

known to them by My name יהוה. ⁴I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. ⁵I have now heard the moaning of the Israelites because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. ⁶Say, therefore, to the Israelite people: I am the LORD. I will free you from the labors of the Egyptians and deliver you from their

נודעתי להם: ⁴וגם הקמתי את-בריתי אתם לתת להם את-ארץ פנען את ארץ מגריהם אשר-גרו בה: ⁵וגם אני שמעתי את-נאקת בני ישראל אשר מצרים מעבדים אתם ואזכר את-בריתי: ⁶לכן אמר לבני-ישראל אני יהוה והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלת מצרים ①

Nor would an unknown divine name serve to counteract the widespread demoralization of the Israelites. Furthermore, the phrase "I am YHVH" in verse 2 appears often in the Bible. It is similar to a form widespread in ancient Semitic royal inscriptions as a self-identification presentation formula, such as "I am Shalmaneser," "I am Mesha," or "I am Esarhaddon." It is not likely, therefore, that it is being used here to introduce a new name. On the contrary, it is precisely because the bearer of the name is well known and its mention evokes awe, reverence, honor, and fear, that its use as the source of a law or an edict encourages obedience.

What, then, does the phrase "I did not make Myself known" mean? In the ancient Near Eastern world names in general, and the name of a god in particular, possessed a dynamic quality and served to express character, attributes, and power. The names of gods were identified with their na-

ture, status, and function. Thus to say, "I did not make Myself known to them by My name YHVH," is to state that the patriarchs did not experience the specific power that is associated with the name YHVH. That power—to be displayed in the coming process of redemption—belongs to the future. The repetition here of the promises made by El Shaddai to the patriarchs and now uttered in the name of YHVH means that their fulfillment is imminent.

El Shaddai The reference is to Gen. 17:1–8, 35:11–12. With the advent of Moses, the name El Shaddai becomes obsolete, preserved only in poetic texts.

4. to give them The patriarchs received ownership of the land; their descendants would receive possession of it.

5. My covenant With the patriarchs.

6. free you Literally, "bring you out."

6–8. I will free you . . . and deliver you. . . I will redeem you. . . I will take you. . . I will bring you into the land The stages of Redemption: "I will free you" from physical enslavement in Egypt; I will "deliver you" from the psychological mind-set of being a slave, which might persist even after you have been physically liberated; "I will redeem you" so that you will think of yourselves as free people; and "I will take you" into a special relationship with Me, for that is the ultimate goal of your liberation. Finally, "I will bring you into the land which I swore to give Abraham." Only when the Israelites have their own land can they become the special people they are summoned to be. Only there will they have the

duty and the opportunity to translate the ideals of the Torah into the realities of daily life and fashion the model society from which all nations will be able to learn. The promise of a land of their own is the Torah's ultimate promise; the threat of being cast out of that land is its ultimate punishment. It is not enough to remove the burden of slavery; they must also have the proper circumstances that will permit them to flourish as God's people.

labors of the Egyptians A Hasidic interpretation understands the Hebrew for "burdens" (*sivlot*) as "tolerance." What was the worst part of slavery? The Israelites became accustomed to it. They lost sight of the fact that one does not have to live in such conditions.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

6:6–8. I will free you . . . and deliver you. . . I will redeem you. . . I will take you to be My people These four phrases of redemption are one source for the four cups of wine that we use at the *Pesah Seider* (JT Pes. 10:1). A fifth phrase in these verses—"I will bring you into the land"—is the basis for having on the *Seider* table a fifth cup reserved for Elijah, the prophet. See Mal. 3:23 (part of the *haftarah* for *Shabbat ha-Gadol* preceding *Pesah*).

bondage. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and through extraordinary chastisements.

⁷And I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God. And you shall know that I, the LORD, am your God who freed you from the labors of the Egyptians. ⁸I 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 LORD.” ⁹But when Moses told this to the Israelites, they would not listen to Moses, their spirits crushed by cruel bondage.

¹⁰The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹¹“Go and tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites depart from his land.” ¹²But Moses appealed to the LORD, saying, “The Israelites would not listen to me; how then should Phar-

וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעֲבָדָתָם וְגָאֻלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּזֵרוֹעַ נְטוּיָה וּבְשַׁפְטִים גְּדֹלִים: ⁷וְלָקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהָיִיתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְיָדַעְתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הַמּוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלוֹת מִצְרַיִם: ⁸וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת-יְדֵי לַתָּת אֹתָהּ לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וְלִיעֲקֹב וְנִתַּתִּי אֹתָהּ לָכֶם מוֹרָשָׁה אֲנִי יְהוָה: ⁹וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה בֵּן אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה מְקַצֵּר רוּחַ וּמִעֲבָדָה קָשָׁה: פ

¹⁰וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ¹¹בֵּא דִבֶּר אֶל-פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיְשַׁלַּח אֶת-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ: ¹²וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה לְפָנָי יְהוָה לֵאמֹר הֵן בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא-שָׁמְעוּ

redeem you The Hebrew stem here is גאל. In time, the abstract noun *g'ulah* (redemption) acquired messianic associations referring to God's ultimate redemption of Israel from exile.

outstretched arm A symbol of strength and power, the arm generally is understood as a metaphor in descriptions of God's mighty deeds related to the Exodus.

7. This declaration alludes to the covenant that is to be established at Sinai. The phraseology—"to take" and "to be [someone's]"—serves here as a covenantal adoption metaphor.

you shall know That is, "acknowledge." See Comment to 1:8.

8. I swore Literally, "I raised my hand." The

phrase derives from the symbolic act that accompanies oath taking. The Bible repeatedly asserts that the land of Israel was pledged on oath by God to the patriarchs and their descendants.

MOSES TRANSMITS THE DIVINE MESSAGE (v. 9)

9. they would not listen Moses' message did not succeed in strengthening their morale; in contrast to the experience recorded in 4:31.

their spirits crushed by cruel bondage Literally, "from shortness of spirit." The word for "spirit" (*ru-ah*) here indicates the spiritual and psychic energy that motivates action. Its absence or diminishment indicates loss of will.

A first step toward liberation will be freeing themselves from their passivity and their tolerance of the intolerable (Menaḥem Mendel of Kotzk).

9. they would not listen to Moses, their spirits crushed by cruel bondage Literally, "because of impatience and hard work." Was it because slavery was so hard and exhausting and left them weary, unable even to envision the possibility of change? The Hebrew translated as "their spirits crushed" (*kotzer ru-ah*) can literally mean "their spirits were stunted." Or was it because they sensed that freedom would require hard work—that it would not happen

quickly or easily? Or perhaps they would not listen to Moses, because he came from Midian and had not shared their labors and suffering. The gap between Moses and his people was great. They were slaves, whereas he had grown up in the palace and had lived in the freedom of Midian. It may be that only one whose spirit had not been crushed by slavery could be capable of leading the people to freedom. The generation that grew up in slavery ultimately would be unable to take advantage of their freedom, and it would perish in the wilderness. Only their children would inherit the Promised Land.

- I will bring you out
from under the burdens of Egypt,
and I will save you from their slavery.
I will redeem you with an outstretched arm,
and with acts of great judgments.
7. I will take you to Myself as a people,
and I will be to you Elohim.
You will know that I am Adonoy, your God
Who is bringing you out
from under the burdens of Egypt.
8. I will bring you to the land
regarding which I raised My hand [in oath]
that I would give it to Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov,
and I will give it to you as an inheritance.
I am Adonoy."
9. Moshe spoke [these words] to the B'nei Yisrael,
but they would not listen to Moshe
because of [their] distress and hard labor.

והוצאתי אתכם
מתחת סבלות מצרים
והצילתי אתכם מעבדתם
וגאלתי אתכם בזרוע נטויה
ובשפטים גדלים:
ז. ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם
והייתי לכם לאלהים
וידעתם כי אני יהוה אלהיכם
המוציא אתכם
מתחת סבלות מצרים:
ח. והבאתי אתכם אל-הארץ
אשר נשאתי את-ידי
לתת אתה לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב
ונתתי אתה לכם מורשה
אני יהוה:
ט. וידבר משה בן אל-בני ישראל
ולא שמעו אל-משה
מקצר רוח ומעבדה קשה: פ

RASHI

רש"י

- I will bring you out.** והוצאתי אתכם.
For I so promised: כי בן הבטחתי:
'And afterwards they will leave with great wealth.'²¹ ואחרי כן יצאו ברקש גדול
- The burdens of Egypt.** סבלות מצרים.
[Meaning:] the trouble of the burden of Egypt. טורח משא מצרים:
- I raised My hand.** [ח] נשאתי את-ידי.
[Meaning:] "I lifted it to swear by My Throne." הרימותיה להשבע בכסאי:
- But they would not listen to Moshe.** [ט] ולא שמעו אל-משה.
[Meaning:] they did not accept [his] words of comfort. לא קבלו תנחומין:
- Because of [their] distress.**²² מקצר רוח.
If someone is in a distressed state כל מי שהוא מצור,
he is short of breath רוחו ונשימתו קצרה,
and he cannot draw long breaths. ואינו יכול להאריך בנשימתו.
- I heard²³ [an explanation] similar to this one קרוב לענין זה שמעתי

²¹ Ibid. ²² קצר רוח literally means *shortness of breath*. ²³ Here Rashi refers to his explanation of 'אני (in v. 2), that it is a reference to God's trustworthiness in rewarding those who abide by His will.