection of bricks to demonstrate just how oppressive the years of slavery were, and this demonstration convinces the ministering angels that God is justified in drowning the Egyptians. God then moves from the throne of mercy to the throne of justice and drowned the Egyptians in the sea.

Uzah's plea in this section raises one of the most crucial questions of the story of the Exodus: Was God justified in drowning the Egyptians? The author of the midrash proposes that God and the angels considered all of the relevant arguments on both sides of the issue before condemning the Egyptian soldiers to death. Whether or not one agrees with the judgement made by God and the angels, this text suggests that the decision was not a hasty one, but, rather, a reasoned one. It was a decision that took into account the entire history of Israel in Egypt, the gold and silver that Israel had taken upon their exodus from Egypt, the plagues that were inflicted upon Egypt, and the severity of Egyptian oppression. After careful reasoning, as demonstrated by both God's and Uzah's arguments, it was decided that the drowning of the Egyptians was just retribution.

The discussion between God and Uzah indicates the author's attempt to make every action of the Exodus fit together perfectly. It is Vayosha's contention that every detail make sense, from the perspectives of logic and justice.

XIII. Exodus 15:1

The material surrounded by quotations from Exodus 15:1 deals with two subjects: First, the author tells us who began singing the Song of the Sea, then we are told how the Israelite children survived the Egyptian decree to slay the first born of Israel.

XIII A. Who Sang First

This question presents itself from the Exodus 15:1 passage: "Then Moses and the children of Israel sang (ישיר) this song..." Since the verb, ישיר, is singular, it is unclear if it applies to the children of Israel, as a single unit or to Moses, or both. The author of our midrash, also sensing this problem, proposes the solution of emending the text to read, "We will sing (נשירה) to God..." This solution grammatically includes all the participants, Moses and the children of Israel.¹

XIII B. How the Israelite Children Survived

This section gives a detailed description of the way that God saved the first born Israelite children after they had been decreed to die. First, God caused the mothers to bear their children without pain, presumably so they wouldn't scream during childbirth and draw attention to themselves. Then, the ministering angels would dress them in colorful clothing and feed them butter and honey. Finally, the earth would swallow them up and keep them until they were grown, when they would return to Egypt, recognize their

¹See Mekhilta Shirta 1 for another parallel version.

parents, and begin their normal lives. The midrash explains that the Song of the Sea is a hymn of thanks to God for saving the Israelite children.

Other midrashim present interesting variations of this story. In Exodus Rabbah 23:8, we read that when the children returned grown, their parents would ask; "Who took care of you?" The children would answer; "A nice young man looked after our needs." The midrash continues with the Israelites at the sea. There, the children say to their parents; "This is the One who did all those things for us when we were in Egypt." In B.T. Sotah 11b, we are told that God brought a rock to the mouth of each child, and another rock to their side. The rock which was at his mouth fed him with honey and milk, and the rock which was at their side annointed them with oil. This midrash also continues with Israel at the sea, where the children recognized and sanctified God.¹

The description of the salvation of the Israelite first born in Midrash Vayoshah expands God's role in the Exodus story. In the Biblical text, God doesn't appear until Moses bows before the burning bush in Exodus 3. There is the sense in the Bible that God was absent from the lives of the Israelites from the time of Jacob's death and throughout the years of slavery in Egypt. The midrash explains that God played an active salvific role in Israel's fate from the time of the decree against the first born of Israel. The midrash tells us that the act of saving the first born of Israel was so important, that it served as the motivation for the Song of the Sea. Egypt was unable to kill a single Israelite. God secured their safety from the moment that Pharaoh attempted to slaughter them.

¹Also see Pirke d'Rebbe Eliezer chapter 42 for another version of this midrash.

XIV. Exodus 15:2

The account describing God's saving the Israelite children demonstrates the important role that divine providence plays in Midrash Vayosha. The midrashic material surrounded by quotations from Exodus 15:2, continuing to describe God's activity in the Exodus story, describes the expanded role that God plays in Moses' early life. As was also just mentioned above, this represents a departure from the Biblical text, where God doesn't appear until Moses bows at the burning bush in Exodus 3.

The following is a detailed analysis of the midrashic material included this section. Emphasis will be placed on how the characters and the events demonstrate God's enhanced role in Moses' childhood.

XIV A. Miriam's prophesy

Miriam, excited and elated, runs to her father and informs him that she was told in a prophesy, presumably by God, that her yet unborn brother would be the one to redeem Israel from Egyptian bondage. The midrash continues with the story of Moses' birth, and Miriam's successful attempt to save him from the Egyptian decree. Given the divine stature that Moses was destined to achieve, according to the midrash, Miriam's role and work takes on new and important meaning here. First, with respect to her role, she is now a prophetess engaged in holy work--work that will result in the redemption of her people. Second, her determination to save her brother is no longer simply the result of a sister's concern for her brother, but, rather, for the future redeemer of her people. Miriam is now a knowing participant in the future salvation of Israel because God spoke to her. Miriam as a prophetess also directly ties God to Moses' birth. Her prophesy clearly

indicates that God intended Moses to be the redeemer of his people. Again, the role of divine providence is expanded in the Exodus story.

In Exodus Rabbah 1:23, we read that Miriam prophesied; "My mother is destined to give birth to a son who will save Israel." And when the house was flooded with light at the birth of Moses, her father arose and kissed her on the head and said; "My daughter, your prophesy has been fulfilled." In this midrash, the Divine light that fills Moses' parents home at the moment of his birth serves as confirmation that indeed Miriam had received prophesy from God, and that Moses would be the redeemer.

XIV B. Why Pharaoh's daughter was at the River

In order to insure that Pharaoh's daughter would be at the river in order to see Moses' basket drifting by, God brought a heatwave upon Egypt. God then caused Pharaoh's daughter to fall for Moses, so she would not kill him. Although the Biblical narrative would lead us to believe that Pharaoh's daughter's discovery of Moses was possibly a chance occurrence, in Midrash Vayosha we see evidence of God's role in the course of events that led to Moses' ascension amongst the Egyptian ranks and ultimately as the Israelite savior.

In Pirke d'Rebbe Eliezer chapter 48, we are told that Pharaoh's daughter, was at the river because God struck her with a case of leprosy, which made it impossible for her to bathe in hot water. When she touched Moses' basket, she was immediately healed, which caused her to take pity on Moses.¹ Both midrashim make it clear that it was part of the Divine plan for Pharaoh's daughter to discover Moses and fall in love with him.

¹Also see Exodus Rabbah 1:23 for another version of this midrash.

XIV C. Pharoah loved Moses

The narrative continues with the discussion of how Moses also found favor in the eyes of Pharoah. The description of how Moses used to take the crown from Pharoah's head and place it on his own is particularly prophetic. As a child, Moses playfully, and with the consent of Pharoah, removes the royal crown from Pharoah's head and places it on his own. As an adult, Moses, as God's agent, will render Pharoah impotent as a ruler as he elevates himself to the stature of leader of Israelites. In Exodus Rabbah 1:26, the text reads, "Moses used to take the crown of Pharoah and place it on his own head, as he was destined for greatness."¹

XIV D. Jethro and the Magicians

Although Pharoah may not have understood the significance of Moses' seemingly innocent act of removing Pharoah's crown, the Egyptian magicians certainly did. They respond to this act by warning Pharoah that this child would someday take his kingdom from him and by imploring Pharoah to kill Moses.

Jethro, who himself is portrayed in the midrash as an Egyptian magician, saves Moses' life by convincing the others, and Pharoah, that the child is stupid. They place before Moses a gold dinar and a piece of hot coal. It is determined that if the child picks up the dinar, he is intelligent and a threat to Pharoah and therefore must die. If he picks up the coal, he has no intelligence, poses no threat to Pharoah's authority and may live.² Although Moses reaches for the gold, the angel Gabriel causes him to touch the coal,

¹Also see Sefer Hayashar, page 289.

²Also see Exodus Rabbah 1:26 and Tanchumah haNidpas Shemot 8.

thus saving his life. The appearance of Gabriel here provides further evidence that Moses' survival was God's will.

Although Jethro is partially responsible for saving Moses' life here, one cannot ignore the fact that he is also an Egyptian magician. And, just as important, Jethro is also Tziporah's father and Moses' future father-in-law. Midrash Vayosha doesn't resolve why an Egyptian magician would rise in defense of a Hebrew child or how this magician became the Midianite priest who, according to the Biblical narrative, become Moses' father-in-law and confidant, but other midrashim do. In Exodus Rabbah 1:32, Jethro, an idolatrous priest, renounced his paganism and repented to Moses. The midrash continues by telling us that this act of repentance caused Jethro to be excommunicated by his former idolatrous colleagues.¹ In Mekhilta Amalek 3, God says, "I am He who brought Jethro near, not keeping him at a distance, so also you, when a man comes to you wishing to become a convert to Judaism, so long as he comes in the name of God, do likewise, befriend him, and do not repel him."

These parallel midrashic versions portray Jethro as a convert. Perhaps, midrashically, his process of teshuvah began with his role in saving Moses' life as the Egyptian magicians called for his demise. This would explain how his first appearance in Vayosha was as an Egyptian official, and, in his last, he will say; "I give testimony to the fact that He causes death and life. And I give testimony for you [Moses] that you are completely righteous, and it is by your hand in the future that Egypt will parish, and it is by your hand that in the future the Holy One, Blessed by He, will bring Israel out of Egypt..."²

¹Also see Tanchuma haNidpas Shemot 11.

²See page 32 of the translation.

Jethro is transformed from an idolator to one of God's loyal agents in the salvation of the Israelites.

XIV E. The Staff

The origin of Moses' staff, as portrayed in Midrash Vayosha, adds to the role that Divine providence plays in this story.¹ We are told that the staff was created on the first Shabbat eve, and was inscribed with God's name and with the ten plagues that God would inflict upon the Egyptians. If this staff was created at the beginning of time, and it prophesies the Exodus from Egypt and the plagues, then one must conclude that the Exodus, and our tenure in Egyptian bondage, was part of God's plan from the beginning of time. God had always intended for us to suffer in Egypt, and God knew, from the days of Creation, exactly what means He would employ to free us. Redemption, and the vehicles that would effect it, were programmed into the world from the very beginning of our history.

This staff suspends time for us. The future is no longer unknown to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. Since the plagues were inscribed on the staff, our ancestors also knew what the future held for their descendents in Egypt.² One may speculate that the knowledge that their children would be redeemed by God from slavery would strengthen our patriarchs' faith in God and in God's plans for His people.

It is also important to note that this staff is part of the inheritance of the Israelites. Our text tells us that this staff was given to Abraham, who bequeathed it to Isaac, and then to Jacob and Joseph, until it finally reached

¹See also Pirke d'Rebbe Eliezer chapter 40, B.T. Pesachim 3A and B.T. Megillah 9B.

²Exodus Rabbah 8:3 tells us that the staff weighed 40 se'ah and was composed of sapphire.

Moses' hands and could aid in the fulfillment of God's plan to free the Israelites. This staff was a sign of God's plans for the Israelites. It was created to ultimately aid in their salvation from the Egyptians at the beginning of time, suggesting that God had planned Israel's enslavement and redemption when He created the world. As well, prior to the Exodus, this staff served as a special gift from God to our ancestors--a reminder of the special relationship between God and Israel.

XIV F. Tzippora

Within this section of midrash, Tzippora plays a most important role. First, as Jethro discovers that Moses is an Egyptian and angrily incarcerates him in a cistern, Tzippora manages to keep Moses alive and to finally convince her father that Moses should be praised instead of condemned. Although in the Biblical account, Jethro immediately embraces Moses, here, Moses is rejected because of his supposed Egyptian blood. It is Tzippora who sees that Moses is a "righteous one,"¹ and it is she who ultimately saves his life.

After Moses is retrieved from the cistern, Jethro allows him to marry Tzippora, but he insists on a specific condition before the wedding may take place. Half of their future sons must be raised as Jews and half as Ishmaelites.² One may guess that this condition harkens back to the fact that Jethro was originally an Egyptian magician, or that he believes Moses to be of Egyptian ancestry. When their first son, Gershom, was born, Moses circumcized him as a Jew. When their second son, Eliezer, was born, Jethro's original condition presented a serious problem for Moses. How could he

¹See page 31 of the translation.

²Also see Mekhilta Amalek 3.

allow his son to go uncircumcized? So distressing was this dilemma for Moses, that he fled Midian to return to Egypt. On his journey, Moses encountered Satan in the image of a giant snake. Satan swallowed Moses up to his groin, and Tzippora immediately deduced that this was a punishment for not circumcizing Eliezer.¹ She immediately cut off his foreskin, threw a drop of the blood at Moses' leg, and a voice from heaven commanded the snake to vomit Moses up. Tzippora then utters the line from Exodus 4:26, "you are a bridegroom of blood," and Moses is saved.

As mentioned above, this story highlights Tzippora's vital role in Moses' early life. She twice saves him from death, and her actions allow Moses to continue on his mission to save his people. The first episode highlights Tzippora's cunning intelligence. She first convinced her father that she should remain at home, so she could feed and sustain Moses. Then she tricked him into lifting Moses up out of the cistern. The second episode shows that Tzippora was keenly aware of God's will. She immediately and intuitively knew that Moses was being threatened because he didn't circumcize their son. She took the commandment upon herself, circumcized Eliezer, and again saved Moses' life.

Tzippora's role here highlights the importance of supportive characters in the Exodus drama. As with Miriam in a previously discussed section, Tzippora helps Moses to survive the dangerous moments of his early life, so that he can serve as God's agent later on.

¹See also Exodus Rabbah 5:8.

XV. The Plagues

Within Midrash Vayosha, there is a wealth of material providing explanation and justification for the plagues. The main questions that this material seeks to answer are: "Why the plagues at all?" And more specifically, "Why these plagues?" As will be discussed, some of the explanations offered here claim that the plagues harken back to the days of Egyptian bondage--either as revenge for the severity of slavery, or as a tactic of war against the Egyptian empire. Other explanations demonstrate that the plagues foreshadow the events that will precede the coming of the Messiah. Here, there is an attempt to draw a connection between the Exodus and the coming of the Messiah--two important salvific events.

It is important to note here that these explanations attempt to create a logical explanation for the intensity and the cruelty of the plagues. The author wants his readers to feel that God was not only justified in inflicting the Egyptians with plagues, but that specifically these plagues themselves are consistent with human reason and intellect.

XV A. Exodus 15:3: God is a man of war

This first midrash on the plagues explains Exodus 15:3: "God is a man of war." Here we are told that the plagues were inflicted in the manner that a human king would wage a war. We have many examples in midrashic literature comparing God to a human king at the time of the Exodus.¹ In one

¹See for example Pesikta Rabati 21:9-10; Mekhilta Bahodesh 5:21; and Tanchuma hanidpas Vayera 12.

such example, Pesikta Rabbati 21:6, we are told that God faced the Egyptians as a young man, since war is best waged by young men.

In Midrash Vayosha, the author begins by first explaining how an experienced military man would wage war against an enemy. He then demonstrates how the plagues logically and perfectly correspond to the abovementioned military plan. The following table charts the logic of this argument.

A military plan of attack

1. Surrounding them with legions
and blocking their waterducts.

2. Archers and shouters.

3. Shooting arrows

4. Invading barbarians

5. Spears

6. Explosives

7. Catapults

8. Incites legions and armies
against them

9. Prison

10. Kills the enemies' elders

The corresponding plagues

1. Blood

2. Frogs

3. Lice

4. Wild animals

5. Plague against cattle

6. Boils

7. Hail

8. Locust

9. Darkness

10. Slaying of the first born.

XV B. The plagues as revenge for Egyptian slavery

In the second explanation, we are told that these specific plagues correspond to the tasks that the Israelites were forced to perform while subject to Egyptian slavery. Here, the plagues are intended to teach a most

severe lesson the Egyptians. They must confront, point by point, every task that they force the Israelites to endure, and pay for each one specifically. In this explanation, the plagues are a vehicle for revenge against the Egyptians for the hardship that they inflicted against Israel. But, just as important, in the final line of this section, the author states, "God only judges a man measure for measure."¹ Although the plagues, according to this midrash, are an expression of revenge, they are completely justified. The Egyptians got what they deserved based on their sins while holding the Israelites captive.

The final and most important message in this explanation of the plagues is, again, that the plagues were a deliberate and justified expression of the divine will. The author of Midrash Vayosha wants us to understand the motivations underlying God's plan--the inflicting the the plagues upon the Egyptians. With each section of this midrash, we are given more and more insight into God's actions.

The description here emphasizes that each plague is a direct response to a specific task of Egyptian slavery. The author begins his rationale for each plague by describing the corresponding task of slavery. He then details the plague which God sent in response to this task. Notice that only five of the plagues are described here.

The Egyptians demanded
that the Israelites:

1. draw water
2. carry merchandise
3. carry their children

God's response as revenge
for this task:

1. Blood
2. Frogs
3. Wild animals to snatch their
children

¹Page 35 of translation.

4. Shepherds for their flocks

4. A plague that would kill
their flocks

5. They would drown Israel's
first born.

5. God drowned them in water.

XV C. Plagues predict what will happen to Edom in the days of the Messiah

This explanation for the plagues is also common in midrashic literature.¹ Here, the plagues foreshadow events that will immediately precede the coming of the Messiah. The author contends that God inflicted the Egyptians with these specific plagues in order to give us a preview of the end of days. With this section, we see the midrashist's attempt to closely tie the Exodus with the Messianic Era as two similar moments of salvation. The divine events which precede our spiritual salvation when the Messiah comes mirror the events that led to our freedom from the physical bondage of Egypt. Just as God saved us in Egypt, so, too, will He save us from Edom.

In order to demonstrate the connection between these two events, the author parallels the plagues with Biblical verses from the prophetic works, which describe God's actions in the Messianic Era. We find a literary formula applied to each plague description in order to crystallize the comparison between Egypt and the destruction of Edom predeciding the coming of the Messiah. The formula is as follows:

In Egypt, God brought _____ So, too, will He bring
(Plague)
upon Edom, as it says, _____
(Prophetic Verse)

¹See Pesikta Rabbati 17:7; Tanchuma haNidpas Bo 4; and Pesikta deRab Kahana 7 for parallel versions.

The use of verses from the Bible in lieu of a simple description of fall of Edom is particularly important here. Each verse cited gives a literary parallel to the plague which describes the coming of the Messiah. Consider the statement about the first plague:

In Egypt, God brought upon them the plague of blood first. So too will He bring it upon Edom when it is eradicated, as it says, "And I will bring wonders in the heavens and on earth--blood and fire and pillars of smoke. And the sun will change to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord" (Joel 3:3-4).

Note the repetition of the symbol of blood, once when describing the Egyptian plague, and twice in the verse from Joel. This provides the necessary literary hook for the claim that the plagues foreshadow the destruction of Edom. And, by employing these verses, the author is providing Biblical grounding for his predictions of the events preceeding the coming of the Messiah while demonstrating their literary connection to the Egyptian plagues. The following is a table demonstrating the comparison of the plagues to the fall of Edom.

<u>Plague</u>	<u>Biblical verse and literary link to the plague</u>
1. Blood	Joel 3:3-4: Verse mentions blood.
2. Frogs with loud voices	Is. 66:6: "A voice of tumult...the voice of God."
3. Burning lice	Is. 34:9: "Rivers to tar and dirt to brimstone."
4. Wild animals	Is. 34:11: "And wild birds of the night will possess them."
5. Pestilence	Ez. 38:22: "And I will judge them by pestilence."

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 6. Pox | Ze. 14:12: "And this will be a plague.....
their flesh shall consume away." |
| 7. Hail | Ez. 38:22: "I will cause great hailstones and fire..." |
| 8. Locust | Ez. 39:17: "Speak to every feathered bird,
and to every beast of the field." |
| 9. Darkness | Is. 34:11: "Line of confusion and a plummet
of emptiness." |
| 10. Slaying of the
first born | Ex. 32:30 "All the princes of the north [have gone
down with the slaughtered]." |

The last line of this section, which follows the literary pattern mentioned above, serves as a climax. It reads:

"In Egypt, God exacted punishment from their gods, and afterwards, He punished them. So too will He do to Edom: First God will punish their leader, and afterwards He will punish them, as it is written, "And it will come to pass that on that day God will punish the hosts on high in the heavens and the kings of the earth on the earth" (Is. 24:21).

This line emphasizes two important themes. First, there is the element of punishment, which was discussed above. Perhaps more than any other justification for the plagues, punishment is the most important. Second, there is the primary role that God plays in both salvific events. Not only is God the single active agent in the punishment of both Egypt and Edom, but God is, as the Biblical verse which concludes unit in Midrash Vayosha, "a man of war."¹ God fights two battles in this midrash. First, he wages a divine war against both Egyptian and Edomite gods, then He battles against Israel's enemies on earth.

¹Ex. 15:3

XV D. A final explanation of the plagues

In the material surrounded by Exodus 15:7, we read the final explanation given for the plagues. Again, we see revenge as justification for the plagues. Although the plagues and their accompanying explanations are similar to the material in the section above, The Plagues as revenge for Egyptian slavery, there are three noticeable differences.

First, the explanation for the plague of hail is much more descriptive than those of the other plagues. Here, we read that the hail stood suspended between heaven and earth until the days of Gog and Migog, the kings who will rise up against Israel in the days of the Messiah will be destroyed by God.¹ Again we see an attempt to draw a concrete connection between God's redemptive might at the Exodus and at the coming of the Messiah. The Egyptians were plummeted with hail by God, and Gog and Migog will be destroyed by hail at the end of time.

Second, the explanation for the ninth plague, the plague of darkness, also breaks the pattern of explanation provided in the other plagues. Instead of serving as a means for punishment against the Egyptians, this plague is directed against the Israelites themselves. The author tells us that God wanted to slaughter the sinners of Israel before the Exodus, but He didn't want the Egyptians to know about it. God felt that the Egyptians would derive great pleasure from seeing the Israelite sinners killed by their own God, so God provided a cover of darkness for the killings so the Egyptians wouldn't see it.

¹See Ezekiel Chapter 38 for the Biblical account of these kings.

This description clearly breaks the pattern set by all of the other descriptions of the plagues. In all of the justifications for the plagues provided in Midrash Vayosha, every plague either mirrors an act of destruction against an enemy of Israel--whether it be Egypt or Edom, or represents revenge or punishment against Egypt. Here, the plague of darkness is a part of God's plan to kill Israelite sinners. This is an interesting twist on the drama.

The explanation for the plague of darkness offered here again provides us with further insight into God's actions. Again the author demonstrates God's attribute of justice. Membership in the Israelite nation was not enough to guarantee redemption from Egypt. One had to be a righteous Israelite. Sining, whether it be among Egyptians or Israelites, would not be tolerated by God.

XVI. The Coming of the Messiah

Beginning with the midrashic material following the quotation of Exodus 15:14, Vayosha describes for us the events that will immediately precede and follow the coming of the Messiah. The general themes which characterized the previous material are also expressed here. First, the message of salvation for Israel is a predominant theme in this section of the midrash. Israel is described as God's first born, whom He loves, protects, and defends. Also important in this section is the degree of judgement and retribution that is brought upon Israel's enemies. As we saw with the material describing the Exodus, all those who ever challenged God and God's people will pay dearly for their sins--in this case by spending eternity in Gehenna.

Finally, there is the primary role that God plays in all phases of the events described in the midrash. As we will see, all the events are a direct result of God's actions in order to further His mission of Israel's redemption.

It must be reiterated here that salvation, which is the general overarching theme of Midrash Vayosha, means salvation for Israel alone. Although one may wish to think that, particularly in the Messianic Era, salvation would be universal, Vayosha contends that salvation will come only to those who were loyal to God. Those who defied God or threatened God's people were destined to perish forever.

With this material, we see a greater connection between the midrashic material and the Biblical verses quoted than seen previously. There is also a heavy reliance on quotations from the Prophetic works in order to justify the picture that the midrash paints for us describing the coming of the Messiah.

XVI A. Exodus 15:14: Elijah's announcement

This section describes the three days which immediately precede the Messiah's entre. First, we are told, Elijah will come and herald the good news. His appearance will take place three days prior to the Messiah's. Elijah will speak about three important qualities that will define the Messianic Era: Peace, goodness, and salvation. A new quality will be announced on each succeeding day, which accounts for the three days. The author suggests that Elijah's announcement is forecast in Isaiah 52:7, which specifically mentions one who brings good tidings and announces peace, goodness and salvation.

Vayosha tells us that, upon hearing the words of Elijah, which ring from one end of the world to the other, even the evildoers will rejoice. But Elijah responds to them that salvation will come only to Zion and her children, and not to the evildoers. Although God will make known His kingdom and glory

in every language and to every nation, only the righteous will be allowed to partake of salvation. We are told that when the nations of the world hear this, they become seized with fear and trepidation.

The use of the Biblical quotation from Exodus 15:14 is very interesting here. The section begins with a short quotation from the verse; "The nations shall here." This would suggest that all the nations of the world will hear Elijah's welcome news that the Messiah was on his way, and that all would rejoice. Not so, we are told. As mentioned above, salvation is reserved for Israel only, and all of the other nations of the world became terrified at what awaited them. When the verse is quoted again, at the end of the section, a much greater selection is used; "the nations will hear and be afraid; trembling shall take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia." This quotation more clearly defines the narrative of the section--that those nations who defied God would have reason to fear. They were destined to suffer divine retribution.

XVI B. Who will fear retribution?

This section, included in the midrashic material within the quotations of Ex.dus 15:15, expands upon the abovementioned material. We were first told that all evildoers would be excluded from God's salvation. Now we are told exactly who those evildoers are, and why they must suffer retribution.

First, there is the kingdom of Philistia. They are fearful because they slaughtered two hundred thousand Ephriamites during the Exodus from Egypt. They also erred in their calculation of when the Exodus should take place, and left on their own, without God's assistance. Because of this, we are told, God was angry at them. So they were afraid that God would help Israel take their land.

The Edomites were also terrified. They feared that Israel would wage a war against them with the same ferocity and hatred that existed between Jacob and Esau. Finally, the Moabites feared that Israel would battle against them the way that Abraham's shepherds fought against the shepherds of Lot. Canaan feared because this mighty God had promised their land to the descendents of Abraham, and Israel returned on that same promise.

The message here, as mentioned above, is one of revenge and reward. Those who sought to impede God's will by challenging the Israelites would be made to suffer for their sins. Redemption would come as a reward only for those who were loyal to God and God's will. This message is stated explicitly a selection of the midrash which immediately follows this section.

The sages of blessed memory said that Moses said to Israel, "My brothers! You will know that not by wisdom and not by understanding and not by strength and not by wealth is a man able to conquer even one city, but, rather, by the might of the Holy One, Blessed be He. Many mighty men are ready to battle against you, and in the future, God will instill in them fear, and not one man will stand before you. And in the future, God will write in His Torah, "Don't praise the hero for his heroism" (Je. 9:22). And if you perform the will of God, He will immediately redeem you from your enemies.¹

Again, the use of the quotations from Exodus 15:15 adds to the drama. The section opens with a small quotation; "And they will be amazed." After the explanation describing Philistia, Edom, and Moab, a greater quotation from the same verse draws the section to a conclusion, "The mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold of them. All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away." This more extended quotation serves as the perfect conclusion to this section, as it crystalizes the prophecies made in this section of

¹Page 54 of the translation.

midrash. With the advent of the coming of the Messiah, and the series of judgments rendered against Israel's enemies by God, the prophesies of the book of Exodus are being fulfilled.

XVI C. Ex. 15:17: God loves Israel

In this section, humility and love are the attributes ascribed to God. First, Israel is described as God's first born, and God is said to love Israel as intensely as one loves his first born. Then, God is said to express His love to Israel with the devotion and humility of a loyal servant. As a servant dresses his teacher, God dresses Israel. As a servant washes his master, God washes Israel. And as a servant shods his lord, God shods Israel. As Biblical support for this description, the author quotes from Ezekiel 16:9-10; "I will dress you with embroidered cloth...I will wash you with water...I will shod you with dolphin skin."

These three actions which express God's love--dressing Israel, washing Israel, and shodding Israel, may be likened to the actions of a mother toward a young child. They are acts of loving protection, or of nurturing. One senses, when reading this passage, that God has consistently and meticulously sought to comfort and shield Israel. Hence, the impending redemption, reserved for Israel only, is the perfect climax to these acts of love.

One cannot stress too often the role that divine providence plays in all of the abovementioned descriptions. God is involved and active in all phases of Israel's redemption. And the actions themselves are inherently logical. The plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians specifically correspond to the severity of Egyptian slavery. The nations of Moab and Edom will suffer prior to the coming of the Messiah because they sinned against God and Israel. Midrash

Chapter Four

Reoccurring Words and Symbols And Their Significance

In the notes accompanying Midrash Vayosha in Otzar Ha Midrashim, Eisenstein states that that Midrash Vayosha is a midrash specifically on the Song of the Sea. He believes that the section of the midrash describing the Akedah does not belong in the midrash.¹ And, at first glance, he appears to be correct. After further study of the text, however, it is my contention that these two stories, in fact do belong together. Vayosha is a midrash which describes in detail three salvific moments--the Akedah, the Exodus from Egypt, and the coming of the Messiah, giving equal weight to all three stories in an effort to demonstrate God's powers of salvation and redemption. Each moment is vital in the history of God's people Israel, and each moment demonstrates God's love and devotion for Israel.

In order to demonstrate how closely these stories are related, in terms of message, theme and structure, the author has woven words, characters, and themes into the text which recur throughout the three stories. This chapter is an attempt to identify and explain these literary and thematic parallels which occur in the midrash among the three stories--the Akedah, the Exodus, and the Messianic age.

I. Abraham's prayers and their fulfillment

At the very beginning of Midrash Vayosha, Israel finds itself trapped in a predicament that would seemingly lead to their demise. Trapped on one side by the charging Egyptian army, and on the other by the raging waters of the Red Sea, Israel was surely doomed. In response to this danger, Israel responds:

¹See note in Eisenstein Vol. 1, pg. 146

When they saw the Egyptians, they said to Moses, "Moses our teacher! Where shall we go?! The Egyptians are behind us and the sea is before us!!" And so they cried out loud, and Moses also cried with them.¹

As we see with the following quotation, God compassionately responds to Israel's cries by telling Moses that there is no need to pray because God remembers the prayer that Abraham uttered at the moment of the Akedah. The implication here is that Abraham's prayer would save the Israelites at the Red Sea.

Immediately, the mercy of the Holy One, Blessed be He, unfolded, and God said to Moses, "Moses! I am reminded of the prayer that Abraham, my beloved, uttered at the moment that I told him, 'Go and slaughter Isaac, your son! He immediately acquiesced, lovingly, and the next day he rose early to do my will...'²

The midrash states that Abraham's prayer, made generations earlier, would save the Israelites at the Red Sea. At some point during the drama of the Akedah, Abraham prayed to God and uttered words so powerful and memorable, that God took note of them at the moment of Israel's impending doom at the Sea, and save Israel on Abraham's account.

An obvious question that presents itself at this moment in the midrash is "Where is the text of Abraham's prayer?" A prayer so important to the salvation of Israel surely should be recorded. But the Biblical account of the Akedah, in Genesis 22, makes no mention of Abraham praying. Nor is that answer to this question apparent at this point in the midrash itself. Later in the midrash, however, Abraham does in fact pray twice to God, and each

¹Page 1 of the translation.

²Ibid.

prayer directly influences God's actions toward the Israelites in the section of the midrash describing the Exodus. Each prayer, therefore, creates a thematic link between the Akedah and the Exodus, and each prayer demonstrates how the Exodus and God's salvific acts there are dependant upon the drama of the Akedah.

IA. Abraham prays for salvation in order to fulfill God's prophesy

Toward the middle of the material describing the Akedah, Satan, in attempt to prevent Abraham and Isaac from reaching Moriah and fulfilling God's command, transforms himself into a great river. This exciting section fills in the gap of what transpired during the patriarchs' three day journey to Moriah, and it highlights the difficulty of the journey itself.

Abraham and Isaac enter the river, and the water rises to their throats, threatening their lives. At this moment, Abraham offers the first of his two prayers to God.

At that same time, [Abraham] lifted his eyes toward the heavens and said, "Master of the Universe, it is revealed and known before the throne of glory, that You are God in the high places and on earth. And You revealed Yourself to me and said to me, 'I am unique, and there is none like me in the world. And you are unique and there is none who is righteous like you in the world. Make my name known in the world, and slaughter Isaac your son as an offering before Me.' And I hurried [to correct you and] said [You mean] Ishmael, since you told me that "Through Isaac shall your seed be called (Gen 21:12)." And now, as we drown in this river, who will declare the unity of God in the world!"¹

¹Page 4 of the translation.

The implications inherent in Abraham's plea to God are that if Abraham and Isaac die, God's promise to make their descendents a great and numerous nation in the land of Israel will go unfulfilled. Abraham appeals to God's sense of logic. A promise was made to Abraham about the stature of his children, and now that promise is threatened. God's response is to immediately rebuke Satan and dry up the river. Abraham and Isaac were saved, but the covenant still remained unfulfilled.

It isn't until much later in the midrash that the source of Abraham's plea, and God's promise to him, come to fruition. On page 54 of the text, we read:

And if you perform the will of God, He will immediately redeem you from your enemies. And Moses said before the Holy One, Blessed be He, "Master of the Universe, when Amalek comes to battle with Israel, 'Fear and dread will come upon them'" (Ex. 15:16). And when the Amorite kings will come to hide themselves in the Arnon River, 'By the greatness of Your arm, they will be as still as a stone....till the people whom You established pass over'" (Ex. 15:16) the Jordan. And they will come and inherit the land, and the vow that You made with Abraham will be complete."

A similar statement linking the promise made to Abraham to the Exodus can be found in B.T. Berachot 18b. There, just as the Israelites are about to enter the land of Israel, God says to Moses, "Go and tell Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that the promise that I made to them is complete."

Abraham's prayer, as he is about to be consumed by Satan's giant river, reminds God that He has made a promise regarding Abraham's descendents, and that Abraham and Isaac must be saved in order for that promise to be fulfilled. Vayosha, as well as the statement from the Talmud, demonstrate that the Exodus fulfills that same promise made to Abraham. Both moments are salvific moments linked together as stages in the fulfilment of God's

promise to make Abraham's descendents a mighty nation in the land of Israel.

IB. Abraham's second prayer and the merit of our fathers (זכות אבות)

At the very end of the section in Vayosha describing the Akedah, we read:

Immediately, "an angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time saying, 'Because you have done this thing and not withheld your son, your only one, therefore I will exceedingly bless you and greatly multiply your seed'" (Gen. 22:16). Immediately [Abraham let go], and [Isaac's] soul returned to him. And he stood up and recited the blessing, "Blessed be the One who resurrects the dead." At that moment, Abraham raised his eyes to the heavens and said, "Lord of the Universe, when my children experience trouble, remember in their favor this moment when I stand before You."

The Akedah is now over, and Abraham passed the test. As is seen above, it was a time for rejoicing and for acknowledging Abraham's unswerving faith in God. The message in Abraham's final prayer to God is that he wants the faith and righteousness he demonstrated in the Akedah to be of benefit to his future descendents when they find themselves in trouble. The rabbis refer to this privilege--our benefiting from the merit of our forebears, as **זכות אבות**, or the merits of the fathers.

In fact, God does remember Abraham's service in Israel's favor, and at a very crucial moment in our history. At the moment that Israel is granted permission to leave Egypt, and they begin their journey into the desert, they notice the Egyptian army in pursuit of them. On page 37 of the midrash, we read:

And when Israel saw that the Egyptians were chasing after them, they became frightened and deathly afraid. The ministering angels said to the Holy One, Blessed be He, "Master of the Universe, let us go down and exact revenge from Egypt and protect your children from them." And the Holy One, Blessed be He, answered, "I Myself will descend and protect the children of Israel as a reward for how Abraham their father acted according to My will," as it is written, "And Abraham rose early in the morning" (Gen. 22:3). At that same moment when Abraham stood in prayer before God, the Holy One, Blessed be He, gazed into the future upon the Egyptian camp through a pillar of fire and cloud.

Because of the merit of Abraham's actions and faith in the Akedah, God Himself descends in order to save Israel from the oncoming Egyptian soldiers. God redeems Israel from Egyptian bondage because of Abraham's strength in the Akedah.

The last line of the above quotation provides a beautiful literary completion to Abraham's prayer at the end of the Akedah. First, immediately following the Akedah, we read.

At that moment, Abraham raised his eyes to the heavens and said, "Lord of the Universe, when my children experience trouble, remember in their favor this moment when I stand before You."

Then, on page 37 of the midrash,

At that same moment when Abraham stood in prayer before God, the Holy One, Blessed be He, gazed into the future upon the Egyptian camp through a pillar of fire and cloud.

It is as if God foresaw the impending peril facing Israel in the wilderness at the same moment that Abraham asked for mercy for his descendants. As

Abraham prays to God, God sees His people suffering in Egypt. God saves them because of Abraham's faith.

II. Other literary connections between the three stories

IIA. Fear (אימה)

The element of fear plays a vital role in all three stories--the Akedah, the Exodus, and the coming of the Messiah. As Israel stood before the Red Sea, before it parted, they sensed the danger of their predicament, and were terrified.

The sages of blessed memory said that when the Egyptians persued the children of Israel and saw them, Israel was seized with fear (אימה) and trembling.¹

At the moment when Isaac became aware of God's plan to have his father offer him up as a sacrifice, Isaac too became seized with an almost paralyzing fear.

Isaac immediately became seized with a great fear (אימה) because he didn't see any of the implements in Abraham's arms for the sacrifice. Isaac said to Abraham, his father, "My father." Abraham said, "Here I am, my son." Isaac said, "Here is the flint and the wood, but where is the lamb for the offering" (Gen. 22:7). Isaac immediately trembled, and his limbs shook as he became aware of the intention of his father because there was nothing in his arms for the sacrifice.²

¹Page 1 of the translation

²Pages 1-2 of the translation.

The sense of fear (אימה) felt by the protagonists of both stories is crucial to the drama. Both stories feature perilous situations followed by God's salvific acts. The fear felt before the salvation demonstrates that both Isaac and the Israelites understood the danger inherent in the moment and, therefore, their acts of obedience to God were even more meritorious.

In the material describing Israel's conquest of the land of Israel, the element of fear is introduced for a very different purpose. Here, those nations who have sinned against God are greatly afraid because they know that God will exact revenge against them.

The sages of blessed memory said, "Why were the residents of Philistia afraid? Because they killed two hundred thousand people of the children of Ephraim who counted the end of the Exodus from Egypt, and erred by thirty years. And they left of their own accord. And the Holy One, Blessed be He, was angry at them and delivered them into the hand of the Philistines. And now they are afraid..."

And why did the mighty men of Moab fear? They said, "Israel will war with us the way the shepherds of Abraham battled with the shepherds of Lot our father..."¹

Fear was introduced into the Akedah and the Exodus in order to make God's salvation more dramatic and meaningful. Here, as the enemies of Israel realize their impending doom, their fear is based on the realization that it is a part of God's plan that they will soon perish. Isaac's fear was followed by salvation, as was the Israelites's fear. But the fear of Philistia and Moab will be followed by their destruction--the punishment for their challenging God and God's people.

¹Page 38 of the translation.

IIB. My beloved (אוהבי)

The phrase "my beloved," (אוהבי), is used twice times in Midrash Vayosha. In one instance, it is used by God to show his love and respect for one of his most loyal children--Abraham. In the second case, Pharoah refers to Moses as "my beloved." In this case, Pharoah fears for his life and uses the phrase in order to gain mercy from God and Moses.

As Abraham lifted the knife with which to slaughter his son, God turned to the ministering angels and said, "Have you seen Abraham my beloved (אברהם אוהבי)? How he declared the unity of My name in this world?"⁴ Here, Abraham's loyalty to God is unquestioned. God, in response to Abraham's act of obedience, boasts to the ministering angels, and refers to Abraham as "my beloved." Given what Abraham was about to do, one senses the sincerity of God's words. There is truly a relationship of love and loyalty that exists between God and Abraham here.

Later in the midrash, as Pharoah watches the first born of Egypt die before his eyes, he goes out in search of Moses to beg for mercy. When he reaches the entrance to Moses' house, he cries bitterly, "Moses my beloved (משה אוהבי)! Please pray for me before the Holy One, blessed be He!" In the former case, by using the term "my beloved," the author is instilling in God a sense of respect and affection for his servant Abraham. In the latter case, one can sense the cynicism and irony as Pharoah, the god of the Egyptians, uses the same term "my beloved" (אוהבי) to apply to his enemy, Moses. And while Abraham, the beloved of God, will prosper and benefit from God's blessing, Pharoah is destined to suffer for eternity.

⁴Page 6 of the translation.

IIC. The ministering angels

The ministering angels play very important supportive roles in both the midrashic versions of the Akedah and of the Exodus. In both cases, they serve as adjudicators and advisors to God and in both cases they have a direct role in the moments when Israel is saved.

We first read of the actions of the ministering angels during the section describing the Akedah. At the moment when Abraham is about to slaughter his son, the angels begin to cry and beseech God to halt the sacrifice. On page 21 of the translation, we read:

"Immediately, Abraham stretched out his arm and took the knife to slaughter his son" (Gen. 22:10). The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to the ministering angels, "Did you see Abraham my beloved? How he declared the unity of My name in this world? If I would have listened to you when you said at the creation of the world, 'What is humankind that you will remember it?' Who will declare the unity of My name as Abraham?" At that moment, the ministering angels cried bitterly, and what did they say? "'The highways are desolate, wayfarers cease, and the covenant is renounced (Is. 33:8).'" Where is the reward for those who bring in guests, the guests who would come from all over? Abraham our father would bring them into his house, feed them, and give them drink, and accompany them on their way. Where is the reward that Abraham deserved? The covenant is broken. You invalidate the very covenant in which you told him, "Through Isaac shall your seed be called" (Gen. 21:12).

Here, the angels attempt to convince God to set Isaac free. They appeal to God's attributes of mercy and of logic in order to show him that the sacrifice would be disastrous. But this is only part of the role that they play in Isaac's salvation here. As we see with the continuation of the quotation, the ministering angels miraculously halt the knife as it is about to enter Isaac's throat, with their tears:

And behold, the knife is at his throat! The ministering angels cried, and their tears fell on the knife. And the knife stood, but it did not penetrate Isaac's throat.

The tears of the ministering angels caused the knife to stand still. Their tears miraculously saved Isaac's life.

In the section describing the Exodus from Egypt, the angels play an equally miraculous role in saving the Israelites. In this case, after the decree that the first born of Israel should die, the angels would save, protect, and raise the Israelite children until they were old enough to return to their parents. The story appears on page 27 of the translation.

When the Egyptians decreed upon us and said, "Throw every newly born son into the river," and the mothers would go out to the fields, and You would cause them to sleep, and they would give birth without pain. And the angels would come down from the heavens and wash and cover us, and they would dress us in colorful clothing, and place two containers in our hands--one of butter and one of honey.

The ministering angel Michael plays specifically important roles in the material on both the Akedah and the Exodus. In the Akedah, it is Michael who tells Abraham to halt the sacrifice.⁵ Michael reappears as God is about to drown the Egyptian soldiers in the sea. Uzah, the ministering angel of Egypt, and Michael adjudicate before God in order to decide if drowning the Egyptians is a just punishment.

The appearance of the ministering angels, and of Michael in particular, in both stories demonstrates the connection between the Akedah and the

⁵Page 7 of the translation

Exodus as moments of divine import. Equally important is the role that the angels play in these stories. They serve as counselors to God and as miracle workers, further highlighting these events as salvational moments.

IID. Satan

Satan appears to Abraham, Isaac, and Sarah in order to challenge their resolve to fulfill God's word by agreeing to the sacrifice. Satan's role here is as an impediment, or a stumbling block. Satan attempts to convince the characters that it is in their best interests to deny God. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, one may suggest that Satan was actually the characters' alter ego, representing the doubt and internal struggle that each of the characters experienced as they came to terms with the task that awaited them. Satan's questions and challenges demonstrate to us just how difficult and painful it was for the characters to accommodate themselves to the sacrifice. After Satan leaves, one senses genuinely that the characters have faced their doubts and are now completely accepting of the fate that awaited them at Moriah.

In the material about the Exodus, Satan appears again. Moses, Tzipora, and their son Gershom have just left Jethro on their way back to Egypt. When Jethro gave Tzipora to Moses as his bride, Jethro imposed an important condition on their betrothal. He insisted that half their children be Jews and half be Ishmaelites. When Tzipora gave birth to Gershom, Moses circumcized him on the eighth day. But with the birth of their second son, Eliezer, a problem presented itself. How could Moses deny his tradition and allow Eliezer to go uncircumcized? On page 32 of the translation, we read:

Some time later, Tzipora became pregnant and gave birth to Gershom. I circumcized him, and his mother breastfed him for two years. In the third year, Eliezer was born. I said, "What will I do now? He [Jethro] will not allow me to circumcize him!" I immediately took my wife and my sons and returned to the land of Egypt.

It is at this moment that Satan arrives upon the scene. Satan here is a vicious enemy, bent on destruction. The narration continues:

At that moment, Satan came in the image of a snake and hit me and swallowed me from my head to my groin. But he was never able to reach the point of circumcision. Tzipora thought to herself and said, "I know that this is only happening because of the sin that we committed by not circumcising Eliezer our son." Immediately, "Tzipora took a flint and cut off the foreskin of her son" (Ex. 4:25). She took a drop of blood and threw it on my leg. At that moment, a voice from heaven came out and said to the snake, "Vomit him up." And he did.

It is clear from the beginning that Moses was very uncomfortable with his father in law's condition of marriage. He clearly wanted to raise all his children as Jews. This issue became painfully pronounced when Eliezer was born, and Moses and Tzipora were faced with the prospect of leaving their son uncircumcized. So difficult was this for Moses that he fled.

If one were to continue with the line of reasoning that Satan was actually the characters' alter-ego, reflecting their doubts and struggles, then one could draw the conclusion that Satan represented the pain and anguish that these parents experienced because they could not circumcise their son. Once they resolved this problem and actually did perform the Brit Milah, Satan disappeared. As is indicated in the above quotation, aside from troubling their consciences, Moses and Tzipora also violated God's will by leaving Eliezer uncircumcised. After they succumbed to God's wishes, a voice from

heaven rebuked Satan and caused him to disappear. Again we see how God works His will in this midrash.

In both stories, Satan enters the narrative to serve as an obstacle in the characters' journey to fulfill God's command. On the road to Moriah, Satan attempts to dissuade Abraham and Isaac from obeying God and offering the sacrifice. In the Exodus material, Satan tries to kill Moses for not circumcising his son. Satan heightens the dramatic tension inherent in both stories by highlighting the struggles through which the characters work. When the struggles are resolved, and the characters come to terms with their purpose and mission, Satan disappears.

III. Water

Water is used in both the Akedah and Exodus material as a vehicle to demonstrate God's salvific powers. In the midrashic material on the Exodus, there is a detailed description of Israel poised at the Red Sea, sandwiched between the Egyptian army and the Sea's waters. When all seems lost, God parts the waters and saves the people. The narrative is found on page 23 of the translation.

Moses responded before the Holy One, Blessed be He, "Lord of the Universe, as for me, what shall I do?" (God) said to him, "Take the staff that I gave you, and go into the water as My emissary, and say to (the water), 'I am the messenger of the Creator of the Universe. Reveal your paths to my children that they will be able to cross you.'" Immediately, Moses walked into the sea and spoke the words of the Holy One, Blessed be He. The sea answered Moses, "I will not do as you say because you were born of a woman; and not only this, but I am three days older than you, for I was created on the third day, and you weren't created until the sixth day!" Moses immediately repeated the words of the sea to the Holy One, Blessed be He. And the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him, "A servant who

refuses his master, what does one do to him?" Moses said to Him, "One punishes him with a staff." The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him, "So you raise your staff and extend your arm over the water and split it." Immediately, "*Moses extended his arm over the water* (Ex. 14:26)" and split it.

On their journey to Moriah, as was mentioned above, Satan transforms himself into a giant river, threatening Abraham's and Isaac's lives. Here, too, God conquers the water and saves our patriarchs. On page 19, we read:

Immediately, the Holy One, Blessed be He, rebuked Satan and dried up the water, and they found themselves on dry land.

In both cases, the water allows the author to demonstrate God's powers of redemption. The water serves as a life threatening obstacle for the characters, and, just as they are about to die, God overcomes the water, and the characters survive and continue on their missions.

IIF. "Here I am" (הנני)

Jethro, upon realizing that Moses was an Egyptian, held Moses captive in a well for seven years. The only reason that Moses survived was because Tzipora fed and cared for him, behind her father's back, for the entire seven years. At the end of the seven years, Tzipora convinced her father to open the well and see if Moses was still alive. If he had survived, claimed Tzipora, then Jethro would have to admit Moses' righteousness.

After seven years, Tzipora said to her father, "I remember, my father, one time when you took a man that brought you the staff and sent him into the dry well. And you sinned greatly in this matter. If it be your will, open the well and see: if he is dead, pull him up from there and put his corpse outside so that

his body won't stink up your house; and if he is alive, know that he is completely righteous." ⁶

As they open the well, Jethro speaks a sentence that is very reminiscent of the Biblical narrative of the Akedah in Genesis 22:

Jethro immediately went and opened the well and called, "Moses, Moses!! I answered, "Here I am! (הֲנִנִּי)."

Note how closely related this sentence is to Genesis 22:11, when God abruptly stops the sacrifice of Isaac.

Then an angel of the Lord called to him from heaven:
"Abraham, Abraham!! And he answered, "Here I am (הֲנִנִּי)."

The similarity between these two quotations indicates that the author of Midrash Vayosha wished to connect Moses' plight with that of Abraham's in the Akedah. Both were characters who were destined for greatness, and both were threatened by greater forces. Abraham was forced to kill his son by God, and Moses' life was placed in jeopardy by Jethro. Both responded to the threats against them with obedience and submission, and both were ultimately saved by the ones who threatened them in the first place. Finally, both Abraham and Moses were able, with God's help, to fulfill their destinies.

⁶See page 17.

Chapter Five

Divine Providence in Midrash Vayosha

After careful analysis of the full text of Midrash Vayosha, I believe that the overall objective of the compiler was to highlight God's role in the redemptive process. The author describes in detail two important moments of salvation in the history of the Jews--the Binding of Isaac and the Exodus from Egypt, and then demonstrates how these events predict the final and ultimate act of divine redemption, the Coming of the Messiah. Throughout his descriptions of these events, the author consistently offers explanations for every aspect of each event in attempt to justify and enhance God's actions.

In this chapter, I will offer evidence from within the text that the author connects the three events detailed in Midrash Vayosha in order to demonstrate how the Akedah and the Exodus predict the coming of the Messiah. Within his comparisons, the author attempts to provide us with a description of the messianic age. This chapter will also demonstrate that the author extends the role of divine providence in these events as compared to that found in the Biblical narratives.

Ultimately, I am convinced that there are two fundamental messages expressed in Midrash Vayosha. First, that God has redeemed us in the past, and, therefore, God will redeem us in the future as well. Second, that God is very involved in these important moments of salvation, and that he is responsible for every phase of the events. If one searches diligently, one will find a just and righteous explanation for every detail of these important moments--from the Binding of Isaac to the plagues of Egypt. All of the actions within these events are a part of God's ultimate plan for His people.

I. The Relationship Among the Three Events

The author of Midrash Vayosha links the Binding of Isaac, the Exodus from Egypt, and the Coming of the Messiah together and demonstrates how they are related. There is a twofold purpose to demonstrating the relationship among these events. First, as was mentioned earlier, this relationship highlights the common redemptive role that God plays in all three events. Second, it allows the author to contend that the Akedah, and the Exodus, events in our past, can predict that God will redeem us again in the Messianic age.

There are several statements in the midrash that demonstrate the relationship among these three events. The first is found on page 16 of the text. Israel stands sandwiched between the potentially fatal waters of the Red Sea, and the charging Egyptian soldiers. Moses, in attempt to save himself and his people, prays to God, and God responds:

Moses, I am reminded of the prayer that Abraham my beloved uttered at the moment I told him, "Go slaughter Isaac, your son."

This statement connects the Exodus to the Akedah in two ways. The statement itself serves as a literary bridge between the midrashic material describing the Exodus and the material describing the Akedah. The material preceeding this statement, at the very beginning of the midrash, describes Israel's predicament at the Red Sea. What follows this statement is an extended midrash on the Akedah.

The second way that this statement connects the two events has to do with its message. God's comforting words to Moses here inform him that Israel is to be saved because of Abraham's actions during the Akedah. The obedience and faith that Abraham demonstrated at Moriah, which ultimately caused God to save Isaac at that time, was so meritorious that it justified God's saving the Israelites generations later.

Another important factor common to both events is that both Isaac and the Israelites were redeemed by God. Divine providence, both in the midrashic and Biblical versions, played a dominant role in each of the redemptive moments.

As was mentioned above, the author of Midrash Vayosha, contends that the Exodus and the Akedah, historical moments which demonstrated God's loyalty toward Israel, actually predict and confirm that the Messiah will come. There are three statements toward the end of the midrash which express this contention. First, on page 52 of the translation, we read:

The sages of blessed memory said that Moses said to Israel, "You have seen all these miracles that the Holy One, Blessed be He, has done for us now. So, too, will He do to Edom at the time when He will redeem Israel.

The midrash continues with a detailed description of the events which will immediately precede the Coming of the Messiah. Edom is mentioned previously in the text. On page 35 of the translation, we read:

And know that all of the plagues that the Holy One, Blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians, so, too, will He bring upon Edom when Israel goes out from the exile in the days of the Messiah.

These two quotations demonstrate that one connection between the Exodus and the messianic age relates to divine punishment. Just as God punished Egypt for their sins by inflicting them with severe plagues, so, too, will He punish Edom for their evil acts in the future. The author contends that we can be assured that, when the Messiah comes, God will punish those who abandoned God. And we know this because He punished Egypt for her sins when He redeemed Israel from slavery. Also on page 52, we read a further indictment against evildoers, and the fate that awaits them.

And when the evildoers see that Elijah will say to Zion, "Your God is King to teach you that salvation will come upon Zion and its children, and not to the evildoers," they will become seized with fear and trepidation.

As is indicated with the plagues of Egypt and the prediction of revenge against Edom, punishment can be an inherent aspect of salvation. It isn't enough for Israel to be saved--either from Egypt or Edom. The enemies of Israel, and of Israel's God, must also suffer for redemption to be complete.

On page 55 of the midrash, we read another prophesy which suggests that the miracles of Egyptian redemption predict a future more important redemption.

The sages of blessed memory said that Moses said to Israel, "You have seen the miracles and the mighty acts that the Holy One, Blessed be He, has done for you. He will perform many more for you in the future, in this world, and in the world to come.

Again, the events of the past help us to shape and predict the miracles of the future. But, in this statement, there is a distinction made between physical and spiritual redemption. The salvific acts of the Akedah and the Exodus

were primarily physical in nature. Isaac's life was spared, and Israel was redeemed from physical servitude. Here, we are told that the miracles of the future will not only take place in this world, but in the world to come as well. Our salvation will be a spiritual one, one that transcends the physical realm and provides for us in the world to come as well.

Finally, the last line of Midrash Vayosha also connects the moments of divine redemption of the past with those yet to occur.

The One who performed miracles and wonders for us in those days will perform miracles for us in these days and at this time. And He will gather us from the four corners of the world and lead us to Jerusalem. May You build and establish it quickly in our days. Amen

As was the case with the previous quotations, this statement gives us insight into the elements of the final redemptive act. Here, we are told that Jerusalem will serve as the center of the redemption. The hope expressed here is a particularistic one. It is we who will ultimately be redeemed by God. And He will redeem us by returning us to our spiritual home, Jerusalem. The connection to the Exodus is particularly strong here. With the Exodus, we were led to our promised land. Now, with the coming of the Messiah, we will again be gathered and returned to our promised land, and to the place where God's presence is the strongest, to Jerusalem.

Each of the abovementioned statements expresses the connection that exists between these moments of salvation. The Akedah and the Exodus, moments in our history when God redeemed us, are used to predict the coming of the final redemptive act--the messianic era. Each statement provides us with insight into what will take place with the coming of the Messiah. First, we are told that the world to come is reserved for those who

were faithful to God in the past. Just as the Egyptians were punished for denying God at the Exodus, so, too, will the enemies of God suffer at the messianic age. Next, we are told that the final redemption will have both a physical and a spiritual component to it. We will benefit in this world, and in the world to come, after the Messiah comes. And, finally, the destination of the Exodus--our promised land, foreshadows the fact that we will again be gathered to our spiritual center and God's home on earth, to Jerusalem.

II. The Expanded Role of Divine Providence in Midrash Vayosha

When one compares Midrash Vayosha to the Biblical stories which it describes, it becomes evident that God has much greater influence over the course of events as described in the midrash than He has in the Biblical narratives. The author enhances God's role in these stories in order to demonstrate that these events--the Akedah, the Exodus, and the Coming of the Messiah, are all within the realm of Divine Providence, and that they are all a part of God's greater plan. A further objective of extending God's power here is to show that God was aware of, and responsible for, every aspect and detail of these three salvific events. God had control over it all.

The first expression of the author's attempt to extend God's role in these events occurs in the material on the Akedah. In the Biblical story, God appears at the very beginning of Genesis 22 and issues to Abraham the command to slaughter his son. God, then, disappears from the scene, never to reappear. In Midrash Vayosha, however, God reenters the narrative at the moment when Abraham binds Isaac and places him on the alter. At this time, the focus of the midrash shifts to heaven, where God begins a conversation with the ministering angels. On page 21 of the translation, we read:

The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to the ministering angels, "Did you see Abraham my beloved? How he declared the unity of My name in the world? If I would have listened to you when you said at the creation of the world, 'What is humankind that You will remember it?' Who would declare the unity of My name in this world as Abraham?"

This conversation provides us with a concrete reason for the Akedah. God wished to highlight His stature by proving Abraham's loyalty to Him. It is as if God needed to convince the ministering angels that Abraham was his obedient servant, thus demonstrating His authority and position in the world.

This next selection from the midrash provides God with a much greater role in the Exodus story than is evident in the Bible. It is a description of the fate of the Israelite first born males, after Pharoah decreed that they should die. On page 27 of the translation, we read:

"We will sing to God who has performed miracles and wondrous things for us. When the Egyptians decreed upon us and said, 'Throw every newly born son into the river,' and the mothers would go out into the fields, and you would cause them to sleep and they would give birth without pain. And the angels would come down from the heavens and wash and cover us, and they would dress us in colorful clothing, and place two containers in our hands--one of butter and one of honey. And when our mothers would see us washed, covered, and dressed in linen, they would give praise to the great name and say, 'Blessed is God who didn't withhold His grace from the seed of Abraham our father.'"

The first noticable and important message in this selection is the expanded redemptive role given to God. In the Biblical account, God doesn't appear in the story until Exodus chapter 3, when Moses encounters the

burning bush. In our midrash, God is intimately involved in saving the lives of the Israelite slaves from the moment of the decree to slaughter the first born of Israel. Again, we see evidence of a greater degree of divine providence than exists in the Biblical story. Another important message here is the gratitude that the Israelites show God. As we saw with the conversation between God and the angels, recognition of God's acts is just as important as the acts themselves. So here, when the Israelites gratefully pray to God, that prayer, which recognizes God's redemptive role in their lives, is crucial.

The role of Miriam, and of Moses' birth, in the midrash differs considerably from that of the Biblical text. As was stated earlier, in the Biblical account, God doesn't appear in the story until Moses is a fullgrown man, standing before the burning bush. Since God isn't mentioned in the first two chapters of the book of Exodus, it is conceivable that Moses' rescue and ascension through the Egyptian ranks was an accident-the result of the intelligent cunning of Miriam and of luck. In Midrash Vayosha, however, God directly influences the events of Moses' early life. On page 28 of the translation, we read:

The sages of blessed memory said that Moses said to Israel, "You gave praise to the Holy One, Blessed be He, for performing miracles for you, but I will give praise and thanks to the Holy One, Blessed be He, who performed miracles for me when Miriam my sister came and said to my father, "My father! I was told in a prophesy that a son would come from you who would redeem Israel from this slavery.

God informed Miriam that her brother would be God's agent in the redemption of Israel. By transforming Miriam into a prophetess, and

providing her with the necessary information and assistance to insure Moses' life, God is exerting His influence in the course of events.

Further on in this section, we see additional evidence of God's role in Moses' childhood. As Moses is lifted out of the Nile, we read on page 28:

The Holy One, Blessed be He, may He be praised forever, brought a great heatwave upon Egypt until the daughter of Pharoah went down to wash in the river.....And the Holy One, Blessed be He, caused me to find favor in her eyes so that she wouldn't kill me. And she took me and nursed me in her bosom. But the Holy One, Blessed be He, gave me knowledge so that I would not want to nurse from her bosom, from unclean milk, and she returned me to my mother, and she gave her a great reward because of me.

God caused Pharoah's daughter to arrive at the river at the moment when Moses' makeshift float drifted by. God caused her to immediately fall in love with Moses. And God even created it so that Moses' mother would nurse him. It is clear from this passage that Moses' birth, and his rescue by the Egyptian princess were all part of the greater divine plan to redeem Israel from Egyptian bondage. Every detail described derives its origin from within divine providence, and each detail is a piece in the greater puzzle of Israel's salvation.

The way that the author of Midrash Vayosha describes Moses' staff highlights the message that every detail of the Exodus was a part of God's overall plan for Israel from the beginning of time. On page 30 of the translation, we read:

I asked her what kind of tree it is, and she told me that it is a staff that the Holy One, Blessed be He, created on Shabbat eve when He created His world. And the Holy One, Blessed be He, entrusted it to the first man. And Abraham entrusted it to

Isaac, and Isaac entrusted it to Jacob, and Jacob brought it down to Egypt and entrusted it to Joseph his son.....That is the same staff that has God's name inscribed on it. And those ten plagues that the Holy One, Blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians were written on it...T'zach, A'dash, B'achav.

Although there is no extended description of the staff in the Biblical story, within the midrash, the staff is a vehicle for the author to demonstrate that the Exodus from Egypt and The Ten Plagues, were all part of God's plan for Israel from the moment the world was created. The staff indicates that all the details of the Exodus were ultimately accounted for by God, and ultimately find their origin in God's plan. The staff also demonstrates that all redemptive vehicles are programmed into the course of nature from the very beginning of time.

Another important sub-plot in Midrash Vayosha which demonstrates God's enhanced role and highlights God's authority in the story is the conflict between God and Pharaoh. The drama begins with Pharaoh questioning God's power and authority. On page 26 of the translation, as Pharaoh is learning about God for the first time, we read:

[Pharaoh] responded to My messengers saying, "There is no god like this in all the world who can perform these deeds but me alone, for I created myself and the Nile River.

With this statement, the conflict between the god of the Egyptians and the God of Israel is joined. Pharaoh exerts himself as the ultimate creator and the most powerful being in the world. God responds to this challenge by inflicting Egypt with the plagues and freeing His people, a response very similar to the Biblical account. On page 50 of the midrash, however, the

author goes well beyond the scope of the Biblical story by describing Pharoah's fate in the following manner.

At that time, Gabriel descended and placed an iron ring around Pharoah's throat and said to him, "Evildoer!! Yesterday you said, 'Who is this god that I should listen to him.' And now you say, 'God is the righteous one!'" Gabriel immediately lowered Pharoah into the depths of the sea and held him there for fifty days and tortured him so that he would know the wonders of the Holy One, Blessed be He...And Pharaoh still lives and stands at the entrance of Gehenna. And when the kings of the nations of the world enter, Pharaoh immediately makes known to them the mighty acts of the Holy One, Blessed be He. And he says to them, "Idiots of the world!! Why don't you learn anything from me? Behold, I denied the Holy One, Blessed be He, and therefore He inflicted ten plagues upon me, and He even drowned me in the sea and kept me there for fifty days. And after this, God raised me from the sea, and, in the end, I believed in Him against my will."

This powerful description of the demise of Pharaoh again serves to illustrate God's powerful role in the events of the midrash. As well, they highlight the role that punishment and judgement play in this text. The severity of Pharaoh's judgement serves two purposes. First, it expresses an important aspect of divine judgement. Those who deny God will suffer in the extreme. Pharaoh, who challenged God's authority and sovereignty, suffers eternally and, ironically, serves as God's spokesman in hell. The other important message that can be gleaned from this punishment, is that sometimes God judges harshly in order to demonstrate His powers to others. Pharaoh, and all Egypt, were forced to endure the plagues so that all would know and fear the power of God.

The author continues to use punishment and judgement as a means to highlight God's power and influence over the events of the world in his

descriptions of the messianic age. After the prophet Elijah comes to herald the Messiah, we are given a detailed description of the events that will immediately precede the Messiah's coming. On page 52 we read:

On the second day, Elijah will come and stand on the mountains of Israel and say, "Goodness has come to the world," as it is written, "Who brings tidings of goodness" (Is. 52:7). And even the evildoers will rejoice. On the third day, Elijah will come and say, "Salvation has come to the world," as it is written, "Who announces salvation" (Is. 52:7). And when the evildoers see that Elijah will say to Zion, "Your God is King to teach you that salvation will come upon Zion and its children, and not to the evildoers," they will become seized with fear and trepidation.

The midrash goes on to describe how and why the Philistines, the Edomites, the Moabites, and the Canaanites will be destroyed. Note that salvation is reserved only for those who were loyal to God. Those who challenged God's authority or threatened God's people would be destroyed, again highlighting the role of God as the ultimate arbiter of justice in the world. It is important to point out that God is not a forgiving God here. God is vengeful, and God punishes harshly those who denied Him, at any time in their history. Again, of course, this example highlights the overarching role that divine providence plays in Midrash Vayosha.

As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the primary goal of Midrash Vayosha is to demonstrate the primary role that divine providence plays in acts of redemption. This chapter serves to highlight two methods that the author used in order to express this goal. First, the author demonstrates the common elements inherent in the three salvific moments described in the midrash. Fundamental to his attempt to connect these events, is the all-important role that God plays in each of them. These three

events, and all the details inherent in them, are all part of God's overall plan for Israel and the world. The author also attempts to conclude that the first two events--the binding of Isaac and the Exodus from Egypt, actually predict the coming of the third--the messianic age.

The second method that the author used in order to highlight divine providence, is to extend the Biblical stories and enhance and embellish God's role in them. Events that, in the Bible, are devoid of God's presence, suddenly are a direct result of God's actions. Moses' birth and upbringing, and the description of Pharaoh's death, are an examples of this.

Both these methods, as well as all the other rich and wonderful material found in Midrash Vayosha, serve to highlight the role of the divine in our history, our present, and our future. The midrash is an expression of praise and gratitude for the many blessings that God has bestowed upon His people, and the many miracles that we have still yet to experience. Midrash Vayosha is a story of the moments in our history when God directly influenced our salvation. And it is a prayer of thanksgiving for those moments, and the ones yet to come.

Conclusion

In concluding this thesis, some final remarks are in order. I have enjoyed this process immensely. I have learned much about the structure and thematic flow of Midrash Vayosha. This text has a great deal to say about how human beings can strengthen their resolve in the face of danger, and, with God's help, create miracles for themselves and their people. In Midrash Vayosha, we also learn about the strength of God's will in the life of His people. Suffering and salvation, devastation and celebration--they are all part of God's plan for His people, and all humankind.

While the themes of Midrash Vayosha specifically speak to the persecution that our people faced in the early medieval period, under the rise of both Christianity and Islam, they speak to Jews of every era as well. In times of tragedy, Midrash Vayosha offers hope. When all seems lost, Midrash Vayosha reminds us of the redemptive moments of the past, and assures us that we will be saved again in the future.

Midrash Vayosha is a story of salvation. Here, we read about God's hand in the history of His people. By weaving together three moments which highlight God's role as redeemer of Israel, the author of the midrash demonstrates that God's support of Israel has been constant and will never end. We have seen His redemptive power in our lives in the past, and we will see it again at the end of days.

But Midrash Vayosha is not only a story about God. The human element in the redemptive process is described here as well. The characters who serve God--Abraham and Isaac, Moses and Jethro and Tzipora, are also vital elements in the events described. We see their development into true leaders and guardians of Israel. As they grow in their faith and courage, the events climax into full salvific moments.

The material on the Akedah focuses on the journey to Moriah and the moment when Isaac was placed on the alter. Using Satan as an antagonist, the author portrays Abraham and Isaac experiencing ambivalence and anxiety as they approach Moriah. After much contemplation, both characters overcome their ambivalence, strengthen their resolve, and approach the alter prepared to fulfill God's command. At the alter itself, the midrash attributes to Abraham and Isaac a depth of emotion lacking in the Biblical narrative. As Abraham prepares to slaughter his son, they begin to cry. Isaac asks his father about Sarah, his mother, and how she will react to his death. Abraham and Isaac seem more real and more human in the midrash than they do in the Biblical account. Here, they respond to God's call with real human anguish, fear, and sorrow. Abraham is a loving father who agonizes over the impending loss of his son. Isaac is no longer a silent child, but an insightful adult who attempts to analyze all the ramifications of the sacrifice, and helps his father to realize them and deal with them. For example, when Isaac suggests that Abraham tie him down tightly so as not to disqualify the sacrifice, he acknowledges that the fulfillment of God's word outweighs their collective desire to keep Isaac alive. When Isaac suggests that Abraham use discretion in revealing the sacrifice to Sarah, he shows that he recognizes the dynamics of his parents' relationship.

When reading the Biblical account of the Akedah, it is common to ask what the characters felt as they approached their task. Was there anger, fear, or resentment? Did Abraham really understand what he was doing? In Midrash Vayosha, these emotions are richly and powerfully expressed.

Another very important element in the material on the Akedah, is the expanded role that Divine providence plays in the story. Unlike the Biblical

narrative, God is intimately involved with the story from beginning to end. The clearest example of this is the description of the ministering angels' attempt to dissuade God from forcing Abraham to complete the sacrifice. As God boasts to the angels of Abraham's loyalty to Him, one senses that the primary motivation for the Akedah was to inflate God's ego. It isn't until the angels plead with God to stop the sacrifice that God relents.

The material describing the Exodus from Egypt is the lengthiest within the midrash. The descriptions center around Moses' early life, God's relationship to Pharaoh, the plagues in Egypt, and the crossing of the Red Sea. Here, the author's primary objective is to enhance God's role in these events. It is God who directly causes Moses to be raised by Pharaoh, and God who saves Moses from Pharaoh's anger when Pharaoh realizes the threat that Moses poses. God parts the Red Sea, and God punishes the Egyptian soldiers with death. Each and every detail of the Exodus derives its origin from God. When Uzah, the ministering angel of Egypt, attempts to dissuade God from drowning the Egyptians in the Red Sea, God provides logical and just reasons why they must die, and the ministering angels are convinced. The plagues are justified as divine revenge against Egypt, and as a foreshadow of the messianic age. All are part of God's overall plan for his people and for the world.

The last section discussing the coming of the Messiah serves as a source of comfort for the reader. We are assured by the author that the Messiah will come because of the fact that the Akedah and the Exodus have happened. God has saved us in the past, and, so too, He will save us in the future. In describing the events of the coming of the Messiah, the author weaves together two elements which will dominate the messianic age--salvation for Israel, and punishment for God's enemies. Half of the material

in this section deals in detail with the annihilation of Edom, Philistia, Canaan, and Moab. The other half describes how powerfully beautiful Israel's redemption will be. Here, as with the description of the plagues in the material discussing the Exodus, we see that redemption is only complete if Israel's enemies suffer punishment. Revenge is an inherent part of salvation.

Midrash Vayosha is an optimistic expression of praise to the God who has consistently come to the aid of His beloved people. It highlights the trials and tribulations of the people of Israel, and demonstrates the redemptive power that flows from God toward us. It is a story of a beloved people and their God overcoming the life threatening obstacles that confront them. And it is a story of the gratitude that Israel expressed to God for His constant support and salvation--in the past, the present, and, ultimately and most importantly, in the world to come.

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