

דְּכָתִיב: "הֲנִי מְקִים עָלֶיךָ רָעָה מִבֵּיתְךָ".
כִּי יֵצֵא בְּדָבָר אֶתָּה אֹמֵר: "וַיִּשְׁלַחְהוּ
מֵעֵמֶק חֶבְרוֹן" – אָמַר רַבִּי הַמְּנַא בַּר
פַּפְּא: בְּעֵצָה עֲמוּקָה שָׁל אוֹתוֹ צְדִיק
שָׁקִיב בְּחֶבְרוֹן, דְּכָתִיב: "יִדְעַ תְּדַע כִּי
גַר יִהְיֶה זֶרְעֶךָ".

"כִּי אָמַר אֵין לִי בֵן". וְלֹא הוּוּ לִיָּה בְּנִי?
וְהַכְּתִיב: "וַיִּוִּלְדוּ לְאַבְשָׁלוֹם שְׁלֹשָׁה בָנִים
וּבַת אַחַת!" אָמַר רַב יִצְחָק בַּר אֲבָדִימִי:
שְׁלֹא הָיָה לוֹ בֶן הַגִּזְיוֹן לְמַלְכוּת. רַב חֲסִידָא
אָמַר, גְּמִירִי: כָּל הַשְּׂוֹרֵף תְּבוּאָתוֹ שָׁל
חֶבְרִי – אֵינוֹ מְנַיֵחַ בֶּן לְיוֹרְשׁוֹ, וְאֵיֵהוּ
קְלִיָּה לְדִיּוֹאֵב, דְּכָתִיב: "וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל
עַבְדָּיו רְאוּ חֲלָקַת יוֹאָב אֶל יָדֵי וְלוֹ שָׁם
שְׁעָרִים לָבוֹ וְהִצִּיתוּהָ בְּאֵשׁ וַיִּצְתוּ עַבְדֵי
אַבְשָׁלוֹם אֶת הַחֲלָקָה בְּאֵשׁ".

"וְכֵן לְעֵנֵן הַטּוֹבָה, מְרִים" וכו'. מִי דְמִי?
הֵתָם חֲדָא שְׁעֵתָא, הֵכָא שְׁבַעֵה יוֹמִי!
אָמַר אַבְי – אֵימָא: וְלְעֵנֵן הַטּוֹבָה אֵינוֹ
כֵן.

אָמַר לִיָּה רַבָּא: הָא "וְכֵן לְעֵנֵן הַטּוֹבָה"
קְתַנִּי! אֶלָּא אָמַר רַבָּא, הֵכִי קְתַנִּי: וְכֵן
לְעֵנֵן הַטּוֹבָה – דְּבִאוּתָה מְדָה, וְלְעוֹלָם
מְדָה טוֹבָה מְרוּבָה מִמְּדַת פְּרוּעָנוֹת.

This is as it is written there: "Thus said the Lord: **Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house**" (II Samuel 12:11), and this prophecy was fulfilled through Absalom. **Similarly, you can say about Joseph, who was sent by his father to inquire as to the well-being of his brothers, where the verse states: "And he sent him from the valley [emek] of Hebron"** (Genesis 37:14). **Rabbi Hanina bar Pappa says: From the deep [amukka] counsel of that righteous individual who is interred in Hebron, i.e., Abraham, as it is written: "And He said unto Abram: Know that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years"** (Genesis 15:13). The journey Joseph took to his brothers set in motion the descent of the Jewish people to Egypt.

The Gemara continues its discussion of Absalom. The verse states concerning Absalom: "**For he said: I have no son to keep my name in remembrance; and he called the pillar after his own name; and it is called Absalom's monument to this day**" (II Samuel 18:18). The Gemara asks: **And did Absalom not have sons? But isn't it written: "And to Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter"** (II Samuel 14:27)? **Rav Yitzhak bar Avdimi says: He meant that he did not have a son worthy for royalty. Rav Hisha said: It is learned as a tradition: Anyone who burns the produceⁿ of another does not leave a son to inherit from him, and he, Absalom, burned the produce of Joab, as it is written: "Therefore he said to his servants: See, Joab's field is near mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire. And Absalom's servants set the field on fire"** (II Samuel 14:30).

§ The mishna teaches: **And the same is so with regard to the reward for good deeds. Miriam waited for the baby Moses for one hour at the shore of the Nile; therefore, the Jewish people delayed their travels in the desert for seven days to wait for her when she was smitten with leprosy. The Gemara asks: Are these matters comparable? There, Miriam waited one hour,ⁿ while here, the Jewish people waited for her for seven days. Abaye said: Say this with a slight change: And with regard to the repaying of good it is not so, as a person is not rewarded precisely measure for measure, as the reward may be greater than the good deed.**

Rava said to him: **But the tanna taught in the mishna: And the same is so with regard to the reward of good deeds. Rather, Rava said: This is what the mishna is teaching: And the same is so with regard to the reward of good deeds. It is rewarded with the same measure, i.e., a person is rewarded in the same manner as the good deed, but the measure of good is always greaterⁿ than the measure of punishment. Therefore, Miriam was rewarded in the same manner as, but in a greater measure than, her deed.**

NOTES

כָּל הַשְּׂוֹרֵף תְּבוּאָתוֹ – **כל השורף תבואתו** – This punishment is measure for measure. Just as one destroyed the produce of another, he is also punished by not having produce, i.e., progeny (*Iyyun Ya'akov*).

One hour – חֲדָא שְׁעֵתָא: *Tosafot* write that one hour is not be taken literally, but indicates a short amount of time.

But the measure of good is always greater – וְלְעוֹלָם מְדָה – *Tosafot* ask: Why doesn't the punishment for the sin of the spies, which included the Jewish people wandering in the wilderness for one year for each day the spies surveyed Eretz Yisrael, prove that the measure of punishment can be greater than the measure of good? In the *Yefe Toar* it is explained that the wandering in the wilderness should not be viewed as a punishment. This is because the punishment actually was that all the males of that generation would die in the wilderness. Therefore, the extended time they wandered was to their benefit, because their lives were thereby prolonged.

Say to wisdom: You are my sister – אָמַר לְחֵכְמָה אַחֹתִי אַתְּ – Rav Sherira Gaon explains that the Divine Presence is the manifestation of God's glory in the world. This glory reveals itself in various ways, and wisdom is one of them.

For behold the Lord will come in fire – כִּי הִנֵּה ה' בָּאֵשׁ יָבֵא – The *Ben Yehoyada* points out that it is clear that here, as well as in other similar passages in the Gemara, the Gemara doesn't mean to say that the Egyptians cited this verse from Isaiah, as he prophesied hundreds of years later. Rather, the verse is cited by the Sages, and the Egyptians believed that God punishes with fire, as the verse writes with regard to Sodom: "Then the Lord caused to rain upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire" (Genesis 19:24).

וַיִּתְצַב אַחֲתוֹ מִרְחוֹק – אָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק: פְּסוּק זֶה בּוֹלֵוֹ עַל שֵׁם שְׂכִינָה נֶאֱמַר: "וַיִּתְצַב" – דְּכַתִּיב: "וַיָּבֵא ה' וַיִּתְצַב" וגו'; "אַחֲתוֹ" – דְּכַתִּיב: "אָמַר לְחֵכְמָה אַחֹתִי אַתְּ"; "מִרְחוֹק" – דְּכַתִּיב: "מִרְחוֹק ה' נִרְאָה לִי"; "לְדַעַת" – דְּכַתִּיב: "בִּי אֵל דַּעוֹת ה'"; "מֵה" – דְּכַתִּיב: "מֵה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׂאֵל מֵעַמְךָ"; "יַעֲשֶׂה" – דְּכַתִּיב: "כִּי לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה ה' אֱלֹהִים דְּבָר"; "לוֹ" – דְּכַתִּיב: "וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ ה' שְׁלוֹם".

"וַיִּקַּם מֶלֶךְ חֲדָשׁ" וגו' – רַב וּשְׂמוּאֵל: חֲדָשׁ מֶלֶךְ חֲדָשׁ מִמֶּשׁ, וְחֲדָשׁ מִשְׁנֵת חֲדָשׁוֹ גִּירוֹתָיו. מֵאֵן דְּאָמַר חֲדָשׁ מִמֶּשׁ, דְּכַתִּיב: "חֲדָשׁ"; וּמֵאֵן דְּאָמַר שְׁנֵת חֲדָשׁוֹ גִּירוֹתָיו, דְּלֹא כְּתִיב "וַיִּמָּט וַיִּמְלוֹךְ". "אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַע אֶת יוֹסֵף" – דְּהוּהוּ דְּמִי כְּמֵאֵן דְּלֹא יָדַע לֵיהּ כְּלָל.

"וַיֹּאמֶר אֵל עַמּוֹ הִנֵּה עִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל" – תִּנְאָה: הוּא הַתְּחִיל בְּעֵצָה תְּחִילָה, לְפִיכֵךְ לָקָה תְּחִילָה; הוּא הַתְּחִיל בְּעֵצָה תְּחִילָה, דְּכַתִּיב: "וַיֹּאמֶר אֵל עַמּוֹ"; לְפִיכֵךְ לָקָה תְּחִילָה, כְּדַכְתִּיב: "וּבִכָּה וּבְעַמְךָ וּבְכָל עַבְדֶּיךָ".

"הִבֵּה נִתְחַכְמָה לוֹ" – "לְהֵם" מִיַּבְעֵי לֵיהּ! אָמַר רַבִּי חֲמַא בְּרַבִּי חֲנִינָא: בָּאוּ וְנַחֲכֵם לְמוֹשִׁיעֵן שְׁלַ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

בְּמָה נִדּוֹנִים? נִדּוֹנִים בָּאֵשׁ – כְּתִיב: "כִּי הִנֵּה ה' בָּאֵשׁ יָבֵא", וְכַתִּיב: "כִּי בָאֵשׁ ה' נִשְׁפָּט" וגו'! בְּחֶרֶב – כְּתִיב: "[וּבְחֶרֶב] אֶת כָּל בְּשָׂר"!

אֵלָּא בּוֹאוּ וְנִדּוֹנִים בְּמַיִם, שְׂכָבְרֵךְ נִשְׁבַּע הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא שְׂאִינוּ מִבֵּיא מִבּוֹל לְעוֹלָם, שְׁנֵאֲמַר: "כִּי מִי נָח זֹאת לִי" וגו'. וְהֵן אֵינָן יוֹדְעִין שְׁעַל כָּל הָעוֹלָם בּוֹלֵוֹ אֵינוּ מִבֵּיא, אֲבָל עַל אוֹמָה אַחַת הוּא מִבֵּיא;

With regard to Miriam's deed the verse states: "And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him" (Exodus 2:4). Rabbi Yitzhak says: This entire verse is stated in reference to the Divine Presence, i.e., each phrase alludes to the Divine Presence watching over Moses. "And his sister stood"; as it is written: "And the Lord came, and stood" (1 Samuel 3:10). "His sister"; as it is written: "Say to wisdom: You are my sister" (Proverbs 7:4).^N "Afar off"; as it is written: "From afar the Lord appeared to me" (Jeremiah 31:2). "To know"; as it is written: "For the Lord is a God of knowledge" (1 Samuel 2:3). "What"; as it is written: "What does the Lord God require of you" (Deuteronomy 10:12). "Would be done"; as it is written: "For the Lord God will do nothing" (Amos 3:7). "To him"; as it is written: "And the Lord said to him: Peace be with you" (Judges 6:23).

§ The Gemara proceeds to discuss the sojourn of the Jewish people in Egypt. The verse states: "And there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph" (Exodus 1:8). Rav and Shmuel disagree about the interpretation of this verse. One says that this means he was actually a new king, and one says that this means that his decrees were transformed as if he were a new king. The one who says that he was actually a new king holds that it is because it is written "new." And the one who says that his decrees were transformed holds that it is because it is not written: "And the previous king of Egypt died and a new king reigned." This indicates that the same king remained. According to this interpretation, the words: "Who knew not Joseph" (Exodus 1:8), mean that he was like someone who did not know him at all. Although he certainly knew Joseph and his accomplishments, he acted as if he didn't.

The next verse states: "And he said to his people: Behold, the people of the children of Israel are too many and too mighty for us" (Exodus 1:9). It was taught (*Tosefta* 4:11): He, Pharaoh, initiated the proposal. Therefore, of his people, he was stricken first. He initiated the proposal, as it is written: "And he said to his people." Therefore, he was stricken first, as it is written: "And the frogs shall come up both upon you, and upon your people, and upon all your servants" (Exodus 7:29).

The next verse states that Pharaoh said: "Come, let us deal wisely with him [*lo*], lest he multiply, and it come to pass that when there befalls us any war, he will also join our enemies, and fight against us" (Exodus 1:10). The Gemara comments: He should have said in plural: With them [*lahem*], rather than the singular: "With him." Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina, says that Pharaoh was saying: Come, let us deal wisely with regard to the savior of Israel, referring to God.

His advisors asked: With what form of death shall we judge and decree upon them? If we shall judge them with fire, perhaps we will be punished measure for measure by fire, as it is written: "For behold, the Lord will come in fire" (Isaiah 66:15),^N and it is written in the verse that follows it: "For by fire will the Lord contend" (Isaiah 66:16). Similarly, we cannot judge them with the sword, as it is written in the continuation of that verse: "And by His sword with all flesh" (Isaiah 66:16).

Rather, let us come and judge them with water, by drowning the Jewish babies. God will not punish us with water, for the Holy One, Blessed be He, already took an oath that He will not bring a flood upon the world, as it is stated: "For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth" (Isaiah 54:9). The Gemara comments: And Pharaoh's advisors did not know that He will not bring a flood upon all the world, but He may bring destruction by water upon one nation.

Job, who was silent – איוב ששתק – The commentaries discuss why Job's silence was punished so severely. Where, they ask, is the measure for measure in his harsh punishment? Some explain that his silence indicated that he agreed with Balaam, which caused the advice of Balaam to be accepted. Therefore, Job was punished with suffering that he had to accept in silence. Others, citing the *Zohar*, state that Job was not completely silent. Rather, he suggested that the Jewish people not be killed but rather should be made to suffer financial loss and physical affliction. Therefore, Job was punished in a similar manner.

And the families of scribes, etc. – ומשפחות סופרים וכו' – See Rashi, who interprets all the names mentioned there in terms of their Torah knowledge and as alluding to the fact that they were judges.

BACKGROUND

A brick mold – מלבן – This is a form in which bricks are produced. In antiquity, bricks were produced by hand. However, molds were soon developed to enable the production of bricks of uniform size. These molds were box shaped, generally rectangular, but other shapes were used according to the type of brick needed. Clay was first mixed with cut straw to reinforce it, and then the mixture was pressed into the mold and subsequently removed to dry in the sun or in an oven. In ancient times, bricks were generally small. Even the fairly large ones used at the time of the Talmud were square with sides of 3 handbreadths, 24 × 24 cm. Consequently, it was possible to hang a brick of that size on a person's neck.



Brick mold

LANGUAGE

Delicate person [istenis] – איסטניס – From the Greek ἀσθενής, *astenēs*, which means weak, without power, without energy. The Sages use it to refer to an individual who is extremely refined, either physically or spiritually.

Alternatively, there is an additional way to punish the Egyptians with water: **He does not bring a flood upon them, but they may come and fall into water, and so it says:** “And the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled toward it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea” (Exodus 14:27), indicating that the Egyptians fell into the water. **And this is what Rabbi Elazar says: What is the meaning of that which is written:** “Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods, for in that which they conspired [*zadu*] against them” (Exodus 18:11)? The phrase means: **In the pot in which they cooked, they themselves were cooked**, as they were punished through drowning, measure for measure, for drowning the Jewish babies. The Gemara asks: **From where may it be inferred that this word “zadu” is a term meaning a pot?** The Gemara answers: **As it is written:** “And Jacob simmered a pot [*vayyazed Ya'akov nazid*]” (Genesis 25:29).

Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba says that Rabbi Simai says: **Three noteworthy people were consulted by Pharaoh in that counsel where Pharaoh questioned what should be done with the Jewish people. They were Balaam, and Job, and Yitro.**

Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba teaches what occurred to each of them: **Balaam, who advised Pharaoh to kill all sons born to the Jewish people, was punished by being killed in the war with Midian** (see Numbers 31:8). **Job, who was silentⁿ and neither advised nor protested, was punished by suffering**, as detailed in the eponymous book in the Bible. **Yitro, who ran away as a sign of protest, merited that some of his children's children sat in the Sanhedrin in the Chamber of Hewn Stone, as it is stated:** “And the families of scribesⁿ who dwelt at Jabez, Tirathites, Shimeathites, and Sucathites, these were the Kenites who descended from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab” (1 Chronicles 2:55). **And it is written:** “The children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law” (Judges 1:16). This teaches that the Kenites, descendants of Yitro, the father-in-law of Moses, dwelt at Jabez [Yabetz], referring to the place where the Jewish people go for advice [*eitza*], i.e., the Chamber of Hewn Stone.

The verse states: “Come, let us deal wisely with him, lest he multiply, and it come to pass that when there befalls us any war, he will also join our enemies, and fight against us, and get him up out of the land” (Exodus 1:10). The Gemara comments: **He should have said: And get us up**, as Pharaoh's fear was that the Jewish people would join the enemies of Egypt and drive Pharaoh and the Egyptians out of Egypt. **Rabbi Abba bar Kahana says:** By stating this, **Pharaoh is like a person who curses himself but applies his curse to another.**

The next verse states: “Therefore they did set over him taskmasters in order to afflict him with their burdens” (Exodus 1:11). The Gemara comments: **It should have stated: Over them**, in the plural. **The school of Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, taught:** This teaches that at first they brought a brick mold⁸ and they hung it on the neck of Pharaoh to create the appearance that he was also participating in the labor. **And with regard to each and every Jew who said to the Egyptians: I am a delicate person [istenis]⁴ and I cannot participate in the labor, they said to him: Are you at all more of a delicate person than Pharaoh, and he is participating.** Therefore, the verse states: “They did set over him,” as they first placed the burden on Pharaoh as an artifice to enslave the Jewish people.

The term “Taskmasters [*sarei missim*]” is formed from the term: **A matter that compels [shemesim]** the manufacture of bricks, as the Jewish people were forced into labor when these taskmasters were assigned to them.

אי נמו, הוא אינו מביא, אבל הן באין ונפלין בתוכו, וכן הוא אומר: “ומצרים נסים לקראתו.” והיינו דאמר רבי אלעזר, מאי דכתיב: “כי בדבר אשר ודו עליהם?” בקדירה שבישלו בה נתבשלו. מאי משמע דהאי “ודו” לישנא דקדירה הוא? דכתיב: “ויוד יעקב נזיד”.

אמר רבי חייא בר אבא אמר רבי סימאי, שלשה היו באותה עצה: בלעם, ואיוב, ויתרו.

בלעם שייעץ – נהרג; איוב ששתק – נידון בסיפורין; יתרו שברח – וכו מבני בניו שישבו בלשכת הגזית, שנאמר: “ומשפחות סופרים יושבי יעבץ תרעתים שמעתים שוכתים המה הקנים הבאים מחמת אבי בית רכב,” וכותיב: “ובני קיני חתן משה” וגו’.

“ונלחם בנו ועלה מן הארץ” – “ועלינו” מיבעי ליה! אמר רבי אבא בר כהנא: באדם שמקלל את עצמו ותולה קללתו בחבירו.

“וישימו עליו שרי מסים” – “עליהם” מיבעי ליה! תנא דבי רבי אלעזר ברבי שמעון: מלמד, שהביאו מלבן ותלו לו לפרעה בצוארו, וכל אחד ואחד מ ישראל שאמר להם איסטניס אני, אמרו לו: כלום איסטניס אתה יותר מפרעה?

“שרי מסים” – דבר שמשים (לכנים).

Pithom and Raamses – פיתום ורעמסס: The Maharsha writes that the Sages had a tradition that Pithom and Raamses were actually the same place, and therefore the separate names were clearly meant to teach another matter. Others explain that there would be no reason to state the names of these cities in the verse, as it would have been sufficient to simply say: “Storage cities.” Therefore, the fact that the names are given is grounds for exegesis (*Iyyun Ya'akov*).

“למען ענותו בסבלותם” – [ענותם] מיבעי ליה! למען ענותו לפרעה בסבלותם דישראל.

“ויבן ערי מסכנות לפרעה” – רב ושמואל חד אמר: שמסכנות את בעליהן, וחד אמר: שממסכנות את בעליהן, דאמר מר: כל העוסק בבנין מתמסכן.

“את פיתום ואת רעמסס” – רב ושמואל חד אמר: פיתום שמה, ולמה נקרא שמה רעמסס? שראשון ראשון מתרוסס; וחד אמר: רעמסס שמה, ולמה נקרא שמה פיתום? שראשון ראשון פיתהום בולעו.

“וכאשר יענו אותו בן ירבה וכן יפרוץ” – “בן רבו וכן פרוץ” מיבעי ליה! אמר ריש לקיש, רוח הקודש מבשרתן: “בן ירבה וכן יפרוץ.” ויקצו מפני בני ישראל – מלמד שהיו דומין בעיניהם כקוצים.

“ויעבדו מצרים את בני ישראל”

The verse continues: “In order to afflict him with their burdens” (Exodus 1:11). The Gemara comments: It should have stated: “In order to afflict them,” in the plural. Rather, the intention is, as mentioned previously, in order to afflict Pharaoh, with the result of causing the burdens of the Jewish people.

The verse concludes: “And they built for Pharaoh storage cities [miskanot], Pithom and Raamses” (Exodus 1:11). Rav and Shmuel disagree as to the precise interpretation of the word miskanot. One says that they are called this because they were the type of structures that endanger [mesakenot] their owners, as it is dangerous to work in cities with tall buildings. And one says that they are called this because this is the type of property that impoverishes [memaskenot] their owners, as the Master said: All who engage in construction become poor.

The verse states that the names of the cities they built were “Pithom and Raamses” (Exodus 1:11).^N Rav and Shmuel disagree as to the precise interpretation of this verse, both assuming that only one city was built, which had primary and secondary names. One says that Pithom was its real name, and why was it called Raamses? It is an appellation indicating that as the buildings were constructed they collapsed [mitroses] one by one and needed to be rebuilt. And one says that Raamses was its real name, and why was it called Pithom? Because the opening of the abyss [pi tehom] swallowed each building they constructed one by one, and it sunk into the ground.

The next verse states: “But the more they afflicted him, the more he would multiply and the more he would spread about” (Exodus 1:12). The Gemara comments: It should have stated: The more they multiplied and the more they spread about, in the past tense. Reish Lakish says: Divine inspiration proclaimed to the Egyptians: As long as this nation is afflicted, the more he will multiply and the more he will spread about. As the verse states: “And they became disgusted [vayyakutz] due to the children of Israel.” The Gemara explains: This teaches that the Jewish people appeared in their eyes like thorns [kotzim].

The next verse states: “And the Egyptians made the children of Israel work

Perek I

Daf 11 Amud b

NOTES

Initially with mortar and bricks, etc. – בתחילה בחומר – ובלבנים וכו': Initially the Egyptians instructed the Jews to work with mortar and bricks to fortify the cities, which is labor incumbent on all citizens of a country. Afterward, they forced them to work in the fields as well, and then they commanded them to perform all the work that had to be done to provide for the needs of the Egyptians (Maharsha).

בפרך” – רבי אלעזר אמר: בפה רך, רבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר: בפריכה.

“וימרו את חיהם בעבדה קשה בחומר ובלבנים” וגו’ – אמר רבא: בתחילה בחומר ובלבנים, ולבסוף “ובכל עבודה בשדה.”

with rigor [befarekh]” (Exodus 1:13). Rabbi Elazar says: The word *befarekh* is a conjugation of the words: With a soft mouth [bifeh rakh], as the Egyptians enticed the Jewish people into slavery, gradually subjugating them until they had lost their freedom completely. Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani says: The word *befarekh* should be understood as: With crushing [bifrikha], as the Egyptians subjugated Israel with backbreaking labor.

The next verse states: “And they made their lives bitter through hard service, with mortar and brick, and with every laborious service in the field” (Exodus 1:14). Rava says: The verse mentions specifically mortar and brick and then all forms of labor, as initially the Egyptians had them work with mortar and bricks,^N and ultimately they subjugated them “and with every laborious service in the field.”

מלאכת אנשים לנשים וכו' – Men's work to women, etc. Even though men's work generally requires more physical effort, women's work requires other character traits such as patience and the ability to pay greater attention to detail. This causes suffering for one not accustomed to this kind of work (*Ben Yehoyada*).

In the merit of the righteous women – בשכר נשים – צדקניות: The Maharsha explains that the primary meaning of this statement relates to the fact that the women remained faithful to their husbands and even encouraged them to engage in sexual intercourse, despite their dire circumstances. In this way they helped keep the Jewish people alive.

BACKGROUND

Small fish – דגים קטנים – Due to its size and slow flow, which leave deposits of organic silt, the Nile River serves as a fertile environment for fish. Moreover, in some seasons the abundance of food in the river attracts large numbers of fish from the sea. During these seasons it is not necessary to use sophisticated equipment to catch fish, as even simple vessels suffice.

The verse concludes: “In all their service, wherein they made them serve with rigor” (Exodus 1:14). Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani says that Rabbi Yonatan says: The meaning of *befarekh* is that the Egyptians would exchange the responsibilities of men and women, giving men's work to womenⁿ and women's work to men, requiring everyone to do work to which they were unaccustomed. And even according to the one who says that there, in the previous verse, *bifarekh* indicates that the Egyptians enslaved the Jews with a soft mouth, here, in this verse, which describes the physical hardship of the labor, the word *befarekh* certainly means with crushing labor.

§ Rav Avira taught: In the merit of the righteous womenⁿ that were in that generation, the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt. He tells of their righteous actions: At the time when these women would go to the river to draw water, the Holy One, Blessed be He, would materialize for them small fish⁸ that would enter into their pitchers, and they would therefore draw pitchers that were half filled with water and half filled with fish. And they would then come and place two pots on the fire, one pot of hot water for washing their husbands and one pot of fish with which to feed them.

And they would then take what they prepared to their husbands, to the field, and would bathe their husbands and anoint them with oil and feed them the fish and give them to drink and bond with them in sexual intercourse between the sheepfolds, i.e., between the borders and fences of the fields, as it is stated: “When you lie among the sheepfolds, the wings of the dove are covered with silver, and her pinions with the shimmer of gold” (Psalms 68:14), which is interpreted to mean that as a reward for “when you lie among the sheepfolds,” the Jewish people merited to receive the plunder of Egypt, as it is stated in the continuation of the verse, as a reference to the Jewish people: “The wings of the dove are covered with silver, and her pinions with the shimmer of gold” (Psalms 68:14).

And when these women would become pregnant, they would come back to their homes, and when the time for them to give birth would arrive they would go and give birth in the field under the apple tree, as it is stated: “Under the apple tree I awakened you; there your mother was in travail with you; there was she in travail and brought you forth” (Song of Songs 8:5).

And the Holy One, Blessed be He, would send from the heavens above an angel who would clean and prepare the newborns, just as a midwife prepares the newborn, as it is stated: “And as for your birth, on the day you were born, your navel was not cut nor were you washed with water for cleansing; you were not salted at all, nor swaddled at all” (Ezekiel 16:4). This indicates that there were no midwives to take care of the Jews born in Egypt. And then, the angel would gather for them two round stones from the field and the babies would nurse from that which would flow out of them. One of the stones flowed with oil and one of the stones flowed with honey, as it is stated: “And He would suckle them with honey from a crag and oil from a flinty rock” (Deuteronomy 32:13).

And once the Egyptians would notice them, realizing that they were Jewish babies, they would come to kill them. But a miracle would occur for them and they would be absorbed by the earth. And the Egyptians would then bring oxen and would plow upon them, as it is stated: “The plowers plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows” (Psalms 129:3). After the Egyptians would leave, the babies would emerge and exit the ground like grass of the field, as it is stated: “I caused you to increase even as the growth of the field” (Ezekiel 16:7).

“את כל עבודתם אשר עבדו בהם בפרך” – אמר רבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר רבי יונתן: שהיו מחליפין מלאכת אנשים לנשים ומלאכת נשים לאנשים. ולמאן דאמר נמי היתם בפה רך, הלא ודאי בפרכה.

דרש רב עוריא: בשכר נשים צדקניות שהיו באותו הדור – נגאלו ישראל ממצרים. בשעה שהולכות לשאוב מים, הקדוש ברוך הוא מזמן להם דגים קטנים בכדי להן ושואבות מתצה מים ומחצה דגים. ובאות ושופות שתי קדירות אחת של חמין ואחת של דגים,

ומוליכות אצל בעליהן לשדה, ומרחיצות אותן וסכות אותן ומאכילות אותן ומשקות אותן ונוקקות להן בין שפתים, שנאמר: “אם תשכבון בין שפתים” וגו'. בשכר “תשכבון בין שפתים” זכו ישראל לביות מצרים, שנאמר: “כנפי יונה נחפה בכסף ואברותיה בירקרק חרוץ”.

וכיון שמתעברות באות לבתיהם; וכיון שמגיע זמן מולדיהן, הולכות ויולדות בשדה תחת התפוח, שנאמר: “תחת התפוח עוררתך” וגו'.

והקדוש ברוך הוא שולח משמי מרום מי שמוקיר ומשפיר אותן, כחיה זו שמשפיר את הילד, שנאמר: “ומולדותיך ביום הולדת אותך לא כרת שרך ובמים לא רחצת למשעי” וגו'. ומלקט להן שני עגולין אחד של שמן ואחד של דבש, שנאמר: “וינקוהו דבש מפלע ושמן” וגו'.

וכיון שמפריז בהן מצרים באין להרגן, ונעשה להם גם ובלעין בקרקע. ומביאין שוורים וחורשין על גבן, שנאמר: “על גבי חרשו חרשים” וגו'. לאחר שהולכין היו מבצבצין ויוצאין כעשב השדה, שנאמר: “רבבה בצמח השדה נתתיך”.

Her thighs become as cold as stones – יְרֻכֹתֶיהָ מִצְטַנְנֹת – כְּאֲבָנִים: It is possible that this expression refers to the contraction and hardening of the stomach muscles and the muscles near them during the birth process, which cause these muscles to become like stone. It could be that this contraction and hardening results in a feeling of coldness in other parts of the body as well.

One thigh here – יָרֵךְ מִכָּאן: The way in which a potter sits while at his potter's wheel resembles the birth process in that his feet are spread out on both sides of the wheel, where the lump of clay usually sits. This is done both to enable him to rotate the wheel and easily reach every side of the instrument with his hand.



Potter creating a vessel with a pottery wheel

וְכִינּוֹן שְׁמֵתִגְדֹּלֵן בְּאֵין עֲדָרִים עֲדָרִים לְבִתְיָהּ, שְׁנֵאמַר: "וְתִרְבִּי וְתִגְדְּלִי וְתִבְאִי בְעֵדֵי עֲדָרִים." אֵל תִּקְרִי "בְעֵדֵי עֲדָרִים" אֲלֵא "בְעֵדֵי עֲדָרִים".

וּבְשִׁנְגָלָה הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל הַיָּם, הֵם הַכִּירוּהוּ תַחֲלָה, שְׁנֵאמַר: "זֶה אֱלֹהֵי וְאֵנֹהוּ".

"וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לַמִּיֻּלְדוֹת הָעִבְרִיּוֹת" וְגו' – רַב וְשְׁמוּאֵל. חָד אָמַר: אִשָּׁה וּבִתָּהּ, וְחָד אָמַר: כִּלְהָ וְחֻמוֹתָהּ. מֵאֵן דְּאָמַר אִשָּׁה וּבִתָּהּ, יוֹכֵבֵד וּמְרִים; וּמֵאֵן דְּאָמַר כִּלְהָ וְחֻמוֹתָהּ, יוֹכֵבֵד וְאֵלִישֶׁבַע.

תְּנִיא כְּמֵאֵן דְּאָמַר אִשָּׁה וּבִתָּהּ, דְּתִנְיָא: "שִׁפְרָה" – זוּ יוֹכֵבֵד. וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמָהּ שִׁפְרָה? שְׁמֵשֶׁפֶרֶת אֶת הַזָּוֵל; דְּבַר אַחֵר: "שִׁפְרָה" – שְׁפָרוּ וְרַבּוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיָמֶיהָ.

"פּוּעָה" – זוּ מְרִים. וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמָהּ פּוּעָה? שְׁהֵיִתָּהּ פּוּעָה וּמוֹצִיָּאָה אֶת הַזָּוֵל; דְּבַר אַחֵר: "פּוּעָה" – שְׁהֵיִתָּהּ פּוּעָה בְּרוּחַ הַקְּדוֹשׁ, וְאוֹמֶרֶת: עֲתִידָה אִמִּי שְׁתֵּלֵד בֵּן שְׁמוּשִׁיעַ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל.

"וַיֹּאמֶר בְּיַלְדֵּךְ אֶת הָעִבְרִיּוֹת" וְגו'. מֵאֵן "אֲבָנִים"? אָמַר רַבִּי חֲנַן: סִימֵן גְּדוֹל מְסַר לָהֶן. אָמַר לָהֶן: בְּשַׁעַה שְׁפוּרַעַת לִילֵד, יְרֻכֹתֶיהָ מִצְטַנְנֹת כְּאֲבָנִים.

וְאֵית דְּאָמַר, כְּדָכְתִּיב: "וְאָרַד בֵּית הַיּוֹצֵר וְהִנֵּה הוּא עוֹשֶׂה מְלֹאכָה עַל הָאֲבָנִים," מֵה יוֹצֵר זֶה – יָרֵךְ מִכָּאן וְיָרֵךְ מִכָּאן וְסָדֵן בְּאֲמָצַע; אִף אִשָּׁה – יָרֵךְ מִכָּאן וְיָרֵךְ מִכָּאן וְהוֹלֵד בְּאֲמָצַע.

"אִם בֵּן הוּא וְהִמְתֵּן אוֹתוֹ" – אָמַר רַבִּי תַנְיָנָא, סִימֵן גְּדוֹל מְסַר לָהֶן: בֵּן – פָּנָיו לְמַטָּה; בַּת – פָּנָיהָ לְמַעְלָה.

And once the babies would grow, they would come like many flocks of sheep to their homes, as it is stated in the continuation of the verse: "And you did increase and grow up and you came with excellent beauty [ba'adi adayim]" (Ezekiel 16:7). Do not read the verse as: "Ba'adi adayim," "with excellent beauty." Rather, read it as: Be'edrei adarim, meaning: As many flocks.

And when the Holy One, Blessed be He, revealed Himself at the Red Sea, these children recognized Him first, as it is stated: "This is my God, and I will glorify Him" (Exodus 15:2). They recognized Him from the previous time that He revealed Himself to them in their infancy, enabling them to say: "This is my God."

§ The verse states: "And the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah" (Exodus 1:15). Rav and Shmuel disagree as to the proper interpretation of this verse. One says that these midwives were a woman and her daughter, and one says that they were a daughter-in-law and her mother-in-law. According to the one who says that they were a woman and her daughter, the women were Jochebed, the mother of Moses and Aaron, and her daughter, Miriam. And according to the one who says that they were a daughter-in-law and her mother-in-law, the verse is referring to Jochebed and her daughter-in-law Elisheba, the wife of Aaron.

It is taught in a baraita according to the one who says that they were a woman and her daughter, because it is taught in a baraita: With regard to Shiphrah, who is referred to in the verse, this is really a reference to Jochebed. And why was she called Shiphrah? Because she would prepare [mishapperet] the newborn. Alternatively, she is referred to as Shiphrah because the Jewish people increased and multiplied [shepparu verabbu] in her days, due to her assistance.

The baraita continues: With regard to Puah, who is referred to in the verse, this is really a reference to Miriam. And why was she called Puah? Because she would make a comforting sound [po'a] as she would remove the child from the womb of the mother. Alternatively, the word Puah is related to one of the verbs that describe speaking, as she would speak [po'a] through divine inspiration and say: In the future, my mother will give birth to a son who will save the Jewish people.

The next verse relates the instructions of Pharaoh to the midwives: "And he said: When you deliver the Hebrew women, and you look upon the stones [ovnayim], if it be a son, then you shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live" (Exodus 1:16). The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of "stones"? Rabbi Hanan says: Pharaoh transmitted a great sign to them. He said to them: At the time when a woman crouches to give birth, her thighs become as cold as stones,^b and, therefore, this shall be for you a sign that the woman is about to give birth.

And there are those who say an alternative explanation for ovnayim: As it is written: "So I went down to the potter's shop, and behold, he was at his work on the wheels [ovnayim]" (Jeremiah 18:3). Just as this potter sits so that one thigh is here^b and one thigh is there and the block upon which he works is in the middle, so too, a woman giving birth also has one thigh here and one thigh there and the newborn is in the middle.

The verse continues: "If it be a son, then you shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live" (Exodus 1:16). Rabbi Hanina says: Pharaoh transmitted to them a great sign to enable them to know the gender of the infant from the beginning of the birth process: A boy is born with his face downward; a girl is born with her face upward. Pharaoh provided them with this sign so that they could kill the boys secretly even before the mother realized what was happening.

”וַתִּירָאן הַמְּלִידוֹת אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים
וְלֹא עָשׂוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהִים” וגו’ –
”לָהֶן” מִיִּבְעֵי לִיהֵא אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹסֵי בְּרַבִּי
חֲנִינָא: מַלְמַד, שֶׁתִּבְעֶן לְדַבֵּר עִבְרָה
וְלֹא תִתְבָּעוּ.

”וַתְּחַיֶּינָן אֶת הַיְלָדִים” – תִּנְא: לֹא
דַּיִן שְׁלֹא הִמִּיתוּ אוֹתָן, אֲלֵא שְׁהִי
מִסְפִּיקוֹת לָהֶם מִים וּמְזוֹן.

”וַתֹּאמְרֵן הַמְּלִידוֹת אֶל פַּרְעֹה כִּי לֹא
כְּנָשִׁים” וגו’. מֵאֵי ”חַיּוֹת”? אֵילִמָּא
חַיּוֹת מִמֶּשׁ, אִטּוּ חַיָּה מִי לֹא צְרִיכָה
חַיָּה אַחֲרֵיתֵי לְאוֹלוֹדָה?

אֲלֵא, אָמְרוּ לוֹ: אוֹמְהָ זוֹ בְּחַיָּה
נִמְשָׁלָה, יְהוּדָה – גּוֹר אַרְיָה; דָּן – יְהִי
דָּן נַחֲשׁ; נַפְתָּלִי – ”אֵילָה שְׁלֹחָה”;
יִשָּׁשְׁכָר – ”חֲמוֹר גָּרִם”; יוֹסֵף – ”בְּכוֹר
שׁוֹר”; בְּנֵימִין – ”אָב יִטְרָף”.

דְּכַתִּיב בֵּיהּ – כְּתִיב בֵּיהּ, וְדָלָא כְּתִיב
בֵּיהּ – כְּתִיב בֵּיהּ: ”מָה אֲמַךְ לְבִיא בֵּין
אַרְיוֹת רְבָצָה” וגו’.

”וַיְהִי כִּי יִרְאוּ הַמְּלִידוֹת אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים
וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם בָּתִּים” – רַב וּשְׁמוּאֵל, חָד
אָמְרוּ: בְּתֵי כְּהוֹנֵה וְלוֹיָהּ, וְחָד אָמְרוּ:
בְּתֵי מַלְכוּת. מֵאֵן דְּאָמַר בְּתֵי כְּהוֹנֵה
וְלוֹיָהּ, אֲהֲרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה; וּמֵאֵן דְּאָמַר
בְּתֵי מַלְכוּת, דָּוִד נְמִי מִמְרִים קְאָתֵי,
דְּכַתִּיב: ”וַתִּמַּת עֲזוּבָה”, אֲשֶׁת כְּלָב,
”וַיִּקַּח לוֹ כְּלָב אֶת אֶפְרַת וַתֵּלֶד לוֹ
אֶת חוּר”, וְכַתִּיב: ”וַדּוּד בֶּן אִישׁ
אֶפְרַתִּי” וגו’.

The next verse states: “**But they feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt spoke about them [aleihen]**, but they kept the male children alive” (Exodus 1:17). The Gemara comments: **It should have stated:** “Spoke to them [lahen].” Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Hanina, says: This teaches that Pharaoh proposed to them to engage in a sinful act, i.e., sexual intercourse, with him, **but they did not accept** his overtures. The word *aleihen* is often used in reference to sexual intercourse, for example: “And brought her to him; and he consorted with her [eileha]” (Genesis 29:23), and that is its connotation here as well.

The verse concludes: “**But they kept the male children alive**” (Exodus 1:17). A Sage teaches: It is **not only that they did not kill** the children as Pharaoh had commanded them, **but that they would even provide for them water and food**, as the phrase “But they kept the male children alive” indicates.

After being questioned by Pharaoh concerning their failure to obey his command, the midwives responded, as it is written: “**And the midwives said to Pharaoh: Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women**, for they are lively [*hayot*], and are delivered before the midwife comes to them” (Exodus 1:19). The Gemara asks: **What is the meaning of “hayot”? If we say that the Hebrew women are like hayot, meaning actual midwives for themselves, and therefore they do not need assistance from others, is that to say that a midwife does not need the assistance of another midwife in order to help her give birth?**

Rather, the midwives said to Pharaoh: **This nation is compared to an animal [hayya]**, and animals give birth without a midwife. For example, with regard to **Judah** it is written: “Judah is a **lion’s whelp**” (Genesis 49:9); with regard to **Dan** it is written: “**Dan shall be a serpent in the way**” (Genesis 49:17); with regard to **Naphtali** it is written: “**A hind let loose**” (Genesis 49:21); with regard to **Issachar** it is written: “**A large-boned donkey**” (Genesis 49:14); with regard to **Joseph** it is written: “**His first bullock**” (Deuteronomy 33:17); with regard to **Benjamin** it is written: “**A ravenous wolf**” (Genesis 49:27).

The Gemara comments: Concerning those individuals **where a comparison to an animal is written with regard to him**, it is already written with regard to him. **And concerning those where no specific metaphor comparing them to an animal is written with regard to him explicitly**, in any case a general comparison is written about the Jewish people: “**How your mother was a lioness; among lions she crouched**, in the midst of the young lions she reared her whelps” (Ezekiel 19:2), indicating that all the Jewish people are compared to animals.

The verse relates the midwives’ reward: “**And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that He made them houses**” (Exodus 1:21). Rav and Shmuel disagree as to the precise interpretation of these houses: **One says that God made the houses of the priesthood and the Levites descend from the midwives, and one says that God made the houses of royalty descend from them. The one who says that it is referring to the houses of the priesthood and the Levites is referring to Aaron and Moses, who were sons of Jochebed. And the one who says that it is referring to houses of royalty is referring to David, who also comes from Miriam, as it is written: “And Azubah,” the wife of Caleb, “died, and Caleb took to him Ephrath, who bore him Hur”** (1 Chronicles 2:19) and, as will be explained further, Ephrath is Miriam. **And it is written: “David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah”** (1 Samuel 17:12). Therefore, he was a descendant of Miriam.

”וְכֵלֵב בֶּן חֲצִרוֹן הוֹלִיד אֶת עֲזוּבָה אִשָּׁה וְאֶת
יְרִיעוֹת. וְאֵלֶּה בְנֵיהָ יֵשֶׁר וְשׁוֹבָב וְאַרְדּוֹן.”
בֶּן חֲצִרוֹן? בֶּן יִפְנֶה הוּא! בֶּן שְׁפָנָה מֵעֲצַת
מְרַגְלִים.

וְאֶפְתִּי בֶּן קִנָּז הוּא, דְּכָתִיב: ”וַיִּלְכְּדָה עֲתַנְיָאֵל
בֶּן קִנָּז אֶחָיו כְּלֵב!” אָמַר רַבָּא: חוֹרְגוּ דְקִנָּז
הוּא.

The Gemara discusses the family of Caleb: In Chronicles it says: “And Caleb, the son of Hezron, begot children of Azubah his wife, and of Jerioth, and these were her sons: Jeshar, and Shobab, and Ardon” (1 Chronicles 2:18). The Gemara asks: Was Caleb actually the **son of Hezron**? Wasn't he the **son of Jephunneh**, as the verse states in Numbers 13:6? The Gemara answers: He was the son of Hezron, but he is called “son of Jephunneh” as an appellation indicating that he was a **son who turned away** [*sheppana*] **from the counsel of the spies**.

The Gemara asks: **But** it is still difficult. Hezron could not be his father, as Caleb was the **son of Kenaz**, as it is written: “And Othniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it” (Judges 1:13). This would mean that Caleb was also a son of Kenaz. **Rava said: Caleb was the stepson of Kenaz**, as he and Othniel shared a mother but had different fathers.