

# Zera Shimshon

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Published Mantua 1778\*

## Chapter XXXI: Emor (Lev. 21:1–24:23)

### Essay 7. The shofar, Jacob, and the secret of the seventh month

*This essay discusses Psalms 81:4–8: “Sound the shofar on the month, on the new moon for our festival. For it is a law for Israel, a ruling of the God of Jacob—He appointed it in Joseph [Yehoseph] for a testimony, when He went forth against the land of Egypt, the speech of one that I did not know I heard. “I relieved his shoulder of the burden, his hands were freed from the basket. In distress you called and I rescued you; I answered you from the secret place of thunder I tested you at the Waters of Meribah. Selah.”*

**פְּסוּק** "תקעו בחודש שופר" וכו'. יש לדקדק למה הנזכיר כאן תיבת "בחודש", לא הנה לו לומר אלא "תקעו שופר בכסה ליום חגנו". ועוד למה אמר "בחודש" בהעלם הה"א הידיעה הנסתרת תחת פתח הבי"ת.

There is a verse: **“Sound the shofar on *the* month, on the new moon for our festival.”<sup>1</sup> One should examine carefully why the word *va’chodesh* [בחודש] [“on *the* month”] is mentioned here—it should have said simply “Sound the shofar on the new moon for our festival.” Furthermore, why does it say *va’chodesh* [בחודש] with the definite article [*heh ha’yediah*] hidden beneath the *patach* vowel of the *beit*?**

In other words, why is it written בחודש [*va’chodesh*] instead of בהחודש [*be’ha’chodesh*]? This contraction combining what would be a two-letter prefix of הַ [“on the”] into a single-letter prefix כַּ reflects standard Hebrew grammar, but the author develops a homiletical interpretation from it.

וְיִשָּׂא לומר שידוע שהקב"ה נָדַי לזכות את ישראל נָתַן לָהֶם שִׁבְעַת מִצְוֹת בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי לְרִמּוֹז לָהֶם שְׁיִנְצָלוּ אֶת נַפְשָׁם מִשְׁבַּע מְדוּרֵי גֵהִינָם וּמִשְׁבַּע שְׁמוֹת הַטּוֹמְאָה שֶׁיֵּשׁ לִיצַר הָרַע שֶׁהֵם הַשּׁוֹרֵשׁ שֶׁל שְׁבָעִים אוֹמוֹת, וְאֶדְרָבָא יִזְכּוּ לְשִׁבְעַת שְׁמֵחוֹת וּלְשִׁבְעַת חוֹפּוֹת הַמְּזוּמָנוֹת לְצַדִּיקִים, וְלָכֵן בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי נִזְקָא צָנָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַל שְׁבִיתָתָם מִמְּלָאכָה בְּשִׁלְשָׁה זְמָנִים דְּהִינּוּ רֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה כִּיפּוּר סוֹכּוֹת, וְעוֹד יֵשׁ בָּהֶם אַרְבַּע מִצְוֹת, שׁוֹפָר סוֹפָה לוֹלֵב וְעֵינָיו שֶׁל יוֹם הַכִּיפּוּרִים שְׁבִין הַכּל הֵם שְׁבָעָה.

**One may say that it is well known that the Holy One, Blessed be He, to confer merit upon Israel, gave them seven commandments in the seventh month. This was to hint to them**

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. 81:4.

that their souls would be saved from the seven chambers of Gehenna<sup>2</sup> and from the seven names of impurity that the evil inclination possesses<sup>3</sup>—which are the root of the seventy nations. Rather, they would merit seven joys<sup>4</sup> and seven wedding canopies prepared for the righteous,<sup>5</sup> evoking the *Sheva Brachot* recited at a wedding, further linking the seventh month to a “wedding” between G-d and Israel. Therefore, specifically in the seventh month, He commanded Israel to rest from labor on three occasions, namely Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot, and in addition there are four commandments among them: shofar, sukkah, lulav, and the affliction of Yom Kippur — making seven in total.

In rabbinic and Kabbalistic literature, the number seven often signifies completeness within the natural or spiritual order (e.g., the seven days of creation). Seventy represents an expansion of that structure into multiplicity, most notably the seventy nations and seventy languages, symbolizing the full range of humanity.

ועקר כְּנוּנַת הַשּׁוֹפָר הוּא לְעוֹרֵר זְכוּתוֹ שֶׁל יַעֲקֹב, כְּדֵאִיתָא בְּזֵהָר שֶׁהַקּוֹל כְּלוּל מֵאֵשׁ מִיַּם וְרוּחַ וּמְעוֹרֵר אֶת יַעֲקֹב הַכְּלוּל מִשְׁלֹשָׁה אַבּוֹת אַבְרָהָם מִיַּם יִצְחָק אִשׁ וְיַעֲקֹב רֵיחַ, וְהַקּוֹל עוֹלָה עַד כִּפְסֵי הַכְּבוֹד וּמְעוֹרֵרֵן רַחֲמִים שֶׁהֵם בְּחִינַת יַעֲקֹב.

**The essential intention of the shofar is to awaken the merit of Jacob, as stated in the Zohar that the sound is composed of fire, water, and wind, and awakens Jacob who is composed of the three patriarchs — Abraham is water, Isaac is fire, and Jacob is wind. The sound rises to the Throne of Glory and arouses mercy, which is the aspect of Jacob.**<sup>6</sup>

וְיָדוּעַ שֶׁיַּעֲקֹב"ב עוֹלָה בְּגִימְטְרִיָּא ז' הַיּוֹת, וְזֶה סוּד "וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּעַר שֶׁבַע". וְעוֹד שֶׁזְכוּתוֹ שֶׁל יַעֲקֹב חָבִיב לָן שֶׁהוּאֵיל שֶׁהִיָּה לּוֹ צַעַר גִּידוּל בָּנִים כַּמָּה טְרַחַת טְרַחַת לְתוֹעֵלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, עַד שֶׁכָּתַב הַשֵּׁ"י שֶׁכְּנוּנַת יַעֲקֹב בְּרַדְתּוֹ לְמִצְרַיִם בְּשֶׁבַעִים נֶפֶשׁ דְּנִקְא הִיָּתָה לְכָלוּל כָּל הַגְּלוּיּוֹת בְּגִלוּת מִצְרַיִם שֶׁבָּאוּ שָׁם שֶׁבַעִים אוֹמוֹת מִחַמַּת הָרָעֵב. וּבְאַמַּת שָׂאֵם לֹא הָיוּ חוֹטְאִים כַּעֲגָל נִתְקַנְּנוּ לְגַמְרֵי וְהָיָה לָהֶם חִירוֹת גְּמוּר.

**It is well known that the name Jacob (יעקב) (Ya'akov) in Gematria is 182, which is equivalent to seven times the Gematria of the Tetragrammaton, 26, and this is the esoteric secret of the verse, “Jacob left Beer-sheba, and set out for Haran.”<sup>7</sup> Be'er means a well or source, so the verse can be read as meaning “Jacob emerges from a source of seven.”**

**Furthermore, the merit of Jacob is precious to us because he endured the anguish of raising children and took so many pains for the benefit of Israel, to the extent that the Shach (on the Torah in parashat Vayigash) wrote that Jacob’s intention in descending to Egypt with seventy souls specifically was to encompass all the exiles within the Egyptian exile, since the**

<sup>2</sup> Sotah 10b; Eruvin 19a: “Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Gehenna has seven names, and they are as follows: She’ol, Avadon, Be’er Shachat, Bor Shaon, Tit HaYaven, Tzalmavet, and Eretz HaTachtit.”

<sup>3</sup> Sukkah 52a: Evil, uncircumcised, impure, enemy, stumbling block, stone, and hidden one.

<sup>4</sup> Arachin 13b says we should read Ps. 16:11 (“שֶׁבַע שְׂמֵחוֹת”) (*sovah smachot*) (“fullness of joy”) as “שֶׁבַע שְׂמֵחוֹת” (*sheva smachot*) (“seven joys”). See also Lev. Rabbah 30:2 and Num. Rabbah 15:11.

<sup>5</sup> Bava Batra 75a.

<sup>6</sup> Zohar III:99b–100b.

<sup>7</sup> Gen. 28:10.

seventy nations had come there on account of the famine.<sup>8</sup> In truth, had they not sinned with the Golden Calf, they would have been completely rectified and would have attained full freedom.<sup>9</sup>

וְזֶהוּ שֶׁכָּתוּב הַמְגֵלָה עֲמוּקוֹת (אוֹפֵן י"ז) שֶׁמִּשָּׁה זָכָה בְּמַתַּן תּוֹרָה לְמִדְרֵיגַת יַעֲקֹב שֶׁכָּשֵׁם שֶׁיַּעֲקֹב נִחְלַק לְשִׁבְעִים נַפְשׁ בֶּן נִתְפָּשֵׁט קוּלוֹ שֶׁל מִשָּׁה בְּמַתַּן תּוֹרָה לְשִׁבְעִים נִיצוּצוֹת שֶׁל שִׁבְעִים אוֹמוֹת, וְזֶהוּ "כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבֵית יַעֲקֹב" רִצָּה לוֹמַר כֹּה יִהְיֶה אֲמִירָה שֶׁלָּהּ שֶׁמִּתְפָּשֵׁט הַקּוּל לְבֵית יַעֲקֹב. שֶׁהִיוּ שִׁבְעִים נַפְשׁ וְכֵן יִתְפָּשֵׁט עֲתָה לְשִׁבְעִים נִיצוּצִין שֶׁל שִׁבְעִים אוֹמוֹת עַכ"ל.

**This is what the *Megaleh Amukot* (Ofen 17) wrote, that Moses merited at the giving of the Torah the spiritual level of Jacob. Just as Jacob was divided into seventy souls, so too the voice of Moses at the giving of the Torah spread out into seventy sparks corresponding to the seventy nations.** That is, for every “power” held by the seventy nations, there was a corresponding “spark” of holiness within the seventy souls of Israel.

**This is the meaning of “Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob,”<sup>10</sup> meaning, thus shall your speech be, spreading out as a voice to the house of Jacob, which consisted of seventy souls, and so now it shall spread into seventy sparks of the seventy nations.<sup>11</sup>**

אָבֵל עִם כָּל זֶה בְּשִׁגְגָתוֹ שֶׁל יַעֲקֹב גָּרַם לָנוּ הַגְּלוּת בְּעוֹלָם הַנְּהַיָּנוּי וְהַיְיִסוּרִין, דְּאִיתָא בְּפִרְקֵי דְרַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר (פֶּרֶק ל"ו) בְּשִׁאֲמַר יַעֲקֹב לַעֲשׂוֹ "כֹּה אָמַר עַבְדְּךָ יַעֲקֹב" אָמַר לוֹ הַקָּב"ה לֹא דִיִּיךָ שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ אֶת עֲצָמְךָ קֹדֶשׁ חוּל, אֱלָא שֶׁאֲמַרְתִּי "וְרַב יַעֲבֹד צִעִיר" וְאִתָּה אֲמַרְתָּ "עַבְדְּךָ יַעֲקֹב", הִנֵּיךָ כְּדַבְּרִיךָ יִהְיֶה הוּא יִמְשׁוֹל עָלֶיךָ בְּעוֹלָם הַנְּהַיָּנוּי וְאִתָּה תִּמְשׁוֹל עָלָיו בְּעוֹלָם הַבָּא עַכ"ל.

**However, with all this, it was through Jacob’s inadvertent error of calling himself Esau’s servant, and in appearing to bow before him, that he caused us exile in this world, poverty and suffering.<sup>12</sup> For it is stated in Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer (chapter 37) that:**

**When Jacob said to Esau, “thus says your servant Jacob,”<sup>13</sup> the Holy One, Blessed be He said to him: “Is it not enough for you that you have made profane that which is holy? I have said, ‘And the elder shall serve the younger,’<sup>14</sup> but you said, ‘your servant Jacob.’ By your life, as you have spoken, so shall it be: he shall rule over you in this world, and you shall rule over him in the World-to-Come.**

- Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer, chapter 37

<sup>8</sup> Rabbi Shabtai ben Meir HaCohen (1621–62), European posek (decisor) and commentator on the Talmud, called “the Shach” after his work, *Sifte Cohen* (שְׁפֵתֵי כֹהֵן), a famous commentary on the Yoreh De’ah section of the Shulchan Aruch.

<sup>9</sup> Avodah Zarah 5a.

<sup>10</sup> Ex. 19:3.

<sup>11</sup> Rabbi Natan Shapira (1585-1633), Polish rabbi and Kabbalist, *Megaleh Amukot* (1637).

<sup>12</sup> This portrayal of Jacob’s conduct as a “sin” reflects a Midrashic or Kabbalistic critique, rather than the plain meaning of the Biblical text. Such sources often attribute subtle shortcomings even to the patriarchs in order to explain later historical or spiritual consequences.

<sup>13</sup> Gen. 32:5.

<sup>14</sup> Gen. 25:23.

ועוד איתא בזוהר על פסוק "והוא עבר לפנייהם וישתחו ארצה" וכי, חס ושלום שיעקב השתחוה לעשו שהיה ממש כאל אחר, אלא והוא עבר קאי על השכינה שעבר לפנייהם והשתחוה יעקב לשכינה ולא לעשו עכ"ל.

**It is further stated in the Zohar regarding the verse:**

**“He passed before them and he bowed low to the ground seven times until he was near his brother”<sup>15</sup>—Heaven forbid that Jacob bowed to Esau, who was truly like another god, but rather “He passed” refers to the Shechinah which passed before them. Jacob bowed to the Shechinah and not to Esau.**

- Zohar I:171b, parashat Vayishlach 8:117–119.

ולכן אמר הפתויב "תקעו בחדש שופר", וכתב בחדש בה"א הידיעה הנסתרת בפתח הבי"ת, כלומר באיזה חדש בחדש השביעי שסודו להנצל משבעה קליפות ומשבע אומות מקלותן ובפרטותן, ובמה בשופר שמעורר זכותו של יעקב וזכות שבעים נפש שהוריד למצרים כדי להחליש פח שבעים אומות.

**Therefore, the verse says “sound the shofar on *the* month,” writing “on *the* month” with the definite article hidden in the *patach* of the *beit*—meaning, which month? The seventh month, the one most saturated with holiness, whose secret is to be saved from the seven *klipot* and from the seven Canaanite nations in their totality and particularity, the spiritual root of the seventy nations of the world. With what? With the shofar, which awakens the merit of Jacob and the merit of the seventy souls he brought down to Egypt in order to weaken the power of the seventy nations.**

ואף על פי שיעקב השתחוה לעשו וגרם לנו הגלות ב"עבדך יעקב", עם כל זה זה היום הוא חג לנו מפני שלא גרם לנו אלא הגלות המגולה של העולם הזה התלוי בהנאת הגורף, אבל מה שתלוי בנפש דהיינו ההשתחוויה לא היתה כף באמת שהרי בלבב היתה לשכינה.

**Even though Jacob apparently bowed to Esau and caused us exile, through his saying “your servant Jacob,” nevertheless this day is a festival for us, because he caused us only the revealed, external exile of this world, which pertains to bodily existence. But that which pertains to the soul, namely the bowing, was not truly so, for in his heart it was directed toward the Shechinah.**

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<sup>15</sup> Gen. 33:3.

וְזָהוּ "בַּפֶּסֶה" בְּשִׁבִיל מַה שֶׁהִנָּה מְכוּסָה מִהִבְרִיאוֹת עַל כֵּן הוּא יוֹם חֲגֻגוֹ, שִׁישׁ לְנוֹ שִׁמְחָה גְדוֹלָה שְׂזוּכוֹתוֹ שֶׁל יַעֲקֹב יַעֲמֹד לְנוּ וְלָכֵן אָנוּ עוֹשִׂים יוֹם טוֹב לְשִׁמְחַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ, וְעוֹד שֶׁאֶפִּילוֹ בְּמַה שֶׁאָמַר "עֲבֹדָה יַעֲקֹב" לֹא אָבֵד שְׁלִיטָתוֹ אֲלֵא בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וְלֹא בְּעוֹלָם הַבָּא, וְזָהוּ הַשִּׁמְחָה "בַּפֶּסֶה" דְּהֵינּוּ הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא שֶׁהוּא נִכְסָה הוּא חֲגֻגוֹ שֶׁאָנוּ נִשְׁלוֹט עֲלֵיהֶם.

We now turn to the end of the verse, “Sound the shofar on *the* month, on the new moon for our festival.” As a noun, the word כֶּסֶה is understood in the context of this verse to mean “New Moon,” with many festivals occurring at mid-month.<sup>16</sup> However, as a verb, it means “he covered” or “he concealed.”<sup>17</sup> *Zera Shimshon* now analyzes the word based on this alternate meaning.

**This is the meaning of “at the concealment”—because of what was concealed from people, that Jacob’s bowing and language were only outward appearances, while his inner intention remained directed toward the Divine. Therefore it is the day of our festival, for we have great joy that the merit of Jacob shall stand by us, and therefore we celebrate a holiday for the joy of the soul. Furthermore, even in saying “your servant Jacob,” he lost his dominion only in this world and not in the World-to-Come. This is the joy of “at the concealment,” meaning the World-to-Come which is hidden, which is our festival, when we shall rule over them.**

וְכַתּוּב הַפְּלִי יִקָּר בְּפָרְשֵׁת בְּלֶק שֶׁהַחֲשׁוּבִים וְהַצְדִּיקִים נִקְרָאִים בְּשֵׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַפְּחוּתִים וְשְׂאִינָם צְדִיקִים נִקְרָאִים בְּשֵׁם יַעֲקֹב. וְעַל זֶה אָמַר "כִּי חֹק לְיִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא" כְּלוּמַר עֲכָשׁוּ שֶׁאֶמְרָנוּ שֶׁהַגְּלוּת בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה הוּא מוּכָרָה וְאֶפִּילוֹ הַצְדִּיקִים אֵינָם יְכוּלִים לִישֵׁב בְּשִׁלְוַת בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, אִם כֵּן לִגְבִי דִידְהוּ הוּא כְּמוֹ חֹק בְּלִי טַעַם שֶׁהָרִי מִן הַדִּין הַתְּלַמִּידִי חֲכָמִים פְּטוּרִים מִן הַמַּסִּים כְּדַכְתִּיב "מִנְדָּה בְּלוֹ וְהִלָּךְ לֹא שְׁלִיט לְמַרְמָא עֲלֵיהֶם", וְכֵן מִן הַרְאִי הוּא שֶׁיִּהְיֶה פְּטוּרִין מִן הַגְּלוּת שֶׁהוּא כְּמוֹ מַסּ וְכְמוֹ שֶׁהָיָה שֶׁבֵט לֹא בְּמַצְרַיִם, וְעוֹד שֶׁאֵין לָהּ בֵּין חוֹרֵין אֲלֵא מִי שֶׁעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה, וְעוֹד שֶׁהַגְּלוּת הוּא בְּמִקּוֹם הַגְּהֵינָם וְלֹא שֶׁיִּיָּד כָּלֵל בְּצְדִיקִים, אֲלֵא שֶׁכָּה רְצוֹנוֹ שֶׁל הַקַּב"ה לְכַפּוֹל שְׂכָרָם לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, אֲבָל גְּבִי אוֹתָם שֶׁאֵינָם צְדִיקִים וְנִקְרָאִים בְּשֵׁם יַעֲקֹב מִן הַדִּין הוּא שֶׁיִּסְבְּלוּ הַגְּלוּת כְּדִי לְהַנְצִיל מְדִינָה שֶׁל גְּהֵינָם, וְזָהוּ מִשְׁפָּט לְאַלֵּהֵי יַעֲקֹב.

**The *Kli Yakar* wrote in parashat Balak (23:14) that the distinguished and the righteous are called by the name Israel, while the lesser ones who are not righteous are called by the name Jacob. Regarding this, it says “for it is a statute for Israel, a ruling of the G-d of Jacob.”<sup>18</sup> That is, now that we have said that exile in this world is inevitable, and even the righteous cannot dwell in tranquility in this world, then for them it is like a statute without reason. That is because by rights Torah scholars are exempt from taxes as it is written, “We further inform you that for any priest, Levite, singer, gatekeeper, temple servant, or other servant of this House of G-d, you have no authority to impose tribute, poll tax, or land tax upon them.”<sup>19</sup> Similarly, it would be fitting that they be exempt from exile, which is like a tax, as was the tribe of Levi in Egypt.**

<sup>16</sup> Pesach starts on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, Sukkot begins on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei, Purim falls on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Adar.

<sup>17</sup> Used as a noun, the word כֶּסֶה means “new moon,” while used as a verb, it means “to conceal.” At the beginning of each lunar month, the Moon passes directly between the Earth and Sun, placing the side illuminated by the Sun facing away from Earth. The unlit, dark side of the Moon faces Earth, and thus it is “concealed” in the solar glare.

<sup>18</sup> Ps. 81:5.

<sup>19</sup> Ezra 7:24; Yoreh De’ah 243:2.

Furthermore, there is no free person except one who engages in Torah,<sup>20</sup> and moreover exile stands in place of Gehenna,<sup>21</sup> which does not apply at all to the righteous. Rather, it is the will of the Holy One, Blessed be He, to double their reward in the World-to-Come. But as for those who are not righteous, who are called by the name Jacob, it is by right that they endure exile in order to be saved from the judgment of Gehenna, and this is “a ruling of the G-d of Jacob.”

"עדות ביהוסף שמו" אמרו ו"ל בא גבריאל ולימדו שבעים לשון, וקשה מה צורך הנה שילמדו שבעים לשון הלא הנה די שילמדו הלשון מצרי כדי שיגבר עם פרעה, שמתחלה לא הנה יודע כמו שפרש רש"י על פסוק "ושם אתנו נער עברי", אפילו לשוננו אינו מכיר וכו'.

“He appointed it in Joseph [*Yehoseph*] [יהוסף] for a testimony.”<sup>22</sup> [The rabbis] of blessed memory said that Gabriel came and taught him seventy languages.<sup>23</sup> The question is, what need was there to learn seventy languages? Would it not have sufficed to teach him the Egyptian language so that he could speak with Pharaoh. At first, he did not even know [Egyptian], as Rashi explained on the verse “A Hebrew youth was there with us,”<sup>24</sup> “he did not even recognize our language.”<sup>25</sup>

אבל הואיל שבמצרים היו כל שבעים אומות כנ"ל כדי שיוסף ישלוט על כלם, משום הכי הוצרך ללמוד כל השבעים לשון ובזה יכול להיות מושל על כל ארץ מצרים ולהחליש פחם, כמו שכתב העשרה מאמרות שכל סוד מכירת יוסף הנה כדי שישפאל וישלטו באומות.

But since all seventy nations were in Egypt, as mentioned above, so that Joseph could rule over all of them, therefore he needed to learn all seventy languages. That mastery of languages symbolizes dominion over nations. Thus, he could become ruler over all the land of Egypt and weaken their power, as the *Asara Ma'amarot* wrote,<sup>26</sup> that the entire secret of the sale of Joseph was so that Israel would rule over the nations.

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<sup>20</sup> Pirkei Avot 6:2.

<sup>21</sup> Rabbinic sources sometimes describe exile and suffering in this world as serving in place of punishment in Gehenna, allowing for atonement and purification to occur during one's lifetime rather than in the afterlife.

<sup>22</sup> Ps. 81:6.

<sup>23</sup> Sotah 36b.

<sup>24</sup> Gen. 41:12.

<sup>25</sup> Rashi on Gen. 41:12.

<sup>26</sup> Rabbi Menachem Azaria da Fano (“Rema M’Pano”) (1548–1620), Italian Kabbalist and commentator on the Talmud. *Asara Ma'amarot* (“Ten Utterances”) was published in Venice in 1597.

ובנה יובן המדרש על פסוק "ויהי מקץ" הַדָּא הוּא דְּכִתִּיב "קִץ שָׁם לְחֻשָׁךְ". וְקִשָּׁה מֵהוּ הַדָּא הוּא דְּכִתִּיב וְכוּ', אֲלֵא לְפִי שְׁבִיחַ הַחֲלוּם הֵיטָה סִיבָה לִיעֲקֹב לִירֵד לְמִצְרַיִם וְכוּנְתוּ הֵיטָה לְבַטֵּל כָּל הַגְּלוּיּוֹת שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל, מִשּׁוּם הֵכִי קָאָמַר הַדָּא הוּא דְּכִתִּיב "קִץ שָׁם לְחֻשָׁךְ" שְׁנֵה הַגְּלוּיּוֹת הֵי הָ לֹו לְהִיּוֹת קִץ שֶׁל הַחֻשָׁךְ שֶׁל כָּל הַגְּלוּיּוֹת. וְעוֹד מֵה שְׁאָמְרוּ ז"ל שִׁיּוֹסֵף לֹא הֵי כֹּוּל לְלַמּוֹד שְׁבָעִים לְשׁוֹן עַד שֶׁהוֹסִיפוּ לוֹ הַ"א" אֶפְדְּכִתִּיב "עֲדוֹת בֵּיהוֹסֵף".

**With this, one can understand the Midrash on the verse:**

**“And it came to pass at the end of two years’ time, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile.”<sup>27</sup> This is what is written: “He sets an end to darkness.”<sup>28</sup> . . . He set a time for Joseph, how many years he would spend in the darkness in prison. When the end came, Pharaoh dreamed a dream.**

- Gen .Rabbah 89:1

**The difficulty is: what is the connection between the two verses, such that the Midrash says “this is what is written” after the first before introducing the second?<sup>29</sup> Rather, since through this dream there came about the reason for Jacob to descend to Egypt, and his intention was to nullify all the exiles of Israel, therefore it says “this is what is written: He set an end to darkness,” for this exile was meant to be the end of the darkness of all the exiles.**

**Furthermore, regarding what the Sages said:**

Pharaoh’s astrologers said: Would you appoint a slave . . . to rule over us? He said to them: I perceive royal characteristics in him [that he was not born a slave]. They said to him: If so, [that he is a child of royalty], he should know the seventy languages [as all kings’ children learn them].

[The angel] Gabriel then came and taught him the seventy languages, but he could not learn [all of them]. [Gabriel then] added one letter, [a *heh*, to Joseph’s name] from the name of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and then he learned, as it is stated: “He appointed it in Joseph [*Yehoseph*] for a testimony, when He went forth against the land of Egypt, the speech of one that I did not know I heard.” The next day, every language that Pharaoh spoke with him, he answered him.

- Sotah 36b

Thus, we learn that Joseph could not learn the seventy languages until the letter *heh* was added to [his name], as it is written “a testimony for Yehoseph.” I.e., while Joseph is typically spelled יוֹסֵף [pronounced *Yoseph*], in this verse it is spelled with a *heh* added, יְהוֹסֵף [*Yehoseph*].

<sup>27</sup> Gen. 41:1.

<sup>28</sup> Job 28:3.

<sup>29</sup> Our version of the Midrash has the second verse following immediately after the first, without the words “this is what is written.”

קִשָּׁה לְמָה דְּנֻקָּא הֵיא. אֵלָא לְפִי שְׁהֵא"א הִיא רִמְזוּ לְגִלּוּת שְׁכִינָה פְּנֻדָּע "נִפְלָה עֲטָרַת רֵאשִׁינוּ" נִפְלָה ה"א, וַיִּדְעֵת יוֹסֵף הַשְּׁבָעִים לְשׁוֹנוֹת הָיָה כְּדֵי שְׁיִשְׁלוּט בַּשְּׁבָעִים אוֹמוֹת שְׁהָיוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם כְּנִ"ל וַיְמָה תְּהִיָּה תְּקוּמָה לְה"א שְׁלֵא תִפּוֹל עוֹד בְּגִלּוּיּוֹת אֲחֵרוֹת.

**The question is: why specifically the letter *heh*? Rather, because the *heh* alludes to the exile of the Shechinah, as is known (Pri Etz Chayyim, Gate of the Midnight Prayer, chapter 3), for the verse, “the crown has fallen from our head,”<sup>30</sup> the feminine tense of the word “fallen,” נִפְלָה, can be interpreted as נִפְלָה ה"א, the *heh* has fallen, with the final *heh* in the Tetragrammaton understood by Lurianic Kabbalah to represent the Shechinah.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the fallen *heh* represents the exile of the Shechinah. Joseph’s knowledge of the seventy languages was in order that he rule over the seventy nations that were in Egypt, as mentioned above, so that the *heh* would rise and not fall again in subsequent exiles.**

וְעוֹד אֵימָא בְּמִדְרָשׁ יִלְקוּט עַל פְּסוּק "וַיִּקְרָא אֲבִרְהֵם שְׁמֵי־הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא ה' יִרְאֶה", אָמַר רַבּוּנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם בְּשַׁעַה שְׁאִמְרַת לִי "קַח־נָא אֶת־בְּנֵךְ הָיָה לִי לְהַשִּׁיב וְכוּ' וְלֹא עָשִׂיתִי כֵן אֵלָא כְּבִשְׁתִּי אֶת יִצְרָי אֲף אֵתָה וְכוּ'. וְעֵי"ש עַל פְּסוּק "וַיִּמָּאֵן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־אֲשֶׁת אֲדֹנָיו", אָמַר לָהּ יוֹסֵף לְמוֹד הוּא הַקַּב"ה לְהִיּוֹת בּוֹחֵר בְּבֵית אֲבָא לְעוֹלָה שְׁמָא אֲבַחֵר לְעוֹלָה וְאִם אֲשַׁמַּע לִידָ אֲהִיָּה פְּסוּל לְקַרְבָּן ע"כ.

**It is further stated in the Midrash Yalkut Shimoni (parashat Vayera, remez 101) on the verse “And Abraham named that site ‘the L-rd will see,’ whence the present saying, “On the L-rd’s mount there is vision.”<sup>32</sup>**

**[Abraham] said: “Master of the Universe, at the time that You said to me, ‘Take now your son,’<sup>33</sup> I could have answered: ‘Yesterday You said to me, “For through Isaac shall your offspring be named,”<sup>34</sup> and now You have said to me, “Take now your son. ” ’ Yet I did not do so; instead, I suppressed my will. May it be Your will that when the children of Isaac come to [the point of] transgressions, You shall remember for them this service and be filled with mercy toward them.”**

- Yalkut Shimoni, parashat Vayera 101:7

**Also, see there, on the verse “And he refused and said to his master's wife”:**

**Joseph said to her: It is the practice of the Holy One, Blessed be He to choose from my father’s house for a burnt offering. Perhaps I will be chosen as a burnt offering, and if I listen to you, I will be disqualified as a sacrifice.**

- Yalkut Shimoni, parashat Vayeshev 145:17

<sup>30</sup> Lam. 5:16.

<sup>31</sup> Chaim Vital, *Pri Etz Chayyim*, Gate of the Midnight Prayer, chapter 3.

<sup>32</sup> Gen. 22:14.

<sup>33</sup> Gen. 22:2.

<sup>34</sup> Gen. 21:12.

נמצינו למדים שאם אברהם לא הנה פובש את יצרו והנה משיב להקב"ה, שמא יצחק לא הנה נעקד ויוסף או לא הנה לו פתחון פה להשיב לאשת פוטיפר למוד הוא, ושמא הנה חס ושלום חוטא ואילו חטא לא היו מוסיפין לו אות אחת משמו של הקב"ה, ואם לא היו מוסיפין לו אות לא הנה לומד שבועים לשון ולא הנה מושל בכל ארץ מצרים ולא הנה מחליש פח הסטרא אחרא.

**We thus learn that had Abraham not suppressed his inclination and had responded to the Holy One, Blessed be He, perhaps Isaac would not have been bound. Then Joseph would have had no opening to respond to Potiphar's wife with the argument "it is the practice of the Holy One, Blessed be He to choose from my father's house for a burnt offering," and perhaps he would have, G-d forbid, sinned with Potiphar's wife. Had he sinned, a letter would not have been added to him from the name of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and had they not added him a letter, he would not have learned the seventy languages, and would not have ruled over all the land of Egypt, and would not have weakened the power of the *Sitra Achra*, "the Other Side," referring to the collective force of spiritual impurity.**

ואיתא במדרש שבשעת תקיעת שופר הקב"ה זוכר לאילו של יצחק. ואם כן אמר הפסוק "עדות ביהוסף שמו", עקידת יצחק היתה לעדות ליוסף לומר לאדונתו וכו' ועל זה זכה "בצאתו על-ארץ מצרים שפת לא-ידעתי אשמע" וכו', "הסירותי מסבל" וכו' שאם לא היו חוטאים בעגל הנה להם חירות לגמרי כנ"ל שהיו מסירים מהם עול הגלות, ואף לאחר שחטאו וקורו להתחייב גלות "בצרה קראת" וכו' דאיתא במדרש עתידין ישראל להיות נאחזין בסבך של צרות אומות העולם וכו' וסופן ליגאל וכו'.

**Also, it is stated in the Midrash that at the time of the shofar sounding, the Holy One, Blessed be He remembers the ram of Isaac.<sup>35</sup> If so, the verse says "He appointed it in Joseph for a testimony," that the binding of Isaac served as a testimony for Joseph to respond to his mistress etc. Through this, he merited "when He went forth against the land of Egypt, the speech of one that I did not know I heard."**

**"I relieved his shoulder of the burden, his hands were freed from the basket."<sup>36</sup> For had they not sinned with the Golden Calf, they would have had complete freedom, as mentioned above, for they would have had the yoke of exile removed from them.**

**Even after they sinned and became liable once more to exile, "In distress you called and I rescued you,"<sup>37</sup> as the Midrash states:**

It teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He showed Abraham our patriarch the ram freeing itself from one thicket and becoming entangled in another thicket. The Holy One, Blessed be He said to Abraham: 'Thus your descendant **Israel is destined to be caught in the thicket of the troubles of the nations of the world**, and drawn from kingdom to kingdom: From Babylon to Media, from Media to Greece and from Greece to Edom. **They will ultimately be redeemed** by the horns of a ram.'

- Lev. Rabbah 29:10

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<sup>35</sup> Lev. Rabbah 29:9.

<sup>36</sup> Ps. 81:7.

<sup>37</sup> Ps. 81:8.