



January 8 - 14, 2023 ט"ו - כ"א טבת תשפ"ג



קַה בְּפָרָשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- Yosef and his brothers die, but their children's families grow very large.
- A new Pharaoh comes to power and enslaves בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (Benei Yisrael, the Israelites).
- Pharaoh instructs two midwives, Shifrah and Puah, to kill Israelite baby boys. They disobey him, and God rewards them. Pharaoh decrees that all Israelite baby boys must be thrown into the river.
- Yokheved gives birth to a boy and hides him in a basket in the river. His sister, Miriam, stands nearby to see what will happen to him. Pharaoh's daughter finds the baby and adopts him. She names him Moshe.
- Years later, Moshe sees an Egyptian beating an Israelite. Moshe kills the Egyptian, and flees to Midian.
- Moshe marries Tzipporah, Yitro's daughter.
- Moshe is a shepherd. One day, he sees a bush that's on fire but not being consumed. God speaks to Moshe from the flames and tells him to go to Pharaoh and demand that Pharaoh free Benei Yisrael.
- Moshe tries to turn down the job. God shows him some miracles that can help convince Benei Yisrael, and tells him that Aharon, his brother, will help him.
- On the way down to Mitzrayim, Tziporah gives her son a בְּרִית מִילָה (berit milah, circumcision).
- Moshe and Aharon meet with Pharaoh, but Pharaoh refuses to let the Israelites go. He makes their work even harder.





פֶּשֶׁט הַפָּסוּקִים • Understanding the Verses

Pharaoh commands that Hebrew baby boys should be killed. Here's what happens:

Shemot 1:17-19

The midwives feared God.
They did not do what the king of Egypt told them; they let the boys live.

The king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, letting the boys live?"

The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are really good at keeping babies alive. Before the midwife can come to them, they have already given birth."

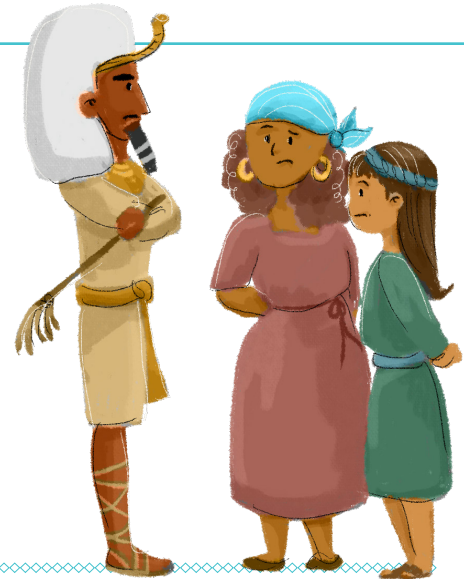
שמות א:יז-יט

וַתִּירָאן הַמִּילְדוֹת אֶת הָאֱלֹקִים
וְלֹא עָשׂוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֲלֵיהֶן מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם
וַתַּחְיֶינָן אֶת הַיְלָדִים:

וַיִּקְרָא מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לַמִּילְדוֹת
וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶן מִדּוּעַ עָשִׂיתֶן הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה
וַתַּחְיֶינָן אֶת הַיְלָדִים:

וַתֹּאמְרָן הַמִּילְדוֹת אֶל פַּרְעֹה
כִּי לֹא כַּנָּשִׁים הַמִּצְרִיּוֹת הָעִבְרִיּוֹת
כִּי חֵיווֹת הֵנָּה
בְּטֶרֶם תָּבוֹא אֲלֵהֶן הַמִּילְדוֹת וַיֵּלְדוּ:

- ♦ What do you notice? What seems special here?
- ♦ What choice do you think the midwives had to make? How do you think that felt for them? What do you imagine they thought would happen?
- ♦ In the final pasuk, are the midwives being truthful? What evidence can you find to support your answer?
- ♦ How do you imagine the midwives felt during this conversation? How did they have the courage to defend themselves when Pharaoh accused them?



פְּרָשְׁנוֹת • Commentary

Shemot 1:8

A new king rose up over Egypt
who did not know Yosef.

שמות א:ח

וַיָּקָם מֶלֶךְ חָדָשׁ עַל מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר
לֹא יָדַע אֶת יוֹסֵף:

In the next few pesukim, we hear that this king is concerned that Benei Yisrael might rebel. So he decides to make Benei Yisrael into slaves.

Our פְּרָשָׁנִים (parshanim, commentators) wonder: **Yosef was so famous! Is it really possible the new king hadn't heard of him? Or could the words in our pasuk have another meaning?**

Rashi (France, 1,000 years ago)

רש"י

The new king acted as if he didn't know about Yosef.

עָשָׂה עֲצָמוֹ בְּאֵלּוּי לֹא יָדָעוּ.

- Why might the new king have wanted to pretend he didn't know about Yosef?
- Rashi thinks our pasuk is giving us information about the character of the new king. What is his character, according to this interpretation? Does this understanding of the king fit with the other things we know about him from our parashah?

Sforno (Italy, 500 years ago)

ספורנו

Yosef was mentioned in the kings' history books, especially the laws he had made that saved Egypt from famine. But the new king didn't realize Yosef had come from this nation (Benei Yisrael), and that it would have been appropriate to treat this nation with special consideration because of Yosef.

אֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁהָיָה זָכְרוֹן מִמֶּנּוּ בְּדִבְרֵי הַיָּמִים לַמְּלָכִים בְּלִי סֶפֶק, בְּפֶרֶט בְּעֵינֵי הַחֹמֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר שָׁם לְחֹק, לֹא עָלְתָה עַל לֵב הַמֶּלֶךְ הַחֹדֶשׁ אֶפְשָׁרוּת הַיּוֹתוֹ מִזֶּה הָעָם, וְשֶׁהָיָה עִם זֶה רָאוּי לְשֹׂאת פָּנִים לַעֲמּוֹ בְּעִבּוּרוֹ.

- Does it make sense to you that the new king might not have made the connection between Yosef and Benei Yisrael? Why might that have happened? Can you find evidence for this in the story?
- Can Rashi's interpretation and Sforno's interpretation both be true? Can you think of other reasons to explain why this new king ended up forgetting Yosef?





מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

Why was Moshe chosen to lead Benei Yisrael? What were his special qualities? What do you think are the most important qualities for leaders?

A midrash offers an answer to these questions. This midrash is based on the pasuk that describes Moshe's previous work experience (Shemot 3:1):

וּמֹשֶׁה הָיָה רֹעֶה אֶת צֹאן יִתְרוֹ חוּתְנוֹ כֹּהֵן מִדְיָן

Moshe was a shepherd for the flock of his father-in-law, Yitro, the priest of Midian.

שמות רבה ב

אָמְרוּ רַבּוּתֵינוּ: בְּשִׁהְיָה מֹשֶׁה רֹבֵינוּ עָלֵינוּ
הַשְּׁלוֹם רוּעָה צֹאנוּ שֶׁל יִתְרוֹ בַּמִּדְבָּר, בָּרַח
מִמֶּנּוּ גָדִי, וְרָץ אַחֲרָיו עַד שֶׁהִגִּיעַ לַחֲסִית.
בֵּינוֹן שֶׁהִגִּיעַ לַחֲסִית, נִזְדַּמְנָה לוֹ בְּרָכָה שֶׁל
מִים, וְעַמֵּד הַגָּדִי לִשְׁתּוֹת. בֵּינוֹן שֶׁהִגִּיעַ
מֹשֶׁה אֶצְלוֹ, אָמַר: "אֲנִי לֹא הֵייתִי יוֹדֵעַ
שֶׁרָץ הֵייתָ מִפְּנֵי צָמָא. עֵיף אָתָּה!"

הַרְבִּיבוּ עַל כְּתוּפוֹ וְהָיָה מְהֵלָּה.

אָמַר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: "יֵשׁ לָךְ רַחֲמִים
לְנֶהֱגַת צֹאנוּ שֶׁל בָּשָׂר וְדָם כִּף חֲיִידָא אָתָּה
תִּרְעָה צֹאנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל."

Shemot Rabbah

Our teachers said: Once, while Moshe was shepherding Yitro's flock, one lamb ran away. Moshe chased after it until it reached a small, shady place. There, the lamb found a pool and began to drink. As Moshe approached the lamb he said, "I didn't know you ran away because you were thirsty. You must be exhausted!"

Moshe put the lamb on his shoulders and carried it back.

The Holy One said, "You showed mercy in leading sheep that belong to a human being. I swear that you will become the shepherd of My sheep, Yisrael."

♦ Rahel (Bereishit 29:9)

♦ Hevel (Bereishit 4:2)

♦ David (Shmuel Alef 16:11-19)

♦ Yaakov (Bereishit 31:39-40)



- ◆ What did Moshe do to show he was a good shepherd? How many different things can you think of?
- ◆ What kinds of hard work are being done by Moshe? How do you think he felt about doing all that work?
- ◆ What's special about Moshe's statement to the sheep? Is it easy to understand what other living things are experiencing and feeling, or to be sensitive to their needs? Why is it important for a leader to be able to do that?
- ◆ What is this midrash saying about the kinds of leaders God wants for Benei Yisrael? What kinds of things does God want them to be able to do?



בואו נדבר על זה • Tell Me More About This!

Moshe was a shepherd (Shemot 3:1)—one of many in Tanakh!

• Yosef and his brothers (Bereishit 37:2)

• Amos the prophet (Amos 1:1)

• Tzipporah and her sisters (Shemot 2:16)

Our midrash (p. 3) told a story to explain why Moshe's shepherding made him a really good choice to become the leader of Benei Yisrael. Later in the same midrash, it explains that David was chosen to become king of Israel because, as a shepherd, he knew how to meet the needs of lots of different sheep. He would take the small sheep out to graze in gentle grass, and the old sheep out to graze in medium grass, and the strongest sheep out to the rough grass (Shemot Rabbah 2:2).

- ◆ Do you know teachers, or other leaders, who are really good at meeting different people's needs, in different ways? Why is it important for leaders to be able to do this?



שאלות הַשְּׁבוּי • Parashah Scavenger Hunt

The answers to the first seven questions can be found in the matching numbered aliyah in the Torah reading. **The answers to questions 8 and 9 are harder and can come from anywhere in the parashah. The answer to question 10 is in this week's haftarah.**

aliyot:

- 1) Shemot 1:1 to 1:17
- 2) 1:18 to 2:10
- 3) 2:11 to 2:25
- 4) 3:1 to 3:15
- 5) 3:16 to 4:17
- 6) 4:18 to 4:31
- 7) 5:1 to 6:1

Haftarah for Ashkenazim:

Yeshayahu 27:6 to 28:13
and 29:22 to 23

Haftarah for Sefardim:

Yirmeyahu 1:1 to 2:3



Good luck!

1 What were the names of the two midwives?

2 Who gave Moshe his name?



3 What did Moshe do right before he killed the Egyptian?

4 How does God describe the land where Benei Yisrael will be taken?



5 What should Moshe do if Benei Yisrael still don't believe him after he turns his staff to a snake and gives his arm צָרַעַת (tzara'at, a spiritual skin disease)?

6 When Moshe speaks to Pharaoh, how should he describe Benei Yisrael?

7 Moshe and Aharon ask Pharaoh to let Benei Yisrael journey in the desert for how many days?

9 Who in this parashah is described as God-fearing?

8 How did Moshe and Tzipporah travel to מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt)?

*
Look for the answers on page 11!

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10 **Haftarah for Ashkenazim:** What will happen on the day that a great shofar is blown?

Haftarah for Sefardim: Why does Yirmeyahu say that he shouldn't become a prophet?



רְגִיעַ שֶׁל עִבְרִית • A Moment of Hebrew

Shemot 2:2

שמות ב:ב

The woman became pregnant and gave birth to a son; she saw that he was good, and **she hid him** for three months.

וַתְּהַר הָאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתֵּרָא אֹתוֹ כִּי טוֹב
הוּא וַתְּצַפְּנֵהוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה יָרְחִים:

לְהַצְפִּין (שָׁרֵשׁ צ.פ.נ.)



- ◆ To hide
- ◆ To write in code (lehatzpin)

= צוֹפֵן
Code (tzofen)

= מַצְפֵּן
Compass (matzpein)

= צָפוֹן

The part of the Pesah Seder when we search for the afikoman and eat it (literally: "hidden") (tzafun)

Find the Word!

What name does Pharaoh give Yosef after Yosef explains Pharaoh's dreams? (Hint: Look for it in Bereishit 41.) Now that you know the שָׁרֵשׁ (shoresh, root) נ.צ.פ., how do you understand the significance of Yosef's Egyptian name, and why it might have fit him?



בואו נדבר על זה • Tell Me More About This!

This week we meet Tziporah. She's the daughter of Yitro (who's also called Re'uel), and she becomes Moshe's wife.

There are only a few pesukim in the Torah that tell us about Tziporah, but you can see from this midrash how important to the story חֲזוֹ"ל (Hazzal, our Sages) thought she was!

Yalkut Shimoni

Re'uel thought, I'll imprison Moshe...
Re'uel kept him in prison for ten years.

Re'uel's daughter Tzipporah took pity on him and she fed him bread and water.

After ten years, she said to her father:
"Should we check on that Hebrew man
whom no one has thought about for 10
years, and see if he's alive or dead?"

Re'uel didn't know she had been bringing
food to Moshe, so he assumed he was
dead.

Tzipporah said: "Haven't you heard of
the amazing miracles the God of the
Hebrews has performed? This God
saved Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov. And
in Mitzrayim, this God saved our prisoner
from being drowned in the river or killed
by Pharaoh's sword. So God can certainly
save him from this imprisonment!"

So Re'uel did what Tzipporah suggested.
Sure enough, he found Moshe alive and
standing on his feet and praying to the
God of his ancestors!

ילקוט שמעוני

אמר בלבו אתנה זה בית הכלא... ויהי כלוא
שם עשר שנים.

ויהי בהיותו עצור שמה ותחמל עליו צפורה
בת רעואל ותכלכלהו לחם ומים.

ויהי מקץ עשר שנים ותאמר אל אביה לאמר,
האיש העברי אשר כלאתו זה עשר שנים בבית
הסהר ואין דורש ואין מבקש אליו, ועתה אם
טוב בעיניך אבי נשלח ונראה אם מת ואם חי
הוא.

ואביה לא ידע כי כלכלתהו, ויען ויאמר רעואל
הנהיה בדבר הזה להעצר גבר בבית הכלא
עשר שנים ולא יאכל ויחיה.

ותען צפורה את אביה לאמר, הלא שמעת אבי
פי אלקי העברים גדול ונורא הוא ומפליא להם
בכל עת, הוא הציל אברהם מאור בשדים, ואת
יצחק מן החרב, ואת יעקב מן המלאך בהאבקו
עמו, וגם עם זה רבות עשה ויצלהו מיאור
מצרים וחרב פרעה גם מזה יכול למלטהו.

ויטיב הדבר בעיני רעואל ויעש כן בדבר בתו,
וישלח אל הבור לראות מה
נעשה בו, ויראו והנה
האיש חי ועומד על
רגליו ומתחנן אל
אלקי אבותיו!



- ◆ In this story, what surprising things does Tzipporah do? What can we learn from her?
- ◆ In the midrash, Tzipporah tells her father that keeping Moshe alive for 10 years was actually one of the many miracles God has performed. Obviously, that's not completely true—she's the one who fed Moshe! So why did she say it that way? Why do Hazal seem to think that saying it that way is the right thing to do?



דְּבַח שֶׁל דֵּיּוּ • One-Minute Debate

Debate: Moshe should have agreed to God's request immediately.

At the burning bush, God sends Moshe to free Benei Yisrael, but Moshe thinks he's not the right person for the job (Shemot 4:10-13).

How to play:

- ◆ Here are some arguments to get you started, but try to come up with your own. Then debate someone!
- ◆ For a true one-minute debate, give each side 30 seconds to make its best case.



Agree!

- ◆ The burning bush was an amazing miracle. Moshe should have been convinced right away that he had been chosen for something special.
- ◆ God knows what we are each capable of.
- ◆ It wasn't right for Moshe to say that Benei Yisrael wouldn't listen to him. That's bad-mouthing Benei Yisrael!
- ◆ Uh... when God asks, you don't say no.



Disagree!

- ◆ It was natural for Moshe to feel intimidated. God was asking him to do something huge!
- ◆ Moshe was not a big talker. It's possible he had a speech impediment. It was reasonable for him to express hesitation about a job that would require giving lots of speeches.
- ◆ Moshe hesitated because he was the most humble person who ever lived (Bemidbar 12:3), and humility is a good thing.





הלכה • Halakhah

In our parashah, some key leaders emerge. A new king rules over מצרים (Mitzrayim, Egypt) (see פְּרָשְׁנוֹת /Commentary, p. 2), and Moshe is appointed leader of Benei Yisrael (see מִדְרָשׁ /Midrash, p. 4).

Can you imagine what it might be like to see a really important leader like a king, or like Moshe? How might you feel?

The Talmud (Bavli Berakhot 58a) says there are special בְּרָכוֹת (berakhot, blessings) to recite if you find yourself in this situation!

FOR A JEWISH KING

(like Moshe—who's also considered a king, based on Devarim 33:5!):

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שְׂחָלַק מִכְבוֹדוֹ לִירְאָיו

Blessed are you, God our Lord, Ruler of the World,
who has distributed honor to those who fear God.

FOR A NON-JEWISH KING

(like Pharaoh):

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁנָּתַן מִכְבוֹדוֹ לְבָשָׂר וְדָם

Blessed are you, God our Lord, Ruler of the World,
Who has given honor to flesh and blood.

Both blessings emphasize that human rulers—made of flesh and blood—ultimately draw their power from God, the only true ruler.





Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. Shifrah and Puah (1:15)
2. Pharaoh's daughter (2:10)
3. He looked in both directions and saw no one there (2:12)
4. A good and wide land, a land flowing with milk and honey (this second phrase appears 13 times in Tanakh, and this is the first!) (3:8)
5. Take water from the river and pour it on the ground; it would turn to blood (4:9)
6. As God's firstborn child (4:22)
7. Three (5:3)
8. By donkey (back in Devash for Bereishit we saw a midrash suggesting that this was the same donkey from the Akeidah!) (4:20)
9. The midwives (1:21)
10. Haftarah for Ashkenazim: Those who have been lost in Ashur and Mitzrayim will be brought back to worship God in Yerushalayim (Yeshayahu 27:13)
Haftarah for Sefardim: He doesn't know how to speak, and he's a child (Yirmeyahu 1:6)

Would you say these blessings over an elected leader, like the President of the United States?

NO

Sefer Ha-Eshkol (France, 900 years ago) says that this blessing is only for rulers who have the power of life and death over their subjects. That is not true of almost any modern leader in the western world.

R. Ovadiah Yosef (Yehaveh Da'at II:28) says that you say these blessings over anyone who can spare a person's life. So monarchs or presidents or even judges with the power to pardon people—which means to stop them from being executed—should also count.

Yes

What if you see the President on TV or on the internet? Does that count?

R. Betzalel Stern (Betzal Ha-Hokhmah II:18) says no: You only say this blessing if you see the ruler in person. You have to actually feel how amazing—and maybe scary or awe-inspiring—it is to be in the presence of someone with that sort of power.



- ♦ Is there an important leader that you've met or would like to meet? Or maybe a great artist or athlete? What would you ask that person?
- ♦ How could meeting that person—and gaining more appreciation for great power, exceptional talents, and extraordinary accomplishments—help you better appreciate God in the world?



תפילה • Prayer in the Parashah

We read in our parashah about God's revelation at the burning bush:

Shemot 3:6

God said: "I am the God of your father, God of Avraham, God of Yitzhak, and God of Yaakov..."

שמות ג:ו

וַיֹּאמֶר: אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי אֲבִיךָ אֱלֹהֵי
אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב...

Seem familiar? We use very similar language in the opening line of the Amidah, our central prayer:

Blessed are You, Lord
Our God and God of our ancestors
God of Avraham, God of Yitzhak,
and God of Yaakov

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'
אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ.
אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם, אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק,
וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב.

When we speak to God in the Amidah, we use God's own words from when God spoke to Moshe for the first time!

Did you ever wonder why we repeat the word "אֱלֹהֵי" (Elokei, God of)," three times in this line in the Amidah? It could have said, "God of Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov," instead of, "God of Avraham, God of Yitzhak, and God of Yaakov." Why all the repetition?

One possible reason is to remind ourselves of this encounter at the burning bush, which is the only story where this exact phrase appears in the Torah. (And the phrase itself is repeated three times throughout this story! See Shemot 3:6, 3:15, and 4:5.)

- ♦ When Moshe heard these words from God, he was surprised and a little frightened. Could that be how tefillah feels sometimes?
- ♦ How might your Amidah change if you think of God speaking to you (like God spoke to Moshe), instead of only thinking about you speaking to God?
- ♦ Try it out! When you say these words in the Amidah, imagine you are standing by the burning bush and speaking with God, just like Moshe. What is that experience like?

