

The argument sketch: Abraham, Moses and the meaning of life

Source Sheet by Michael Kay

1. **Genesis 22**

(1) Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, “Abraham,” and he answered, “Here I am.” (2) And He said, “Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you.” (3) So early next morning, Abraham saddled his ass and took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and he set out for the place of which God had told him.

2. **The Koren Yom Kippur Mahzor (Minhag Anglia, the Ostro Edition), commentary by Jonathan Sacks (2012), p.133-4**

ב.

[Piyut/poem:]

Like clay in the potter's hands
expanded or contracted at will

so are we in Your hand, Guardian of loving-kindness;
look to the covenant, and disregard our inclination.

[Commentary:]

This poem is a daring plea for the defence: Forgive us for we are what you made us. We sin because You gave us both the ability and the inclination. Had you made us like angels we would have been like angels.

Based on ideas in Isaiah (64:7) and Jeremiah (18:6), the poem belongs to a radical tradition, in prophetic and rabbinic literature, of audacity in prayer. One example is Moses' prayer to God to forgive the Israelites for the sin of the golden calf on the grounds that they would not have had the gold, had God not told them to take it with them when they left Egypt (Berakhot 32a). So too here: we are God's creations. Let not the Potter blame the pot He has made.

3. **Exodus 4**

(10) But Moses said to the LORD, “Please, O Lord, I have never been a man of words, either in times past or now that You have spoken to Your servant; I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.” (11) And the LORD said to him, “Who gives man speech? Who makes him dumb or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? (12) Now go, and I will be with you as you speak and will instruct you what to say.” (13) But he said, “Please, O Lord, make someone else Your agent.” (14) The LORD became angry with Moses, and He said, “There is your brother Aaron the Levite. He, I know, speaks readily. Even now he is setting out to meet you, and he will be happy to see you. (15) You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth—I will be with you and with him as you speak, and tell both of you what to do...”

[Full source: appendix n.15, p.11-16]

4. **Exodus 32**

(7) The LORD spoke to Moses, “Hurry down, for your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt, have acted basely. (8) They have been quick to turn aside from the way that I enjoined upon them. They have made themselves a molten calf and bowed low to it and sacrificed to it, saying: ‘This is your god, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt!’” (9) The LORD further said to Moses, “I see that this is a stiffnecked people. (10) Now, let Me be, that My anger may blaze forth against them and that I may destroy them, and make of you a great nation.” (11) **But Moses implored the LORD his God, saying, “Let not Your anger, O Lord, blaze forth against Your people, whom You delivered from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand. (12) Let not the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that He delivered them, only to kill them off in the mountains and annihilate them from the face of the earth.’ Turn from Your blazing anger, and renounce the plan to punish Your people. (13) Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, how You swore to them by Your Self and said to them: I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and I will give to your offspring this whole land of which I spoke, to possess forever.” (14) And the LORD renounced the punishment He had planned to bring upon His people.**

5. **Numbers 14**

(11) And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will this people spurn Me, and how long will they have no faith in Me despite all the signs that I have performed in their midst? (12) I will strike them with pestilence and disown them, and I will make of you a nation far more numerous than they!” (13) **But Moses said to the LORD, “When the Egyptians, from whose midst You brought up this people in Your might, hear the news, (14) they will tell it to the inhabitants of that land. Now they have heard that You, O LORD, are in the midst of this people; that You, O LORD, appear in plain sight when Your**

cloud rests over them and when You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. (15) **If then You slay this people to a man, the nations who have heard Your fame will say,** (16) **‘It must be because the LORD was powerless to bring that people into the land He had promised them on oath that He slaughtered them in the wilderness.’** (17) Therefore, I pray, let my Lord’s forbearance be great, as You have declared, saying, (18) **‘The LORD! slow to anger and abounding in kindness; forgiving iniquity and transgression; yet not remitting all punishment, but visiting the iniquity of fathers upon children, upon the third and fourth generations.’** (19) Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to Your great kindness, as You have forgiven this people ever since Egypt.” (20) And the LORD said, “I pardon, as you have asked.”

6. **Berakhot 32a**

And Rabbi Elazar said: Moses spoke impertinently toward God on High, as it is stated in the verse following the sin of those who murmured against God in the desert: **“And Moses prayed to the Lord and the fire subsided”** (Numbers 11:2), and this verse is interpreted homiletically: **Do not read to [el] the Lord,** but rather **onto [al] the Lord,** which indicates that he spoke impertinently.

[...]

The Sages of **the school of Rabbi Yannai said that Moses said the following before the Holy One, Blessed be He,** to atone for Israel after the sin of the Golden Calf: **Master of the Universe, because of the gold and silver that you lavished upon Israel during the exodus from Egypt until they said enough [dai];** it was this wealth **that caused Israel to make the Golden Calf.** Establishing a general moral principle, the Sages **the school of Rabbi Yannai said: A lion does not roar standing over a basket of straw** from which he derives no pleasure, **but he roars standing over a basket of meat,** as he only roars when satiated.

[...]

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said that Rabbi Yonatan said: From where in the Torah is it derived

that **the Holy One, Blessed be He, ultimately conceded to Moses** that the reason for the sin of the Golden Calf was indeed the riches lavished upon Israel? **As it is stated: “And I gave them an abundance of silver and gold, which they used for the Ba’al”** (Hosea 2:10).

[...]

And Rava said: Moses stood in prayer **until he nullified His vow**, as the term *vayḥal* alludes to nullification of an oath. [...] **And** with regard to vows, **the Master said: He** who vowed **cannot nullify** his vow, **but others**, the court, **can nullify** his vow **for him**. Here, it is as if Moses nullified the Lord’s vow to destroy Israel.

[...]

The Gemara moves to a discussion of additional prayers offered by Moses. Moses said that if God fails to bring the Jewish people into Eretz Yisrael, the nations of the world will say: **“The Lord did not have the ability [yekholet] to bring this people into the land which He swore to them, and He killed them in the desert”** (Numbers 14:16). The Gemara examines this verse closely: The verse should not have utilized the term *yekholet*, an abstract feminine noun, but rather, **it should have said: “The Lord was not able [yakhol],”** a masculine verb. **Rabbi Elazar said: Moses** phrased it that way because he **said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, now the nations of the world will say that His strength weakened like a female and He is unable to rescue** the nation of Israel. **The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses: And did the nations of the world not already see the miracles and the mighty acts that I performed on behalf of Israel at the Red Sea? Moses said before Him: Master of the Universe, they can still say: The Lord can stand up to a single king like Pharaoh and defeat him, but He is unable to stand up to the thirty-one kings in the land of Canaan. Rabbi Yoḥanan said: From where is it derived that the Holy One, Blessed be He, ultimately conceded to Moses? As it is said: “And the Lord said: I have forgiven according to your word”** (Numbers 14:20). The Sages of the school of Rabbi Yishmael taught: **According to your word**, it will be, as indeed **in the future the nations of the world will say this**. The Gemara concludes: **Happy is the student whose teacher concedes to him** as the Lord conceded to Moses. Explaining the next

verse, “Nevertheless, as I live, and the glory of the Lord fills the entire world” (Numbers 14:21), **Rava said that Rav Yitzhak said:** This teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses: Moses, you have given Me life with your words. I am happy that on account of your arguments, I will forgive Israel.

[Full source: appendix n.17, p.18-29]

7. **Shemot Rabbah 43:4**

[Rough translation:]

"...v'yachal Moshe" [literally: Moses prayed]:

Moses annulled God's vow. How so? When the Children of Israel sinned with the Golden Calf, Moses prayed that God forgive them, but God said, I cannot, I have already sworn ("One who brings offerings to the gods shall be destroyed" Exodus 22:19). Moses said, God, you have taught us that one cannot annul his own vow, but a chacham (rabbi) can. You should let me annul your vow. Immediately, Moses wrapped himself in his talit and sat as a judge, and God stood in front of him as one does when he asks for annulment.

שמות רבה מ"ג:ד'

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(ד) דָּבַר אַחַר, וַיַּחַל מֹשֶׁה, מֵהוּ כֵּן, אָמַר רַבִּי בְּרַכְיָה בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי חֶלְבּוֹ בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי יִצְחָק, שֶׁהִתִּיר גְּדָרוֹ שֶׁל יוֹצְרוֹ. כִּי צַד, אֶלָּא בְּשַׁעַה שֶׁעָשׂוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל הַעֲגָל עֲמַד מֹשֶׁה מִפְּיֵי הָאֱלֹקִים שֶׁיִּמְחַל לָהֶם. אָמַר הָאֱלֹקִים, מֹשֶׁה, כָּבֹר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי (שמות כב, יט): זִבַּח לְאֱלֹקִים יִתְחַרֵּם, וּדְבַר שְׁבוּעָה שֶׁיִּצָּא מִפִּי אִינִי מִחֲזִירוֹ. אָמַר מֹשֶׁה רַבּוֹן הָעוֹלָם וְלֹא נִתְּתָ לִי הַפְּרָה שֶׁל גְּדָרִים, וְאִמְרַתָּ (במדבר ל, ג): אִישׁ כִּי יֵדַר גְּדָר לֵה' אוֹ הַשָּׁבַע שְׁבַעַה לְאַסֹּר אֶסֶר עַל נַפְשׁוֹ לֹא יִחַל דְּבָרוֹ, הוּא אִינּוֹ מוֹחֵל אֶבֶל חֲכָם מוֹחֵל אֶת גְּדָרוֹ בְּעֵת שֶׁיִּשְׁאֵל עָלָיו, וְכָל זָקֵן שֶׁמּוֹרֶה הוֹרָאָה אִם יִרְצֶה שֶׁיִּקְבְּלוּ אַחֲרָיו הוֹרָאָתוֹ

צָרִיךְ הוּא לְקַיְמָה תְּחִלָּה, וְאַתָּה צּוֹיִתְנִי עַל הַפֶּרֶת
 נְדָרִים, דִּין הוּא שְׁפַתִּיר אֶת נְדָרְךָ כְּאֲשֶׁר צּוֹיִתְנִי
 לְהַתִּיר לְאַחֲרֵים. מִיָּד נִתְעַטֵּף בְּטַלִּיתוֹ וַיָּשָׁב לוֹ
 כְּזָקוֹ, וְהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עוֹמֵד כְּשׂוֹאֵל נְדָרוֹ

8. **Berakhot 31b**

Rabbi Elazar explains that **Hannah said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, are You not the Lord of the Hosts, and of all of the hosts and hosts of creations that You created in Your world, is it difficult in Your eyes to grant me one son?**

[...]

Rabbi Elazar said: Hannah said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, if You will look upon [ra'o] me now, fine, and if not, in any case You will see [tireh]. What was Hannah threatening? She said: **I will go and seclude myself with another man before Elkana, my husband. Since I secluded myself, they will force me to drink the *sota* water** to determine whether or not I have committed adultery. I will be found innocent, **and since You will not make Your Torah false [pelaster],** I will bear children. With regards to a woman who is falsely suspected of adultery and drank the *sota* water, the Torah says: “And if the woman was not defiled, but was pure, then **she shall be acquitted and she shall conceive**” (Numbers 5:28).

[...]

And Rabbi Elazar said: Hannah spoke impertinently toward God on High. As it is stated: “And she prayed onto the Lord,” as opposed to the common phrase: To the Lord. This teaches that she spoke impertinently toward on High. **And** on a similar note, **Rabbi Elazar said** that **Elijah spoke impertinently toward God on High** as well in his prayer at Mount Carmel, **as it is stated: “Answer me, Lord, answer me, that this people will know that You are the Lord, God, and You have turned**

their hearts backward” (I Kings 18:37), claiming that God caused Israel to sin. On this topic, **Rabbi Shmuel bar Rabbi Yitzhak said: From where do we know that the Holy One, Blessed be He, ultimately conceded to Elijah** that he was correct?

[Berakhot 32a]

As it is written in a future prophecy: “In that day, says the Lord, I will assemble the lame, and I will gather those who are abandoned and **those with whom I have dealt in wickedness”** (Micah 4:6). God states that He caused Israel to act wickedly. Similarly, **Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina, said: Had it not been for these three verses, the legs of the enemies of Israel**, a euphemism for Israel itself, **would have collapsed**, as Israel would have been unable to withstand God’s judgment. **One** is the verse just mentioned in which **it is written: “Those whom I have dealt in wickedness.”** **And one** is the verse in which **it is written: “Behold, like clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, house of Israel”** (Jeremiah 18:6). **And one** is the verse in which **it is written: “And I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will place within you, and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh”** (Ezekiel 36:26). These three verses indicate that God influences a person’s decisions, and therefore one does not have sole responsibility for his actions.

[Full source: appendix n.16&17, p.16-19]

9. **The Koren Yom Kippur Mahzor (Minhag Anglia, the Ostro Edition), commentary by Jonathan Sacks (2012), p.846**

.b

Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev [1740–1809] was known for his daring prayers in defence of the Jewish people. Once he prayed, "Master of the universe, we have many sins. You have much

forgiveness. I propose a deal: our sins for your forgiveness. And should You say, That is not a fair deal, I would reply, Without our sins, of what use would Your forgiveness be?"

10. **Bava Metzia 59b**

And this is known as the oven of *akhnai*...

[...]

Years after, **Rabbi Natan encountered Elijah** the prophet and **said to him: What did the Holy One, Blessed be He, do at that time**, when Rabbi Yehoshua issued his declaration? **Elijah said to him: The Holy One, Blessed be He, smiled and said: My children have triumphed over Me; My children have triumphed over Me.**

[Full source: appendix n.18, p.29-31]

11. **Jonathan Sacks, 'The great partnership: God, science and the search for meaning' (2011), p.74**

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Faith is a relationship in which we become God's partners in the work of love. The phrase sounds absurd. How can an omniscient, omnipotent God need a partner? There is, surely, nothing he cannot do on his own. ...there is one thing God cannot do on his own, namely have a relationship. God on his own cannot live within the free human heart.

12. **Bamidbar Rabbah 19:33**

Another interpretation of (Numb. 21:17), "Then Israel sang": This is one of the three things that Moses said before the Holy One, blessed be He, and He said [back] to him, "You have taught me."

[Full source: appendix n.19, p.31-35]

13. **Genesis 18**

(22) The men went on from there to Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the LORD. (23) Abraham came forward and said, "Will You sweep away the innocent along with the guilty? (24) What if there should be fifty innocent within the city; will You then wipe out the place and not forgive it for the sake of the innocent fifty who are in it? (25) Far be it from You to do such a thing, to bring death upon the innocent as well as the guilty, so that innocent and guilty fare alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (26) And the LORD answered, "If I find within the city of Sodom fifty innocent ones, I will forgive the whole place for their sake." (27) Abraham spoke up, saying, "Here I venture to speak to my Lord, I who am but dust and ashes: (28) What if the fifty innocent should lack five? Will You destroy the whole city for want of the five?" And He answered, "I will not destroy if I find forty-five there." (29) But he spoke to Him again, and said, "What if forty should be found there?" And He answered, "I will not do it, for the sake of the forty." (30) And he said, "Let not my Lord be angry if I go on: What if thirty should be found there?" And He answered, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." (31) And he said, "I venture again to speak to my Lord: What if twenty should be found there?" And He answered, "I will not destroy, for the sake of the twenty." (32) And he said, "Let not my Lord be angry if I speak but this last time: What if ten should be found there?" And He answered, "I will not destroy, for the sake of the ten." (33) When the LORD had finished speaking to Abraham, He departed; and Abraham returned to his place.

14.

.ד.

Appendix - full sources:

15.

Exodus 3

Now Moses, tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, drove the flock into the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. An angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire out of a bush. He gazed, and there was a bush all aflame, yet the bush was not consumed. Moses said, "I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight; why doesn't the bush burn up?" When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him out of the bush: "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am." And He said, "Do not come closer. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. I am," He said, "the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. And the LORD continued, "I have marked well

שמות ג'

.טו.

ומלֹשֶׁה הָיָה רֹעֵה אֶת־צֹאן יִתְרוֹ חֹתְנָו פֹּהֵן מִדְּיָן
וַיִּנְהַג אֶת־הַצֹּאן אַחַר הַמִּדְבָּר וַיָּבֹא אֶל־הַר
הָאֱלֹקִים חֹרֵבָה: וַיֵּרָא מִלְּאֹף ה' אֵלָיו בְּלִבַת־אֵשׁ
מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּינָה וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה הַסִּינָה בֹעֵר בְּאֵשׁ וְהַסִּינָה
אֵינָנו אֹכֵל: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶסְרֶה־נָּא וְאֶרְאֶה
אֶת־הַמַּרְאֶה הַגָּדֹל הַזֶּה מִדּוּעַ לֹא־יִבְעַר הַסִּינָה:
וַיֵּרָא ה' כִּי סָר לִרְאֹת וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו אֱלֹקִים מִתּוֹךְ
הַסִּינָה וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִי: וַיֹּאמֶר
אֶל־תִּקְרַב הֵלֶם שְׁלִי־נִעְלִיךָ מֵעַל רַגְלֶיךָ כִּי הַמָּקוֹם
אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עוֹמֵד עָלָיו אֲדַמַת־קֹדֶשׁ הוּא: וַיֹּאמֶר
אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹקֶי אֲבִיךָ אֱלֹקֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹקֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹקֵי
יַעֲקֹב וַיִּסְתֵּר מֹשֶׁה פָּנָיו כִּי יָרָא מֵהַבַּיִת
אֶל־הָאֱלֹקִים: וַיֹּאמֶר ה' רְאֵה רְאֵיתִי אֶת־עַנְי עַמִּי
אֲשֶׁר בְּמִצְרָיִם וְאֶת־צַעֲקוֹתָם שְׁמַעְתִּי מִפְּנֵי נְגִשָׁיו

the plight of My people in Egypt and have heeded their outcry because of their taskmasters; yes, I am mindful of their sufferings. I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them out of that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the region of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now the cry of the Israelites has reached Me; moreover, I have seen how the Egyptians oppress them. Come, therefore, I will send you to Pharaoh, and you shall free My people, the Israelites, from Egypt.” But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and free the Israelites from Egypt?” And He said, “I will be with you; that shall be your sign that it was I who sent you. And when you have freed the people from Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain.” Moses said to God, “When I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?” And God said to Moses, “Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh.” He continued, “Thus shall you say to the Israelites, ‘Ehyeh sent me to you.’”

כִּי יִזְעַתִּי אֶת־מִכְאָבָיו: וְאָרַד לְהִצִּילָם | מִיַּד
 מִצְרַיִם וְלִהְעֲלֹתָם מִן־הָאָרֶץ הַהִוא אֶל־אֶרֶץ טוֹבָה
 וְרַחֲבָה אֶל־אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ אֶל־מְקוֹם
 הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהַפְּרִזִּי וְהַחִוִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי:
 וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה צִעַקְתָּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֵזְבֵּי אֲלֵי
 וְגַם־רָאִיתִי אֶת־הַלְחָץ אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם לֹחֲצִים אֹתָם:
 וְעַתָּה לָכֵה וְאַשְׁלַחְךָ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה וְהוֹצֵא אֶת־עַמִּי
 בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים
 מִי אֲנֹכִי כִי אֵלֶךְ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה וְכִי אוֹצִיא אֶת־בְּנֵי
 יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם: וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי־אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ וְזֶה־לָּךְ
 הָאוֹת כִּי אֲנֹכִי שְׁלַחְתִּיךָ בְּהוֹצִיאֲךָ אֶת־הָעָם
 מִמִּצְרַיִם תַּעֲבֹדוּן אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים עַל הַהָר הַזֶּה:
 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי בֹא אֶל־בְּנֵי
 יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתִּי לָהֶם אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם שְׁלַחְתִּנִּי
 אֲלֵיכֶם וְאָמְרוּ־לִי מַה־נְּשֹׂמוֹ מָה אָמַר אֱלֹהִים:
 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֶהְיֶה אִשְׁרָךְ אֶהְיֶה וַיֹּאמֶר
 כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶהְיֶה שְׁלַחְתִּנִּי אֲלֵיכֶם:
 וַיֹּאמֶר עוֹד אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה כֹּה־תֹאמַר אֶל־בְּנֵי
 יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי
 יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב שְׁלַחְתִּנִּי אֲלֵיכֶם זֶה־שְּׁמִי לְעֹלָם

And God said further to Moses, “Thus shall you speak to the Israelites: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you: This shall be My name forever, This My appellation for all eternity. “Go and assemble the elders of Israel and say to them: the LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has appeared to me and said, ‘I have taken note of you and of what is being done to you in Egypt, and I have declared: I will take you out of the misery of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey.’ They will listen to you; then you shall go with the elders of Israel to the king of Egypt and you shall say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, manifested Himself to us. Now therefore, let us go a distance of three days into the wilderness to sacrifice to the LORD our God.’ Yet I know that the king of Egypt will let you go only because of a greater might. So I will stretch out My hand and smite Egypt with various wonders which I will work upon them; after that he shall let you go. And I

וַיֹּזַח זַכְרֵי לְדָר דָּר: לָךְ וְאַסְפֹּתְ אֶת־זַקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם ה' אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם נִרְאָה אֵלַי אֱלֹהֵי
אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וַיַּעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר פֶּקֶד פְּקֹדֹתַי אֶתְכֶם
וְאֶת־הַעֲשׂוֹי לְכֶם בְּמִצְרַיִם: וְאָמַר אֶעֱלֶה אֶתְכֶם
מִמִּצְרַיִם אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהַיְבֻסִי
וְהַפְּרִזִּי וְהַחִוִּי וְהַיְבֻסִי אֶל־אֶרֶץ זְבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבַשׁ:
וְשָׁמְעוּ לְקֹלְךָ וּבֵאתָ אִתָּהּ וְזַקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־מֶלֶךְ
מִצְרַיִם וְאָמַרְתָּם אֵלָיו ה' אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרָיִים נִקְרָה
עָלֵינוּ וְעַתָּה גִלְכָה־נָּא דְרָךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים בְּמִדְבָּר
וְנִזְבַּחְתָּה לָּהּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ: וְאָנֹכִי יִדְעֵתִי כִּי לֹא־יִתֵּן אֶתְכֶם
מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְהֵלֶךְ וְלֹא בְּיַד חֲזָקָה: וְשָׁלַחְתִּי
אֶת־יָדִי וְהִפִּיתִי אֶת־מִצְרַיִם בְּכֹל נִפְלְאוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר
אֶעֱשֶׂה בְּקִרְבּוֹ וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יִשְׁלַח אֶתְכֶם: וְנִתְּתִי
אֶת־תְּנוּ הָעַם־הַזֶּה בְּעֵינַי מִצְרַיִם וְהָיָה כִּי תִלְכּוּן לֹא
תִלְכוּ רִיקָם: וְשָׁאַלְתָּ אִשָּׁה מִשְׁכַּנְתֶּהּ וּמִגֵּרַת בֵּיתָהּ
כְּלֵי־כֶסֶף וְכֵלֵי זָהָב וְשִׁמְלֹת וְשִׁמְמוֹת עַל־בְּנֵיכֶם
וְעַל־בָּנֹתֵיכֶם וְנִצַּלְתֶּם אֶת־מִצְרַיִם:

(א) וַיַּעַן מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר וְהֵן לֹא־יֵאֱמָינוּ לִי וְלֹא

יִשְׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי כִּי יֹאמְרוּ לֹא־נִרְאָה אֵלָיֶה ה': (ב)

will dispose the Egyptians favorably toward this people, so that when you go, you will not go away empty-handed. Each woman shall borrow from her neighbor and the lodger in her house objects of silver and gold, and clothing, and you shall put these on your sons and daughters, thus stripping the Egyptians.”

[Exodus 4]

(1) But Moses spoke up and said, “What if they do not believe me and do not listen to me, but say: The LORD did not appear to you?” (2) The LORD said to him, “What is that in your hand?” And he replied, “A rod.” (3) He said, “Cast it on the ground.” He cast it on the ground and it became a snake; and Moses recoiled from it. (4) Then the LORD said to Moses, “Put out your hand and grasp it by the tail”—he put out his hand and seized it, and it became a rod in his hand— (5) “that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, did appear to you.” (6) The LORD said to him further, “Put your hand into your bosom.” He put his hand into his bosom; and when he took it out, his hand was

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו ה' מִזֶּה [מֵה־] [זֶה] בְּיָדְךָ וַיֹּאמֶר
מֹטֶה: (ג) וַיֹּאמֶר הַשְּׁלִיכֵהוּ אֶרְצָה וַיִּשְׁלִיכֵהוּ אֶרְצָה
וַיְהִי לְנָחָשׁ וַיִּנָּס מִפְּנֵיו: (ד) וַיֹּאמֶר ה'
אֶל־מֹשֶׁה שְׁלַח יָדְךָ וַאֲחֹז בְּזַנְבּוֹ וַיִּשְׁלַח יָדוֹ וַיִּחְזַק
בּוֹ וַיְהִי לְמֹטֶה בְּכַפּוֹ: (ה) לְמַעַן יֵאמְרִינוּ כִּי־נִרְאָה
אֵלֶיךָ ה' אֵלֶיךָ אֲבַתָּם אֵלֶיךָ אֲבַרְתָּם אֵלֶיךָ יִצְחָק
וְאֵלֶיךָ יַעֲקֹב: (ו) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' לוֹ עֹוד הֲבֵא־נָא יָדְךָ
בְּחִיקְךָ וַיִּבֶא יָדוֹ בְּחִיקוֹ וַיּוֹצֵאֵה וַהֲגִה יָדוֹ מִצַּרְעַת
כַּשֵּׁלֶג: (ז) וַיֹּאמֶר הַשֵּׁב יָדְךָ אֶל־חִיקְךָ וַיִּשָּׁב יָדוֹ
אֶל־חִיקוֹ וַיּוֹצֵאֵה מִחִיקוֹ וַהֲגִה־נִשְׁכָּה כְּבָשָׂרוֹ: (ח)
וַהֲיֵה אִם־לֹא יֵאמְרִינוּ לָךְ וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ לְקֹל הָאֵת
הָרֹאשׁוֹן וַהֲיֵאמְרִינוּ לְקֹל הָאֵת הַאֲחֵרוֹן: (ט) וַהֲיֵה
אִם־לֹא יֵאמְרִינוּ גַם לְשָׁנֵי הָאֲתוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְלֹא
יִשְׁמְעוּן לְקֹלְךָ וְלִקְחֹת מִמִּימֵי הַיָּאֵר וְשִׁפְכֹתָ
הַיַּבְשָׁה וַהֲיֵו הַפְּלִים אֲשֶׁר תִּקַּח מִן־הַיָּאֵר וַהֲיֵו לְדָם
בַּיַּבֶּשֶׁת: (י) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־ה' כִּי אֲדוֹשֵׁם לֹא
אֵישׁ דְּבָרִים אֲנֹכִי גַם מִתְמוֹל גַּם מִשְׁלָשִׁים גַּם מֵאֶז
דְּבָרְךָ אֶל־עַבְדְּךָ כִּי כְבֹד־פָּה וְכְבֹד לְשׁוֹן אֲנֹכִי:
(יא) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵלָיו מִי שָׁם פֹּה לְאָדָם אוֹ מִי־יִשׁוּם
אֵלִים אוֹ חַרָּשׁ אוֹ פִּקֵּחַ אוֹ עֹגֵר הֲלֹא אֲנֹכִי ה': (יב)

encrusted with snowy scales! (7) And He said, “Put your hand back into your bosom.”—He put his hand back into his bosom; and when he took it out of his bosom, there it was again like the rest of his body.— (8) “And if they do not believe you or pay heed to the first sign, they will believe the second. (9) And if they are not convinced by both these signs and still do not heed you, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and it—the water that you take from the Nile—will turn to blood on the dry ground.” (10) But Moses said to the LORD, “Please, O Lord, I have never been a man of words, either in times past or now that You have spoken to Your servant; I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.” (11) And the LORD said to him, “Who gives man speech? Who makes him dumb or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? (12) Now go, and I will be with you as you speak and will instruct you what to say.” (13) But he said, “Please, O Lord, make someone else Your agent.” (14) The LORD became angry with Moses, and He said, “There is your brother Aaron the Levite. He, I know, speaks readily. Even now he is setting out to meet you, and he will be happy to see you. (15)

וַעֲתָה לָךְ וְאַנְכִּי אֶהְיֶה עִם-פִּיךָ וְהוֹרִיתִיךָ אֲשֶׁר
 תִּדְבֹר: (יג) וַיֹּאמֶר בֵּי אֲדוּשָׁם שְׁלַח-נָא
 בְּיַד-תְּשַׁלַּח: (יד) וַיִּסַּר-אַף ה' בְּמִנְשָׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלֵא
 אֶהְרֹן אֶחֱיֶיךָ הֲלֹא יִדְעֵתִי כִּי-דִבֶּר יְדִבֶּר הוּא וְגַם
 הִנֵּה-הוּא יֵצֵא לְקַרְאֲתְךָ וְרָצָה וְשָׂמַח בְּלִבּוֹ: (טו)
 וְדַבַּרְתָּ אֵלָיו וְשָׂמַח אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים בְּפִיו וְאַנְכִּי אֶהְיֶה
 עִם-פִּיךָ וְעִם-פִּיהוּ וְהוֹרִיתִי אֶתְכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר
 תַּעֲשׂוּן: (טז) וַדְּבַר-הוּא לָךְ אֶל-הָעַם וְהָיָה הוּא
 יְהִיֶה-לָּךְ לְפִהּ וְאַתָּה תְּהַיְהֶי-לּוֹ לְאַלְקִים: (יז)
 וְאַתְּ-הַמַּטֵּה הַזֶּה תִּקַּח בְּיָדְךָ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה-בּוֹ
 אֶת-הָאֵתָת:

You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth—I will be with you and with him as you speak, and tell both of you what to do— (16) and he shall speak for you to the people. Thus he shall serve as your spokesman, with you playing the role of God to him, (17) and take with you this rod, with which you shall perform the signs.”

16. **Berakhot 31b**

Rabbi Elazar explains that **Hannah said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, are You not the Lord of the Hosts, and of all of the hosts and hosts of creations that You created in Your world, is it difficult in Your eyes to grant me one son?** The Gemara suggests a parable: **To what is this similar?** It is similar to a **flesh and blood king who made a feast for his servants. A poor person came and stood at the door. He said to them: Give me one slice of bread! And they paid him no attention. He pushed and entered before the king. He said to him: My lord, the King, from this entire feast that you have prepared, is it so difficult in your eyes to give me a single slice of**

ברכות ל"א ב

.זו

אמרה חנה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא רבונו של עולם מכל צבאי צבאות שבראת בעולמך קנשה בעיניך שיתן לי בן אחד משל למה הדבר דומה למלך בשר ודם שעשה סעודה לעבדיו בא עני אחד ועמד על הפתח אמר להם תנו לי פרוסה אחת ולא השגיחו עליו דחק ונכנס אצל המלך אמר לו אדוני המלך מכל סעודה שעשית קנשה בעיניך ליתן לי פרוסה אחת: אם ראה תראה אמר רבי אלעזר אמרה חנה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא רבונו של עולם אם ראה מוטב ואם לאו תראה אלה ואסתתר בפני אלקנה בעלי וכיון דמסתתרנא משקו לי מי סוטה ואי אתה עושה

bread? As for the double language in the verse, “if you will look upon [*im ra’o tireh*],” Rabbi Elazar said: Hannah said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, if You will look upon [*ra’o*] me now, fine, and if not, in any case You will see [*tireh*]. What was Hannah threatening? She said: **I will go and seclude myself** with another man before Elkana, my husband. Since I secluded myself, they will force me to drink the *sota* water to determine whether or not I have committed adultery. I will be found innocent, and since You will not make Your Torah false [*pelaster*], I will bear children. With regards to a woman who is falsely suspected of adultery and drank the *sota* water, the Torah says: “And if the woman was not defiled, but was pure, then she shall be acquitted and she shall conceive” (Numbers 5:28).

[...]

And Rabbi Elazar said: Hannah spoke impertinently toward God on High. As it is stated: “And she prayed onto the Lord,” as opposed to the common phrase: To the Lord. This teaches that she spoke impertinently toward on High. And on a similar note, Rabbi Elazar

תִּוְרַתָּךְ פְּלִסְתִּיר שְׁנֵאמַר וְנִקְתָּהּ וְנִזְרָעָה זָרַע

[...]

וְאָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר חֲנָה הִטִּיחָה דְבָרִים כָּלפִי מֵעֵלָה
 שְׁנֵאמַר וְתַתְּפִלֵּל עַל ה' מְלַמֵּד שֶׁהִטִּיחָה דְבָרִים
 כָּלפִי מֵעֵלָה וְאָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אֵלֶיהוּ הִטִּיחַ
 דְבָרִים כָּלפִי מֵעֵלָה שְׁנֵאמַר וְאַתָּה הִסַּבְתָּ אֶת לִבְךָ
 אַחֲרַיִת אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר רַבִּי יִצְחָק מִבְּנֵי
 שְׁחָזַר הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא וְהוֹדָה לוֹ לְאֵלֶיהוּ

said that **Elijah spoke impertinently toward God on High** as well in his prayer at Mount Carmel, as it is stated: “Answer me, Lord, answer me, that this people will know that You are the Lord, God, **and You have turned their hearts backward**” (I Kings 18:37), claiming that God caused Israel to sin. On this topic, **Rabbi Shmuel bar Rabbi Yitzhak said: From where do we know that the Holy One, Blessed be He, ultimately conceded to Elijah** that he was correct?

17. **Berakhot 32a**

As it is written in a future prophecy: “In that day, says the Lord, I will assemble the lame, and I will gather those who are abandoned and **those with whom I have dealt in wickedness**” (Micah 4:6). God states that He caused Israel to act wickedly. Similarly, **Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina, said: Had it not been for these three verses, the legs of the enemies of Israel**, a euphemism for Israel itself, **would have collapsed**, as Israel would have been unable to withstand God’s judgment. **One** is the verse just mentioned in

ברכות ל"ב א

יז.

דְּכַתִּיב וְאֲשֶׁר הִרְעֵתִי: אָמַר רַבִּי חֲמָא בְּרַבִּי חֲנִינְיָא
אֶלְמָלָא שְׁלֵשׁ מְקָרְאוֹת הִלְלוּ גִתְמוּטְטוּ רַגְלֵיהֶם
נְשֵׁל שׁוֹנְאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל חֵד דְּכַתִּיב וְאֲשֶׁר הִרְעֵתִי וְחֵד
דְּכַתִּיב הִנֵּה כַחֲמֹר בְּיַד הַיּוֹצֵר כֵּן אַתֶּם בְּיַד בֵּית
יִשְׂרָאֵל וְחֵד דְּכַתִּיב וְהִסְרֵתִי אֶת לֵב הָאֶבֶן
מִבְּשָׂרְכֶם וְנִתְתִּי לְכֶם לֵב בְּשָׂר רַב פְּפָא אָמַר
מִהֲכָא וְאֵת רוּחֵי אֶתְנִן בְּקַרְבְּכֶם וְעֲשִׂיתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר
בְּחֻקֵּי תִלְכוּ וְאָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר מִשְׁנֵה הַטִּיחַ דְּבָרִים
כְּלָפֵי מַעְלָה וְשִׁנְאָמַר וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל מִשְׁנֵה אֶל ה' אֵל

which it is written: **“Those whom I have dealt in wickedness.”** And one is the verse in which it is written: **“Behold, like clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, house of Israel”** (Jeremiah 18:6). And one is the verse in which it is written: **“And I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will place within you, and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh”** (Ezekiel 36:26). These three verses indicate that God influences a person’s decisions, and therefore one does not have sole responsibility for his actions. **Rav Pappa said** there is a clearer proof from here: **“And I will place My spirit within you and I will cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will observe My decrees and do them”** (Ezekiel 36:27). **And Rabbi Elazar said: Moses also spoke impertinently toward God on High, as it is stated** in the verse following the sin of those who murmured against God in the desert: **“And Moses prayed to the Lord** and the fire subsided” (Numbers 11:2), and this verse is interpreted homiletically: **Do not read to [el] the Lord**, but rather **onto [al] the Lord**, which indicates that he spoke impertinently.

תקרי אל ה' אלא על ה' שכן דבי רבי אליעזר בן יעקב קורין לאלפין עיניו ולעיניו אלפין דבי רבי ינאי אמרי מהכא ודי זהב מאי ודי זהב אמרי דבי רבי ינאי כף אמר משה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא רבוננו של עולם בשביל כסף וזהב שהשפעת להם לישראל עד שאמרו די הוא גרם שעשו את העגל אמרי דבי רבי ינאי אין ארי גוהם מתוך קופה של תבן אלא מתוך קופה של בשר אמר רבי אושעיא משל לאדם שהיתה לו פרה כחושא ובעלת אברים האכילה פרישנין והיתה מבועטת בו אמר לה מי גרם לך שותהא מבועטת בי אלא פרישנין שהאכלתיך אמר רבי חייא בר אבא אמר רבי יוחנן משל לאדם אחד שהיה לו בן הרחיצו וסכו והאכילו והשקהו ותלה לו כיס על צנארו והושיבו על פתח של זונות מה יעשה אותו הבן שלא יחטא אמר רב אחא בריה דרב הונא אמר רב ששת היינו דאמרי אינשי מלי פריסיה זני בישי שנאמר כמרעיתם וישבעו שבעו וגרם לבם על כן שכחוני רב נחמן אמר מהכא ורם לבבך ושכחת את ה' ורבנן אמרי מהכא

[...]

The Sages of the school of Rabbi Yannai said that Moses said the following before the Holy One, Blessed be He, to atone for Israel after the sin of the Golden Calf: **Master of the Universe, because of the gold and silver that you lavished upon Israel during the exodus from Egypt until they said enough [dai]; it was this wealth that caused Israel to make the Golden Calf.** Establishing a general moral principle, the Sages the school of Rabbi Yannai said: **A lion does not roar standing over a basket of straw from which he derives no pleasure, but he roars standing over a basket of meat, as he only roars when satiated. Similarly, Rabbi Oshaya said: This is comparable to a person who had a lean, but large-limbed cow. At one point, he fed it lupines, a choice food, and soon thereafter the cow was kicking him. He said to the cow: Who caused you to begin kicking me if not the lupines I fed you?** Here, too, the sin was caused by an abundance of good. The Gemara offers another analogy: **Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: This is comparable to a person who had a son; he bathed him and**

וְאָכַל וְשָׁבַע וְדָשַׁן וּפְנָה וְאִי בְעֵית אֵימָא מְהֻכָּא
וַיִּשְׁמַן יִשׁוּרוּן וַיִּבְעֹט אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר נַחֲמָנִי
אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹנָתָן מִזִּין שְׁחֹזַר הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
וְהוֹדָה לוֹ לְמֹשֶׁה שְׁנֵאמַר וְכֹסֶף הַרְבִּיתִי לָהֶם וְזָהָב
עָשׂוּ לַבַּעַל: וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵּךְ רֵד מֵאֵי לֵךְ רֵד
אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אָמַר לוֹ הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
לְמֹשֶׁה מֹשֶׁה רֵד מִגְּדוּלְתָךְ כָּלוּם נִתְתִּי לֵךְ גְּדוּלָה
אֶלָּא בַּשְּׁבִיל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַכְשָׁיו יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲטָאוּ אִתָּךְ
לָמָּה לִּי מִיָּד תִּשְׁשׁ כּוֹחוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה וְלֹא הָיָה לוֹ כַּחַ
לְדַבֵּר וְכִינּוֹן שְׁאֵמַר הֲרַף מִמְּנִי וְאַשְׁמִידֵם אָמַר
מֹשֶׁה דְּבַר זֶה תְּלוּי בִּי מִיָּד עֲמַד וְנִתְחַזַּק בְּתַפְלָה
וּבְקִשׁ רַחֲמִים מִשָּׁל לְמַלְךְ שְׁפָעַס עַל בְּנוֹ וְהָיָה
מִכְּהוּ מִכָּה גְּדוּלָה וְהָיָה אוֹהֲבוֹ יוֹשֵׁב לְפָנָיו
וּמִתְיָרָא לוֹמַר לוֹ דְּבַר אָמַר הַמַּלְךְ אֶלְמָלָא אוֹהֲבֵי
זֶה נְשִׁיּוֹשֵׁב לְפָנָיו הַרְגִיתִּיךָ אָמַר דְּבַר זֶה תְּלוּי בִּי
מִיָּד עֲמַד וְהִצִּילוֹ: וְעַתָּה הִנֵּיחָה לִּי וַיִּסַּר אִפִּי בְּהֵם
וְאָכְלִים וְאַעֲשֶׂה אוֹתָךְ לְגוֹי גְּדוֹל וְגוֹ' אָמַר רַבִּי
אַבְהוּ אֶלְמָלָא מִקְרָא כְּתוּב אִי אֶפְשָׁר לְאוֹמְרוֹ
מִלְמַד שְׁתַּפְּסוּ מֹשֶׁה לְהַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא כְּאֲדָם
שֶׁהוּא תוֹפֵס אֶת חֲבִירוֹ בְּבִגְדוֹ וְאָמַר לְפָנָיו רַבּוֹנוֹ

anointed him with oil, fed him and gave him drink, and hung a purse of money around his neck. Then, he brought his son to the entrance of a brothel. What could the son do to avoid sinning? On a similar note, Rav Aḥa, son of Rav Huna, said that Rav Sheshet said: That is what people say in a popular maxim: **Filling his stomach is a type of sin, as it is stated: “When they were fed and became full they were sated, and their hearts were lifted and they have forgotten Me”** (Hosea 13:6). Rav Naḥman said: This principle is derived not from the verse in Hosea, but **from here: “And your heart is lifted and you forget the Lord”** (Deuteronomy 8:14). **And the Rabbis say that this principle is derived from here: “And they will have eaten and been sated and fattened, and they will turn to other gods”** (Deuteronomy 31:20). **And if you wish, say instead that it is derived from here: “And Jeshurun grew fat and kicked”** (Deuteronomy 32:15). **Rabbi Shmuel bar Naḥmani said that Rabbi Yonatan said: From where in the Torah is it derived that the Holy One, Blessed be He, ultimately conceded to Moses that the reason for the sin of the Golden Calf was indeed the**

שֶׁל עוֹלָם אֵין אָנִי מְנִיחָךְ עַד שְׁתַּמְחֹל וְתִסְלַח
 לָהֶם: וְאֶעֱשֶׂה אוֹתָךְ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְגוֹ' אָמַר רַבִּי
 אֶלְעָזָר אָמַר מֹשֶׁה לְפָנָי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא רַבּוֹנוֹ
 שֶׁל עוֹלָם וּמָה כֶּסֶא שֶׁל שְׁלֹשׁ רַגְלִים אֵינּוּ יָכוֹל
 לַעֲמוֹד לְפָנָיךְ בְּשִׁעַת כַּעֲסֶךָ כֶּסֶא שֶׁל רַגַל אֶחָד עַל
 אַחַת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה וְלֹא עוֹד אֶלָּא שְׂיֵשׁ בִּי בּוֹשֶׁת
 פָּנִים מֵאַבּוֹתַי עַכְשָׁיו יֹאמְרוּ רְאוּ פָּרְנָס שְׁהֶעֱמִיד
 עֲלֵיהֶם בְּקֹשׁ גְּדוּלָּה לְעֲצָמוֹ וְלֹא בְּקֹשׁ עֲלֵיהֶם
 רַחֲמִים: וַיִּחַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת פָּנָיו ה' אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר
 מְלַמֵּד שְׁעָמַד מֹשֶׁה בְּתַפְלָה לְפָנָי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ
 הוּא עַד שֶׁהִתְחַלְהוּ וְרָבָא אָמַר עַד שֶׁהִפָּר לוֹ נִדְרוֹ
 כְּתִיב הִכָּא וַיִּחַל וּכְתִיב הִתְם לֹא יִחַל דְּבָרוֹ וְאָמַר
 מָר הוּא אֵינּוּ מֵיִחַל אֶבְל אַחֲרִים מְחַלִּין לוֹ
 וְשִׁמוּאֵל אָמַר מְלַמֵּד שְׁמֹסֵר עֲצָמוֹ לְמִיתָה עֲלֵיהֶם
 שְׁנֵאמַר וְאִם אֵין מְחַנֵּי נָא מִסְפָּרָךְ אָמַר רַבָּא אָמַר
 רַב יִצְחָק מְלַמֵּד שֶׁהִתְחַל עֲלֵיהֶם מִדַּת רַחֲמִים
 וְרַבְּנָן אָמְרֵי מְלַמֵּד שְׁאָמַר מֹשֶׁה לְפָנָי הַקְּדוֹשׁ
 בְּרוּךְ הוּא רַבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם חוֹלִין הוּא לָךְ מַעֲשׂוֹת
 כְּדָבָר הַזֶּה וַיִּחַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת פָּנָיו ה' תַּנְיָא רַבִּי
 אֶלְעָזָר הַגָּדוֹל אוֹמֵר מְלַמֵּד שְׁעָמַד מֹשֶׁה בְּתַפְלָה

riches lavished upon Israel? **As it is stated: “And I gave them an abundance of silver and gold, which they used for the Ba’al”** (Hosea 2:10).

The Gemara elaborates upon additional aspects of the sin of the Golden Calf. It is stated: **“And the Lord said to Moses: Go and descend**, for your people whom you have lifted out of the land of Egypt have been corrupted” (Exodus 32:7).

What is the meaning of “go and descend”?

Rabbi Elazar said: The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses: Moses, descend from your greatness. Isn’t it only for the sake of Israel, so that you may serve as an emissary, that I granted you prominence; and now that Israel has sinned, why do I need you? There is no need for an emissary. **Immediately, Moses’ strength waned and he was powerless to speak in defense of Israel. And once God said to Moses: “Leave Me be, that I may destroy them”** (Deuteronomy 9:14), **Moses said to himself: If God is telling me to let Him be, it must be because this matter is dependent upon me. Immediately Moses stood and was strengthened in prayer, and asked that God have mercy on the nation of Israel and forgive**

לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא עד שֶׁאֶחָזְרוּ אֶחֱלוּ מֵאֵי
אֶחֱלוּ אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אֵשׁ שֶׁל עֲצָמוֹת מֵאֵי אֵשׁ
שֶׁל עֲצָמוֹת אָמַר אָבִי אִשְׁתָּא דְגַרְמֵי זָכַר
לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָדֵיהּ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ
לָהֶם בְּךָ מֵאֵי בְּךָ אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אָמַר מִנְּשֵׂה
לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא רבוננו של עולם אלמלא
נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לָהֶם בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ הֵייתִי אוֹמֵר כְּשֵׁם
שְׁשָׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ בְּטִלִים כֶּךָ שְׁבוּעָתְךָ בְּטִלָּה וְעַכְשָׁו
שְׁנִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לָהֶם בַּשָּׁמַיִם הַגָּדוֹל מֶה שְׁמֶךָ הַגָּדוֹל חַי
וְקַיִים לְעוֹלָם וּלְעוֹלָמֵי עוֹלָמִים כֶּךָ שְׁבוּעָתְךָ
קַיִימָת לְעוֹלָם וּלְעוֹלָמֵי עוֹלָמִים: וַתְּדַבֵּר אֵלֶיהֶם
אַרְבֵּה אֶת זַרְעֲכֶם כְּכֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכָל הָאָרֶץ
הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אִמַּרְתִּי הִיא אֲשֶׁר אִמַּרְתִּי אֲשֶׁר אִמַּרְתָּ
מִיִּבְעֵי לִי הָאֵשׁ רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר עַד כָּאֵן דְּבַרִּי תִלְמִיד
מִכָּאֵן וְאֵילָף דְּבַרִּי הָרַב וְרַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר נַחֲמָנִי
אָמַר אֵלֶּי וְאֵלֶּי דְּבַרִּי תִלְמִיד אֵלָּא כֶּךָ אָמַר מִנְּשֵׂה
לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא רבוננו של עולם דברים
שְׁאִמַּרְתָּ לִי לֶךְ אָמֹר לָהֶם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשָׁמַי הִלְכָתִי
וְאִמַּרְתִּי לָהֶם בַּשָּׁמַי עַכְשָׁו מֶה אָנִי אוֹמֵר לָהֶם:
מִבְּלִתִּי יְכֻלֵת ה' יְכוֹל ה' מִיִּבְעֵי לִי הָאֵשׁ רַבִּי

them for their transgression. The Gemara says: This is **comparable to a king who became angry at his son** who had sinned against him, **and beat him**, administering a **severe beating**. At that moment, a **well-wisher** of the king was **sitting before him** and witnessed the entire event, **and was afraid to say anything to** the king about the excessive beating. Meanwhile, **the king said** to his son: **Were it not for this well-wisher of mine who is sitting before me, I would have killed you**. Upon hearing this, the king's friend **said** to himself: This is clearly a sign that **this matter**, rescuing the son from the hands of his father, **is dependent upon me**. **Immediately he stood and rescued him** from the king. In an additional aspect of the sin of the Golden Calf, God told Moses: **“Now leave Me be, that My wrath will be enraged against them and I will consume them; and I will make of you a great nation”** (Exodus 32:10). Explaining this verse, **Rabbi Abbahu said: Were the verse not written** in this manner, **it would be impossible to utter** it, in deference to God. The phrase: **Leave Me be**, **teaches that Moses grabbed the Holy One, Blessed be He,**

אֶלְעֶזֶר אָמַר מִשָּׁה לִפְנֵי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא רַבּוֹנוּ
 שֶׁל עוֹלָם עֲכָשְׁיוּ יֹאמְרוּ אוֹמוֹת הָעוֹלָם תָּשֵׁשׁ כַּחוֹ
 כְּנִקְבָה וְאִינוּ יָכוֹל לְהַצִּיל אָמַר הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
 לְמִשָּׁה וְהֵלֵא כָּבֵד רָאוּ נְסִים וּגְבוּרוֹת שֶׁעָשִׂיתִי
 לָהֶם עַל הַיָּם אָמַר לִפְנֵי רַבּוֹנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם עַד־יֵין
 יֵשׁ לָהֶם לוֹמַר לְמַלְךְ אֶחָד יָכוֹל לַעֲמוֹד לְשִׁלְשִׁים
 וְאֶחָד מְלָכִים אֵינוּ יָכוֹל לַעֲמוֹד אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן
 מִנֵּין שֶׁחֲזַר הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא וְהוֹדָה לוֹ לְמִשָּׁה
 שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַיֹּאמֶר ה' סְלַחְתִּי כְּדַבְּרֶיךָ תְּנִי דְבִי רַבִּי
 יִשְׁמַעְאֵל כְּדַבְּרֶיךָ עֲתִידִים אוֹמוֹת הָעוֹלָם לוֹמַר כֵּן
 אֲשֶׁרִי תִלְמִיד שָׂרְבוּ מוֹדָה לוֹ וְאוֹלָם חַי אֱנִי אָמַר
 רַבָּא אָמַר רַב יִצְחָק מְלַמֵּד שֶׁאָמַר לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ
 בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְמִשָּׁה מִשָּׁה הִתְחַיֵּיתִנִי בְּדַבְּרֶיךָ:

as a person who grabs his friend by his garment would, and he said before Him: Master of the Universe, I will not leave You be until You forgive and pardon them. In the same verse, God promised Moses: **“And I will make of you a great nation.”** What was Moses’ response? **Rabbi Elazar said: Moses said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, if a chair with three legs, the collective merit of the three forefathers, is unable to stand before You in Your moment of wrath, all the more so that a chair with one leg, my merit alone, will be unable to withstand your wrath. Moreover, but I have a sense of shame before my forefathers. Now they will say: See this leader that God placed over Israel. He requested greatness for himself but did not pray for God to have mercy upon them in their troubled time. The Torah continues: “And Moses beseeched [*vayḥal*] before the Lord” (Exodus 32:11).** Many interpretations were given for this uncommon term, *vayḥal*: **Rabbi Elazar said: It teaches that Moses stood in prayer before the Holy One, Blessed be He, until it made him ill [*heḥelahu*] from overexertion. And Rava said:**

Moses stood in prayer **until he nullified His vow**, as the term *vayhal* alludes to nullification of an oath. **Here it is written *vayhal*, and there referring to vows, it is written: “He shall not nullify [*lo yaḥel*] his word”** (Numbers 30:3). **And** with regard to vows, **the Master said: He** who vowed **cannot nullify** his vow, **but others**, the court, **can nullify** his vow **for him**. Here, it is as if Moses nullified the Lord’s vow to destroy Israel. **And Shmuel said:** The term *vayhal* **teaches that Moses gave his life**, from the term *ḥalal*, a dead person, **for Israel, as it is stated: “And if not, erase me, please, from Your book”** (Exodus 32:32). **Rava**, also interpreting this verse, **said that Rav Yitzḥak said:** The term *vayhal* **teaches that he caused the Divine Attribute of Mercy to take effect [*heḥela*] upon them. And the Rabbis say** that this term constitutes the essence of Moses’ claim: **It teaches that Moses said before the Holy One Blessed be He: It is a sacrilege [*ḥullin*] for You to do something like this.** And another interpretation of the verse, **“And Moses beseeched [*vayhal*] before the Lord.”**
[...]

As Moses continues his prayer, he says:

“Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel Your servants, to whom You swore in Your name”

(Exodus 32:13). **What is the meaning of in Your**

name? Rabbi Elazar said: Moses said before

the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the

Universe, had You sworn to them by the

heavens and the earth, I would say: Just as the

heavens and the earth will ultimately be no

more, so too Your oath will be null and void.

Now that You swore to them by Your great

name, just as Your name lives and stands for

all eternity, so too does Your oath live and

stand for all eternity. In this verse, Moses

continues: **“And You said to them: I will make**

your offspring as numerous as the stars of

heaven, and all this land of which I have

spoken I will give to your offspring that they

shall inherit it forever.” The Gemara clarifies a

puzzling phrase in this verse. **That phrase of**

which I have spoken, it should have said: Of

which You have spoken, as Moses is referring to

God’s promise to the forefathers. **Rabbi Elazar**

said: To this point, the verse cites the words of

the student, Moses; from this point, and all this

land of which I have spoken, the verse cites **the words of the Master, God. And Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said: These and those are the words of the student;** Moses spoke the entire verse. **Rather, Moses said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, those matters which You told me to go and say to Israel in My name, I went and told it to them in Your name.** I have already told Israel of God's promise to the forefathers. **Now what do I say to them?** The Gemara moves to a discussion of additional prayers offered by Moses. Moses said that if God fails to bring the Jewish people into Eretz Yisrael, the nations of the world will say: **"The Lord did not have the ability [*yekholet*] to bring this people into the land which He swore to them, and He killed them in the desert"** (Numbers 14:16). The Gemara examines this verse closely: The verse should not have utilized the term *yekholet*, an abstract feminine noun, but rather, **it should have said: "The Lord was not able [*yakhol*],"** a masculine verb. **Rabbi Elazar said: Moses phrased it that way because he said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, now the nations of the world will**

say that His strength weakened like a female and He is unable to rescue the nation of Israel. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses: And did the nations of the world not already see the miracles and the mighty acts that I performed on behalf of Israel at the Red Sea? Moses said before Him: Master of the Universe, they can still say: The Lord can stand up to a single king like Pharaoh and defeat him, but He is unable to stand up to the thirty-one kings in the land of Canaan. Rabbi Yoḥanan said: From where is it derived that the Holy One, Blessed be He, ultimately conceded to Moses? As it is said: “And the Lord said: I have forgiven according to your word” (Numbers 14:20). The Sages of the school of Rabbi Yishmael taught: According to your word, it will be, as indeed in the future the nations of the world will say this. The Gemara concludes: Happy is the student whose teacher concedes to him as the Lord conceded to Moses. Explaining the next verse, “Nevertheless, as I live, and the glory of the Lord fills the entire world” (Numbers 14:21), Rava said that Rav Yitzḥak said: This teaches that the Holy One,

Blessed be He, said to Moses: Moses, you have given Me life with your words. I am happy that on account of your arguments, I will forgive Israel.

18. **Bava Metzia 59b**

And this is known as **the oven of *akhnai***. The Gemara asks: **What** is the relevance of *akhnai*, a snake, in this context? **Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said:** It is characterized in that manner due to the fact **that** the Rabbis **surrounded it with their statements like this snake**, which often forms a coil when at rest, **and deemed it impure**. The Sages **taught: On that day**, when they discussed this matter, **Rabbi Eliezer answered all possible answers in the world** to support his opinion, **but** the Rabbis **did not accept** his explanations **from him**. After failing to convince the Rabbis logically, **Rabbi Eliezer said to them: If the *halakha* is in accordance with my opinion, this carob tree will prove it.** The carob tree was uprooted from its place one hundred cubits, and some say four hundred cubits. The Rabbis **said to him: One does not**

בבא מציעא נ"ט ב

.ית.

וזה הוא תנור של עכנאי מאי עכנאי אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל שהקיפו דברים כעכנא זו וטמאוהו תנא באותו היום השיב רבי אליעזר כל תשובות שבעולם ולא קיבלו הימנו אמר להם אם הלכה כמותי חרוב זה יוכיח נעקר חרוב ממקומו מאה אמה ואמרי לה ארבע מאות אמה אמרו לו אין מביאין ראיה מן החרוב חזר ואמר להם אם הלכה כמותי אמת המים יוכיחו חזרו אמת המים לאחוריהם אמרו לו אין מביאין ראיה מאמת המים חזר ואמר להם אם הלכה כמותי כותלי בית המדרש יוכיחו הטו כותלי בית המדרש ליפול גער בהם רבי יהושע אמר להם אם תלמידי חכמים מנצחים זה את זה בהלכה אתם מה טיבכם לא נפלו מפני כבודו של רבי יהושע

cite halakhic proof from the carob tree. Rabbi Eliezer **then said to them: If the *halakha* is in accordance with my opinion, the stream will prove it.** The water in **the stream turned backward** and began flowing in the opposite direction. **They said to him: One does not cite halakhic proof from a stream.** Rabbi Eliezer **then said to them: If the *halakha* is in accordance with my opinion, the walls of the study hall will prove it.** The walls of the study hall **leaned inward and began to fall.** Rabbi Yehoshua **scolded the walls and said to them: If Torah scholars are contending with each other in matters of *halakha*, what is the nature of your involvement in this dispute?** The Gemara relates: The walls **did not fall because of the deference due Rabbi Yehoshua, but they did not straighten because of the deference due Rabbi Eliezer, and they still remain leaning.** Rabbi Eliezer **then said to them: If the *halakha* is in accordance with my opinion, Heaven will prove it.** A Divine Voice emerged from Heaven **and said: Why are you differing with Rabbi Eliezer, as the *halakha* is in accordance with his opinion in every place that he expresses an**

ולא זקפו מפני כבודו של ר"א ועדיין מטין ועומדין חזר ואמר להם אם הלכה כמותי מן השמים יוכיחו יצאתה בת קול ואמרה מה לכם אצל ר"א שהלכה כמותו בכ"מ עמד רבי יהושע על רגליו ואמר (דברים ל, יב) לא בשמים היא מאי לא בשמים היא אמר רבי ירמיה שכבר נתנה תורה מהר סיני אין אנו משגיחין בבת קול שכבר כתבת בהר סיני בתורה (שמות כג, ב) אחרי רבים להטות אשכחיה רבי נתן לאליהו א"ל מאי עביד קוב"ה בהיא שעתא א"ל קא חייך ואמר נצחוני בני נצחוני בני

opinion? **Rabbi Yehoshua stood on his feet and said:** It is written: **“It is not in heaven”** (Deuteronomy 30:12). The Gemara asks: **What is the relevance of the phrase “It is not in heaven” in this context?** **Rabbi Yirmeya says:** Since **the Torah was already given at Mount Sinai, we do not regard a Divine Voice, as You already wrote at Mount Sinai, in the Torah: “After a majority to incline”** (Exodus 23:2). Since the majority of Rabbis disagreed with Rabbi Eliezer’s opinion, the *halakha* is not ruled in accordance with his opinion. The Gemara relates: Years after, **Rabbi Natan encountered Elijah** the prophet and **said to him: What did the Holy One, Blessed be He, do at that time,** when Rabbi Yehoshua issued his declaration? Elijah **said to him:** The Holy One, Blessed be He, **smiled and said: My children have triumphed over Me; My children have triumphed over Me.**

19. **Bamidbar Rabbah 19:33**
Another interpretation of (Numb. 21:17), "Then Israel sang": This is one of the three things that

במדבר רבה י"ט:ל"ג
דָּבָר אֶחָד, אֶזְיִשִׁיר יִשְׂרָאֵל, זֶה אֶחָד מִנְשִׁלְשָׁה
י.ט.

Moses said before the Holy One, blessed be He, and He said [back] to him, "You have taught me." He said in front of Him, "Master of the Universe, from where does Israel know what they did (was wrong)? Did they not grow up in Egypt? And all of Egypt are idolaters. And when You gave the Torah, You did not give it to them, and they were also not standing there, as it is stated (Exod. 20:18), 'And the people stood from afar.' And You only gave it to me, as it is stated (Exod. 24:1), 'And He said to Moses, "Ascend to the Lord."' And when You gave the statements (Ten Commandments), You did not give [them] to them. You did not say, 'I am the Lord, your (plural) God'; but rather I am the Lord, your (singular) God. [Hence] You said it to me. Did I sin?" The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, "By your life, you have spoken well. You have taught Me! From now on, I will say the expression, 'I am the Lord, your (plural) God.'" The second one is when the Holy One, blessed be He, said (in Numb. 34:7), "visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children": Moses said, "Master of the Universe, how many evildoers begat righteous ones; should they be removed by

דְּבָרִים שֶׁאָמַר מֹשֶׁה לְפָנָי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא וְאָמַר
 לוֹ לַמְּדַתְּנִי, אָמַר לְפָנָיו רַבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם מִיָּיִן
 יִשְׂרָאֵל יוֹדְעִין מָה עָשׂוּ, לֹא בְּמִצְרַיִם נִתְגַּדְּלוּ וְכָל
 מִצְרַיִם עוֹבְדֵי עֲבוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים הֵם. וּכְשֶׁנָּתַתָּ אֶת
 הַתּוֹרָה לֹא נָתַתָּ אוֹתָהּ לָהֶם, וְאַף לֹא הָיוּ עוֹמְדִין
 שָׁם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שמות כ, יח): וַיַּעֲמֵד הָעָם מֵרָחֹק,
 וְלֹא נָתַתָּ אוֹתָהּ אֵלָּא לִי, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שמות כד, א):
 וְאֵל מֹשֶׁה אָמַר עֲלֵה אֵלַי ה'. וּכְשֶׁנָּתַתָּ אֶת הַדְּבָרוֹת
 לֹא נָתַתָּ לָהֶם, לֹא אָמַרְתָּ אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, אֵלָּא
 (שמות כ, ב): אֲנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, לִי אָמַרְתָּ, שֶׁמָּא
 חֻטְאתִי. אָמַר לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא סִיּוּהַ, יָקָה
 אָמַרְתָּ לַמְּדַתְּנִי, מִכָּאֵן וְאֵילֶךְ אֲנִי אוֹמֵר בְּלִשׁוֹן
 (במדבר טו, מא): אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם. הַשְּׁנִיָּה, כְּשֶׁאָמַר
 לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא (שמות לד, ז): פֶּקֶד עֲוֹן אָבוֹת
 עַל בָּנִים, אָמַר מֹשֶׁה רַבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם כַּמָּה
 רְשָׁעִים הוֹלִידוּ צְדִיקִים, יְהִיוּ נוֹטְלִין מֵעֲוֹנוֹת
 אָבִיהֶם, תָּרַח עוֹבֵד צְלָמִים, וְאַבְרָהָם בָּנוּ צְדִיק,
 וְכֵן חִזְקִיָּה צְדִיק, וְאַחַז אָבִיו רְשָׁע. וְכֵן יֵאֱשָׁרֶה
 צְדִיק, וְאַמּוֹן אָבִיו רְשָׁע, וְכֵן נֶאֱמַר שִׁיְהוּ הַצְּדִיקִים
 לִוְקִין בְּעֹן אָבִיהֶם, אָמַר לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא

the iniquities of their parents? Terach was an idol-maker, but his son, Abraham, was righteous; so too Hezekiah was righteous, but Ahaz, his father was an evildoer; Josiah was righteous, but Amon, his father, was an evildoer. Is this proper, that the righteous be struck for the iniquities of their parents?" The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, "Behold, you have taught Me! By your life, I will nullify My words and preserve your words, as it is stated (Deut. 24:15), 'The parents shall not die for the children, and the children shall not die for the parents'; and it is by your life that I shall write [these things] in your name, as it is stated (II Kings 14:6), 'as it is written in the Torah of Moses, which God commanded'" The third one is when the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, "Make war on Sichon; even if he does not want to engage with you, wage war with him, as stated (Deut. 2:24), 'Get up, go and cross the Arnon.'" But Moses did not do like this. Rather what is written above? "And I sent messengers" (Deut. 2:26). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, "By your life, I will nullify My words and preserve your words, as it is stated (Deut. 20:11), 'When you approach a town to

לַמִּדְתַּי, חַיִּיךָ שְׂאֲנִי מְבַטֵּל דְּבָרֵי וּמְקַיֵּם דְּבָרֵיךָ, שְׂנֵאָמַר (דברים כד, טז): לֹא יוּמְתוּ אָבוֹת עַל בְּנֵים וּבְנֵים לֹא יוּמְתוּ עַל אָבוֹת, וְחַיִּיךָ שְׂאֲנִי כּוֹתֵב לְשִׁמְךָ, שְׂנֵאָמַר (מלכים ב יד, ו): כִּכְתוּב בְּסֵפֶר תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' וְגו'. הַשְּׁלִישִׁית, כְּשֵׁאָמַר לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עֲשֵׂה מִלְחָמָה עִם סִיחוֹן אֲפִלוּ הוּא אֵינוֹ מְבַקֵּשׁ לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּךְ אֶת תַּתְגָּר בּוֹ מִלְחָמָה, שְׂנֵאָמַר (דברים ב, כד): קוּמוּ סִעוּ וְעַבְרוּ אֶת נַחַל אַרְנוֹן. וּמִשָּׁה לֹא עֲשֵׂה כֵן אֶלָּא מַה כְּתִיב לְמַעַלָּה (דברים ב, כו): וְאֲשַׁלַּח מַלְאָכַיִם, אָמַר לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא חַיִּיךָ שְׂאֲנִי מְבַטֵּל דְּבָרֵי וּמְקַיֵּם דְּבָרֵיךָ, שְׂנֵאָמַר (דברים כ, י): כִּי תִקְרַב אֶל עִיר לְהִלָּחֵם עָלֶיהָ וְקִרְאתָ אֵלֶיהָ לְשָׁלוֹם. כִּיֹּן שְׁלֹא קָבַל סִיחוֹן הַפִּילוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מִפְּנֵיהֶם, שְׂנֵאָמַר (דברים ב, לג): וַנַּךְ אֹתוֹ, וְלֹא עוֹד אֶלָּא אַף אוֹתוֹ שֶׁהִטְמִינוּ עֲצָמָן בְּמַעְרוֹת לְהַרְגוֹ, רָמַז הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְהַר וְרָצַץ אוֹתוֹ, שְׂנֵאָמַר (תהלים עד, יג יד): שִׁבְרַתְּ רֵאשֵׁי תַנִּינִים עַל הַמַּיִם רָצַצְתָּ רֵאשֵׁי לוֹיְתָן, מָשַׁל הַדְּיוּט אוֹמֵר נְתַתְּ פֶת לְתִינוּק הוֹדִיעַ לְאִמּוֹ, אָמַר הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מַנִּין

attack it, you shall offer it terms of peace." Once Sichon did not accept, the Holy One, blessed be He, felled him in front of them, as it is stated (Deut. 20:33), "and we smote him." And not only that, but even [with] those that were hiding themselves in the caves to kill [the Israelites], the Holy One, blessed be He, signaled to the mountain and it crushed them, as it is stated (Ps. 74:13-14), "who smashed the heads of the monsters in the waters. It was You who crushed the heads of Leviathan." A common proverb says [that] if you gave bread to an infant, let his mother know. The Holy One, blessed be He, said, "From where will Israel know the favor I did for them?" What did He do? He distanced the mountains from each other and the streams swept down [the corpses], as it is stated (Numb 21:17), "And the streams poured." And the Israelites passed by and sang song - "then Israel sang" (Numb. 21:17). Israel said, "It is for You to do miracles for us, but it is for us to bless and laud Your name" - "Salvation is to the Lord; upon Your people is Your blessing, Selah" (Ps. 3:9). Upon the waters was it decreed against Moses, so he was not mentioned in the song. Moses said,

יִשְׂרָאֵל יוֹדְעִין מַה טּוֹבָה עָשִׂיתִי לָהֶם, מָה עָשָׂה
הַרְחִיקוּ הַהָרִים זֶה מִזֶּה וְשִׁטְפוּ אוֹתָן הַנְּחָלִים,
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (במדבר כא, טו): וְאֲשַׁד הַנְּחָלִים, וְהָיוּ
יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹבְרִים וְאוֹמְרִים שִׁירָה אִזּוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל,
אָמְרוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עָלֶיךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת לָנוּ נִסִּים, וְעָלִינוּ
לְבָרֶךְ וּלְקַלֵּס לְשִׁמְךָ. (תהלים ג, ט): לַה' הַיְשׁוּעָה
עַל עַמְּךָ בְּרִכְתְּךָ סֵלָה, וְעַל הַמַּיִם נִגְזַר עַל מִשְׁפָּה,
וְלֹא נִזְכַּר בַּשִּׁירָה, אָמַר מִשְׁפָּה רַבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם,
אַחַר כָּל נִסִּים שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לָהֶם אֲנִי מֵת מִתַּחַת
יְדֵיהֶם, מִן הַמְדַבֵּר נִתְּתָ לָהֶם אֶת הַתּוֹרָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר
(במדבר כא, יח): וּמִמְדַבֵּר מִתְּנָה, וּמִתַּחַת יְדֵי נְחָלוֹ
אוֹתָהּ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (במדבר כא, יט): וּמִמִּתְּנָה נְחָלֵי אֵל,
נְחָלוֹ אֵל, וּמִשְׁנַחֲלוֹ גִזְרֵת עָלַי מִיְתָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר
(במדבר כא, יט): וּמִנְחָלֵי אֵל בְּמוֹת, וּמִנְחָל בָּא מוֹת,
(במדבר כא, כ): וּמִבְּמוֹת הַגִּיָּא אֲשֶׁר בְּשִׁדָּה מוֹאֵב,
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (דברים לד, ו): וַיִּקְבַּר אֹתוֹ בְּגִי בְּאֶרֶץ
מוֹאֵב. אָמַר אִיּוֹב (איוב לד, יט): אֲשֶׁר לֹא נִשְׂא פָנָי
שָׂרִים וְלֹא נִכַּר שׁוֹעַ לְפָנָי דָּל כִּי מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו כָּלָם.

"Master of the Universe, "I am dying because of them. You gave them the Torah from the wilderness, as it is stated, (Numb. 21:18), 'and from the wilderness, Matanah (which is also the word for gift).' And they possessed (*nachalu*) it from my hands, as it is stated (Numb. 21:19), 'And from Matanah, Nachliel.'" And from when they possessed it, You decreed death upon me, as it is stated (Numb. 21:19), "and from Nachliel, Bamot" - and from possession comes death (*menachal, ba mot*). "And from Bamot, Haggai in the field of Moav" (Numb. 21:20), as it is stated (Deut. 34:6), "And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moav." Job said, "He is not partial to princes; the noble are not preferred to the wretched; for all of them are the work of His hands" (Job 34:19).

