

## Exodus 11:1-5 (Bo)

v. 1- וַיֹּאמֶר יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי מֹשֶׁה עוֹד גָּנַע אֶחָד עַל־פְּרַעֲהוֹ וְעַל־מִצְרַיִם אֶחָרִי־כֵן יִשְׁלַח אֶתְכֶם מִזֶּה כְּשִׁלְחֹו כָּל־הָגֹרֶשׁ יִגְרַשׁ אֶתְכֶם מִזֶּה:

*And the Eternal said to Moses, “I will bring but one more plague upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt; after that he shall let you go from here; indeed, when he lets you go, he will drive you out of here one and all completely.*

- **SEFAT EMET**....It became immediately clear that the Israelites had no sense of belonging to Egypt and its abominations, even though until now, they were under Egypt’s control. Such is the meaning of what God said to Moses: “In your bringing the people out, you will worship God.” (Exodus 3:12), i.e., at the moment that you bring them out of Egypt, immediately they will become different people. They will rise to their proper stature to worship God.

- **ETZ HAYIM**....Pharaoh has closed the door on any further negotiations with Moses. The natural disasters have left the despot even more unyielding than before. A final blow, one wholly beyond nature or any previous human experience, is now about to descend on the Egyptians....Then the Exodus will no longer be a concession by Pharaoh. He will want your swift departure.

v. 2- דַּבֵּר־נָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם וַיִּשְׁאַלּוּ אִישׁ אֶת־יְקָרְבוֹ וְאִשָּׁה אֶת־יְקָרְבָּהּ וְכָל־כֶּסֶף וְכָל־זָהָב:

*Speak, please, into the ears of the people, to borrow, each man from his neighbor and each woman from hers, objects of silver and objects of gold.”*

- **GENESIS**.... And God said to Abram, “Know well that your offspring shall be strangers in a land not theirs, and they shall be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years; but I will execute judgment on the nation they shall serve, and in the end they shall go free with great wealth.” (Genesis 15:13-14)

- **ETZ HAYIM**....”During the plague of darkness, the Israelites could have plundered the homes of the Egyptians. When the Egyptians saw that the Israelites had not done so, they realized the moral greatness of that people and were inclined to give them the silver and gold they asked for.” (Hirsch)....Pharaoh, who once decreed death for the Israelite male children, will now see the children of his own people struck down. God has tried everything to persuade Pharaoh to relent, to no avail. Of course, God could have struck Egypt with this plague first, but hoped that lesser punishments would bring about the desired result. It turned out the society that benefited from slaying the Israelite children will now pay the price. Most modern readers are troubled by the sins the parents being

visited on their children, but the ancient mind did not have the concept of separate individual identities that we have today. The child was part of the parent, not a separate individual...However, the later Israelite prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, would repudiate this attitude in God's name, as would the Torah itself: "The fathers would not be put to death for the children, nor the children put to death for the fathers. Every person shall be put to death for his/her own sin." (Deut. 24:16)

- **SFORNO...** In the same manner as he has already expelled both you and Aaron from his presence when he had lost his cool. (Compare: "Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh and he said to them, "Go, worship the the Eternal your God! Who are the ones to go?" Moses replied, "We will all go, young and old: we will go with our sons and daughters, our flocks and herds; for we must observe the Eternal's festival." But he said to them, "The Eternal be with you—the same as I mean to let your children go with you! Clearly, you are bent on mischief. No! You menfolk go and worship the Eternal, since that is what you want." And they were expelled from Pharaoh's presence." (Exodus 10:9-11) When he will send the whole people of Israel from his land, he will act under a similar type of stress.
- **RASHI...** The word נא is always an expression of entreaty. Here it means: I entreat you, admonish them about this which follows (impress this injunction upon them), so that righteous man, Abraham, may not say: the prophecy ([Genesis 15:13](#)) "they shall serve them, and they shall afflict them" He permitted to be fulfilled in them, but the promise ([Genesis 15:14](#)) "and afterwards they shall go forth with great substance" He did not bring to fulfilment for them ([Berakhot 9a-b](#)).
- **BEKHOR SHOR....**Speak now into the ears of the people, because there is no more time to wait.
- **IBN EZRA....**I have already explained that the word "na" means "now."
- **PLAUT ....**"*Sha'al* (borrow)" also means, "to ask," "demand." The latter is obviously meant, for the return of the items was hardly intended. Compare the English expression, "borrow a match." A return of the borrowed item is here, in fact, impossible. The Book of Jubilees (48;18) is more direct: the Israelites plundered the Egyptians to make up for the centuries of slavery.

This passage "from his neighbor" suggests that the Israelites lived very near the Egyptians.

- **CHIZKUNI....** , "Speak, please." Moses was to do this at this time as they would not have any time to do so once Pharaoh would discharge them unconditionally, i.e. even expel them. If the people had made these requests still earlier, Egyptians would have

demanded that they would give back what they had borrowed, seeing that Pharaoh had refused to allow them to leave permanently.

וישאלו איש, “To borrow, each man.” They complied with what God had asked them to do, so that God could fulfill God’s promise to Abraham that after servitude to a land other than the land of Canaan, they would leave that country as free people with a great deal of wealth. (Genesis 15:14). Some commentators insist that the expression: וישאלו refers to asking for an outright gift. (Rabbeinu Chananel) They claim that Psalms 2:8: שאל ממני ואתנה וגו’, “ask something of Me and I will grant it,” is proof of this.

מאת רעהו, “from his neighbor” to the question of: “Since when were the ordinary Egyptians the personal friends of the Israelites?” The answer is that after the plagues had ceased, the Egyptians’ attitude towards the Israelites underwent a drastic change, and they became very willing to let them use their vessels.

כלי כסף וכלי זהב, “silver vessels and golden vessels.” It was no more than a fair exchange, seeing that the Israelites left behind their houses and their fields which no one compensated them for. We read already in Genesis 47:27 ויאחזו בה, that the sons of Jacob, instead of or in addition to being shepherds, also became land owners.

v. 3- וַיִּתֵּן יְיָ אֶת־תְּנוּן הָעַם בְּעֵינֵי מִצְרַיִם גַּם הָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה גָּדוֹל מְאֹד בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּעֵינֵי עַבְדֵי־פַרְעֹה וּבְעֵינֵי הָעָם:

*The Eternal disposed the people favorably in the eyes of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man, Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the eyes of Pharaoh’s servants and in the eyes of the people.*

- **PLAUT** .... “Moreover, the man, Moses was very great.” This is one of the two personal assessments of Moses in the Torah. The other describes him as humble or meek (Numbers 12:3) Both times, the expression is used: “*Ha-ish Moshe*- the man Moses” is used.
- **SFORNO**....In Moses’ honor, the Egyptians gave the Israelites generously.
- **RAMBAN**....The reason is that the Egyptians did not hate them because of the plagues. Instead, they conceived affection for them, and the Israelites found favor in their eyes, the Egyptians acknowledging, “We are the wicked ones. There is violence in our hands, and you merit that God be gracious to you.”
- **CHIZKUNI**.... “And in the eyes of the people.” (the Egyptian people, not only in the eyes of Pharaoh’s officials.)

v. 4- וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה כֹּה אָמַר יְיָ בְּחֹצֵת הַלַּיְלָה אֲנִי יוֹצֵא בְּתוֹךְ מִצְרַיִם:

*Moses said, “Thus says the Eternal: About midnight, I will go forth in the midst of the Egyptians,*

- **ETZ HAYIM...**”About midnight”- When everyone would be at home.
- **RASHI...**”They asserted that Moses said כַּחצוֹת “about midnight,” which implies near to it — either just before it or just after it, and he did not say בַּחצוֹת “at midnight” (as God had bidden him say) because he feared lest Pharaoh’s astrologers might make a mistake as regards the time when the slaughter of the firstborn actually took place, thinking that it was a little earlier or later than midnight, and would say, in consequence of this error, “Moses is a liar!” (cf. [Berakhot 4a](#))

v. 5- וּמֵת כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבְּכוֹר פַּרְעֹה הַיֹּשֵׁב עַל־כִּסְאוֹ עַד בְּכוֹר הַשֹּׁפְחָה אֲשֶׁר אַחַר הָרְחִים וְכֹל בְּכוֹר בְּהֵמָה:

*And every first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh, who sits on his throne, to the first-born of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; and every first-born of the cattle.*

- **ETZ HAYIM...** For the first time, Pharaoh will personally be afflicted. No one among the Egyptians would be spared.

Non-Israelite slaves certainly did not have the power in that society. So why would they be punished. Because they did not make common cause with the Israelites, saying, “Let us join hands and rise together against our oppressors.” Bad as their lives were, they took perverse satisfaction in knowing they that there were others even worse off.

The first-born of the cattle were included because they were the objects of Egyptian worship. The Egyptians might have ascribed their misfortune to the work of their own animal-shaped gods instead of to Adonai.