YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**GREAT BIBLICAL COMMENTATORS**

**By Dr. Avigail Rock**

**Lecture #24: Seforno**

1. **Introduction**

R. Ovadia Seforno (1475-1550) was born in Cesena, near Bertinoro, Italy, where he acquired most of his Torah-related knowledge.As an adult, he moved to Rome, where he became well-versed in general studies, including philosophy, linguistics, mathematics, and medicine; the last was his main profession.In 1501, he received his medical degree.

Seforno had many financial problems, and in Rome, he was supported by his brother Chananel.[[1]](#footnote-1)To support himself, Seforno taught some students privately in the disciplines with which he was familiar, and he quickly he became a sought-after instructor for both Jews and non-Jews.Educated non-Jews asked him to teach them Hebrew language and grammar.[[2]](#footnote-2)

In Rome, Seforno dedicated himself to community affairs.He taught Torah to the community for close to three decades.In the year 1524, David Reubeni[[3]](#footnote-3) arrived in Rome and met Seforno.In the year 1525, Seforno left Rome and began wandering, until he eventually settled in the city of Bologna (where his brother settled).In this city, he became renowned as a medical expert and a great Torah scholar.[[4]](#footnote-4)Seforno sat on the community’s court, and he became the local *rosh yeshiva*.He also invested great efforts in establishing a Jewish printing house, in which a number of his works were published.

Aside from the commentary he composed on the Pentateuch, Seforno wrote a commentary to additional books: *Yona, Chavakkuk, Zekharya, Shir Ha-Shirim, Kohelet, Iyov*,and *Tehillim*. For the most part, philosophical topics are discussed there.

Two other books by Seforno are *Kavanot Ha-Torah* and *Or Ammim*. *Kavanot Ha-Torah* is essentially an addendum to his commentary on the Torah, in which Seforno explains the aim of the Torah and its narratives. *Or Ammim* is a philosophical composition.These two books were designated to strengthen the fundamentals of faith in the midst of the Jewish nation.Similarly, Seforno wrote a commentary on Tractate *Avot* and a book of Hebrew grammar.

1. **Background and Target Audience for the Commentary**

In Seforno’s introduction to his Torah commentary, he describes his motivations for composing the commentary on the Torah.He rouses himself “to reclaim the honor of the Torah,” responding to the various claims of Jews who try to minimize the value of the Torah.Among these claims are the accusations that the Torah is not written in order and that the Torah is explained based on mistaken interpretations.

It may be that the basis for claims of this type was the development of humanism during the Italian Renaissance of the 15th century.[[5]](#footnote-5)Following the development of humanism, there was a surge of interest in history, linguistics, and literature.In the domain of literature, the humanists stressed the art of writing, and it was therefore specifically during this period that questions were raised about the supposed lack of chronological sequence and logical structure of the Torah.In addition, there was some criticism of lines that seemed to be incomprehensible.

Later in his introduction, Seforno writes that it was difficult for the Jews of his generation to respond to these claims, since they were preoccupied with making a living and managing their troubles and they did not have the opportunity to study Torah.Because of this, he decided to take upon himself the responsibility of writing a commentary on the Torah which would be accessible for those busy Jews, responding to the questions that contemporaries might ask.According to Seforno, the commentaries of his predecessors are not sufficient for this task, since sometimes their words are not understandable, and sometimes their answers are unsatisfying.These claims against the Torah caused a desecration of God’s name, and in order to remedy it, Seforno wrote his commentary.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Thus, the target audience of Seforno’s commentary is intelligent Jews who do not have the opportunity for a deep study of the Torah.Therefore, Seforno does not see a need to explain each and every verse; he explains only what he believes will be useful to his contemporaries, when the commentaries of his predecessors are not sufficient.At the same, he strives to make his explanation clear, devoid of convoluted argumentation and lengthy analysis.[[7]](#footnote-7)

1. **The Humanist Thought of Seforno**

Seforno is the last of the Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages, but his commentary on the Torah is not a philosophical commentary, but rather a commentary based on *peshat*.Despite this, one may find in his commentary many allusions to his philosophical worldview.

A fine example of this may be seen in his conception of man and his role in the world.It appears that Seforno’s attribution of great importance to the status of human beings is firmly grounded in the principles of humanism, which was gaining momentum in the era of Seforno.The guiding principle of humanism in this period is the centrality and the superiority of man in nature, which requires a person to yearn towards human completion.Seforno accepts humanistic thought (as we shall see below), but he gives it a Jewish spin: he concedes that the person is the superior creation, but it stresses that God is sublime above man.Similarly, he agrees that a person must aspire towards self-completion, but this completion is not defined by man, but by God.

One of the places in which Seforno relates to this topic is his explanation of “the image of God” (*Bereishit* 1:27) in which man is created.In his view, the phrase “*tzelem elohim*” does not mean “the image of God;” the term “*elohim*” does not refer to God Himself, but purely spiritual beings, and “*tzelem*” means potential. The unique character of man is his ability to realize his spiritual potential.[[8]](#footnote-8)

In a number of places, Seforno stresses that the entire human race is sublime, not just the nation of Israel (see his commentary to *Shemot* 19:5, *Devarim* 33:3).One of the most prominent places in which one may learn the value of every person in the eyes of Seforno is his commentary to the verse, “You may charge a foreigner interest, but you may not charge your brother interest, so that Lord your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land that you are entering to take possession of it” (*Devarim* 23:21).The accepted understanding of this verse, as we have in fact translated it, is that it is forbidden to lend to a Jew with interest but it is permitted to lend to a non-Jew with interest (see, for example, Rashi ad loc.). God will then bless the Jewish people for avoiding lending to each other with interest.This might imply that the Torah minimizes the value of the non-Jew.However, Seforno explains this verse in an innovative way; his amazing commentary is as follows:

Pay him his interest if you have committed to do so, and do not deceive him.

“So that Lord your God may bless you” — For you will not deceive the foreigner, and you will not desecrate the Name.

According to the view of Seforno, the verse does not deal with charging non-Jews interest, but the reverse – paying interest to non-Jews.If a Jew borrows from a non-Jew and is obligated to pay interest to him, it is incumbent upon him to fulfill this obligation.Faithfully paying interest will prevent a desecration of God’s name; for this reason, God will bless his nation Israel.

Humanism sees the point of the existence of man in this world, and man’s aspiration must be to extract the maximum from this world.It appears that this is the basis of Seforno’s emphasis in a number of places for the centrality of reward in this world (see his commentary to *Shemot* 20:12; *Devarim* 26:19, 31:20).

**D**.**The Influence of the Spanish Expulsion**

Seforno lived at the height of the Expulsion and the generation after the Expulsion.On the basis of these events, we may understand certain emphases in his commentary and significant deviations from his explaining according to the plain sense of *Tanakh*.In the episode of Yaakov’s ladder (*Bereishit* 28:10-22), Yaakov receives the blessing (v. 14):

Your seed shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Seforno explains the first part of the verse, “Your seed shall be like the dust of the earth,” not as the blessing of fecundity – that the nation of Israel will be increased like the numerousness of the dust – but rather as description of lowness - the nation of Israel will be lowered to the dust. It is after this situation that the redemption will come:

After your seed will be like the dust of the earth… namely, that they will be at the extremity of lowliness, then they will sprout in the land upon which you lie…

For indeed, the salvation of God, which is destined to occur after the great lowliness of Israel, **which is a phenomenon happening today, in their exile, which has no precedent,** as they of blessed memory said (*Sanhedrin* 98a): “R. Yochanan said: When you see a generation overwhelmed by many troubles as by a river, await him, as it is written, ‘When the enemy shall come in like a flooding river, God’s spirit shall lift up a standard against him;’ this is followed by, ‘And the Redeemer shall come to Zion’ (*Yeshayahu* 59:19-20).”

Seforno’s tendency is to comfort the people of his generation after the difficult crisis of the Spanish Expulsion.He sees the current period of exile as more arduous than all other periods of exile; the redemption from it is certain.[[9]](#footnote-9)

We may find an additional allusion to the Inquisition and the Spanish Expulsion in his explanation of the verse (*Bereishit* 33:20), “And he set up an altar, and he called it, ‘God, God of Yisrael,’” which Yaakov states when he comes to Shekhem:

He called Him, the Blessed God, [by the name] “God” in his prayer…This is signified by the name of Yisrael, that the nations of the world cannot compel him to abandon his faith and knowledge of his Creator…

It is clear that Seforno here explains the verse on the basis of his era. It is not logical that Yaakov would request in his prayer that the nations of the world not be able to compel him to change his religion! Apparently, Seforno is referring to the perils familiar to his contemporaries, and on their behalf, he is praying “that the nations of the world cannot compel him to abandon his faith and knowledge of his Creator.”

In another place (*Bereishit* 11:4-6), Seforno presents the dangers of religious centralization, which may mask a political takeover.It appears that Seforno alludes to the danger of the Christian faith taking over the political sphere, as occurred in his era:

“And a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves” — “Let us make a name” refers to idols that would be in the tower.They wanted the entire human race to know of the height of the place and the greatness of its city, in a way that it might be considered the God of Gods for all people, and towards it everyone might turn.The intent of this was that whoever ruled over the city would rule over the entire human race…

Behold, they were one nation in the matter of religion, for all of them would agree to the faith of the Sabians. In this, all of them agreed to the language, “And now it will not be held back from them.”

Thus, there is nothing to stop them from realizing their intent that idolatry[[10]](#footnote-10) would be accepted by everyone in the human race, and not one of them would know to turn to the Blessed Creator and to understand that he is the Creator of all.The opposite will happen when there is a dispute about the issue of these foreign gods, for every one of them will consider that there is a God of Gods to whom all of the gods are subservient, and He will arrange their systems and the order of reality, as it says (*Malakhi* 1:11): “For from the rising of the sun to its setting, my name will be great among the nations.”

In the process of Yaakov’s encounter with Esav after the former returns to the Land of Israel (*Bereishit* 32:3-33:17), Yaakov expends great effort in order to appease Esav.Seforno praises Yaakov’s subservience to Esav, and he sees in this a symbol of the future: the nation of Israel will be laid low before the nations of the world, and thus it may survive the exile.In his view, in the days of the Second Temple, had the Jewish People been obsequious and kowtowed to Vespasian, instead of rebelling against Roman rule, the Temple would not have been destroyed:

His heart was turned[[11]](#footnote-11) in a moment by Yaakov’s subservience.This is akin to our situation in exile among the sons of Esav, who says at his height, “Who will bring me down to the ground?” (*Ovadia* 1:3),[[12]](#footnote-12) and he teaches us that we may escape from the reach of his prideful sword by demonstrating subservience and tribute…

Had the brutes of the Second Temple not been so violent, our Temple would not have been destroyed, as R. Yochanan ben Zakkai himself testified… (Seforno, *Bereishit* 33:4)

The Ramban in his commentary to these verses takes the opposite view, criticizing the subservience of Yaakov:

In my view, this also alludes to the fact that this precipitated our fall into the hands of Edom [the Romans], for the kings of the Second Temple entered a covenant with the Romans (*I Maccabees*, ch. 8) and some came to Rome, and this was the reason that we fell into their hands.(Ramban, *Bereishit* 32:4)

The great distinction between these two views may depend on the changes that occurred in the Jewish nation between the era of the Ramban and the era of Seforno.The Ramban lived two centuries before the Spanish Expulsion. In his time, the Jewish community had an honored status in the midst of the Christian community; indeed, the Ramban himself was close to the monarchy.However, Seforno, who wrote his commentary a few years after the Spanish Expulsion, cannot speak about standing strong and unbowed before Christianity; the singular way to survive in his era was by subservience and obsequiousness.

**E**.**Ethical Matters**

Seforno learns ethics from many verses, even if they are not the focus of the narrative — in his view, there are no superfluous verses, and therefore if a certain detail is noted, the implication is that we should learn something from it.An additional possible source is the influence of the humanists on Seforno; the stream of humanism stresses the importance of ethical conduct by people.Below, we will examine a number of examples which stress the ethical component of Seforno’s commentary:

1. When Yaakov reaches Charan, he turns to the shepherds and says to them (*Bereishit* 29:7), “Behold, it is still high day; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered together…”:

He said, “Behold, it is still high day” — the righteous will reject evil, even towards others…

1. God turns towards Kayin with the question (*Bereishit* 4:6): “Why has your face fallen…”Seforno explains:

When a mistake can be repaired, it is not fit to be distressed about what has passed; rather, it is appropriate to exert effort to achieve the reparation in the future.

1. The Torah recounts that Yosef supported his brothers in Egypt with “bread according to the children” (*Bereishit* 47:12). Seforno notes:

Even though he had the power to increase food for them, he gave them a sufficient amount.As they of blessed memory said, when society at large is in distress, a person should not say, “I will go to my home, eat and drink, and my soul will be at peace” (*Taanit* 11a).

**F**.**The Sins of the National Leaders**

In a consistent way, Seforno avoids criticizing the Patriarchs’ actions.One example of this is Sarai’s treatment of Hagar, “Sarai mistreated her” (*Bereishit* 16:6).Seforno justifies this behavior in the following way:

So that she will recognize that she is subjugated, and she will no longer despise her mistress, as a sign that this will happen to any despiser of Israel…

In other words, Sarai mistreats Hagar so that Hagar will fully understand her status in Avraham’s house and she will avoid being arrogant in the future.

This explanation is in total opposition to that of the Ramban.Not only does he criticize Sarai’s conduct, he notes that this conduct has a negative impact on the future of the Jewish nation:

Our mother sinned in this mistreatment, as did Avraham by letting her do so.God heard her mistreatment, **and He gave her a son who would be a wild man, in order to mistreat the seed of Avraham and Sara in all manners of mistreatment**.

Seforno as well, like the Ramban, believes that Sarai’s behavior has ramifications for the future, but in his view, we are talking about a positive impact.This is “a sign that this will happen to any despiser of Israel.”

A second and far-reaching example of Seforno’s relationship to the heroes of the nation is the positive relationship of Seforno to the act of selling Yosef into slavery.It appears that he is the first among the biblical exegetes who justifies the actions of the brothers in Yosef’s sale, and he returns to this idea in a number of places.One example of this is the difficult phrase, “*va-yitnakkelu oto*”:

They suspected Yosef of plotting to kill them; they thought that he came to them not to seek their peace, but in order to hatch a plot against them or to make them sin so that their father would curse them or Blessed God would kill them, and he himself would remain blessed among the sons…

This tells us what they are: they must be totally righteous, for their names were before God for remembrance,[[13]](#footnote-13) so how could it be that they united to kill their brother or to sell him and they did not repent of the evil?[[14]](#footnote-14)…

Behold, the verse tells us that they imagined in their hearts and thought that Yosef was a schemer and attempting to kill them, either in this world or the next world or both of them.Now, the Torah says, “If someone comes to kill you,” etc. (*Sanhedrin* 72a). (Seforno, *Bereishit* 37:18)

At the beginning of his words, Seforno resolves the linguistic issue in the verse. If the verse is describing the brothers as plotting against Yosef, the direct pronoun (*oto*) is not appropriate; rather, it should be “*elav*,” “to him”(see Rashi, ad loc*.*).According to Seforno, “*va-yitnakkelu oto*” does not mean that Yosef’s brothers were plotting against him, but they thought that he was plotting against them to kill them, or at least to make them sin so that Yaakov or God might punish them.If so, in their view, they were required to kill Yosef because of the principle, “If someone comes to kill you, kill him first.”

According to Seforno, an additional proof that the brothers act out of self-defense is found in the verse “And they sat to eat bread” (*Bereishit* 37:25), which appears immediately after Yosef is cast into the pit:

They did not see this as an obstacle or disaster which would prevent them from sitting down to their meal, as would be appropriate for those who are righteous as they, when some disaster came by their hand, as Israel did after killing the tribe of Binyamin…

**This occurred to them because they thought that Yosef was a pursuer; in such a case, whoever kills him first is praiseworthy when there is no other way to save the pursued otherwise.**

**G**.**Original Interpretations**

In Seforno’s commentary, one may find numerous original interpretations.We have already seen two of them above – the explanation of interest and non-Jews and the explanation of the sale of Yosef.We will bring two more original explanations below.

1. On his way to Charan, Yaakov dreams of a heavenly ladder (*Bereishit* 28:10-16), and in light of this, he makes a vow:

Then Yaakov made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and if He will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, and Lord shall be God for me, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God’s house.And of all that You give me, I will give a full tenth to You.”

It is clear that Ya’akov’s words until the first part of verse 21 (“so that I come again to my father’s house in peace”) are a description of the terms of the vow: “**If** God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and **if** He will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, and **if** I come again to my father’s house in peace…”Similarly, it is clear that verse 22 (“and this stone…”) is the obligation of the vow: “**Then** this stone, which I have set up for a pillar…”

However, it is not clear how we should relate to the clause at the second part of verse 21, “And Lord will be my God.” Is this one of the conditions of the vow, or are we perhaps talking about the first of the vow’s obligations?Many exegetes struggle with this question (see, for example, Rashi and Ramban, ad loc.[[15]](#footnote-15)). The commentary of Seforno on this issue is interesting and original.Seforno distinguishes between the names “God” and “Lord,” which express the different divine orientations towards the world. “God” expresses the Attribute of Justice, while “Lord” expresses the Attribute of Mercy.According to the view of Seforno, this verse is part of the obligation to the vow. Its meaning is that Yaakov accepts upon himself that God will relate to him with the Attribute of Justice instead of the Attribute of Mercy if he will not serve God with all of his might: “And Lord shall be,” Lord’s Attribute of Mercy, “God for me,” it will turn into the Attribute of Justice.

2) Seforno offers an interpretation, surprising in its originality, to the verses in *Shemot* 16:6-7:

So Moshe and Aharon said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you will know that it was God Who brought you out of Egypt. And in the morning you will see the glory of God, because He has heard your grumbling against Him.Who are we that you should grumble against us?”

The simple understanding of these verses is as follows: In verse 6, Moshe says to the Israelites that in the evening they will know that God took them out of Egypt, and in verse 7, he says that in the morning, they will see the glory of God.However, Seforno explains these verses in opposition to the division of the verses. In his view, they should be read in this way:

So Moshe and Aharon said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you will know that it was God Who brought you out of Egypt, as well as in the morning. You will see the glory of God, because he has heard your grumbling against him.Who are we that you should grumble against us?”

In his view, in verse 6, Moshe says to the Israelites that by feeding the Israelites at certain times, in the evening and in the morning, they will understand and know that God took them out totally from slavery in the land of Egypt, because slaves cannot eat at a set time; rather they eat at any time they can.[[16]](#footnote-16)In verse 7, Moshe says to them that they will witness the glory of God.[[17]](#footnote-17)

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We will end with the concluding blessing of Seforno in his *Kavanot Ha-Torah*:

Behold, our God has given to us all of this!Aside from them, in His great kindnesses, is He not our father, in whom we put our hope that He will save us, He will make us hear jubilation, satisfied and full of God’s blessing.His kindness will overwhelm us, and His glory will fill the entire land, amen and amen.

1. The Zevulun-Yissakhar relationship which existed between the brothers may be the basis of Seforno’s expansive comment to *Bereishit* 49:13, “Zevulun will dwell at the shore of the seas”:

   Zevulun, who deals with business, precedes Yissakhar, who delves into the Torah… for indeed it is impossible for a person to delve into the Torahwithout first acquiring what he needs, as they have said (*Avot* 3:17): “If there is no flour, there is no Torah.”When one provides for his fellow, so that his fellow may delve into the Torah, as is said of Zevulun, behold the worship of Blessed God in the enterprise of the Torah scholar will be attributed to both of them.This is the intention of the Torah when it comes to the gifts for Priests and Levites; the entire people may help those who grab hold of the Torah… [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. One of his most famous students was Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522), a Christian humanist who excelled in the study of the Hebrew language.Reuchlin was the first to disseminate the study of Hebrew among the Christian scholars in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, and he endowed chairs for studying Hebrew in a number of institutions of higher learning.Reuchlin recognized that the essential source for all religions is the Torah of the Jews, from which all the Church fathers drew.Similarly, he understood that the Latin translations of *Tanakh* contained many errors, and in order to repair them, he decided to study Hebrew and Aramaic.We should note that Reuchlin was a zealot for Christianity, and his study of the Hebrew language and the literature of the sages of Israel was not motivated by a love of the Jews, but a desire to develop his religious investigations. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. David Reubeni travelled from the Arabian Peninsula to Europe in order to convince Pope Clement VII and King João III of Portugal to organize an army and navy, paid for by European Jewry, to fight the Muslims in India, and thereby to free the Holy Land from the Muslims and to allow the Jewish nation to return to its land. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For example, Maharam Padua, in his responsa (48-49), describes Seforno in this way:

   A great man and a shining light is the sage whose name is widely known as our honored teacher, Rabbi Ovadia, man of Seforno.May God protect him, peace be upon the master and his Torah.One of the angels flew to me, carrying a scroll of secrets, set with marble, bedecked with sapphires.These are the words of the living God, and from behind the veil I have heard that you are the source of greatness, the wellspring of waters, sweet and cold, to saturate a weary soul, which is thirsty for Torah, for everything our honored master has written is built on stones of marble… [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Below, we will explain briefly the principles of this movement, and we will expand our description of the influence of Seforno. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. These are his words:

   I am the young one, Ovadia, may God protect me and keep me alive, son of the honored master, lord and teacher, Yaakov Seforno, of blessed eternal memory, by the sound of the words of the honored master, Chananel, my brother, may God protect him and keep him alive.

   He has great zeal to reclaim the honor of the Torah from “the unfaithful children” (*Devarim* 32:20), who impart a bitter taste in the explication of its words, narratives and order.It is a treasure that is wholly desirable, correct for those who understand it, with no one to say, "Send them back."

   So I have said that I will tell the bit of a matter I may hear of it, for my hand has found a bit of success in it.The small measure which I may surmise may arouse to give pleasant words honorably and inscribe a remembrance in the book — may the Torah be great and glorious!

   For indeed, my toil amid my current circumstances each day surrounds me like bees, until there is no place and proper time to see the wonders of our Torah…

   Sometimes, the statement of the early ones is not well-understood, and sometimes they provide an answer insufficient to resolve the doubt, and it is shame to them…

   And we, how can we justify ourselves, when God will arise and take account of the matter of His Name’s glory?Is it not in the telling of wonders from His Torah, to enlighten every eye and broaden every mind as to its narrative and its order, which teach of the righteousness and of the greatness of the Blessed Name, as well as His good reason in dividing and concluding the books… [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This position stands in totally opposition to that of Abarbanel’s commentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. An additional place in *Bereishit* in which Seforno deals with human superiority is his commentary on 9:5-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Words of encouragement concerning the future redemption can also be found in his commentary to *Bereishit* 41:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. They wanted all people to worship one false God. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. This means that Esav was persuaded. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The verses in *Ovadia* are dealing with Edom and Esav; Edom, in *Tanakh,* is a synonym for Esav’s descendants (see, for example, *Bereishit* 36:1). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. He is referring to the verses describing the onyx stones on the breastplate:

    You shall take two onyx stones, and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the remaining six on the other stone, in the order of their birth… so shall you engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel…And you shall set the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel.And Aharon shall bear their names before Lord on his two shoulders for remembrance.(*Shemot* 28:9-12) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Here, Seforno says explicitly that the motivation for a forgiving interpretation of the brothers’ actions is the general evaluation of them as positive characters. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. In fact, we are talking about a double question: whether this sentence is part of the conditions of the vow or part of the obligations of the vow, and how one may understand it according to each of the possibilities.Rashi and the Rashbam, for example, agree that we are talking about the continuation of the condition, but they argue about the question of the understanding of the sentence, while the Ramban maintains that this is an obligation of the vow.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Reading these verses such that “morning” is the end of verse 6 creates the problem of a deficient sentence, because the word “evening” has a continuation: “And you shall know that God took you out of the land of Egypt,” but for “morning” the continuation is deficient — what will happen in the morning?

    This problem may be solved in one of two ways.One is that one may rearrange the verse and read it in the following way: “In the evening and in the morning, you shall know that God took you out of the land of Egypt.”The second is that the verse is tobe read as having two parallel clauses: “And you shall know that God took you out of Egypt” also relates to the word “evening” and one should read the verse thusly: “In the evening, you shall know that God took you out of Egypt, and in the morning you shall know that God took you out of Egypt.” [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. These are his words:

    **6**) “In the evening you will know” — May it be His will that what He said to me, that He will give you food, will be in such as a way that He will give you in the evening your evening needs, in a way that you shall know that Blessed God took you out totally from the land of Egypt.He will take you out also from its customs, for you would reside there on the pot of meat, without a set mealtime, like animals, as they of blessed memory said that at first Israel were like chickens pecking in a garbage heap, until Moshe came and set mealtimes for them (*Yoma* 75b).

    **7**) “And in the morning” — you will have bread in the morning.

    “You shall see the glory of God” — thus may it be His will that you will see God’s glory, which will come to delimit the times, so that you shall know that your complaints are upon Him, and He will be the one to appear to remove them from upon Him. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)