

יח וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיָּשָׁב אֶל-יֶתְרוֹ חֹתֵנוֹ, וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֵלְכָה נָא וְאֶשׁוּבָה אֶל-אֲחִי אֲשֶׁר-בְּמִצְרַיִם, וְאַרְאֶה, הֲעוֹדָם חַיִּים; וַיֹּאמֶר יֶתְרוֹ לְמֹשֶׁה, לֵךְ לְשָׁלוֹם.

18 And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said unto him: 'Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren that are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive.' And Jethro said to Moses: 'Go in peace.'

יט וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְיָן, לֵךְ שָׁב מִצְרַיִם: כִּי-מֵתוּ, כָּל-הָאֲנָשִׁים, הַמְּבַקְשִׁים, אֶת-נַפְשְׁךָ.

19 And the LORD said unto Moses in Midian: 'Go, return into Egypt; for all the men are dead that sought thy life.'

כ וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת-אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת-בָּנָיו, וַיִּרְכָּבֵם עַל-הַחֲמֹר, וַיָּשָׁב, אֶרֶצָה מִצְרַיִם; וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת-מִטֵּה הָאֱלֹהִים, בְּיָדוֹ.

20 And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt; and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

כא וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, בְּלִכְתּוֹךָ לָשׁוּב מִצְרַיִמָּה, רְאֵה כָּל-הַמִּפְתִּים אֲשֶׁר-שָׁמַתִּי בְיָדְךָ וְעָשִׂיתָם לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה; וְאֲנִי אֲחִזֶּק אֶת-לְבָבוֹ, וְלֹא יִשְׁלַח אֶת-הָעָם.

21 And the LORD said unto Moses: 'When thou goest back into Egypt, see that thou do before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in thy hand; but I will harden his heart, and he will not let the people go.'

כב וְאָמַרְתָּ, אֶל-פַּרְעֹה: כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה, בְּנִי בְכֹרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh: Thus saith the LORD: Israel is My son, My first-born.

כג וְאָמַר אֵלַיְךָ, שְׁלַח אֶת-בְּנִי וַיַּעֲבֹדֵנִי, וַתִּמָּאֵן, לְשַׁלְחוֹ--הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי הָרֵג, אֶת-בְּנֶךָ בְּכֹרְךָ.

23 And I have said unto thee: Let My son go, that he may serve Me; and thou hast refused to let him go. Behold, I will slay thy son, thy first-born.'

כד וַיְהִי בַדֶּרֶךְ, בְּמִלּוֹן; וַיִּפְגְּשֵׁהוּ יְהוָה, וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַמָּיתוֹ.

24 And it came to pass on the way at the lodging-place, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him.

כה וַתִּקַּח צִפּוֹרָה צֹר, וַתְּכַרֵּת אֶת-עֶרְלַת בְּנָהּ, וַתַּגֵּעַ, לְרַגְלָיו; וַתֹּאמֶר, כִּי חֲתָן-דָּמִים אַתָּה לִי. **25** Then Zipporah took a flint, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet; and she said: 'Surely a bridegroom of blood art thou to me.'

כו וַיַּרְף, מִמֶּנּוּ; אַז, אָמְרָה, חֲתָן דָּמִים, לַמּוֹלֶת. {פ} **26** So He let him alone. Then she said: 'A bridegroom of blood in regard of the circumcision.'

2. Seforno Shemos 4:24

ויפגשוהו ה' קרה יום מילת בנו אשר בו תשרה שכינה לעמוד בברית, כענין נמולו אתו וירא אליו ה' ואולי זאת היא סבת המנהג להכין כסא כבוד במקום המילה

ה', 'ויפגשוהו ה', the 8th day on which he should have circumcised his son occurred [the word is derived from פגש, occurred, happened. Ed.] When the baby is circumcised the presence of the Lord, שכינה is perceived as being present waiting to induct the new member of the Jewish faith. Perhaps this is even the source of the practice to place a chair for the prophet Elijah at the circumcision ceremony.

3. Nedarim 31b, 32a

גמ' תניא רבי יהושע בן קורחא אומר גדולה מילה שכל זכויות שעשה משה רבינו לא עמדו לו כשנתרשל מן המילה שנאמר ויפגשוהו ה' ויבקש המיתו

It is taught in a baraita that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa says: So great is the mitzva of circumcision that all the merits that Moses our teacher accrued when he performed mitzvot did not protect him when he was negligent about performing the mitzva of circumcision, as it is stated: "And the Lord met him and sought to kill him" (Exodus 4:24).

אמר רבי חס ושלום שמשה רבינו נתרשל מן המילה אלא כך אמר אמול ואצא סכנה היא שנאמר ויהי ביום השלישי בהיותם כאבים וגו' אמול ואשהא שלשה ימים הקדוש ברוך הוא אמר לי לה שב מצרים אלא מפני מה נענש משה

Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi said: Heaven forbid that Moses our teacher was neglectful of the mitzva of circumcision. Rather, this is what he said: If I circumcise the child now and depart to begin my journey, it is a danger for the child, as it is stated: "And it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain" (Genesis 34:25), which indicates that the pain of circumcision lasts for several days and the child may be in danger while in pain. If I circumcise him immediately and wait three days and only then embark on the journey, this is problematic, as the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to me: "Go, return into Egypt" (Exodus 4:19), i.e., go immediately. For these

reasons Moses did not circumcise the child immediately, but no neglect existed on his part. But according to this explanation, for what reason was Moses punished?

מִפְּנֵי שְׁנֵתֶּעֶסֶק בְּמִלּוֹן תַּחֲלָה שְׁנֵאָמַר וַיְהִי בַדֶּרֶךְ בְּמִלּוֹן

Because he was occupied with lodging first and did not immediately perform the mitzva of circumcision, as it is stated: "And it came to pass on the way at the lodging-place" (Exodus 4:24).

רַבֵּן שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל אוֹמֵר לֹא לְמֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ בִקֵּשׁ שְׁטֵן לְהַרוֹג אֶלֶּא לְאוֹתוֹ תִּינוּק שְׁנֵאָמַר כִּי חֲתַן דָּמִים אֵתָּה לִי צֹא וּרְאֵה מִי קָרִי חֲתַן הָיִי אוֹמֵר זֶה הַתִּינוּק

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: It was not Moses our teacher that Satan wanted to kill, but rather, that infant who was not circumcised

4. Ibn Ezra Shemos 4:24

וַיְהִי בַדֶּרֶךְ. הִיתָה קִבְלָה בִּידֵם שֶׁלֹא יוֹמֵל הֵבֵן בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי אִם הוּא חוֹלָה אוֹ הוּא בַדֶּרֶךְ שֶׁאֵין יִכּוֹלֵת בְּמוֹלִיכּוֹ לְהִתְעַכֵּב. וּבַעֲבוּר כִּי מֹשֶׁה לֹא יוֹכֵל לְהִתְעַכֵּב בְּשִׁלְיחוֹת הַשֵּׁם. רָאָה בַּעֲצָתוֹ שֶׁלֹא יוֹמֵל כִּי יִסְתַּכֵּן הַנֶּעַר אִם יוֹלִיכּוֹ אוֹתוֹ בַּדֶּרֶךְ. וְהִנֵּה שֶׁלַח הַשֵּׁם מִלֶּאכֶךְ לְהַזְכִּיר מֹשֶׁה שִׁינִיחַ עֲצָתוֹ וְיוֹמֵל הַנֶּעַר וְיִלֶּךְ לוֹ לְבַדּוֹ. וְהַנֶּעַר יִהְיֶה עִם אִמּוֹ עַד שִׁתְּרַפֵּא.

וְהִנֵּה טַעַם וּפְגִשְׁהוּ שֶׁבֶא חוּלִי עַל מֹשֶׁה מִהַשֵּׁם שֶׁלֹא עָלָה עַל לִבּוֹ. וְזֶהוּ וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַמִּיתוֹ אִם לֹא יוֹמֵל בְּנוֹ. וּבַעֲבוּר שֶׁאֲחֻזָּתוֹ רַעְדָּה לֹא יוֹכֵל הוּא לְמוֹלוֹ וּמִלָּה אוֹתוֹ צְפוּרָה

And it happened in the way - They had a tradition that an eight-day son should not be circumcised if he was sick or traveling since there wasn't a possibility for delaying the travel. And this was because Moses could not be delayed in his Divine mission. He saw by his own counsel not to circumcise, since the youngster would be in danger if he was put to travel. And behold, HaShem sent an angel to remind Moses to pause himself and circumcise the child and go on his way on his own. And the youngster would stay with his mother until he healed, and behold the reason of "he met him" is that sickness from HaShem came to Moses that he didn't think of it. And this is "he sought to kill him" if he didn't circumcise his son. And due to the trembling that seized him he wasn't able to circumcise his son, and Tzipporah circumcised him

5. Yehoshua 5: 2-5

בַּיָּמִים הַהֵוא, אָמַר יְהוָה אֶל-יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, עֲשֵׂה לָךְ, חֶרְבוֹת צִרִּים; וְשׁוּב מִלְּאֵת-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, שְׁנִית. 2 At that time the LORD said unto Joshua: 'Make thee knives of flint, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time.'

וַיַּעַשׂ-לוֹ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, חֶרְבוֹת 3 And Joshua made him knives of flint, and

צָרִים ; וַיִּמַּל אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֶל-גִּבְעַת הָעֲרָלוֹת. circumcised the children of Israel at Gibeath-ha-araloth.

ד וְזֶה הַדָּבָר, אֲשֶׁר-מָל יְהוֹשֻׁעַ: כָּל-הָעָם הַיֵּצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם הַזְּכָרִים כָּל אֲנָשֵׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה, מָתוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר בַּדֶּרֶךְ, בְּצֵאתָם, מִמִּצְרַיִם. 4 And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: all the people that came forth out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came forth out of Egypt.

ה כִּי-מְלִים הָיוּ, כָּל-הָעָם הַיֵּצֵאִים ; וְכָל-הָעָם הַיִּלְדִּים בַּמִּדְבָּר בַּדֶּרֶךְ, בְּצֵאתָם מִמִּצְרַיִם--לֹא-מָלוּ. 5 For all the people that came out were circumcised; but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, had not been circumcised.

6. HaKetav V'Hakabala, R. Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg

And if not for the opinion of our predecessors, I would have said that 'Vayevakesh hamito' does not refer to Hashem, but rather to Moshe, and its meaning is that through his encounter [pegisha] with Hashem, Moshe realized that his sin was visited upon him, and that he had not done well by delaying the performance of his Creator's will, and so much did his sin become great in his own eyes that this encounter was mild and not sufficient to remove his sin, and he said in his heart, 'If I am evil before God, why should I live? It would be better for me to cease to exist, and to choose death over life,' and this is the meaning of 'vayevakesh hamito,' that Moshe wanted Hashem to kill him.

7. Abravanel

Prophecy descended upon Moshe always, and he always needed to meditate and think about his mission. Therefore, when he came to the inn and occupied himself all that night with making provisions for lodging, and he did not meditate on the matters of his mission and his prophecy first, when the prophetic flow came upon him, it found him unprepared for prophecy. When it says "vayifgeshehu Hashem," it means that prophecy came upon him while his heart and his thoughts were burdened with the matters of his lodging and his wife and sons, and since he was found unprepared for the acceptance of prophecy, he experienced pain and danger and his spirit was rattled. And the meaning of "vayevakesh hamito" is not that Hashem wanted to kill him, for He desires kindness, but rather that the divine flow came upon him when he was unprepared, and therefore he was endangered and reached the gates of death

8. Rav Hirsch Shemos 4:24

God, Who had just sent Moshe forth with a most lofty mission, which Moshe was preparing to carry out, now abruptly confronted him and considered it better that he should die. The verses that follow make it clear why Moshe was suddenly in danger of losing his life. He had neglected to circumcise his son. He had set out to bring deliverance to a people whose whole distinction was based on bris mila, and now he himself was about to introduce into that people an uncircumcised son. God considered it better to let Moshe die than to let him begin his mission with such an example.

9. Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 18:3:1

שבשעה שאמר משה ליתרו, תן לי צפורה בתך לאשה, אמר לו יתרו, קבל עליך דבר זה שאומר לך ואני נותנה לך לאשה, אמר לו מהו, אמר לו בן שיהיה לך תחלה יהיה לעבודה זרה, מכאן ואילך לשם שמים, וקבל עליו. אמר לו השבע לי, וישבע לו. לפיכך הקדים המלאך להרוג את משה

For when Moses said to Yithro, Give me your daughter Tzipporah as a wife, Yithro answered, If you do what I ask of you, I will give her to you as a wife. Moses: What do you ask? Yithro: Your first son must serve idolatry. Thenceforward, they may serve (G d) in heaven. Moses accepted. Yithro: Swear. And he swore....Therefore, the angel came forward to kill Moses

10. Midrash on the death of Moshe

כשהגיע יומו של מרע"ה ליפטר מן העולם א"ל הקדוש ברוך הוא: הן קרבו ימיך למות
... 'אמר לפניו: רבש"ע אחר כל היגיעה שיגעתי תאמר לי שאמות? לא אמות כי אחיה וגו'
?א"ל הקדוש ברוך הוא: כלום אמרתי לך שתהרוג את המצרי
?א"ל ואתה הרגת כל בכורי מצרים ואני אמות בשביל מצרי אחד
א"ל הקדוש ברוך הוא ואתה דומה אלי ממית ומחיה? כלום אתה יכול להחיות כמוני

11. Rashbam Shemos 4:24

ויפגשוהו ה' - המלאך - כי היה מתעצל בהליכתו ומוליך אשתו ובניו.

ה' ויפגשוהו, in this instance a reference to the Lord's angel. Moses' sin consisted of needlessly slowing down the carrying out of his mission by taking his wife and children along.

12. Rashbam Bereishis 32:29

ומה שלקה יעקב ונצלע, לפי שהקב"ה הבטיחו והוא היה בורח. וכן מצינו בכל ההולכים בדרך שלא ברצון הקב"ה, או ממאנים ללכת שנענשו. במשה כתיב: שלח נא ביד תשלח ויחר אף ה' במשה. ולפי הדרש, אף על פי שאמרו חכמים בכל מקום חרון אף עושה רשם וכאן מה רשם יש? הלא אהרן אחיך הלוי עתיד

הוא להיות לוי ואתה כהן ועכשיו הוא יהיה כהן ואתה לוי. אך לפי הפשט: לפי שהיה מתעצל ללכת כתיב: ויהי בדרכך במלון ויפגשוהו ה' ויבקש המיתו. וכן ביונה שנבלע במעי הדגה

And the fact that Ya'akov was struck and was lamed was because the Holy One, blessed be He, promised him yet he fled. And we find the same thing with all those who go on the road contrary to the wishes of the Holy One, blessed be He, or who refuse to go, that they are punished. Regarding Moshe, it is written (Ex. 4:13), "make someone else Your agent," and (v.14), "The LORD became angry with Moses." And according to the Rabbinic exposition (Zev. 102a), even though the Sages said, "Everywhere [in the Torah] where 'blazing anger' is mentioned, it makes an impression," here, what impression is there? "There is your brother Aaron the Levite" (Ex. 4:14) -- he was to be the Levi, and you the Kohen; now, he will be the Kohen and you the Levi. However, according to the plain sense, [the impression is that] because he [Moshe] was making excuses to avoid going, it is written (Ex. 4:24), "At a night encampment on the way, Adonai encountered him and sought to kill him." Likewise with Yonah, who was swallowed into the belly of the fish.

13. Rashbam Shemos 4:25

ותכרות וגו' - הועילה לו למשה המצוה להצילו כמו קרבן, כעין שעשו גדעון ומנוח כשנראה להם המלאך

'ותכרות וגו', performance of the circumcision of Moses' son by Tzipporah was a lifesaver for Moses, much as a sacrifice offered by Gideon or by Manoach when they were confronted by an angel