

The Road to Sinai:

Exodus 15-18 and The People's Adolescence

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1: From praise to doubt

Exodus 15:1

(1) Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to יהוה. They said:

I will sing to יהוה, for He has triumphed gloriously;
Horse and driver He has hurled into the sea.

שמות ט"ו:א'

(א) אָז יָשִׁיר מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־
הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ
לְאֹמֶךָ אֲשִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי־גָאֵה
גָּאֵה סוּס וּרְכֹבֹו רָמָה בַיָּם:

Exodus 15:23-27

(23) They came to Marah, but they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; that is why it was named Marah. (24) And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” (25) So he cried out to יהוה, and יהוה showed him a piece of wood; he threw it into the water and the water became sweet. There [God] made for them a fixed rule; there they were put to the test. (26) [God] said, “If you will heed your God יהוה diligently, doing what is upright in God’s sight, giving ear to God’s commandments and keeping all God’s laws, then I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians, for I יהוה am your healer.” (27) And they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; and they encamped there beside the water.

שמות ט"ו:כ"ג-כ"ז

(כג) וַיָּבֹאוּ מֵרְתֵהּ וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לִשְׁתֹּת
מֵי־מַרְיָה כִּי מָרִים הֵם עַל־כֵּן קָרְא־
שְׁמָהּ מַרְיָה: (כד) וַיִּלְגְּוּ הָעָם עַל־מֹשֶׁה
לֵאמֹר מַה־נִּשְׁתַּהּ: (כה) וַיִּצְעַק אֶל־
יְהוָה וַיֹּרְהוּ יְהוָה לְעֹץ וַיִּשְׁלֶךְ אֶל־הַמַּיִם
וַיִּמְתְּקוּ הַמַּיִם שָׁם שָׁם לֹא תֵק וּמִשְׁפָּט
וְשָׁם נִסָּהוּ: (כו) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱ־מֹשֶׁה
תִּשְׁמָע לְקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְהִישָׁר
בְּעֵינֶיךָ תַעֲשֶׂה וְהִאֲזַנְתָּ לְמִצְוֹתַי
וְשָׁמַרְתָּ כָּל־חֻקֵי כָל־הַמִּחְלָה אֲשֶׁר־
שָׁמַרְתִּי בְּמִצְרַיִם לֹא־אֲשִׁים עֲלֶיךָ כִּי אֲנִי
יְהוָה רַפְּאֶה: {ס} (כז) וַיָּבֹאוּ
אֵילִמָּה וְשָׁם שְׁתַּיִם עֶשְׂרֵה עֵינֹת מַיִם
וְשִׁבְעֵים תְּמָרִים וַיַּחֲנוּ־שָׁם עַל־הַמַּיִם:

Rashi on Exodus 15:22:1

AND MOSES CAUSED [ISRAEL] TO JOURNEY — He made them journey against their own will, because the Egyptians had adorned their horses with ornaments of gold and silver and with precious stones, and the Israelites were finding these in the sea. Greater, indeed, was the booty they obtained at the Red Sea than the booty they had brought out of Egypt — as it is said (Song 1:11) “Circlets of gold (the booty of the Sea) will we make thee together with the studs of silver” (which we brought forth from Egypt) (Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 12:36). On this account he was compelled to make them journey on against their will.

2. The gift of guidance

Rashi on Exodus 15:25:1

לֹא שָׁם שָׁם לֹא HERE HE MADE FOR THEM [A STATUTE AND AN ORDINANCE) — At Marah He gave them a few sections of the Torah in order that they might engage in the study thereof; viz., the sections containing the command regarding the sabbath, the red heifer and the administration of justice (Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 15:25; Sanhedrin 56b).

Ramban on Exodus 15:25:1

...Now Rashi's expression, "He gave them... sections of the Torah so that they might engage in the study thereof," indicates that Moses did inform them of these statutes and that he taught these statutes to them, [saying], "In the future, the Holy One, blessed be He, will command you so," in the same way as Abraham our father learned the Torah. **The purpose of it was to make them familiar with the commandments and to know if they would accept them *with joyfulness and with gladness of heart*. This was "the trial" of which Scripture says, *and there He tried them*, and he [Moses] informed them that G-d would further command them the precepts of the Torah. This is the intent of the verse, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Eternal thy G-d... and wilt give ear to His commandments, which He will command you [in the future]."**

In line with the plain meaning of Scripture, when the Israelites began coming into *the great and dreadful wilderness... thirsty ground where there was no water*, Moses established customs for them concerning how to regulate their lives and affairs *until they come to a land inhabited*... It may mean that **Moses instructed them in the ways of the wilderness, namely to be ready to suffer hunger and thirst and to pray to G-d, and not to murmur. He taught them ordinances whereby they should live, to love one another, to follow the counsel of the elders, to be discreet in their tents with respect to women and children, to deal in a peaceful manner with the strangers that come into the camp to sell them various objects. He also imparted moral instructions, i.e., that they should not become like bands of marauders who do all abominable things** and have no sense of shame... Here too the expression, [*a statute and an ordinance*], does not refer to the statutes and ordinances of the Torah, but rather to **the customs and ways of civilized society**... And Scripture says, *and there he tried them*, in order to inform us that he [Moses] led them by such a road on which there was no water, and he brought them to a place where the waters were bitter in order to test them, even as Scripture says, *And He afflicted thee, and suffered thee to hunger; And that He might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end*.

3: Raising a people

John Adams to James Warren, April 1776:

..They are advancing by slow but sure steps, to that mighty Revolution, which You and I have expected for Some Time. **Forced Attempts to accelerate their Motions, would have been attended with Discontent and perhaps Convulsions....** The Royal Proclamation, and the late Act of Parliament, have convinced the doubting and confirmed the timorous and wavering. The two Proprietary Colonies only, are still cool. But I hope a few Weeks will alter their Temper. I think it is now the precise Point of Time for our Council and House of Representatives, either to proceed to make such Alterations in our Constitution as they may judge proper, or to Send a Petition to Philadelphia for the Consent of Congress to do it. It will be considered as fresh evidence of our Spirit and Vigour, and will give Life and Activity and Energy to all the other Colonies. **Four Months ago, or indeed at any Time Since you assumed a Government, it might have been disagreeable and perhaps dangerous. But it is quite otherwise now...** if you are so unanimous, in the Measure of Independency and wish for a Declaration of it, now is the proper Time for you to instruct your Delegates to that Effect. **It would have been productive of Jealousies perhaps and Animosities, a few Months ago, but would have a contrary Tendency now. The Colonies are all at this Moment turning their Eyes, that Way.** Vast Majorities in all the Colonies now see the Propriety and Necessity of taking the decisive Steps, and those who are averse to it are afraid to Say much against it. And therefore Such an Instruction at this Time would comfort and cheer the Spirits of your Friends, and would discourage and dishearten your Enemies.

Kari Kampakis, “Prepare Your Child for the Road, Not the Road for the child”

...it’s hard not to be a Snowplow Parent in an age of Snowplow Parenting. It’s hard not to clear every obstacle in our children’s path so they can be happy now – getting what they want, when they want it – and buck the current trends. But when we clear the road for a child, we make their life too easy. We don’t allow them to build life-coping skills they’ll need down the road to handle life’s hard realities.

Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Bewilderments*, xix – xx:

In the Book of the Wilderness, it is the people who continuously and turbulently *speak*. God’s words... are now spoken mostly in response to the people’s speech....In the Book of the Wilderness, *yetziat Mitzraim* – the issuing forth from Egypt – is registered within the subjective consciousness of the Israelites; and within their own *issues*, their troubled utterances.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, “Looking Up”:

A fundamental principle of leadership is being taught here. A leader must empower the team. They cannot always do the work for the group; they must do it for themselves. But the leader must, at the same time, give them the absolute confidence that they can do it and succeed. The leader is responsible for their mood and morale... In today’s terminology, a leader needs emotional intelligence. Daniel Goleman, best known for his work in this field, argues that one of the most important tasks of a leader is to shape and lift the mood of the team: ‘Great leaders move us. They ignite our passion and inspire the best in us. When we try to explain why they are so effective, we speak of strategy, vision, or powerful ideas. But the reality is much more primal: Great leadership works through the emotions.’

4. Internal distinctions

Exodus 16:1-3

(1) Setting out from Elim, the whole Israelite community came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt. (2) In the wilderness, the whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. (3) The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of יהוה in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, when we ate our fill of bread! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to starve this whole congregation to death."

שמות ט"ז:א-ג'

(א) ויסעו מאילם ויבאו כל־עדת בני־ישראל אל־מדבר־סין אשר בין־אילם ובין סיני בקמשה עשר יום לחודש השני לצאתם מארץ מצרים: (ב) (וילינו) [וילונו] כל־עדת בני־ישראל על־משה ועל־אהרן במדבר: (ג) ויאמרו אליהם בני ישראל מי־יתן מותנו ביד־יהוה בארץ מצרים בשבתנו על־סיר הבשר באכלנו לחם לשבע כִּי־הוצאתם אתנו אל־המדבר הזה להמית את־כָּל־הקהל הזה ברעב: {ס}

Or HaChaim on Exodus 16:3:2

בשר, "while we sat by the flesh-pots, etc." This verse clearly shows that the people who uttered this slander were not the ones who had performed slave labour, but had been overseers. The labourers had never had anything to eat but unleavened bread. Possibly the speakers were the well known Datan and Aviram who were known for their wickedness.

5. A slave's meal

העמק דבר על שמות ט"ז:ג:ב'

...והנה אמרו בשבתנו על סיר הבשר באכלנו לחם לשובע. שהיינו אוכלים בשר בשעת אכילת לחם לשובע אז אכלו בשר אחר המזון לתענוג. מה שאין כן במדבר. אע"ג שהיה להם בשר הרבה גם זולת השליו שהרי הוציאו צאן ובקר מקנה כבד מאד אבל לא השתמשו בבשר לתענוג אלא לשובע. היינו שהיו צולים ואוכלים כדרך אנשי המחנה שממלאים נפשם במה שבידם. והנה לצורך עיקר התלונה על משה ואהרן לא נצרכו להזכיר כלל בשר שהרי אינם תובעים כ"א לחם לשובע אבל הזכרת בשר היה נראה שבאים בלבכם לקבול גם על זה שאינם מוצאים במדבר סיר הבשר בריוח כיד המלך שהיה במצרים להאכילם אחר עבודתם סיר הבשר מה שאין כן דרך האדם כשהוא ברשות עצמו לזבוח צאנו ובקרו כדי לאכול בשר וכדאי בחולין דפ"ד א' אשר יצוד וגו' למדה תורה ד"א שלא יאכל אדם בשר אלא בהזמנה הזאת. היינו בצידה מן ההפקר. וזה היה ברמז תלונה על הקב"ה שאינו מספיק להם בשר מן ההפקר אפילו להעדה שיצאו מרצון ה' ית'. אבל לא היתה תלונה זו מפורש יוצא מפיהם כמו שהיתה תלונת המתאווים במדבר. ויבואר עוד לפנינו בהמשך הפרשה:

6: The freeman's meal

Exodus 16:4-5

(4) And יהוה said to Moses, “I will rain down bread for you from the sky, and the people shall go out and gather each day that day’s portion—that I may thus test them, to see whether they will follow My instructions or not. (5) But on the sixth day, when they apportion what they have brought in, it shall prove to be double the amount they gather each day.”

שמות ט"ז:ד-ה

(ד) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הַנְּגִי מִמַּטֵּיר לְכֶם לֶחֶם מִזֶּה־הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיֵּצֵא הָעָם וַיִּקְטֹּף דְּבַר־יּוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ לְמַעַן אֲנַסְנוּ הַיִּלָּךְ בְּתוֹרַתִי אִם־לֹא: (ה) וַהֲיֵה בְיָוֶם הַשְּׁשִׁי וַהֲכִינוּ אֶת־אֲשֶׁר־יִבְיְאוּ וַהֲיֵה מִשְׁנֵה עַל אֲשֶׁר־יִקְטֹף יוֹם וַיּוֹם:

Rashi on Exodus 16:4:1

THE THING OF THE DAY ON ITS DAY — what is needed for a day’s eating shall they collect on its (that) day, and they shall not today collect what will be needed tomorrow (cf. Mekhilta d’Rabbi Yishmael 16:4).

Rashi on Exodus 16:4:2

THAT I MAY TRY THEM WHETHER THEY WILL WALK IN MY LAW — whether they will observe the commands associated with it: viz., that they should not leave any overnight, and that they should not go out on the Sabbath to collect it.

Ibn Ezra on Exodus 16:4:3

[THAT I MAY PROVE THEM.] For they will daily need Me.

Ramban on Exodus 16:4:3

..Rather, the intent [of the trial mentioned here] is as He said, *Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not; that He might afflict thee, and that He might try thee, to do thee good at thy latter end.* [The manna itself] was a trial to them, since they had no food in the wilderness and were without recourse to any sustenance except the manna, which they knew not from before and had never heard of from their fathers. Each day’s quantity came down on its day, and they were eagerly desirous for it. Yet with all this, they hearkened to walk after G-d to a place of no food...

Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Bewilderments*, xvi - xvii

The skeptical question *Man hi?* – “*What is it?*” – gives its name to the manna...it is the question, and not the answer, that names the unknowable substance. This manna, this “What-stuff,” remains enigmatic – it may be a source of sensual variety and pleasure, but at the same time it remains ungratifying, imaginatively *indigestible*.

The forty-year *midbar* journey was intended as a difficult odyssey of self-understanding, a reconnaissance mission into the human heart. The manna is essential wilderness food... precisely in its unknowability it will open a new kind of knowledge... The manna is an intimate encounter with the otherness that issues from God’s mouth... A substance that tells of the unknown leads the consumer to *see through* its flimsy appearance. This is the essential *midbar* experience: the unknowable leads the traveler to an imaginative knowledge, which refigures, transfigures the world.

7: Food and questioning

Exodus 16:11-32

(11) spoke to Moses: (12) “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Speak to them and say...(14) When the fall of dew lifted, there, over the surface of the wilderness, lay a fine and flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. (15) When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” —for they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “That is the bread which יהוה has given you to eat...(19) And Moses said to them, “Let no one leave any of it over until morning.” (20) But they paid no attention to Moses; some of them left of it until morning, and it became infested with maggots and stank. And Moses was angry with them. (21) So they gathered it every morning, as much as each one needed to eat; for when the sun grew hot, it would melt. (22) On the sixth day they gathered double the amount of food, two *omers* for each; and when all the chieftains of the community came and told Moses, (23) he said to them, “This is what יהוה meant: Tomorrow is a day of rest, a holy sabbath of יהוה. Bake what you would bake and boil what you would boil; and all that is left put aside to be kept until morning.” (24) So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered; and it did not turn foul, and there were no maggots in it. (25) Then Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a sabbath of יהוה; you will not find it today on the plain. (26) Six days you shall gather it; on the seventh day, the sabbath, there will be none.” (27) Yet some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found nothing. (28) And יהוה said to Moses, “How long will you all refuse to obey My commandments and My teachings? (29) Mark that it is יהוה who, having given you the sabbath, therefore gives you two days’ food on the sixth day. Let everyone remain in place: let no one leave the vicinity on the seventh day.” (30) So the people remained inactive on the seventh day. (31) The house of Israel named it manna; it was like coriander seed, white, and it tasted like wafers in honey. (32) Moses said, “This is what יהוה has commanded: Let one *omer* of it be kept throughout the ages, in order that they may see the bread that I fed you in the wilderness when I brought you out from the land of Egypt.”

שמות ט"ז:י"א-ל"ב

(יא) וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: (יב) שְׁמַעְתִּי אֶת-תְּלוּנַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל דִּבְרֵי אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר... (יד) וַתַּעַל שִׁכְבַּת הַטֶּל וְהַיָּה עַל-פְּנֵי הַמִּדְבָּר דֶּק מְחֹסֶפֶס דֶּק כַּפֶּךָ עַל-הָאָרֶץ: (טו) וַיֵּרְאוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל-אֶחָיו מִן הוּא כִּי לֹא יָדְעוּ מַה-הוּא וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֲלֵהֶם הוּא הַלֶּחֶם אֲשֶׁר נָתַן יְהוָה לָכֶם לֶאֱכֹלָה... (יט) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ אֶל-יֹתֵר מִמֶּנּוּ עַד-בֹּקֶר: (כ) וְלֹא-שָׁמְעוּ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּתְרוּ אַנְשִׁים מִמֶּנּוּ עַד-בֹּקֶר וַיֵּרָם תּוֹלְעִים וַיִּבְאֵשׁ וַיִּקְצַף עֲלֵהֶם מֹשֶׁה: (כא) וַיִּלְקְטוּ אֹתוֹ בַּבֹּקֶר בַּבֹּקֶר אִישׁ כַּפִּי אֹכְלוֹ וְחָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְנָמַס: (כב) וַיְהִי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי לָקְטוּ לָהֶם מִשְׁנֵה שְׁנֵי הָעֹמֶר לְאֶחָד וַיְבֹאוּ כָּל-גִּישִׁי אֵי הָעֵדָה וַיִּגִּידוּ לְמֹשֶׁה: (כג) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם הוּא אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה שְׁבַתוֹן שְׁבַת-קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה מִחֹר אֵת אֲשֶׁר-תֹּאפֹּא אִפּוֹ וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-תִּבְשְׁלוּ בְשָׁלוֹ וְאֵת כָּל-הָעֵדָף הַנִּיחֹו לָכֶם לְמִשְׁמַרַת עַד-הַבֹּקֶר: (כד) וַיִּגִּיחוּ אֹתוֹ עַד-הַבֹּקֶר כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה וְלֹא הִבְאִישׁ וְרַמָּה לֹא-הִיְתִיָּה בּוֹ: (כה) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֲכַלְהוּ הַיּוֹם כִּי-שְׁבַת הַיּוֹם לַיהוָה הַיּוֹם לֹא תִמְצָאֵהוּ בַשָּׂדֶה: (כו) שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תִּלְקַטְהוּ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שְׁבַת לֹא יִהְיֶה בּוֹ: (כז) וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי יֵצְאוּ מִן-הָעֵם לִלְקֹט וְלֹא מִצָּאוּ: {ס} (כח) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה עַד-אַנָּה מֵאַנְתֶּם לִשְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתַי וְתוֹרוֹתַי: (כט) רְאוּ כִּי-יְהוָה נָתַן לָכֶם הַשְׁבַּת עַל-כֵּן הוּא נָתַן לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי לָחֶם יּוֹמִים שָׁבוּ וְאִישׁ תַּחֲתָיו אֶל-יֵצֵא אִישׁ מִמְּקוֹמוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי: (ל) וַיִּשְׁבַּתוּ הָעָם בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי: (לא) וַיִּקְרְאוּ בֵּית-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-שְׁמוֹ מֶן וְהוּא כְּזֶרַע גֹּד לְבוֹ וְטַעְמוֹ כְּצַפִּיחַת בְּדָבָשׁ: (לב) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה מִלֹּא הָעֹמֶר מִמֶּנּוּ לְמִשְׁמַרַת לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם לְמַעַן וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶת-הַלֶּחֶם אֲשֶׁר הָאֲכַלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בַּמִּדְבָּר בְּהוֹצִיאִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם:

8: Human concerns

Exodus 17:8-13

(8) Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. (9) Moses said to Joshua, “Pick some troops for us, and go out and do battle with Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill, with the rod of God in my hand.” (10) Joshua did as Moses told him and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. (11) Then, whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; but whenever he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. (12) But Moses’ hands grew heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur, one on each side, supported his hands; thus his hands remained steady until the sun set. (13) And Joshua overwhelmed the people of Amalek with the sword.

שמות י"ז:ח'-י"ג

(ח) וַיָּבֹא עֲמֹלֵק וַיִּלָּחֶם עִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרִפְדִּים׃ (ט) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּחַר־לָנוּ אַנְשִׁים וְצֵא הִלָּחֶם בְּעֲמֹלֵק מִחֹר אֲנֹכִי נֹצֵב עַל־רֹאשׁ הַגְּבֻעָה וּמִטָּה הַיְּאֵלֹהִים בְּיָדִי׃ (י) וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר־לוֹ מֹשֶׁה לְהִלָּחֶם בְּעֲמֹלֵק וּמֹשֶׁה אָחֲרָיו וְחֹזֵר עָלָיו רֹאשׁ הַגְּבֻעָה׃ (יא) וְהָיָה כַּאֲשֶׁר יָרִים מֹשֶׁה יָדוֹ וַגֵּבַר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכַאֲשֶׁר יִנְיֹחַ יָדוֹ וַגֵּבַר עֲמֹלֵק׃ (יב) וַיִּדְּי מֹשֶׁה כְּבָדִים וַיִּקְחוּ־אָבֹן וַיִּשְׂמוּ תַחְתָּיו וַיֵּשֶׁב עָלֶיהָ וְאַחֲרָיו וְחֹזֵר תָּמְכוּ בְּיָדָיו מִזָּה אֶחָד וּמִזָּה אֶחָד וַיְהִי יָדָיו אֲמוּנָה עַד־בֹּא הַשָּׁמֶשׁ׃ (יג) וַיַּחְלֹשׂ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶת־עֲמֹלֵק וְאֶת־עַמּוֹן לְפִי־חֶרֶב׃ {פ}

Exodus 18:13-23

(13) Next day, Moses sat as magistrate among the people, while the people stood about Moses from morning until evening. (14) But when Moses’ father-in-law saw how much he had to do for the people, he said, “What is this thing that you are doing to the people? Why do you act alone, while all the people stand about you from morning until evening?” (15) Moses replied to his father-in-law, “It is because the people come to me to inquire of God. (16) When they have a dispute, it comes before me, and I decide between one party and another, and I make known the laws and teachings of God.” (17) But Moses’ father-in-law said to him, “The thing you are doing is not right; (18) you will surely wear yourself out, and these people as well. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. (19) Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You represent the people before God: you bring the disputes before God, (20) and enjoin upon them the laws and the teachings, and make known to them the way they are to go and the practices they are to follow. (21) You shall also seek out, from among all the people, capable individuals who fear God—

שמות י"ח:י"ג-כ"ג

(יג) וַיְהִי מִמָּחָרֵת וַיֵּשֶׁב מֹשֶׁה לְשַׁפֵּט אֶת־הָעָם וַיַּעֲמֵד הָעָם עַל־מֹשֶׁה מִן־הַבֹּקֶר עַד־הָעֶרֶב׃ (יד) וַיֵּרָא חֲתָנוֹ מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־הוּא עֹשֶׂה לָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר מֶה־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹשֶׂה לָעָם מִדּוּעַ אַתָּה יוֹשֵׁב לְבַדְּךָ וְכָל־הָעָם נֹצֵב עָלֶיךָ מִן־בֹּקֶר עַד־עֶרֶב׃ (טו) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְחֲתָנּוֹ כִּי־בָא אֵלַי הָעָם לְדַרְשׁ אֱלֹהִים׃ (טז) כִּי־יִהְיֶה לָּהֶם דְּבָר כָּבֹד בָּא אֵלַי וְשִׁפְטֵתִי בֵּין אִישׁ וּבֵין רֵעֵהוּ וְהוֹדַעְתִּי אֶת־חֻקֵּי הַיְּאֵלֹהִים וְאֶת־תּוֹרֹתָיו׃ (יז) וַיֹּאמֶר חֲתָנוֹ מֹשֶׁה אֵלָיו לֹא־טוֹב הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹשֶׂה׃ (יח) נָבֵל תִּבְלֶגְמִי גַם־אַתָּה גַם־הָעָם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר עִמָּךְ כִּי־כָבֵד מִמֶּךָ הַדְּבָר לֹא־תוּכַל עֲשֹׂהוּ לְבַדְּךָ׃ (יט) עַתָּה שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלִי אִיעָצֶךָ וַיְהִי אֱלֹהִים עִמָּךְ הֲיֵה אַתָּה לָעָם מוֹל הַיְּאֵלֹהִים וְהִבֵּאתָ אֶתָּה אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים אֶל־הַיְּאֵלֹהִים׃ (כ) וְהִזְהַרְתָּה אֶתְהֶם אֶת־הַחֻקִּים וְאֶת־הַתּוֹרֹת וְהוֹדַעְתָּ לָהֶם אֶת־הַדְּרֹתַי יִלְכוּ בָהּ וְאֶת־הַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּ׃ (כא) וְאַתָּה תַחֲנֹה מִכָּל־הָעָם מִכָּל־חֵיל יִרְאֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲנָשֵׁי אַמָּת שְׂנֵאִי בְּצַע וְשִׁמְתָה עֲלֵהֶם שָׂרֵי אֶלְפִים שָׂרֵי מֵאוֹת שָׂרֵי חֲמִשָּׁים וְשָׂרֵי עֶשְׂרֹת׃ (כב) וְשִׁפְטוּ אֶת־הָעָם בְּכָל־עֵת וְהָיָה כָל־הַדְּבָר הַגָּדוֹל בְּבִיאוֹ אֵלָיִךְ וְכָל־הַדְּבָר הַקָּטָן יִשְׁפְטוּהֶם וְהָקַל מֵעֲלֶיךָ וּנְשֵׂאוּ אֶתָּה׃ (כג) אִם אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה תַעֲשֶׂה וְצוּוּהָ אֱלֹהִים וַיְכַלְתָּ עַמְּךָ וְגַם כָּל־הָעָם הַזֶּה עַל־מִקְמוֹתָם יָבֹא בְשָׁלוֹם׃