

וַיִּסְעוּ מִהַר הָהָר יַם־סוּף לְסָבֵב אֶת־אֶרֶץ אֲדוֹם  
וַתִּקְצַר נַפְש־הָעָם בְּדֶרֶךְ: וַיְדַבֵּר הָעָם בְּאֱלֹהִים וּבְמֹשֶׁה  
לֵמָּה הֵעֲלִיתָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם לָמוֹת בַּמִּדְבָּר כִּי אֵין לָחֶם וְאֵין

ART SCROLL  
CHUMASH

מַיִם וְנַפְשָׁנוּ קָצָה בְּלֶחֶם הַקֶּלֶקֶל: וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה בְּעַם  
אֶת הַנְּחָשִׁים הַשָּׂרְפִים וַיִּנְשְׁכוּ אֶת־הָעָם וַיָּמָת עִם־רַב  
מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל: וַיָּבֹא הָעָם אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמְרוּ חָטָאנוּ כִּי־  
דִּבְרָנוּ בַיהוָה וּבָךְ הַתְּפִלֵּל אֶל־יְהוָה וַיִּסַּר מֵעֲלֵינוּ  
אֶת־הַנְּחָשׁ וַיִּתְּפֵלֵל מֹשֶׁה בְּעַד הָעָם: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־  
מֹשֶׁה עֲשֵׂה לָךְ שָׂרָף וְשִׂים אֹתוֹ עַל־גֹּם וְהָיָה כָּל־  
הַנִּשְׁוֹף וְרָאָה אֹתוֹ נָחַי: וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה נָחַשׁ נְחֹשֶׁת  
וַיִּשְׁמְחוּ עַל־הַגֹּם וְהָיָה אִם־נִשְׁף הַנְּחָשׁ אֶת־אִישׁ  
וְהָבִיט אֶל־נָחַשׁ הַנְּחֹשֶׁת וְחָי:

A New Challenge 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 ADUMA  
DEATH of MIRIAM  
DEATH of AHARON  
THE SERPENTS  
THE SONG  
THE STORY

HIRSH  
CHUMASH

4. And they journeyed from Mount Hor, the way to the Red Sea to go round the land of Edom, and the soul of the people was impatient of the way. 5. And the people spake against God and against Moses: Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread and no water, and

6. Then God let the poisonous serpents loose against the people, and they bit the people and many people of Israel died. 7. Then the people came to Moses and said: We have sinned, for we have spoken against God and against thee; pray unto God that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

8. And God said unto Moses: Make thee a poisonous serpent and set it on a high pole, and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live.

9. And Moses made a copper serpent and set it upon the high pole, and it came to pass if a serpent had bitten any man, when he regarded the copper serpent he lived.

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ABBI SAMON  
PHIL HIRSH

V. 6. וישלח ה' בעם. וישלח in the Kal means to send to put something in motion towards a goal. But שלח in Piel predominantly has the meaning of letting something go, to leave it to its natural way, not to hold it back. Thus ושלח לכם את אחיכם (Gen. VIII,7 & 8) וישלח את היונה, וישלח את העורב (ibid. XLIII,14) ויהי בשלח פרעה (Ex. XXII,4) ושלח את בערה (Ex. XIII,17) and elsewhere very frequently. Here too, not God sent serpents, but, let them go, did not keep them back. Hence not הנחשים שרפים but הנחשים השרפים, 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 unscathed through God's miraculous protective power as הנחש השרף והנורא הנחש שרף ועקרב וצמאון וגו' ("Who led you through the great and terrible wilderness of poisonous snakes, scorpions and drought"). So that הנחשים שרפים are as much a natural appendage of the wilderness as thirst וינשכו, phonetically related to נשק to injure, נשק to burn נשק armour (see Gen. XLI,40).

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V. 8. והיה כל הנשוך וגו', ויאמר ה' וגו'. The serpents' bite had 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 הנחשים השרפים 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 כפניי טובה, 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 — והיה כל הנשוך וראה אותו וחי!

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V. 9. לשון נופל על לשון: נחש הנחשת. עשה דך שרף לא פירש אמר משה עיקרה לא נחש הוא לפיכך III,9 ר"ה Jerusalmi

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ההרים: ויהי מקץ ארבעים יום ויפתח נרו את חלון התבה אשר עשה: וישלח את העורב ויצא וישב עד יבשת המים מעל הארץ: וישלח את היונה מאתו לראות הקלו המים מעל פני האדמה: ולא מצאה היונה מנוח לכתף רגלה ותשב אליו אל התבה פימים על פני כל הארץ וישלח ידו ויקחה ויבא אתה אליו אל התבה: ויחל עוד שבעת ימים אחרים ויסף שלח את היונה מן התבה: ותבא אליו היונה לעת ערב והנה עלה זית טרף בפיה וידע נרו כי קלו המים מעל הארץ: ויחל עוד שבעת ימים אחרים וישלח את היונה ולא יספה שוב אליו עוד: ויהי באחת ושש מאות שנה

PARSHAT  
NOACH

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RASHI  
CHUKAT

15. AND THE OUTPOURING OF THE VALLEYS. - The Aramaic translation of שָׁפַךְ הַנְּחָלִים, "outpouring, spillage," is אֲשַׁד. The verse means שָׁפַךְ הַנְּחָלִים - the outpouring of the valleys, שָׁנְשָׁפַף שָׁם דַּם אַמּוֹרִיִּים - in that the blood of the Amorites was spilled there, לְפִי שֶׁהָיוּ הַהָרִים גְּבוּהִים - because the mountains there were high וְהַנְּחָל עֲמוּק וְקָצֵר - and the valley deep and narrow, וְהַהָרִים קְמוּיָכִים זֶה לְזֶה - and the mountains near one another. אִדָּם עוֹמֵד עַל הַהָר מִזֶּה - A person can stand on the mountain on one side וְיַדְבֵּר עִם חֲבֵרוֹ - and speak with his friend בְּהָר מִזֶּה - on the mountain on the other side. The Amorites were to travel passes through the valley. וְהַדֶּרֶךְ עוֹבֵר בְּתוֹךְ הַנְּחָל - The Amorites said: בְּשִׁיכְנוֹסוֹ וְיִשְׂרָאֵל - "When Israel will enter into the valley, in order to pass through, נֵצֵא מִן הַמְּעֻרוֹת - we will come out of the caves שְׂבָהֲרִים - that are in the mountains above them, וְנַהַרְגֵם - and we will kill them בַּחֲצִיִּים - with arrows וְהָיוּ אוֹתָן הַנְּקָעִים בְּהָר שֶׁל צַד מוֹאָב - and catapult stones." Those hollows, i.e., the caves in which the Amorites hid, were on the mountain on the Moabite side, וְיָבֵר שֶׁל צַד אַמּוֹרִיִּים - and, on the mountain on the side of the Amorites הָיוּ - there were, בְּמִין קַרְנוֹת וְשָׂדִים - hornlike and breast-like projections בּוֹלְטִין לְחוּץ - protruding outwards. Once Israel came to pass through the valley, הַהָר שֶׁל אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל - the mountain of the Land of Israel, i.e., of the land of the Amorites, which would be incorporated into the Land of Israel, trembled, לְכַשְׁתָּחָה - like a slavewoman הַיּוֹצֵאת לְהַקְבִּיל פָּנֵי גְבֵרְתָּהּ - who goes out to greet her mistress,

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וּנְכַנְסוּ אוֹתָן - and came close לְצַד הָר שֶׁל מוֹאָב - to the side of the mountain of Moab, וְהָרְגוּם - and those breastlike projections entered לְתוֹךְ אוֹתָן נְקָעִים - into those hollows וְהָיוּ - and killed [the Amorites]. And this is the meaning of "אֲשַׁד נָטָה לְשִׁבְתָּ עַר" - "when it veered to dwell at Ar," שֶׁהָהָר נָטָה מִמְּקוֹמוֹ - that the mountain veered<sup>2</sup> from its location וְנִתְקַרְבַּ - and came close to the side of Moab וְנִדְבַק בּוֹ - and joined itself to it. And this is what is meant by "וְנִשְׁעַן לְגִבּוֹל מוֹאָב" - "and leaned against the border of Moab."<sup>3</sup> וְיִשְׂרָאֵל עָלַתְּ עַל הַהָרִים - Israel passed by the mountains וְלֹא יָדְעוּ הַנְּסִיִּים הָאֵלֶּה - and were not aware of these miracles אֲלָא עַל יְדֵי הַבְּאֵר - but through the well שֶׁנִּכְנְסָה לָשָׁם - which entered [the scene of the miracles].<sup>4</sup>

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16. AND FROM THERE TO THE WELL. - From there the outpouring came to the well.<sup>5</sup> How? אָמַר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא - The Holy One, Blessed is He, said, הַמְּשַׁל אוֹמֵר - "Who will let My children know of these miracles?" The proverb says, "If you have given bread to a child, let his mother know."<sup>6</sup> - "אִם נָתַתָּ פֶת לְתִינוּק, לֹא תִחַר שְׂעָבָרוֹ" - After [Israel] passed through, the mountains went back to their places, וְהַבְּאֵר יָרְדָה לְתוֹךְ הַנְּחָל - and the well went down into the valley וְהָעֵלְתָה מִשָּׁם - and brought up from there דַּם הַהָרוּגִים - the blood of those who were killed וְיָמּוּלִיכְתָן סָבִיב הַמַּחֲנֶה - and took them around the camp. וְיִשְׂרָאֵל רָאוּ - Israel saw וְאָמְרוּ שִׁירָה - and said song, i.e., gave praise in appreciation of the miracle.<sup>7</sup>

17. COME UP, O WELL, - from inside the valley, and bring up whatever you bring up.<sup>8</sup> And from where do we know שֶׁהַבְּאֵר הוֹדִיעָה - that the well informed them of the miracles? For it says in the preceding verse,

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RASHI  
BSHALACH

8. [The Torah] juxtaposed this passage that deals with Amalek's attack against Israel with the preceding verse, "Is HASHEM in our midst or not?" to say, "I am always among you and ready for all of your needs, yet you say, 'Is HASHEM in our midst or not?' I swear by your lives that as a lesson the dog, Amalek, will come and bite you. And you will shout to Me and know where I am." This is compared to a man who put his son on his shoulder and went out on a journey. That son saw an object and said, "Father, take that object and give it to me." [The father] gave it to him. And so, too, a second time when the son asked for something, and so, too, a third time. They encountered a man. The son said to [the man], "Have you seen Father?" His father said to him, "Do you not know where I am?" and the dog came and bit him.<sup>1</sup>

