

2,1. ויקח את בת לוי, "he took a daughter of Levi for a wife."

The Torah speaks of an actual daughter of Levi, not just of a girl descended from Levi's family. This paragraph is written here in order to provide the link between the passage describing the enslavement of the Jewish people and the birth of its redeemer. In a manner of speaking, G'd provided the solution to the problem before the problem itself occurred [seeing that the 86 years during which the Israelites experienced intolerable conditions commenced with the birth of Miriam, Moses' older sister. Ed.] The word ויקח always means "to marry, " i.e. the first part of the marriage ceremony, the betrothal. Seeing that these verses report the birth of Moses which had been preceded by the births of Aaron and Miriam, the word ויקח as betrothal can only mean that Amram had divorced Yocheved and now took her back as a wife. The reason he had divorced her was the decree that every male baby had to be thrown into the Nile. The Torah, of course, is not bound by chronological sequences when choosing the order in which it reveals to us whatever it sees fit to reveal. (This is why the details of this marriage are revealed only in chapter 6,20, "Amram took his aunt Yocheved as a wife and she bore him Aaron and Moses.")

The Talmud *Sotah* 12 points out that Yocheved was 130 years old at the time Moses was born. This fact is arrived at by comparing Numbers 26,59: "Yocheved the wife of Amram, Levi's daughter whom she bore for him in Egypt," with what is written here. This teaches that though Yocheved was born in Egypt she had not been conceived in Egypt. Israel experienced a total of

210 years enslavement in Egypt. Moses was 80 years when he became the leader of the nation. This means that his mother was 130 years of age when he was born. When the Torah uses the expression בַּת in connection with Yocheved at that time, this is an allusion that she experienced rejuvenation prior to Amram remarrying her.

2.2. וַתֵּרָא אוֹתוֹ כִּי טוֹב הוּא, “she saw that he was good.”

According to the plain meaning of the text the words “that he was good” mean that he was a handsome baby. Even if he had been ugly, in the eyes of his mother he would have appeared beautiful and she would have protected him against all dangers and have hidden him. Seeing this is a psychological fact of life, there was no need for the Torah to tell us that in the eyes of his mother the baby looked “good.” It follows that the Torah wished to inform us of something else. According to *Shemot Rabbah* 1,20 the word טוֹב means that Moses was born without a foreskin. The sages add that seeing the whole house was filled with light after Moses was born his parents considered this a good omen, i.e. he was “good.” The first time the adjective good was used as a noun was in Genesis 1,4 when G'd had created light and had satisfied Himself that it was something “good.” Our sages also comment that Adam who had been constructed by G'd Himself, (not a mother of flesh and blood) had also not had a foreskin. “Good” then is a description of something that does not need improvement (*Avot de Rabbi Nathan* chapter 2).

A kabbalistic approach concentrates on the extra word הוּא. According to the *Midrashim* it would have sufficed for the Torah to write וַתֵּרָא אוֹתוֹ כִּי טוֹב; why did the Torah bother with the additional word הוּא? The word הוּא was added as one of the names of G'd such as we find in Psalms 100,3 הוּא עָשָׂנוּ וְלוֹ אֲנַחְנוּ “He (G'd) has made us and we are His.” Or, Isaiah 42,8 אֲנִי ה' - הוּא שְׁמִי, “I am the Lord, הוּא is My name.”

When our sages (*Menachot* 29) stated that G'd created the world with the letter ה, they meant with the letters הוּ of His name He created the world. The letter ו symbolises the number 6, the six directions which receive radiations (divine input) from the benevolent Presence of G'd, שְׂכִינָה. G'd's Presence protects the world from harm; this is why David in Psalm 121 where he commences with the words “I raise my eyes to the mountains,

from where will my help come?," uses the word שומר, guardian, 6 times in the course of this psalm. This was David's way of alluding to the שכינה. Seeing that the letter א and what it stands for is so crucial to continued existence, it was added to the two letters הו, forming the word הוא. In this way Moses' relationship to G'd Who represents the ultimate significance of א was shown already the moment he was born. In other words: the two words כי טוב tell us that the house was filled with light at Moses' birth, whereas the additional word הוא tells us that this was divine light, light from a celestial source. Yocheved experienced the presence of the שכינה when she saw this light. The word הוא in our verse is also what prompted our sages to explain the word ותראהו, "she saw him," in verse 6 as a reference to the שכינה. The Torah only needed to write ותפתח ותראה, "she opened and she saw;" instead the Torah wrote ותפתח ותראהו, "she opened and she saw Him," i.e. the שכינה. G'd's benevolent Presence had accompanied Moses to the reeds. Clearly, this is another proof that the kabbalists arrived at this interpretation by the letters הו which the Torah appended to the word תראה. If Batya, Pharaoh's daughter was granted a vision of the שכינה, it is quite natural that Yocheved the righteous mother of Moses should be granted no less.

ירחים, "she kept him hidden for three months." Moses was born on the seventh of Adar; the Egyptians had waited for Yocheved to give birth at the end of nine months as was customary. These nine months would have expired on the sixth of Sivan. The Torah does not use the word חדשים to describe "months" but ירחים, as normally you would have two months with 30 days each and one month of 29 days in between. In this instance the three months were reversed i.e. two months of 29 days and one month of 30 days giving us a total of 58 days for the period the Torah describes. The end of this period occurred on the sixth day of Sivan (the day the Torah would be given 81 years later). Moses was exposed to the waters of the Nile on that very date. The Torah hints that on the date that Moses was exposed to the cruel fate of death in the river he was compensated many years later for ascending to heaven via Mount Sinai in order to receive the Tablets. This may be what David had in mind when he said (Psalms, 138,3) "on the day I called, You answered me, You inspired me with courage."

2,3. ותקח לו תבת גמא, "she took for him a wicker basket." the word לו in this verse means "for his benefit, in order to save him." Yocheved acted very cleverly in placing Moses at the edge of the river as she hoped that Pharaoh's astrologers would inform him that Israel's saviour had already been thrown into the water. They would have discovered this through their star-gazing, and they would have been sure to tell Pharaoh the good news. As a result, the decree to throw all the boy babies into the river would be canceled. They would not organise a search to ascertain that Moses whom they did not know had actually drowned. (*Shemot Rabbah* 1,21) This is what our sages read out of Isaiah 47,13: "the scanners of heaven, the star-gazers who announce month by month whatever will come upon you." The Hebrew word is לחודשים, "some of what occurs each month," rather than "all that will occur each month." At any rate, Pharaoh's star-gazers failed him in this instance as G'd saves those whom He wants to save.

2,4. ותתצב אחותו מרחוק, "his sister stood by from afar." According to the plain meaning of the text the Torah refers to Miriam who had prophesied that her mother would give birth to the saviour (*Sotah* 13). This is in accordance with the additional words here לודעה מה יעשה לו, "to know what would be done with him." She wanted to know whether her prophecy would come true.

According to a *Midrashic* view (*Sotah* 11) the words ותתצב אחותו is a reference to the שכינה. This is another instance of the truism that when the righteous person is in trouble the שכינה is at his side. it is an illustration of Jonah 2,3: "In my trouble I called on G'd and He answered me." As soon as Moses felt uncomfortable in his basket the שכינה took up guard duty near the future bearer of the Torah and of the Tablets with the Ten Commandments. In fact, our sages interpreted every single word in this verse as applying to the שכינה. The word ותתצב refers to the שכינה as we find it in ויבא ה' ויתיצב, in Samuel I 3,10 where it means "The Lord came and stood there, and he called as before." In Proverbs 7,4 the words ואמר לחכמה אחותי היא, the word חכמה is an allusion to the word מרחוק and appears as a substitute for the שכינה in Jeremiah 31,2 לי נראה ה' מרחוק, "G'd appeared to me as a distant Presence. Similarly, we find the word דעה as a word describing the שכינה in Samuel I 22,3 ה' כי אל דעות ה', "for the Lord is a G'd known as דעות." The word מה is also reminiscent of the שכינה, as in Deut. 10,12 מה ה' אלוהיך שואל ממך, "what does the Lord your

G'd ask of you?" G'd is described there as מה (His attribute שכינה). The word יעשה also appears in Scripture meaning שכינה, such as Samuel II 19,14 כה יעשה לי ה', "may the יעשה do thus to me." Finally, even the word לו appears on occasion as a word describing the שכינה, such as in Judges 6,24 ויקרא לו ה' אלוקים "he called the שכינה 'the Lord G'd.'"

2.5. ותשלח את אמתה, "she sent her hand-maid." There are conflicting interpretations of these words in *Sotah* 12. Rabbi Yehudah holds that the word אמתה, is derived from the word אמה, meaning a cubit, as this is the length of the arm from the elbow to the hand; Pharaoh's daughter stretched out her arm to pick up the baby or the baby and its wicker basket. This required that her arm be artificially extended beyond its normal range, i.e. a miracle. The opinion of Rabbi Nechemyah is that she dispatched her maid-servant to pick up the baby. If we accept Rabbi Yehudah's view we would find an allusion to it in the words of the princess who said: "for I have pulled him from the water" (verse 10).

2.6. ותחמול עליו, "she took pity on him." *Shemot Rabbah* 1,24 attributes the fact that Moses was crying to the fact that the angel Gavriel struck him so that he would wail and the daughter of Pharaoh would take pity on him.

2.7. מינקת מן העבריות, "a wet nurse from the Hebrew women." The verse strongly hints that Moses had refused to suckle at the breast of Egyptian wet nurses. This impression is confirmed by *Shemot Rabbah* 1,25 which writes that the baby rejected milk from the breasts of Egyptian wet nurses. G'd had said that he who in the future would speak to G'd Himself on a "mouth to mouth basis," should certainly not be someone who had been fed by the breast of an Egyptian woman. Our sages derive this from Isaiah 28,9: "To whom would he give instructions? To whom expound the message? To those newly weaned from milk, just taken away from the breast?"

2.9. והיניקיהו לי, "and nurse him for me." Batya commanded Yocheved to nurse **only** Moses for her and no other baby. This verse prompted our sages (*Ketuvot* 60) to rule that if a woman accepts the role of wet nurse for another mother unable or

unwilling to nurse her own infant, she must not let a second infant share her milk with the baby whom she undertook to nurse.

וואני אתן את שכרך, **“and I will pay your wages.”** Not only is lost property restored to the righteous, but they even receive a reward as if they had found it (*Shemot Rabbah* 1,25). We find that something similar happened to Mordechai. Not only was he saved from the gallows Haman had built for him, but he even inherited Haman’s house and position (*Esther* 9).

2,10. ויהי לה לבן, **“he was a son for her.”** She kissed him and fondled him and did not let him leave the palace. Even Pharaoh kissed Moses and embraced him. One day Moses playfully removed Pharaoh’s crown from his head and threw it on the floor as a hint of things to come, and to show that one fine day he would leave Pharaoh’s palace who had lost his crown and his kingdom. At that time fire would come forth out of Pharaoh’s mouth and would burn him. This is similar to *Ezekiel* 28,18 in which the prophet rebukes Chiram for having corrupted his wisdom as a punishment for which G’d would withdraw fire from within him which would consume him. [Our author assumes that the prophet speaks of Chiram king of Tyre. Ed.] The lesson is that wickedness is self-destructive. as demonstrated by the results described in the above mentioned verse in *Ezekiel*. *Isaiah* 26,5-6 contains a similar prophecy showing how high-riding rulers of Gentile Empires are brought down, in that instance by the Messiah of the future.

ותקרא שמו משה, **“she called his name Moses.”** Batya had the merit that the name she gave Moses remained his name throughout history because of the miracle which occurred when she saved Moses from the water and certain death. This name was an inspiration given to her by G’d so that G’d did not need to change Moses’ name at a later stage in his life.

2,11. איש מצרי, **“an Egyptian man, etc.”** According to *Tanchuma Shemot* 9 the Egyptian referred to here was the father of the blasphemer (*Leviticus* 24,10) where the Torah describes him as בן איש מצרי, **“the son of an Egyptian man.”**

מכה איש עברי, **“striking (dead) an Israelite.”** The man in question was the husband of Shlomit (*Leviticus* 24,11). The Egyptian mentioned here had lusted after her and had called out

her husband at night substituting for him in the dark of night and sleeping with Shlomit who was unaware that this was not her husband. When her husband returned later and she realised what had happened, her husband confronted the Egyptian who began to harass him and to strike him all day long (compare *Tanchuma Shemot* 9).

2,12. ויפן כה וכה, “**he turned in each direction.**” According to *Shemot Rabbah* 1,29 Moses realised what this Egyptian had done in the house of Shlomit and why he was persecuting her husband.

וירא כי אין איש, “**he saw that there was no man.**” This means that he foresaw that no one of consequence who would convert to Judaism would ever descend from this man (compare *Targum Yonatan*).

ויד את המצרי, “**he struck down the Egyptian.**” According to *Chulin* 13, Moses, who was the reincarnation of Hevel who had been slain by his brother Kayin, had been slated to commit this act ever since creation, seeing that the Egyptian represented the attribute of Kayin, the world’s first murderer. The Talmud derives from this the rule that an animal which has been slaughtered ritually correctly by a Gentile is not fit for consumption by a Jew. The carcass of such an animal confers ritual impurity on a Jew just as it would if it had died from natural causes. Ritual impurity is something which represents the כח, the specific attribute, of Kayin.

It is important to remember that Moses did not strike the Egyptian physically, but killed him with a curse invoking G’d’s name. This is based on Isaiah 11,4 that the redeemer when he comes “will kill the wicked with the breath (spirit) of his lips.” We have even more direct proof of this when the Torah reports that one of the wicked Israelites quarreling with another Israelite on the following day challenged Moses saying: **לההרגני אתה אומר**, “are you going to say something which will kill me?” (Exodus 2,14) Clearly he had been a witness, though Moses had not noticed. The name used by Moses was that of 42 letters. The text hints at this fact [there are 42 letters in the verse describing this event. *Torat Chayim*]. We also find an allusion to this in Psalms 44,6 **בך צרינו ננגח בשמך נבוס קמינו**, “Through You we gore our foes; by Your name we trample our adversaries.” David referred to G’d’s 42-lettered name. Concerning this name he also said (Psalms

148,13) כי נשגב שמו לבדו, "for His name, His alone, is sublime." The author quotes more verses in which the numerical value of the words referring to G'd or His name amount to 42. In the verse quoted, the word לבדו =42 corresponds in numerical value to the letters לבדו, "He alone." When Moses called forth the coffin containing Joseph by addressing it as a עלה שור, as we explained on Genesis 49,26, he also used this 42-lettered name. When Elisha cursed the youngsters who had been jeering and bothering him and 2 bears came out of the forest killing 42 of these youngsters, this was also in response to the 42-lettered name of G'd he had invoked on that occasion. (compare Kings II 2,23-24). The word ויך is found for death administered without physically touching the victim in Kings II 19,35 where the prophet Jeremiah describes G'd as annihilating the army of Sancheriv saying: ויצא מלאך ה' ויך במחנה אשור, "and the angel of the Lord went out and struck down 185,000 in the Assyrian camp."

ויטמנהו בחול, "he hid him in the sand." seeing only Israelites were present, he buried him in the sand saying that Israel has been compared to the sand of the sea when the prophet said: "The Israelites will be as numerous as the sand of the sea" (Hoseah 2,1). One of the peculiar properties of that sand is that when one takes some from one place and transfers it to another place no sound is heard.

2,13. שני אנשים עברים נצים, "two Israelite men quarreling." According to *Shemot Rabbah* 1,29 these men were Datan and Aviram. They were the same two people who are quoted by the Torah in Numbers 14,4 as saying: "let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt." They were the same two people who already at the sea of reeds had been rebellious as recorded in Psalms 106, 7: "they rebelled at the sea, at the Sea of Reeds." They were the people who left over part of their ration of manna in defiance of Moses' instructions, (Exodus 16,20) and they are the same that took such a prominent part in the uprising of Korach (Numbers 16,1 et al).

2,14. מי שמך לאיש שר, "who appointed you as an authority, etc.?" "You who are still an adolescent already want to arrogate to yourself the authority of an adult?" This appears to show that at the time when this occurred Moses was not yet 13 years of age.

Once a boy has reached that age he would be referred to as איש, "man." We find confirmation of this in *Shemot Rabbah* 5,2 where Rabbi Chama said that Moses was separated from his father's house at the age of 12. Seeing that the two Israelites accused Moses of arrogating to himself three kinds of stature, i.e. איש, שר, and שופט, G'd in due course had to equip Moses with all these three titles. The Torah called him איש in Numbers 12,3 where we read וְהָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה עֲנוּ מְאֹד, "and the 'man' Moses was exceedingly humble." He was called שר, in Numbers 21,18 where the Torah writes בְּאֵר חֲפְרוּהוּ שְׂרִים, "a well dug by princes." He was called שופט, judge, in Exodus 18, 13 where the Torah reports וַיֵּשֶׁב מֹשֶׁה לְשַׁפֹּט אֶת הָעָם; "Moses sat down in order to judge the people."

אכן נודע הדבר, "indeed the matter has become known." He meant that he had now understood something which had been bothering him for a long time. He had not understood why the Jewish people of all nations had to suffer such long and cruel exile. He now attributed this to the slanderers and informers amongst the people which made them unfit for redemption. We find confirmation of this thought in *Midrash Tehillim* 7,8 on Psalms "Let the assembly of peoples gather about You." According to that *Midrash*, during the generation of the prophet Samuel and King Saul, children who had not yet attained puberty had studied 49 aspects of the Torah already, finding 49 reasons why to declare something ritually pure or a similar number of reasons why to declare it impure. Concerning such children David prayed in Psalms 12,8: "You, O Lord, will keep them, guarding each from this age evermore." He referred to his own generation which was guilty of annihilation because they engaged in slander. He asked G'd to keep these children pure in their hearts when they reached puberty also. Thousands of these children subsequently fell in warfare because they were guilty of slander and character assassination. By contrast, the generation of Achav, a generation which had no Torah scholars, and certainly no Torah-oriented youth, and which worshipped idols was successful in war apparently not incurring casualties. The reason was that there were no informers amongst them and that they did not engage in mutual character assassination. The best proof is the fact that Adoniah had hidden 100 prophets of the true G'd whom Achav had searched for high and low in order to kill them and not a single Jew had betrayed any of these prophets or Adoniah who had hidden them and fed them (Kings I 18,13). Adoniah had even provided water for these 100 refugees, something which was

harder to come by than bread in those days. Whereas the prophet Elijah declared publicly on Mount Carmel that he was the **only** prophet left alive of the true prophets, and the whole people knew that this was not so, not a single one contradicted him. (compare Kings I 18,22). Slander is the primary reason why the benevolent Presence of G'd, שכינה, withdraws from its people.

2,15. וישמע פרעה, "Pharaoh heard." He heard because both Datan and Aviram turned informer against Moses. He tried to kill Moses, and Moses fled as if he had not fled Pharaoh would have executed him. According to a *Midrash*: Moses once again used a mystical dimension of the name of the Lord in order to escape Pharaoh. Another *Midrash* (quoted by *Rashi*) suggests that the wording means that Pharaoh's executioner's attempt to sever Moses' head with the sword did not succeed as G'd made Moses' neck very stiff. This is why the Torah writes in Exodus 18,4: "He saved me from the sword of Pharaoh."

ויברח משה מפני פרעה, "Moses fled on account of Pharaoh." According to *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* chapter 29 this verse inspired David to try and flee from King Saul (Samuel I 19,12). Moreover, this is also why G'd told Elijah who was upset that he had to run for his life from the threats of Izzaveel (Kings I 19,2-3) that he was not superior to Moses or David each of whom had to flee from their homeland at times in order to save their lives.

וישב על הבאר. "He settled at a well." Three prominent people found their life-partners at a well. They are: Yitzchak, Yaakov, and Moses. In the case of Yitzchak the Torah wrote: "it was when he came from באר לחי ראי, the well where Hagar had had four visions of angels," (Genesis 24,62) and immediately afterwards the Torah writes: "when he raised his eyes here a caravan of camels was approaching (the camels of Eliezer on one of which Rivkah was riding)." In the case of Yaakov, the Torah wrote: "he looked and here a well was in the field;" immediately afterwards the Torah reports that Rachel was approaching that well with her father's flock (Genesis 29,10). Finally, here we are told after Moses settled at that well that the (7) daughters of Yitro arrived their with their father's flocks.

2,17. ויבואו הרועים ויגרשום, "the male shepherds arrived and drove them away." Seeing that the father of these seven

girls was the leading religious dignitary in their country, how is it that the shepherds dared push his daughters around? This teaches that the daughters had already been ostracised as their father had removed every vestige of idolatry from their home even before the arrival of Moses. In response, the shepherds had agreed amongst themselves that they would not make common cause with Yitro nor even tend his flocks. This is why they ousted his daughters from that well (compare *Shemot Rabbah* 1,31).

ויקם משה ויושיען, “Moses arose and saved them.” He saved them from the violence the shepherds subjected them to. There could not have been any doubt that the water the girls were drawing with which they watered their flocks must have been theirs by right. Seeing there was not enough water for all the flocks they decided to water their own flocks first.

2,19. איש מצרי הצילנו, “an Egyptian (gentle)man has saved us.” *Shemot Rabbah* 1,32 expresses surprise that Moses should have been mistaken for an Egyptian. The answer given is that the words “an Egyptian man” refer to the Egyptian whom Moses had slain and who had become the cause for Moses fleeing to Midian.

2,20. קראן לו ויאכל לחם, “invite him so that he will have a meal (with us).” At the back of Yitro’s mind was the hope that the stranger would marry one of his daughters. We have already learned that the word לחם may be used by the Torah to describe someone’s wife when Joseph told his mistress that she was out of bounds to him inasmuch as she was Potiphar’s wife. The Torah uses the word לחם there (Genesis 39,6).

Sanhedrin 104 claims that Yitro was amply rewarded for showing Moses hospitality in that male descendants of his would sit in the לשכת הגזית, an office adjoining the Temple housing the Supreme Court. Even Solomon alluded to this when he wrote (Kohelet 11,1) שלח לחמך על המים, “throw your bread on the waters, etc.” He added: כי ברוב הימים תמצאנו, “for in the course of many years you will find it.” He referred to the fact that by offering a meal to Moses, Yitro’s daughter Tziporah became the mother of many Levites. Another aspect of this verse: Solomon referred to Yitro when he said the words quoted above, i.e. he acquired a son-in-law Moses who had been drawn from the water. The words “for you will find it (the bread)” refer to the time when Tziporah and her children rejoined her husband Moses and the entire

nation including the High Priest Aaron came out to honour Yitro (Exodus 28,12)

2,21. ויואל משה, "Moses agreed." Why would Moses agree to live in the house of an idolater like Yitro? The only reason Moses agreed was that he was a fugitive from Pharaoh and he was afraid that Pharaoh would offer rewards to anyone turning him in or would punish anyone who failed to do so. As a result, he would remain a fugitive all his life. He was desirous of marrying into the family of a priest as the priests were not slaves to Pharaoh and their property could not be confiscated by Pharaoh as it was a freehold. Joseph had legislated this as we know from Genesis 47,26 and 47,22. He would marry the daughter of such a priest after she would convert to Judaism. The reason that he chose Yitro from amongst all the many priests to be his father-in-law was that he had many daughters and he would have an additional incentive to prove agreeable to such an arrangement. This is the reason that the Torah mentioned that Yitro had seven daughters. Seeing that Judaism was interested in only one of these daughters, why else would the Torah have to make us read year after year that he had seven daughters about none of whom except Tziporah anything more is said? He had to make the family swear that they would keep his secret. The expression ויואל is derived from אלה, an oath. I have heard this explanation from Rabbi Dan of blessed memory. [Rabbi Chavell traces that Rabbi who was an Ashkenazi who fled to Spain due to persecutions. He engaged in halachic polemics with the *Rashba*.]

ויתן את צפורה בתו למשה, "He gave his daughter Tziporah to Moses." She was called צפורה, as a reminder of the bird which is one of the few pure birds. Her name alluded to the fact that she would eventually become a Jewess, become purified from her former status as an idolatress and become the life-partner of Moses.

2,23. ויהי בימים הרבים ההם, "it was in the course of these many years, etc." The years during which Moses was a fugitive from Pharaoh.

וימת מלך מצרים ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבודה, "that the king of Egypt died, and the Children of Israel groaned because of the work." The death of the king upset them although he had been a

wicked king; they were afraid that any successor might deal even more harshly with them. The word ויזעקו, "they cried out," referred to the violence the Egyptians had perpetrated against them thus far. We find a similar meaning of ויזעקו in Job 35,9: "because of contention the oppressed cry out."

ותעל שועתם אל האלוהים מן העבודה, "their outcry rose all the way to the Lord, due to the work." Even though, chronologically speaking, the time for redemption was already at hand, the people were not deserving of redemption. G'd accepted their prayer as the work they had to perform was disproportionate to the guilt they had accumulated. The Torah repeatedly mentions the expression מן העודה, to teach that no one's prayer is as sincere as the one who prays out of a profound sense of oppression. Prayers from people in such straits reach G'd more readily and He responds to such prayers more promptly. A perfect example of such a prayer is the prayer Jonah offered up to G'd while he was inside the fish. Jonah 2,8 said: "when my life was ebbing away I called the Lord to mind and my prayer came before You, into Your holy Temple." In this verse the prophet assured us that prayer which is rooted in man's despair finds its way to the Holy of Holies.

It is entirely possible that our verse, or better, this paragraph, is a role model for how our redemption in the future will be ushered in, by repentance, by throwing ourselves on G'd's mercy, and by sincere prayer. The redemption from Egypt was also ushered in by repentance and by prayer to the Lord who is prepared to respond in the hour of trouble. As soon as the Israelites, after many years, are reported as turning to G'd, He immediately sent them the redeemer. This is why the next verse (3,1) has the connecting letter ו in front of the word ומשה, something most unusual seeing Moses had not been featured in the previous verse.

A kabbalistic approach to our verse: it is possible that the whole subject of prayer (on behalf of oneself) is alluded to here plus the fact that when such prayer results from deep awareness of man's inadequacy it opens the way to all ten emanations. It is similar to the prophet saying (Isaiah 58,9) יענה אז תקרא וה' יענה, "then you will call out and the Lord will respond." In our verse all ten emanations are alluded to, the word אלוהים appearing five times, the first time with the prefix ה thus effectively doubling the number

of times the word אלו-הים appears. Each time the word appears it relates to a different one of the emanations.

2,25. וירא אלוקים את בני ישראל וידע אלוקים, "G'd saw the Children of Israel and G'd knew." According to the plain meaning of the text the Torah tells us that G'd saw all the devious and hidden ways in which the Egyptians made the lives of the Israelites more and more miserable. The words וירא אלוקים, refer to the visible torture inflicted on the Israelites, the words וידע אלוקים on the other hand, refer to the invisible torture, that which only G'd's eye can see.

A kabbalistic approach: We have already explained the meaning of the word אלוקים which appears here so many times in the previous verse. The specific emanation alluded to by the word וידע corresponds to the blessing in Numbers 6,25 יאר ה' פניו אליך, that דעה is the middle emanation, the one represented by the tree of knowledge, the עץ הדעת. Bounty travels down to the terrestrial regions via the attribute of Mercy to the emanation דעת to display its mercy towards the people of Israel. You find this concept explained in greater detail in the book ספר הבהיר by Rabbi Nechunyah HaKaneh (item 76). The author explains the process by means of the following parable: what is the meaning of the word וידע אלוקים? A king had a wife who bore sons for him. He was fond of them and raised them. Then they became delinquents. As a result his attitude to his children changed and he began to hate them. Ultimately he also hated their mother who had borne them. Thereupon the mother remonstrated with her sons asking: "what did you do that causes your father to hate me?" Finally, the sons decided to live according to the lifestyle their father had instilled in them. When the father became aware of this his love for them was rekindled and he also loved their mother again. This is the meaning of the sequence וירא וידע, "He saw and he knew." Concerning such a situation Solomon said in Proverbs 10,1: "a foolish son is his mother's sorrow." Solomon does not speak about the father's reaction to such a son seeing that the mother becomes estranged to him on account of the son. All this is clear proof that as long as Israel are in exile the bounty which flows from the heavenly reservoirs via the emanations is cut off from the celestial source. That which was described as G'd's light shining in Numbers 6,25 is not in evidence anymore, and remains far from the middle emanation דעת. The sons go into

exile. When they return in penitence the flow of both spiritual and physical largesse resumes, and the children are redeemed. At that point the flow of both spiritual and physical blessing from the מרכבה via the middle emanation דעת is resumed. The words וירא וידע in our verse illustrate this process at work.