

תלמוד-תורה ביחד ממרחק  
**TORAH-STUDY TOGETHER FROM AFAR**



January 16, 2021

*"The answers we receive, the interpretations we develop, are all dependent on the questions we ask; the experiences we bring; and the preferences we have."*

– Amy-Jill Levine & Marc Zvi Brettler

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
 אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְעִסוּק בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָה:

**Parashah Stats**

|                               |                 |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| <u>Weekly Portion:</u>        | vaEira          |
| <u>Consists of:</u>           | Exodus 6:2-9:35 |
| <u>Sequence—</u>              |                 |
| <u>in annual Torah cycle:</u> | 14 of 54        |
| <u>in Book of Exodus:</u>     | 2 of 11         |



**- A Salient Selection from the Portion -**

Exodus 6:2-13

**Context:** *Exodus, second of the Five Books of the Torah, is an account of how God liberated the Israelites from Egypt and entered into a Covenant with us at Mount Sinai, and a record of the legislations they undertook for the conduct of the society they were to establish in the Promised Land.*

**Content:** *This week's portion opens with Moses demoralized, after his initial embassy to Pharaoh has failed to yield any results. Here we have the world's oldest "locker-room pep talk," as The Eternal One offers the dismayed prophet the assurance that the process of liberating the Israelites will in fact result in eventual success... through the completion of that process, in the fullness of God's Own time.*

6:2] - God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am The Eternal One. [6:3] - I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as *El Shaddai*— but My Name, **יהוה**, I never made known to any of them.

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר  
 אֵלָיו אֲנִי יְהוָה: וְאַרְא אֶל-אַבְרָהָם  
 אֶל-יִצְחָק וְאֶל-יַעֲקֹב בְּאֵל שַׁדַּי  
 וּשְׁמִי יְהוָה לֹא נִודַעְתִּי לָהֶם:

|         | אֵל שַׁדַּי              | יְהוָה  |
|---------|--------------------------|---|
| Abraham | Genesis 17:1             | Genesis 13:4, 15:2, 15:7, 21:33, 22:14, 24:27   |
| Isaac   | -----<br>(1x הָאֱלֹהִים) | Genesis 25:21<br>[Rebekah] Genesis 25:22  |
| Jacob   | Genesis 35:11            | Genesis 31:49, 32:10, 49:18<br>[Lei'ah] Genesis 29:31, 29:32, 29:33, 29:35<br>[Racheil] Genesis 30:34 |

- more follows

6:4] - “I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they had resided as mere sojourners.

וְגַם הִקְמַתִּי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אִתְּם לָתֵת לָהֶם אֶת-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֶת אֶרֶץ מְגֻרֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר-גָּרוּ בָּהּ :

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A) <u>Genesis 37:1</u> –</p> <p style="text-align: center;">וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מְגֻרֵי אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן</p> <p>Thus Jacob was now established in the land of his forebears’ sojournings, in the land of Canaan.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">B) <u>Genesis 47:27</u> –</p> <p style="text-align: center;">וַיֵּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן</p> <p>Thus Israel was now established in the land of Egypt, in the region of Goshen.</p> |
|---|--|

6:5] - “Now, I have heard the outcry of the Israelites because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant.

וְגַם אָנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת-נַאֲקַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם מַעֲבָדִים אֲתֶם וְאַזְכֹּר אֶת-בְּרִיתִי :

יָדַע תִּדַּע כִּי-גַר יִהְיֶה זְרַעְךָ בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם וַעֲבָדוּם וַעֲנֹוּ אֲתֶם אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה

C) Genesis 15:13-16 - You are to know, of a surety, that your descendants will be aliens in a land not their own, which shall enslave them and abuse them four hundred years.

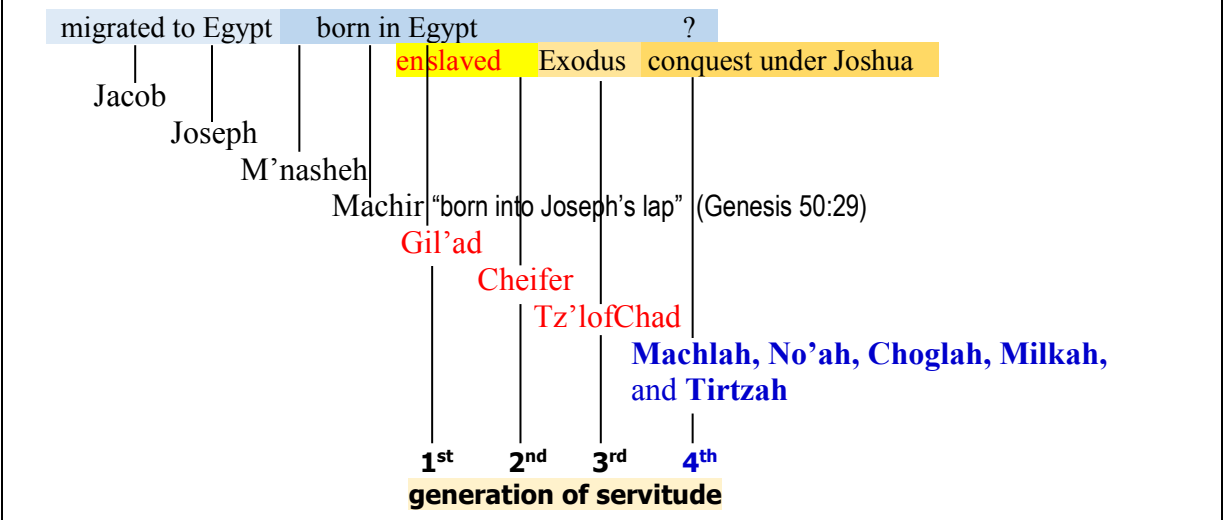
וְגַם אֶת-הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲבֹדוּ דָן אֲנֹכִי וְאַחֲרָי-כֵן יֵצְאוּ בְּרִכְשׁ גָּדוֹל וְאַתָּה תָּבוֹא אֶל-אֲבֹתֶיךָ בְּשָׁלוֹם תִּקְבְּרָם בְּשִׁיבָה טוֹבָה

Although I will exact judgement against that people who enslaved them, after which they will go forth with great wealth (while you, yourself, will have long since been gathered to your forebears in peace at an advanced great age),

כִּי לֹא-שָׁלֹם עֹוֹן הָאֱמֹרִי עַד-הַנְּהַ

and the fourth generation [of their servitude] shall return hither— but for the moment, the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.

**- Chronology of the Egyptian Servitude – after Numbers 27:1 -**



[6:6] - “Say, therefore, to the Israelite people: ‘I am The Eternal One. **I will free you** from the labors of the Egyptians;

לְכוּ אָמַר לְבְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי יְהוָה  
וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם  
מִמִּצְרַיִם

**I will rescue you** from their bondage;

וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעַבְדֹתָם

**I will redeem you** with an outstretched arm and through extraordinary chastisements;

וְגֵאלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּזְרוּעַ נְטוּיָה  
וּבְשִׁפְטִים גְּדֹלִים :

[6:7] - “and **I will take you** to be My people, and I will be your God. And you shall know that I, The Eternal One, am your God who freed you from the labors of the Egyptians.

וְלָקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהִייתִי  
לְכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וַיִּדְעֶתֶם כִּי אֲנִי  
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הַמוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם  
מִמִּצְרַיִם מִמִּצְרַיִם :

6:8] - “**I will bring you** into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession, I The Eternal One’.”

וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר  
נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת-יְדֵי לְתַת אֶתֶּה  
לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב וְנָתַתִּי  
אֶתֶּה לְכֶם מוֹרְשָׁה אֲנִי יְהוָה :



6:9] - But when Moses told this to the Israelites, they would not listen to Moses, their spirits crushed by cruel bondage.

וַיִּדְבֹר מֹשֶׁה כֹּן אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא  
שָׁמְעוּ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה מִקְצֶר רוּחַ  
וַיַּעֲבֹדָה קִשָּׁה :

6:10] - The Eternal One spoke to Moses, saying, [6:11] - “Go and tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites depart from his land.” [6:12] - But Moses appealed to The Eternal One, saying, “**The Israelites would not listen to me; how then should Pharaoh heed me**, a man of impeded speech!”

וַיִּדְבֹר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר : בֹּא  
דַּבֵּר אֶל-פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּשְׁלַח  
אֶת-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרְצוֹ : וַיִּדְבֹר  
מֹשֶׁה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לֵאמֹר הֵן בְּנֵי-  
יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא-שָׁמְעוּ אֵלַי וְאִיךָ  
יִשְׁמְעֵנִי פַרְעֹה וְאֲנִי עֶרְל שִׁפְתַּיִם :

6:13] - So The Eternal One spoke to both Moses and Aaron, instructing them regarding the Israelites, and Pharaoh king of Egypt, to deliver the Israelites from the land of Egypt.

וַיִּדְבֹר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן  
וַיִּצְוֶם אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶל-פַּרְעֹה  
מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְהוֹצִיא אֶת-בְּנֵי-  
יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם :

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וַיִּצְוֶם אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל - צוּה עֲלֵיהֶם לְהִנְהִיגֵם בְּנִחַת וּלְסַבּוֹל אוֹתָם

D) RaSHI (Shlomo Yitzchaqi, 1040-1105) on Exodus 6:13 - “Instructing them regarding the Israelites” - God instructed them **to comport themselves gently** and to bear with them.

- more follows

וַיִּצְוּם אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶל-פְּרַעֲה - א"ל הקב"ה בני סרבנים הן רגזנין הן  
טרחנין הן ע"מ כן תהיו מקבלין עליכם שיהיו מקללין אתכם שיהיו מסקלין  
אתכם באבנים

E) Midrash Exodus Rabbah 7:3 - "Instructing them regarding the Israelites, and Pharaoh" - The Holy And Blessed One told them: "They are frustrated; they are impatient; they are impatient" — on which account, **be ready to take it from them when they curse you and pelt you with stones.**"

וְאֶל-פְּרַעֲה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְהוֹצִיא אֶת-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם - אמר להן  
הקב"ה היו נוהגין בו כבוד וחלקו כבוד למלכות אע"פ שאני צריך לעשות בו  
את הדין

"And Pharaoh king of Egypt, to deliver the Israelites from the land of Egypt" - The Holy And Blessed One told them: "Conduct yourselves towards him respectfully, for **he is entitled to the glory of his monarchy even though I have to carry out judgment against him.**"

F) RaMBaM (Musa ibn-Maimun, 1135-1204), *Mishneh-Torah*, Laws of Repentance 6:1-2 -

והרי אני מבאר עיקר גדול שממנו  
תדע בזמן שאדם אחד או אנשי  
מדינה חוטאים ועושה החוטא  
חטא שעושה מדעתו וברצונו

Herein I expound a great principle, from which you will know that at any such time that one person or the entire populace of a nation transgresses, **that sin which he does is of his own knowledge and of his own free will.**

במה דברים אמורים בזמן שלא  
עשה תשובה אבל אם עשה תשובה  
התשובה כתריס לפני הפורענות  
וכשם שהאדם חוטא מדעתו  
וברצונו כך הוא עושה תשובה  
מדעתו וברצונו

[In those Biblical verses addressing punishments of such sin,] to what does Scripture refer? To those incidents in which one has not repented; but when one does repent, then repentance is like a shield against punishment. For **just as one sins of his own knowledge and of his own free will, so too does one repent of his own knowledge and of his own free will.**

G) Midrash Genesis Rabbah 34:10 -

הרשעים הן ברשות לבן אמר נבל  
בלבו ויאמר עשו בלבו ויאמר  
ירבעם בלבו ויאמר המן בלבו

The wicked are governed by their impulses (even as it is said in Scripture: "The ruffian says in his heart..." [Psalm 14:1]; "Eisav said in his heart..." [Genesis 27:41]; "Y'rav'Am said in his heart..." [I Kings 12:26]; "Haman said in his heart..." [Esther 6:6])—

אבל הצדיקים לבן ברשותן וחנה  
היא מדברת על לבה ויאמר דוד אל  
לבו וישם דניאל על לבו

but the righteous govern their impulses (even as it is said in Scripture: "Chanah said in her heart..." [I Samuel 1:13]; "David said in his heart..." [I Samuel 27:1]; "Daniel kept it in his heart..." [Daniel 1:8]).

H) Mordechai Katz, Lilmod uL'lameid (1978) - Though God oversees all earthly events, He has graced each human with the gift of Free Will. Men are not robots. They have the ability to make a choice between right and wrong, between good and evil. Because of this, we are responsible for the decisions and actions we take, and we are rewarded and punished accordingly.

However, the principle of Free Will seems to be contradicted by the case of Pharaoh. Every time a plague ceased, Pharaoh became stronger in his opposition to the Jews' departure. It would seem as if God had removed Pharaoh's ability to decide to let the Jews go. Did Pharaoh lack the power of Free Will?

Not really. Actually, **anyone who saw the ten plagues in Egypt no longer had the free will to deny God's existence.** Who else but God could have the power to perform these miracles? To counteract this influence, God restored the power of Free Will to Pharaoh. He was given the ability to make his decision on whether to let the Jews go regardless of God's obvious presence. It was under these conditions that Pharaoh, entirely on his own and with full power of decision, decided not to let the Jews of Egypt go.

**בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם - חוּץ לְכַרְךְ**

I) Midrash M'chilta d'Rabi Yishma'El, Bo - “[The Eternal One spoke to Moses and to Aaron] in the Land of Egypt” [Exodus 12:1] – this signifies, outside the city walls.

**וּמִפְנֵי מָה לֹא נִדְבַר עִמּוֹ תוֹךְ הַכַּרְךְ**

Why did God not simply talk to him within the city walls?

**מִפְנֵי שֶׁהִיְתָה מְלֵאָה שִׁיקוּצִי וְגִילּוּלִי.**

**Because it was filled with blasphemous abominations.**



**אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ - מִפְנֵי מָה לֹא נִאֲמְרוּ עֲשֵׂרֵת הַדְּבָרוֹת בְּתַחֲלַת הַתּוֹרָה**

J) Midrash M'chilta d'Rabi Yishma'El, baChodesh 5 - “I am the Eternal One, your God[, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of bondage” - Exodus 20:2] – for what reason were these Ten Commandments not proclaimed at the very outset of the Torah?

**מִשְׁלוֹ מִשָּׁל לְמָה הַדְּבָר דּוֹמֵה לְאֶחָד שֶׁנִּכְנַס בְּמִדְיָנָה אָמַר לָהֶם אֲמִלּוֹךְ עֲלֵיכֶם**

They cite a parable to which the thing can be compared: to a fellow who comes into a country and declares to its residents: “Let me rule over you.”

**אָמְרוּ לוֹ כָּלֹם עֲשִׂית לָנוּ שֶׁתִּמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ**

They would say to him: “You haven't done anything for us, that we should let you be our ruler!”

**מָה עָשָׂה בָּנָה לָהֶם אֶת הַחוּמִי הַכְּנִיס לָהֶם אֶת הַמַּיִם עָשָׂה לָהֶם מַלְחָמוֹת אָמַר לָהֶם אֲמִלּוֹךְ עֲלֵיכֶם אָמְרוּ עֲלֵיכֶם אָמְרוּ לוֹ הֵן וְהֵן**

**- more follows**

What, then does he do? He builds walls to protect them; he lays down conduits to bring them water; he fights their battles for them— and then, when he says to them “Let me rule over you,” they answer him: “Yes, indeed!”

כך המקום הוציא ישראל ממצרים קרע להם הים הוריד להם המן העלה להם הבאר הגיז להם השלו עשה להם מלחמת עמלק אמר להם אמלוד עליכם אמרו לו הן והן

So it is with The Omnipresent One, Who brought Israel out of Egypt; divided the Sea for them; brought down the *mahn* to feed them in the wilderness; brought up the well to give them water; blew the quail to them; and fought the battle with ‘Amaleiq— and then Who said to them [at Mount Sinai] “Let Me rule over you,” to which they answered: “Yes, indeed!”

רבי אומר להודיע שבחן של ישראל שכשעמדו כולן על הר סיני לקבל התורה השוו כלם לב אחד לקבל מלכות שמים בשמחה

Rabbi says that all this was to make known the praise of Israel— for when they all stood at Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, **all of them alike shared a single heart to receive the Sovereignty of Heaven in joy.**