## The Sanctity of the Individual: From the Tower of Bavel to the Midwives of Egypt

Torah in Motion, The People and The Book April 3rd, 2016 Sarah Cheses

```
ו) שמות פרק א
                                             א ואַלה שמות בּנִי יִשׂרָאֵל הַבַּאִים מצרַיִמָה אַת יַעקב אִישׁ וּבִיתוֹ בָּאוּ:
                                                                                                ב ראובן שמעון לֵוִי וִיהוּדָה:
                                                                                                     יַשַּשֹּׁכַר זבוּלן וּבִניַמן:
                                                                                                      ד דן ונפתלי גד ואשר:
                                                    ה ויהי כל-נפש יצאי <sup>יֶרֶךְ</sup> יעקב שבעים נפש ויוֹסף היה במצרים:
                                                                                   וַ וַיַּמַת יוֹסֵף וכַל-אחַיו וכל הַדוֹר הַהוּא:
                                          ובני ישראל פרו וישרצו וירבו ויעצמו במאד מאד ותמלא הארץ אתם ד:
                                                                 ּח ויַקּם מֶּלֶּרְ חַדַשׁ על-מִצרָיִם אשר לֹא-יָדַע אַת-יוֹסֶף:
                                                                ַט וַיאמר אל-עמוֹ הְנָה עם בּנִי יִשׂרָאֵל רַב ועצום ממנו :ט וַיאמר אל-עמוֹ
יִ הַבָּה נַתחַכּמַה לוֹ פּן-יִרבּה והַיָה כִּי-תַקראנַה מַלחַמַה ונוֹסַף גַּם-הוּא על-שׂנאַינוּ ונַלחַם-בַּנוּ ועלַה מַן-הַאַרץ:
             יא וַיָשִׁימוּ עלַיו שַׁרִי מִסִּים למַען ענתוֹ בּסָבלתַם וַיִּבן ערֵי מִסכּנוֹת לפַרעה את-פַּתם ואת-רַעמסָס:
                                                        יב וכַאשֵר יְעַנוּ אֹתוֹ כֵּן יִרְבֵּה וְכֵן יִפְרץ וַיָּקצו מִפְּנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
                                                                                 ויעבדו מצרים את-בּני ישׂראל <sup>בְּפֶּ</sup>רֶרְ:
   ָיד וַיְּמֶּרֶרוּ אֶתֹּ-ֹחַיֵּיהֶם בַּעֵבֹדָה ֹקָשָׁה בְּחֹמֶר וּבִלְבֵנִים וּבְּכָל-עבֹדָה בַּשָּׁדֵה אֵת כָּל-עבֹדָתם אֵשַׁר-עבִדוּ בָהם
                                                                                                                        בפרך:
```

### 1) Exodus 1

I Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, who came into Egypt with Jacob; every man came with his household: 2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah; 3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; 4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. 5 And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls; and Joseph was in Egypt already. 6 And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. 7 And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them. {P}

8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. 9 And he said unto his people: 'Behold, the people of the children of Israel are too many and too mighty for us; to come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there befalleth us any war, they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land.' It Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh store-cities, Pithom and Raamses. 12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And they were adread because of the children of Israel. 13 And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour. 14 And they made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field; in all their service, wherein they made them serve with rigour.

```
יטוּ וַיֹּאמֶר <sup>מֶלֶ</sup>רְ מִצְרַיִם לַמְיַלְּדֹת הָעִבְרִיּת אֲשֶׁר שֵׁם הָאַחַת שִׁפְּרָה וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית פּוּעָה
יז וַיִּאמֶר בְּיֵלֶּדְכֶן אֶת-הָעִבְרִיּוֹת וּרְאִיתֶן עַל-הָאָבְנָיִם אִם-בֵּן הוּא וַהֲמִּתֶּן אֹתוֹ וְאִם-בַּת הִוּא וָחָיָה
יז וַתִּירֶאן הַמְיַלְּדִת אֶת-הָאֱלֹהִים וְלֹא עָשׂוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֲלֵיהֶן מֶּלֶּרְ מִצְרָיִם וַתְּחַיֶּין אֶת-הַיְלְדִי
יִט וַתִּאמֵרְ בְּמְיֵלְדֹת אֶל-פַּרְעֹה כִּי לֹא כַנָּשִׁים הַמִּצְרְיּת הָעִבְרִיּת כִּי-חָיוֹת הֵנָּה בְּטֶרֶם תָּבוֹא אֲלֵהֶן הַמְיַלֶּדֶת וְיָלָדוּ
כּא וַיְהִי כִּי-יָרְאוּ הַמְיַלְּדֹת אֶת-הָאֱלְקִים וַיַּעֲשׁ לָהֶם בָּתִּשְׁלִיכֶהוּ וְכָל-הַבֵּת תְּחַיּוּן
בּב וַיִּצו פַּרְעֹה לְכָל-עַמּוֹ לֵאמֹר כָּל-הַבֵּן הַיִּלֹּדֹד הַיִּאֹרָה תַּשְׁלִיכָהוּ וְכָל-הַבַּת תְּחִיּוּן
```

15 And the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah; 16 and he said: 'When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, ye shall look upon the birthstool: if it be a son, then ye shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.'17 But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men-children alive. 18 And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them: 'Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men-children alive?' 19 And the midwives said unto Pharaoh: 'Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwife come unto them.' 20 And God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty. 21 And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that He made them houses. 22 And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying: 'Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.'

```
2) רש"י על שמות א, טו
:(שפרה. יוֹכֶבֶד, עַל שֵׁם שֶׁמְשַׁפֶּרֶת אֶת הַוָּלָד (שם
.פועה. זוֹ מִרְיָם, שֶׁפּוֹעָה וּמְדַבֶּרֶת וְהוֹגָה לַוָּלָד (שם), <sup>כְּדֶרֶךְ</sup> הַנָּשִׁים הַמְּפַיְּסוֹת תִּינוֹק הַבּוֹכֶה
פועה לִשׁוֹן צִעַקה, כְּמוֹ "כַּיּוֹלֵדָה אֵפָעה" (ישעיה מ"ב
```

### 2) Rashi on Exodus 1:15

שפרה SHIPHRAH — This was Jochebed; she bore this additional name because she used to put the babe after its birth into good physical condition (משפרת) by the care she bestowed upon it (Sotah IIb) PUAH — This was Miriam, and she bore this additional name because she used to call aloud and speak and coo to the babe just as women do who soothe a child when it is crying (Sotah IIb). Pugh has the meaning of crying aloud, as (Isaiah 42:14) "I will cry (אפעה) like a travailing woman

# רש"י על שמות א, כא (3

ויעש להם בתים. בָּתֵּי כְהֻנָּה וּלְוִיָּה וּמַלְכוּת שֶׁקְרוּיִין בָּתִּים, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב: ״לִבְנוֹת אֶת בֵּית ה׳ וְאֶת בֵּית הַּמֶּלֶרְ״ (מלכים א ט׳), כְּהֻנָּה וּלְוִיָּה מִיּוֹכֶבֶד וּמַלְכוּת מִמִּרְיָם. כִּדְאִיתָא בְּמַסֶּכֶת סוֹטָה:

## 3) Rashi on Exodus 1:21

ויעש להם בתים HE MADE THEM HOUSES — houses (dynasties) of the priesthood and the Levites and of royalty which are all termed בתים, "houses", as it is said, (I Kings 9:1) "and Solomon built the house of the Lord and the house of the king": "the house of the Lord" i. e. a dynasty of priests and Levites — from Jochebed (Shifrah); and "the house of the king", i. e. a royal dynasty — from Miriam (Puah), just as it is stated in Treatise Sota

## בראשית פרק יא (4

אַ וַיָּהִי כַל-הַאַרץ שַׂפָה אחַת וּדבַרִים אחַדִים:

בַ וַיָּהִי בּנַסעם מַקדם וַיִּמצאו בַקעה בארץ שנער וַיָּשבוּ שָׁם:

ָג וַיֹּאמרוֹ אִישׁ אל-רֵעהוּ הַבָּה נִלֹבּנָה לְבֵּנִה וֹנָשׂרַפָּה לְשֹׁרְפָּה וַתּהִי לָהם הַלֹּבַנָה לאַבן והַחַמֵּר הַיַה לָהם לַחמר.

ץ עַל-פּוֹי כָּל-הָאָרֵץ :דַוּאמִרוּ הָבָה נִבְנֵה-לָנוּ עִיר וּמִגֹּדָּל וְרֹאשׁוֹ בַשָּׁמִיִם וְנַעשֵׁה-לָנוּ שֵׁם פֵּןְ-נָפּוּץ עַל-פּוֹיַ כָּל-הָאָרֵץ

הַ וַיַּרֵד ה לְרָאֹת אַת-הָעיר וְאַת-הַמְּגדָּל אֲשֵׁר בָּנוּ בּנֵי הָאָדָם:

ו וַיאמר ה הֱן עָם אַחָד וִשָּׁפָּה אַחַת לְכַלָּם ווֹזָה הַחְלָּם לַעשׁוֹת ועַתָּה לֹא-יִבָּצֵר מֶהַם כֹּל אַשַׁר יָזָמוּ לַעשׂוֹת:

ָדָ הָבָה וַנְבָלָה שָׁם שִּׁפָּתָם אֲשֵׁר לֹא יִשָּׁמְעוּ אִישׁ שַּׁפַּת רֵעהוּ זְיִבָּה וַנָבָלָה שָׁם שִּׁפָּתָם אֱשֵׁר לֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ אִישׁ שַּׁפַּת רֵעהוּ זְּי

ַויַחִדּלוּ לְבַנֹת הָעִיר יַרָּפָנֵי כָל-הָאָרֵץ וַיַּחִדּלוּ לְבַנֹת הָעִיר יַר.

ָט עַל-כֵּן קַרָא שְׁמָהּ בָּבֶל כִּי-שָׁם בָּלַל ה שְׂפַת כָּל-הָאָרֶץ וּמִשָּׁם הֱפִיצָם ה עַל-פְּנֵי כָּל-הָאָרֶץ

## 4) Bereishit 11

- I And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech.
- 2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.
- 3 And they said one to another: 'Come, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly.' And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.
- 4 And they said: 'Come, let us build us a city, and a tower, with its top in heaven, and let us make us a name; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.'
- 5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.
- 6 And the LORD said: 'Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is what they begin to do; and now nothing will be withholden from them, which they purpose to do.
- 7 Come, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.'
- 8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city.
- 9 Therefore was the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there aconfound the language of all the earth; and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the ear

# רש"י על בראשית יא, א (5

ודברים אחדים בָּאוּ בְעֵצָה אַחַת וְאָמְרוּ לֹא כָּל הֵימֶנּוּ שֶׁיָבוֹר לוֹ אֶת הָעֶלְיוֹנִים, נַעֲלֶה לָּרָקִיעַ וְנַעֲשֶׂה עִמּוֹ מִלְחָמָה דָּבָר אַחֵר עַל יְחִידוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם דָּבָר אַחֵר וּדְבָּרִים אֲחָדִים-אָמְרוּ אַחַת לְאֶלֶף ותרנ"ו שָׁנִים הָרָקִיעַ מִתְמוֹטֵט כְּשֵׁם שׁעשַׂה בִּימִי הַמַּבּוּל, בּוֹאוּ ונַעשֹׁה לוֹ סמיכוֹת (ב"ר):

# 5) Rashi on Genesis 11:1

ודברים אחדים AND ONE SPEECH — They came with one plan, saying: "He has no right to select the heavenly regions exclusively for Himself; let us ascend to the skies and make war upon Him". Another explanation (of דברים אחדים which is taken to mean "words referring to "One"): words regarding the Sole Being (God) in the Universe. Another explanation of דברים חדים is: they spoke "דברים חדים "sharp" words; they said, "Once in every one thousand six hundred and fifty six years (the period that elapsed from the Creation to the Flood) there is a heaven-shaking, just as there was in the days of the Flood. Come. then, and let us make supports for it" (Genesis Rabbah 38).

### 6) העמק דבר על בראשית יא, א-ד

**שפה אחת.** זה גרם לחטא א׳. היינו שיסכימו לשבת כולן בקבוץ אחד. וזהו נגד רצון ה׳ שאמר שרצו בארץ ורבו בה היינו להתהלך לארכה ולרחבה כי לשבת יצרה:

**פן נפוץ על פני כל הארץ.** אמנם יש להבין מה חששו אם יצאו כמה לארץ אחרת. ומובן שזה היה שייך לדברים אחדים שהיה ביניהם ובאשר אין דעות ב״א שוים חששו שלא יצאו ב״א מדעה זו ויהיו במחשבה אחרת ע״כ היו משגיחים שלא יצא איש מישוב שלהם. ומי שסר מדברים אחדים שביניהם היה משפטו לשריפה כאשר עשו לא״א. נמצא היו דברים אחדים שביניהם לרועץ שהחליטו להרוג את מי שלא יחשוב כדעתם.

#### 6) HaEmek Davar on Bereishit 11:4

One language: This caused one sin, that they agreed to live together in one group. This was against the will of G-d, who said to fill the earth and multiply, to travel its length and width, for it was created to be settled in.

Lest we be spread out on the face of the earth: We must understand why they feared some people leaving for another land. This was certainly related to the "one speech" among them. They feared that since not all human thoughts are identical, if some would leave, they might adopt different thoughts. And so they saw to it that no one left their enclave. Anyone who deviated from the "one speech" that was among them would be sentenced to burning, as it was done with our forefather, Abraham. What emerges is that they decided to kill anyone who did not think as they did.

בראשית ט:א (<sub>7</sub>

 $\mathbf{A}^{\underline{\mathrm{I}}^{!}}$ אַרֶּךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת נֹחַ וְאֶת בָּנָיו וַיִּאמֶר לָהֶם פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמִלְאוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ:

### 7) Genesis 9:1

IAnd God blessed Noah and his sons, and He said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."

#### 8) Pirke DeRabbi Eliezer 24:7

If a person fell and died they paid no attention, but if a brick fell they sat and wept, saying, 'Woe upon us! Where will we get another to replace it?