

Parashat Shemot - פְּרַשְׁת שְׁמוֹת

January 3-9, 2021 י"ט טבת - כ"ה טבת תשפ"א

PARASHAH NEWSLETTER

In This Week's Parashah: מָה בַּפְּרָשָׁה

Pharaoh enslaves Bnei Yisrael, forcing them to work very hard.

Pharaoh makes a law that says that all male Hebrew babies should be killed. The Hebrew midwives do not follow this order.

After three months of being hidden at home, a male Hebrew baby is put in a basket in the Nile River and his older sister, Miriam, watches over him.

The daughter of Pharaoh recognizes that he is a Hebrew baby, pulls him out and accepts Miriam's offer to find her a Hebrew woman who could nurse the baby and names him Moshe.

When Moshe grows up, he kills an Egyptian taskmaster who was beating a Hebrew. He hides the body in the sand.

When Moshe intervenes in a fight between two Hebrews, he realizes that his secret is out and that he must run away from Pharaoh. He reaches Midian and is taken in by Yitro, Kohen Midian.

Moshe encounters God in the burning bush and is given the responsibility of taking Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt. His brother Aharon joins him and they go to speak with Pharaoh.

In response to Moshe's request to let his people go, Pharaoh increases the workload of Bnei Yisrael, which leads them to ask Moshe to leave them alone.

God promises that this is just the beginning, and that by the end Pharaoh will send Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt with a strong arm.



This Date in Jewish History

הַשָּׁבוּעַ בַּהִיסְטוֹרְיָה

[20 Tevet] Yahrzeit of the רמב"ם/Rambam (1137- 1204).

Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (Also known as Rambam or Maimonides) was born in Cordoba, Spain. When he was 15, Jews were forced to convert to Islam or run away. His family ran away to Morocco, and he later settled in Egypt, where he became leader of the Jewish community. His three most important and well-known works are his commentary on the Mishnah, the Mishneh Torah and the Guide of the Perplexed. It was said about him "From Moshe to Moshe, there was no one like Moshe," comparing the Rambam to Moshe Rabbeinu.

רַגַע נֶשֶׁל עֵבְרִית

שמות ג:ה

”וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־תִּקְרַב הַלֵּם שֶׁל־נִעְלִיךָ מֵעַל רִגְלֶיךָ כִּי הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עוֹמֵד עָלָיו אֲדַמְתִּי־קִדְשׁ הוּא:”

להשיל (שָׂרַשׁ נ.ש.ל) = Shed or remove

נֶשֶׁל = The skin shed by snakes or other reptiles

לְנֶשֶׁל = Banish, expel, cut out of inheritance



פְּרָשְׁנוֹת Commentary

וַיִּקָּם מֶלֶךְ־חֲדָשׁ עַל־מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדַע אֶת־יֹסֵף: (שמות א, ה) רש"י

וַיִּקָּם מֶלֶךְ־חֲדָשׁ. רב וּשְׂמוּאֵל, חד אָמַר חֲדָשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ, וְחַד אָמַר שְׁנַת־חֲדָשׁוֹ גְּזֻרֹתָיו: אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַע. עָשָׂה עֲצָמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ לֹא יָדָעוּ (סוטה י"א):

There was a new king — Rav and Shmuel (Amoraim found in the Talmud) differed in their interpretation of these words. One said that he was really a new king; the other said that it was the same king but he made new rules (Sotah 11a).

Who did not know Joseph/יֹסֵף — he acted as if he didn't know him (Sotah 11a).

- In this commentary, Rashi presents two different interpretations for the words "new king," one being that the king was new, and the other that it was as though he was new, because his rules were new. **Which position makes more sense to you? Why?**

Halakhah/הלכה

When encountering God at the burning bush, Moshe is instructed to remove his shoes because the ground he was standing on was holy--"שֶׁל־נִעְלִיךָ מֵעַל רַגְלֶיךָ כִּי--"הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עוֹמֵד עָלָיו אֲדַמְת־קֹדֶשׁ הוּא."

Indeed, this was the rule for everybody who ever entered into the area of the בית המקדש/Temple in Jerusalem: "לא יבִּגֵּס לְהֵר הַבַּיִת בְּמַקְלוֹ וּבְמִנְעָלוֹ"/"One should not enter the Temple Mount with a staff, or with shoes on..." (Mishnah Berakhot 9:5) Similarly, כהנים/priests who worked in the בית המקדש/Temple had to perform all their main jobs barefoot! (See Mishnah Zevachim 2:1.)

In fact, in many synagogues, people used to pray barefoot! But later a distinction was made between praying in synagogues and working at Beit Hamikdash. Today, what is and isn't considered respectful and appropriate depends on where you are from. In some countries, particularly in Arab countries and the Far East, removing one's shoes shows respect, while in Europe and Western countries, it is the opposite and people keep their shoes on to show respect. **How do you think about wearing shoes? Does it make you feel more or less serious?**

Torah Trope/טעמי המקרא

מֵרַכָּא כְּפוּלָה

This special note looks like this: „

There are only five of them in the whole Torah--This is the second one! In this week's parsha, it appears in the phrase: לָמָּה תַעֲשֶׂה לָּהּ לַעֲבָדֶיךָ/"Why are you doing this to your servants?" The Israelite officers come to complain to Pharaoh that they are being treated too harshly; the people don't have enough time to collect all the straw and make the required number of bricks. He doesn't care. This note appears as part of their desperate complaint to Pharaoh and the special tune almost sounds like a cry.

אָמרו רבוֹתֵינוּ, כְּשֶׁהָיָה מֹשֶׁה רֹבֵינוּ רוֹעֵה צֹאֲנוֹ שֶׁל יִתְרוֹ בַּמִּדְבָּר, בָּרַח מִמֶּנּוּ גָּדִי, וְרָץ אַחֲרָיו עַד שֶׁהֵגִיעַ לַחֲסִית, כִּיּוֹן שֶׁהִגִּיעַ לַחֲסִית, גִּזְדַּמְנָה לוֹ בְּרֻכָּה שֶׁל מַיִם, וְעָמַד הַגָּדִי לְשִׁתּוֹת, כִּיּוֹן שֶׁהִגִּיעַ מֹשֶׁה אֶצְלוֹ, אָמַר אָנִי לֹא הֵייתִי יוֹדֵעַ שֶׁרָץ הָיִיתָ מִפְּנֵי צָמָא, עָנַף אֶתָּה, הִרְכִּיבוֹ עַל כַּתְפוֹ וְהָיָה מְהֵלָּה. אָמַר הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, יֵשׁ לָּהּ רַחֲמִים לְנֶהֱגַ צֹאֲנוֹ שֶׁל בֶּשֶׂר וְדָם כִּף סִיף אֶתָּה תִרְעֶה צֹאֲנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, הֲוֵי וּמֹשֶׁה הָיָה רוֹעֵה. (שמות רבה א, ב)

Our teachers said: Once, while Moshe our Teacher was tending [his father-in-law] Yitro's flock, a kid (a young goat) ran away. Moshe ran after it until it reached a small, shaded place. There, the kid came across a pool and began to drink. As Moshe approached the lamb, he said, "I did not know you ran away because you were thirsty. You must be so exhausted!" He then put the kid on his shoulders and carried him back. God said, "Since you tend a person's flock with such overwhelming love - I swear you will be the shepherd of my flock, Israel." This is the meaning of: "And Moshe was a shepherd." (Shmot Rabba 1, 2)

There are often gaps in the Torah's telling of the story and there are also phrases that are curious and draw our attention. Midrash tries to fill in gaps in the story while also answering questions or resolving difficulties. You can think of Midrash as where the text and an idea meet.

- This midrash is focused on the phrase *ומשה היה רעה* in Shemot 3:1. The phrase seems to set the scene: Moshe came to the burning bush while tending his father-in-law's flock. But it also can be read as saying, "Moshe was a shepherd." The Midrash wonders: Why would it matter what Moshe's work was?
- The midrash tells a long story about how Moshe takes care of a kid that runs away from the herd. God sees the way Moshe cares for the lamb, and decides that Moshe will be the one to lead בני ישראל / the Jewish people. What question do you think the Midrash is trying to answer by telling this story?
- What qualities does Moshe have that will make him a good leader? What qualities do you think a good leader needs to have?



Discussion Questions

1.

What do you think it means when the Torah says that the cries of בני ישראל /the Jewish people rise up to God, and God hears their moaning and remembers the covenant with Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov? Did God need this reminder? Doesn't God remember and know everything?

שאלות לדיור ומחשבה

2.

Do you think Moshe knew he was a Hebrew when he killed the Egyptian taskmaster? From when do you think he knew this important fact about himself?

שאלות הנשבע Quiz

1. Once Yaakov comes down to מצרים/Egypt, how many people does the Torah report being there from his family?
2. What שבט/tribe does Moshe come from?
3. Moshe and Aharon ask Pharaoh to let them go a certain number of days' journey into the wilderness. How many?
4. Who sees baby Moshe floating in a basket in the יאר/Nile and brings him home?
5. What nation are Moshe's wife and father-in-law from?
6. What is the name of Moshe's first-born child?
7. Moshe's father in law is called three different names in this parashah. What are they?
8. Complete this sentence: _____ זֶה־שְׁמִי לְעֵלָם וְזֶה זְכָרִי.
9. What was Moshe doing when he saw a bush on fire?
10. What are the names of the two midwives who refuse to kill the Israelite children?