4. They journeyed from Mount Hor by way of the Sea of Reeds to go around the land of Edom, and the spirit of the people grew short on the way. 5. The people spoke against God and Moses: Why did you bring us up from Egypt to die in this Wilderness; for there is no food and no water, and our soul is disgusted with the insubstantial food?”

6. God sent the fiery serpents against the people and they bit the people. A large multitude of Israel died. 7. The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against Hashem and against you! Pray to Hashem that He remove from us the serpent.” Moses prayed for the people.

8. Hashem said to Moses, “Make yourself a fiery [serpent] and place it on a pole, and it will be that anyone who was bitten will look at it and live.” 9. Moses made a serpent of copper and placed it on the pole; so it was that if the serpent bit a man, he would stare at the copper serpent and live.

PARAH ADUMAH DEATH OF MIRIAM DEATH OF AARON THE SERPENTS THE SONG THE STORY
V. 6. יתלשת 새 become in the Kal means to send to put something in motion towards a goal. But גלשת in Piel predominantly has the meaning of letting something go, to leave it to its natural way, not to hold it back. Thus גלשת אכתיות (Gen. VIII,7 & 8) יתלשת אכתיות (ibid. XLII,14) יתלשת רגע (Ex. XXII,4) יתלשת רגע (Ex. XIII,17) and elsewhere very frequently. Here too, not God sent serpents, but, let them go, did not keep them back. Hence not גלשת אכתיות, but יתלשת אכתיות, they had always been there in the wilderness, but hitherto they had been kept back by God’s careful protecting Power. Now God withdraws this restraining power, and the serpents of the wilderness follow their natural traits to which the people succumbed. Thus in Deut. III,15 Moses describes the wilderness, through which they had wandered unceasingly through God’s miraculous protective power as מפרש כספראים תבשאר נפש שחק תכף. (‘Who led you through the great and terrible wilderness of poisonous snakes, scorpions and drought’). So that אכתיות are as much a natural appendage of the wilderness as thirst. נפש שחק תכף phonetically related to אכתיות to injure, נפש to burn Ston armour (see Gen. XLII,40).

V. 8. יתלשת 새 is the sole purpose of letting the people see the dangers which dog a person’s steps when he goes through the wilderness, and that it was only the miraculous power of God which had hitherto kept them far from them, so far indeed that they did not even have an idea of their existence. One, who had been bitten had only to fix the image of a serpent firmly in his mind so that he realises that even when God’s gracious power will again keep the serpents at a distance he will remember that the danger is still in existence, dangers that daily and hourly the special care of God lets us escape quite unconsciously. So that every breath we take in our life is made into a fresh gift from God’s might and goodness. Nothing is so thoroughly calculated to conciliate us in the everyday disappointments in life which so easily sting us to impatience — every big prize in the lottery which God has failed to let us win — and to mix them with the exalted feeling of God having saved us, and the joy of being granted a new life, than the conviction of the abyss on the narrow edge of which the whole path of our life treads which the loving Hand of God veils from what would be our giddy sight, nothing so much but to see, to realise the נפש שחק תכף which lurk invisibly on our path, and which only the Almighty Power of God knows how to impose the ban of impotence to injure us on them. Hence the punishment of these serpents, these “ingrates”, as our sages call them, by God removing the protection and the evil which hitherto had made the poisonous tooth of the serpent hidden and innocuous in the wilderness; hence the remedy, that one who had been bitten impresses on his mind to remember permanently the picture of the serpent — יתלשת 새!

V. 9. יתלשת 새 a play on words (Rashi). Jerusalmi ה ר III,9, עיין על שמה את מימי who make a mockery of the passing days. Parshat Noah.
15. AND THE OUTPOURING OF THE VALLEYS. — The Aramaic translation of נַגֵּן, “outpouring, spillage,” is הנֵגֶן. The verse means נַגֵּן — the outpouring of the valleys, נַגֵּן — in that the blood of the Amorites was spilled there, נַגֵּן — for they were hiding there נַגֵּן — because the mountains were high נַגֵּן — and the valley deep and narrow נַגֵּן — and the mountains near one another נַגֵּן — A person can stand on the mountain on one side נַגֵּן — and speak with his friend נַגֵּן — on the mountain on the other side נַגֵּן — The road upon which the Israelites were to travel passes through the valley נַגֵּן — The Amorites said נַגֵּן — “When Israel will enter נַגֵּן — into the valley, in order to pass through נַגֵּן — we will come out of the caves נַגֵּן — that are in the mountains above them נַגֵּן — and we will kill them נַגֵּן — with arrows נַגֵּן — and catapult stones נַגֵּן. — Those hollows, i.e., the caves in which the Amorites hid, were on the mountain on the Moabite side נַגֵּן — and, on the mountain on the side of the Amorites נַגֵּן — there were נַגֵּן — opposite those hollows נַגֵּן — hornlike and breastlike projections נַגֵּן — protruding outwards נַגֵּן. — Once Israel came through the valley נַגֵּן — the mountain of the Land of Israel, נַגֵּן — of the land of the Amorites, which would be incorporated into the Land of Israel, trembled נַגֵּן — like a slavewoman נַגֵּן — who goes out to greet her mistress נַגֵּן. — and came close נַגֵּן — to the side of the mountain of Moab נַגֵּן — and those breastlike projections entered נַגֵּן — into those hollows נַגֵּן — and killed [the Amorites]. נַגֵּן. — And this is the meaning of נַגֵּן — “when it veered to dwell at Ar,” נַגֵּן — that the mountain veered נַגֵּן — from its location נַגֵּן — and came close to the side of Moab נַגֵּן — and joined itself to it נַגֵּן. — And this נַגֵּן — is what is meant by נַגֵּן נַגֵּן — “and leaned against the border of Moab,” נַגֵּן — נַגֵּן — Israel passed by the mountains נַגֵּן — נַגֵּן — and were not aware of these miracles נַגֵּן — but through the well נַגֵּן — which entered [the scene of the miracles].נַגֵּן. — AND FROM THERE TO THE WELL. — From there the outpouring came to the well.נַגֵּן — Question: נַגֵּן — The Holy One, Blessed is He, said נַגֵּן — to Me, and the Proverb says נַגֵּן — “Who will let My children know of these miracles?” נַגֵּן — The Proverb says נַגֵּן — “If you have given bread to a child, נַגֵּן — let his mother know.” נַגֵּן. — After Israel passed through נַגֵּן — the mountains went back to their places נַגֵּן — and the well went down into the valley נַגֵּן — and brought up from there נַגֵּן — the blood of those who were killed נַגֵּן — and arms נַגֵּן — and limbs, נַגֵּן — and took them around the camp נַגֵּן — and said song, i.e., gave praise in appreciation of the miracle.נַגֵּן. — COME UP, O WELL, — From inside the valley, נַגֵּן — and bring up נַגֵּן — whatever you bring up.נַגֵּן — And from where do we know נַגֵּן — and said song, i.e., gave praise in appreciation of the miracle.נַגֵּן — that the well informed them of the miracles? נַגֵּן — For it says in the preceding verse, נַגֵּן — AMALEK CAME, ETC. — [The Torah] juxtaposed this passage that deals with Amalek’s attack against Israel נַגֵּן — with the preceding verse, נַגֵּן — “Is Hashem in our midst or not?” to say, נַגֵּן — “I am always among you נַגֵּן — and ready for all of your needs, נַגֵּן — yet you say, ‘Is Hashem in our midst or not?’” נַגֵּן. — I swear by your lives that as a lesson the dog, Amalek, נַגֵּן — will come and bite you. נַגֵּן. — And you will shout to Me and know where I am.” נַגֵּן — This is compared to a man who put his son on his shoulder and went out on a journey. נַגֵּן. — That son saw an object נַגֵּן — and said, נַגֵּן — “Father, take that object and give it to me.” נַגֵּן. — [The father] gave it to him. נַגֵּן. — And so, too, a second time when the son asked for something, נַגֵּן. — … and so, too, a third time: נַגֵּן. — They encountered a man. נַגֵּן. — He asked Hebrew נַגֵּן — and the dog came and bit him.