

**THE TARGUM OF ONKELOS
ON THE BOOK OF SHEMOTH,
OR EXODUS**

*English Translation by J.W. Etheridge
with Minor Updates by Aran Ya'aqub Younan-Levine
Bibliotheca Aramaica
<http://aramaica.org/>*

[In the Pentateuch the first chapter of Exodus begins the Thirteenth Section of the Law with the initial SHEMOTH, or Names.]

I. And these are the names of the sons of Israel who came into Mizraim with Jakob; (each) man with the men of his house they came in: Reuben, Shimeon, Levi and Jehudah, Issakar, Zebulon and Benyamin, Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. And all the souls that came forth from the thigh of Jakob were seventy souls, with Joseph who was in Mizraim.

And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation; but the sons of Israel increased and propagated, and became great and very mighty, and the land was filled with them.

But a new king arose over Mizraim who did not hold valid (or confirm) the decree of Joseph. And he said to his people, Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more numerous and stronger than we: come, let us deal wisely by them, lest they multiply, and it be that should war happen to us they join themselves with our enemies, and break forth in the war against us, and go up from the land. And they appointed over them evildoing governors (shiltonin) to afflict them in their labors. And they builded cities of treasure houses for Pharaoh, Pithom, and Raamsas. But by as much as they afflicted them, so they increased and waxed strong, and the Mizraee had vexation on account of the sons of Israel; and the Mizraee made the sons of Israel serve with rigor, and embittered their lives with hard labor, in clay and in brick, and in all labor of the field, -all the work which they wrought, they made them do with hardship.

And the king of Mizraim spake to the midwives of Jewesses, (Yehuditha,) of whom the name of the one was Shiphra, and the name of the second Puvah; and he said, When you do the office of the midwife among the Jewish women, and you look upon the childbirth, if it be a son, you shall kill him; but if a daughter, let her live. But the midwives feared before MarYah, and did not act as the king of Mizraim had bidden them, but preserved the sons alive. And the king of Mizraim called the midwives said to Pharaoh, It is because the Jewesses are unlike the Mizraite women; they are cunning, and give birth before the midwives come to them. And MarYah did good to the midwives; and the people multiplied and became strong. And because the midwives feared before MarYah He made for them houses. But Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, Every son who is born to the Jews you shall throw into the river, and every daughter you shall keep alive.

II. And a man of the house of Levi went and took a daughter of Levi (to wife). And the woman conceived, and bare a son; and she saw that he was good, and concealed him three months. But not being able to hide him longer, she took an ark of reed, and covered it with bitumen and pitch, and laid the child within it, and set it in the river upon the brink of the stream.[1] And his sister stationed herself at a distance, to know what would be done to him.

And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash at the river, and her damsels walked on the river's

bank; and she saw the ark in the flood,[2] and reached out her arm and took it. And opening, she saw the child; and, behold, the infant wept. And she had compassion on him and said, This is one of the children of the Jehudaeae. Then spake his sister to the daughter of Pharaoh, Shall I go and call a nurse-woman of the Jehudaeae who will suckle the child for thee? And the daughter of Pharaoh said to her, Go; and the maiden went, and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee they recompense. And the woman took the child and suckled him. And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became to her a son, and she called his name Mosheh, saying, Because I drew him out from the water.

And it was in those days when Mosheh had grown that he went out to his brethren and beheld their servitude. And he saw a Mizraite man smite a man, a Jehudai, (one) of his brethren. And he turned this way and that, and saw that there was no man; and smote the Mizraite, and buried him in the sand. And he went out the second day, and, behold, two men, Jehudaeen contended. And he said to the guilty one, Why did you strike your companion? But he said, Who set you a chief man and judge over us? Will you who speak so kill me, as you killed the Mizraya? And Mosheh was afraid, and said, Surely the thing is known. And Pharaoh heard that thing, and sought to kill Mosheh; and Mosheh fled from before Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian.

And he sat by a well; and the prince (rabba) of Midian had seven daughters; and they came and drew and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. But the shepherds came and drave them away; and Mosheh arose and rescued them, and watered the flock.

And they came to Reuel their father; and he said, What is this, that ye have come so quickly to-day? And they said, A man, a Mizraya, delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and also drew for us and watered the flock. And he said to his daughters, And where is he? wherefore have you left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread. And Mosheh was willing to dwell with the man; and he gave Zipporah his daughter unto Mosheh. And she bare a son; and he called his name Gershom; for, said he, I am a stranger in a foreign land.

And it was in many of those days: and the king of Mizraim died. And the sons of Israel groaned with the hard service which was upon them; and the cry rose up before the presence of MarYah, from their labor. And their appeal was heard before MarYah; and MarYah remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Izhak, and with Jakob. And the servitude of the sons of Israel was know before MarYah, and MarYah said in His Word, that He would deliver them.

III. And Mosheh tended the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the rabba of Midian, and he led the flock to the place of the best pastures of the wilderness, and came to the mountain on which was revealed the glory of MarYah, unto Horeb. And the Angel of MarYah appeared to him in a flame of fire in the midst of a bush. And he gazed, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, but the bush was not consumed. And Mosheh said, I will now turn and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned up. And MarYah saw that he turned to see, and MarYah called to him from the midst of the bush, and said, Mosheh, Mosheh! And he said, Behold me. And He said, Approach not hither;[3] loose the sandal from thy foot, for the place where thou standest is holy. And He said, I am the God of thy fathers; the God of Abraham, the God of Izhak, and the God of Jakob. And Mosheh bowed with his face; for he was afraid to look up to the glory of MarYah.

And MarYah said, The bondage of My people who is in Mizraim is verily disclosed before Me, and before Me is heard their cry on account of their toils;[4] for their afflictions are disclosed before me; and I have appeared to deliver them from the hand of the Mizraee, and to bring them up from that land,

unto a land good and large, a land producing milk and honey, unto the place of the Kenaanaee, an the Hittae, and the Amoraee, and the Perizae, and the Hivae, and the Yevusae. And now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel ascendeth before Me, and the affliction is also revealed before Me wherewith the Mizraee afflict them. And now, come, I will send thee to Pharaoh, and will bring forth the sons of Israel from Mizraim.

And Mosheh said before MarYah, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh to bring forth the sons of Israel from Mizraim? And He said, Because My Word shall be thy helper: and this shall be the sign that I have sent thee: In thy leading forth of the people from Mizraim you shall do service before MarYah upon this mountain.

And Mosheh said before MarYah, Behold, when I am come to the sons of Israel, and say to them, The God of your fathers hath sent me to you, and they say to me, What is His name? what shall I say to them? And MarYah said unto Mosheh, EHEYEH ASHER EHEYEH. And he said, Thus shalt thou speak to the sons of Israel, EHEYEH hath sent me unto you.

MarYah said moreover to Mosheh, Thus shalt thou speak to the sons of Israel, MarYah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Izhak, and the God of Jakob, hath sent me unto you. This is My Name for ever, and this is My Memorial in every generation and generation. Go and assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, MarYah, the God of your fathers, hath revealed Himself to me, the God of Abraham, Izhak, and Jakob, saying, Remembering I have remembered you, and that which hath been done to you in Mizraim; and I have said that I would bring you up from the bondage of Mizraim to the land of the Kenaanaee, and Hittae, and Emoraee, and the Pherizae, and Hivae, and Jebusae, -to a land producing milk and honey. And they will be obedient to thee,[5] and thou shalt go, thou and the elders of Israel, to the king of Mizraim, and say to him, MarYah, the God of the Jehudae, hath called us;[6] and now let us go, as (for) a journey of three days into the desert, that we may sacrifice before MarYah our God. But it is manifest before Me that the king of Mizraim will not release you, that you may go, not even on account of Him whose power is mighty. But I will send forth the stroke of My power, and will smite the Mizraee with all My miracles which I will perform among them, and afterward they will send you away. And I will give this people to become favorites in the eyes of the Mizraee, and it shall be that when you go you shall not go empty. But you shall demand, a woman of her neighbor and the inmates of her house, articles of silver and of gold and vestments, and put them upon you sons and upon your daughters, and shall make the Mizraee empty.[7]

IV. And Mosheh answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me nor hearken to me: for they will say, MarYah hath no been revealed to thee. And MarYah said to him, What is that which is in thy hand? and he said, A rod. And He said, Cast it to the ground; and he cast it upon the ground, and it became a serpent, and Mosheh fled from before it. And MarYah said to Mosheh, Stretch forth thy hand and seize it by its tail; and he put forth his hand and grasped it, and it became a rod in his hand. That they may believe that MarYah, God of their fathers hath been revealed to thee, that God of Abraham, the God of Izhak, and the God of Jakob. And MarYah said yet to him, Put now thy hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom, and drew it out; and, behold, his hand was white as snow. And He said, Return thy hand into thy bosom. And he returned his hand into his bosom, and drew it out from his bosom, and, behold, it had turned to be as his own flesh. And it shall be, if they will not believe thee nor receive the voice of the first sign, that they shall believe the voice of the latter sign. But if they will not believe either of these two signs, nor receive from thee, take of the water that is in the river, and pour it upon the ground; and the water which thou takest from the river shall become blood upon the ground.

And Mosheh said before MarYah, In entreating, I am not a man who is (well) spoken, neither yesterday nor the day before, and from the time that thou spakest with Thy servant: for I am heavy of speech and of a deep[8] tongue. But MarYah said to him, Who hath appointed the mouth of man, and who hath appointed the mute, or the deaf, or the open-sighted, or the blind? Have not I, MarYah? And now go, and My Word shall be with thy mouth, and I will teach thee what to say. And he said, I beseech MarYah to send by the hand of one who is fit to be sent. And the displeasure of MarYah was kindled against Mosheh; and He said, Is not Aharon the Levite, thy brother, known before Me as one who speaking can speak? and also, behold, he cometh forth to anticipate thee, and will see thee, and rejoice in his heart. And thou shalt speak with him, and put the words in his mouth; and My Word will be with thy mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what to do. And he shall speak for thee with the people, and shall be thy interpreter, and thou shalt be to him a rab; and this staff thou shalt take in thy hand wherewith to work the signs.

And Mosheh went, and returned to Jether his father-in-law, and said to him, I will now go and return to my brethren who are in Mizraim, and see if they still live. And Jether said to Mosheh, Go in peace. And MarYah said to Mosheh in Midian, Go, return to Mizraim; for all the men who sought to kill thee are dead. And Mosheh took his wife and his sons, and made them ride upon the ass, and returned to the land of Mizraim. And Mosheh took the staff with which the miracles had been done before MarYah in his hand. And MarYah said to Mosheh, In thy going to return to Mizraim look to all the wonders that I have appointed by thy hand, and do them before the Pharaoh. But I will obdurate his heart, and he will not send the people away. And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus said MarYah; Israel is My son, My firstborn. And I say unto thee, Let My son go, that he may serve before Me; and if thou refuse to send him away, behold, I will kill thy son, thy firstborn.

And it was in the way, at the place of lodging, that the Angel of MarYah met him, and sought to kill him. And Zipporah took a stone, and circumcised the foreskin of her son, and approached before him, and said, On account of the blood of this circumcision let my husband be given (back) to me. And when he had desisted from him, she said, But for the blood of this circumcision my husband would have been condemned to die.

And MarYah said to Aharon, Go thou to meet Mosheh in the desert. And he went, and met him at the mountain on which was revealed the glory of MarYah, and he kissed him. And Mosheh showed Aharon all the words with which MarYah had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded. And Mosheh and Aharon went and assembled all the elders of the sons of Israel; and Aharon told all the words which MarYah had spoken with Mosheh, and did the signs in the eyes of the people. And the people believed, and understood (heard) that MarYah had remembered the sons of Israel, and that heir slavery was manifest before him; and they bowed, and adored.

V. And afterward Mosheh and Aharon went in, and said to Pharaoh: Thus saith MarYah, the God of Israel, Let My people go, to solemnize a feast (yechagun) before Me in the desert. And Pharaoh said, The name of MarYah is not know to me, that I should hearken to His word to send Israel away. The name of MarYah is not revealed to me, and Israel I shall not release. And they said, The God of the Jehudaeae hath revealed Himself to us; let us now go three days' journey into the desert to sacrifice before MarYah our God, lest He come upon us with death or with slaughter. And the king of Mizraim said to them, Why, Mosheh and Aharon, do you hinder the people from their works? Go to your employment. And Pharaoh said, Behold now, the people of the land are many, and you make them relax from their employment. And Pharaoh that day commanded the masters[9] of the people and the overseers,[10] saying, You shall not continue (add) to give straw to the people to cast bricks, as heretofore; let them go and collect straw for themselves; yet the number[11] of bricks which they have

made heretofore you shall still lay upon them and not diminish; for they are idle, and therefore cry, saying, We will go and sacrifice before our God. Make labor heavy upon the men: let them be occupied with it, and not with vain words. And the masters of the people and the overseers went forth and spake to the people, saying, Thus saith Pharaoh, I will not give you straw; you shall go and gather up straw for yourselves wheresoever you can find it; though from you work there shall be mother diminished. And the people were scattered abroad over all the country of Mizraim to gather stubble for straw. And the masters were urgent, saying, Fulfill your work, the matter of a day in a day, as you did when straw was given to you. And the masters whom Pharaoh set over the sons of Israel smote them, saying, Why do you not fulfill your requirement to cast bricks as heretofore, as yesterday, so also to-day? And the overseers of the sons of Israel came and complained before Pharaoh, saying, Why hast thou done thus with thy servants? Thou hast not given thy servants straw, yet they say to us, Make bricks; and, behold, thy servants are beaten, and thy people sin against us. But he said, You are idle: therefore you say, We will go and sacrifice before MarYah. And now go, work: but straw I will not give you; yet the number of bricks you shall render. And the overseers of the sons of Israel perceived that they were in evil: for they said to them, You shall not diminish form your bricks the matter of a day, in a day.

And they met Mosheh and Aharon standing before them in their coming out from being with Pharaoh. And they said to them, May MarYah manifest Himself to you and adjudge;[12] because you have made our savour evil in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, and have put a sword into their hands to kill us! An Mosheh returned before MarYah and said, O Lord, why hast Thou done evil unto this people, and wherefore didst Thou send me? and from the time that I went in to Pharaoh to speak in Thy name he hath done evil to this people, but liberating Thou hast not liberated Thy people.

VI. But MarYah said to Mosheh, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he send them away, and with a strong hand drive them from his land.

[1] Sam. Vers., "among the rushes."

[2] Ibid.

[3] Sam. Vers., "suddenly," or, "rashly."

[4] Sam. Vers., "before the face of their taskmasters."

[5] Al. cod., "to thy word."

[6] Al. cod., "hath revealed Himself to us."

[7] Sam. Vers., "strip the Mizraee."

[8] Or, "stammering."

[9] Sam. Vers., "the foremen."

[10] Sam. Vers., "his scribes."

[11] Sam. Vers., "proportion."

[12] Sam. Vers., "interpret."