

# MOSHE

## A Gift Drawn From the Water

Original Painting By: YORAM RAANAN

### Weekly Torah Video Series: Parshas Shemos

#### Featured Video: Two Hundred and Ten Years of Gestation

#### Finding Purpose In The Infrastructure of Creation

1. The written Torah is comprised of Five Books.
2. 1. Genesis 2. Exodus 3. Leviticus 4. Numbers 5. Mishneh Torah.
3. Netziv in his introduction to Exodus cites Ramban & Rav Hai Gaon.
4. Ramban refers to each book by content: 1: Book of Creation, 2: Book of Redemption.
5. Rav Hai Gaon refers to 1st 2 Books as: Book 1 & Book 2 and the others by content.
6. Netziv: Why refer to the 1st 2 by number & not the others?
7. If the 1st 2 books would be identified by content rather than by number one would think each independent of the other.
8. The closing chapter of the first book is the second.
9. The purpose of creation is that the Jewish People be redeemed from Egypt to receive the Torah at Sinai.
10. Gemarah: Genesis is referred to as the Book of the Straight because the Holy Patriarchs were straight; unbiased totally objective.

#### The Intensification of Bondage & Its Explosive Results

1. Pharaoh instituted bondage as the Jewish population reached staggering proportions.
2. He feared they would take over the country.
3. Enslavement would control & minimize their number.
4. Midrash: "As the Egyptians considered afflicting them G-d considered to increase their number".
5. G-d decreed the bondage to be 400 years; the Jews were in Egypt 210 years.
6. Midrash: Had bondage only been in servitude, it would be 400 yrs.
7. The Egyptians embittered their lives, imposing inhumane conditions: 210 was equivalent to the greater (400).
8. The Jews could not be taken as G-D's people unless they were 600,000 men above 20.
9. Only 20% of Jews left Egypt.
10. To reach the critical mass of 600,000 men over 20, the numbers must be enormous and staggering.
11. As bondage intensified, the end of the bondage drew nearer; numbers had to increase.

#### Though Small in Number, Always the Focal Point of Existence

1. The Jews were enslaved by Pharaoh.
2. He appointed taskmasters to insure their enslavement.
3. They were tasked to fortify the cities of Peesom & Ramseis.
4. Midrash: Upon completion, cities crumbled and collapsed.
5. Maharal: Pharaoh believed the Jewish People no different than others.
6. Their essence is physical: the quantification of a People is based on accomplishment.
7. The essence of the Jewish People is spiritual & not quantified.
8. Pharaoh wanted to prove his point by their rebuilding Peesom & Ramseis- quantifying their capacity.
9. G-d caused the 2 cities to collapse proving this is not who they are.
10. Jewish People, rooted in their relationship with G-d, cannot be quantified.
11. They have always been the the smallest people in number.
12. King David sinned when he took a census of the Jewish People to know their number.
13. The result was a plague to indicate that their number is not relevant to who they are.

## Weekly Torah Commentaries Series: Parshas Shemos



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### The Holy Patriarchs, the Equivalent of Creation

Ramban writes, in his introduction to the Book of Shemos, that the Book of Bereishis is the “Book of Formation (*Yetzeirah*)” regarding the Creation of the world and all that was formed. Just as the Book of Bereishis discusses G-d’s formation of the physical world and how He formed existence, so too does it discuss every aspect of how the spiritual destiny of the Jewish people was established through the lives of the Holy Patriarchs. All that transpired with the Holy Patriarchs, both physical and spiritual, has relevance to the destiny of the Jewish people until the end of time.

Ramban explains, “After completing the Book of Bereishis, which is the Book of Formation, the Torah begins to discuss the actualization of the formation of the Patriarchs which has relevance to the future of the Jewish people who are their descendants. The Book of Shemos begins with the first exile and the redemption of the Jewish people from it. The exile that the Jewish people experienced in Egypt did not come to its completion until they were returned to the level of their Holy Forefathers.

Although they had been freed from the house of bondage, they were still considered in exile because they were not in a location that was their own. They wandered the desert until they came upon Mt. Sinai and built the Mishkan. After they completed the building of the Mishkan, G-d returned and allowed His Divine Presence to dwell among them. Then they returned to the level of the Holy Patriarchs, which is the secret of G-d being upon their tents. It was the equivalent of them becoming the chariot of G-d. Only then were they considered to be truly redeemed. This is because they returned to the level of their forefathers.

The Midrash states regarding the holy Patriarchs, *‘Hein, hein hamerkava* – they are the Chariot (receptacle for G-d).’ Each one of the Patriarchs was the location of the Divine Presence similar to the Holy of Holies in the Temple. This is the reason the Book of Shemos concludes with the completion of the building Mishkan.”

Every aspect of the destiny of the Jewish people was determined by the actions and happenings of the Holy Patriarchs. Chazal tell us, “The actions of the Patriarchs are a sign for the children.” This means that the actions of the Patriarchs set in motion and establish future events that the Jewish people will experience and of which they will be the beneficiaries.

Tana d’vei Eliyahu (teachings of Eliyahu the Prophet) states that every Jew must say, “When will my accomplishments be comparable to the accomplishments of my forbearers Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov?” Why must the Jew aspire and set his goals to be able to achieve the level of the holy Patriarchs? Why would it not be sufficient for a Jew to aspire, “When will my accomplishments be comparable to the accomplishments of Hillel the elder, Rambam, or other great Torah sages of the past?”

It is because every Jew does not have relevance to Rambam or to other great Torah sages such as Shamei and Hillel. However, every Jew has relevance to the Holy Patriarchs who established the spiritual profile and infrastructure of the entire Jewish people.

The Gemara in Tractate Yevamos tells us there are three distinct characteristics that are innate in every Jew: mercy, shame, and the propensity to perform acts of kindness (*rachmanim, baishanim, gomlei chassadim*). These characteristics are transmitted to the Jewish people by the holy Patriarchs because they are their spiritual heirs. If a Jew does not possess these characteristics, his pedigree is in question.

However, based on the Ramban, in addition to the innate characteristics that every Jew possesses, his spiritual destiny has been formed and determined by the Holy Patriarchs, thus going beyond the spiritual characteristics mentioned in the Gemara. The Holy Patriarchs, through their lives and experiences, determined the entire destiny of the Jewish people until the end of time to no less of a degree than G-d’s formation of existence.

If a Jew wants to understand and appreciate his spiritual potential and how his life must be invested, he must look upon the lives of the holy Patriarchs. This is the reason that the aspiration of every Jew, regarding his actualization, must conform to what was established by the holy Patriarchs. Since the destiny of the Jewish people has already been established by the holy Patriarchs, it cannot be changed.

The Torah tells us that when Korach opposed the appointment of Aaron to be the High Priest, Moshe said to him that just as one cannot change the order of nature that is fixed and innate in existence, so too one cannot change the spiritual infrastructure that pertains to the Jewish people. Since Aaron was chosen by G-d to be the High Priest, it is something that cannot be altered to any degree.

The more the Jew appreciates the lives and experiences of the holy Patriarchs in the Book of Bereishis, the more he will come to appreciate his own spiritual potential and relevance to existence to contribute to the destiny of the Jewish people.

### **Yocheved and Miriam, Transcending Their Essence**

The Torah tells us that because of the degree of proliferation of the Jewish people in Egypt, Pharaoh was concerned that they would ultimately join with the enemy to wage war against them and force them out of their land. Pharaoh thus decreed that when a Jewish male child is born, he should be killed on the birth stool. However, if a female child were born, she should live.

The Torah states, **“The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives of whom the name of the first was Shifrah and the name of the second was Puah, ‘When you deliver the Hebrew women, and you see them on the birthstool; if it is a son, you are to kill him and if it is a daughter, she shall live.’”**

Rashi cites Chazal who explain, “Shifrah is Yocheved (the mother of Moshe). She was called Shifrah because her responsibility as a midwife was to cleanse and beautify the newborn children (l’shapeir – to beautify). Puah is Miriam (the sister of Moshe) because she was the one who was responsible to calm and quiet the newborns (‘Poo’ is the sound that one makes to quiet and calm a crying child).”

Why does the Torah choose to identify Yocheved and Miriam by referring to them by their area of responsibility as midwives rather than by their names?

By identifying Yocheved as Shifrah and Miriam as Puah, the Torah is revealing to us each of their areas of strength and sensitivity regarding the care of newborns as midwives.

Yocheved was uniquely qualified because of her predisposition and capacity to cleanse and beautify the newborn children. Miriam had the unique ability to calm the newborns despite the trauma of birth. Each of them was chosen and appointed to be the overseers of the midwives in each of their areas of expertise.

Dedicating themselves to oversee the births of unlimited numbers of Jewish children is an indication that each of their areas of expertise identified their essence. This was due to their unique level of love for the newborn Jewish children that were being born into existence. Why is it necessary for the Torah to share with us the innate predisposition, sensitivities, and abilities of Yocheved and Miriam as midwives?

The Torah continues, **“...But the midwives feared G-d and they did not do as the king of Egypt spoke to them, and they caused the boys to live.”** Yocheved and Miriam defied the dictate of the king of Egypt. They were not intimidated by his order to kill the male Jewish newborns. Chazal explain that when the Torah states, “...they caused the boys to live...”, it is to reveal that they did not only defy his dictate, but they also fed and sustained them in their newborn state.

It is understood that it is natural that if a mother is told to kill her own offspring, she will not be able to heed the dictate, even if it were given by the monarch himself. She would prefer to be killed herself, rather than bring harm upon her child.

Chazal tell us that at that time in Egypt, the Jewish women were giving birth to six children in one litter. This means that Yocheved and Miriam were overseeing the births of hundreds of thousands of newborn children. Regardless of this staggering number of newborns with which they needed to contend in their capacity, the Torah identifies them as Shifrah and Puah, to affirm that their affinity and dedication to every child was not diminished. It was because they saw each child as if he was their own.

Since the Torah identified and quantified Yocheved and Miriam’s essence regarding their capacity as midwives, one would think that the reason they had defied the order of Pharaoh to kill the male newborns was because it was the antithesis of their essence. It was something that they could not do because of their feelings and love was no less than a parent has towards his own child. However, the Torah attests and reveals that the basis for their defiance of Pharaoh’s dictate purely attributed to their fear of G-d and was unrelated to their emotional connection to the newborn children. It was thus necessary for the Torah to identify Yocheved and Miriam in their capacity as midwives (Shifrah and Puah) in order for one to appreciate that the basis for their defiance of Pharaoh’s decree was unrelated to their disposition as midwives but rather because of their fear of G-d.

Had the Torah identified the midwives as Yocheved and Miriam, it would not have revealed this aspect of their dimension of fear of G-d. It is because they negated their essence to G-d that they merited to have special gifts bestowed upon them. Their personal sensitivities had no relevance to their service of G-d.

The pasuk states, **“He (Hashem) made for them houses.”** Chazal explain that these houses were the houses of Priesthood and Kingship. Yocheved merited the house of Priesthood and Miriam merited the house of Kingship.

### **Increasing the Merit of the Meritorious**

The Torah tells us that the Jewish midwives, Yocheved and Miriam, did not heed the decree of Pharaoh to kill the Jewish male newborns because they “feared G-d.” Because they spared the male children, the Torah states, **“G-d benefited the midwives- and the people increased and became very strong. And it was because the midwives feared G-d that He made for them Houses.”** Chazal explain that these houses were the houses of Priesthood and Kingship. Yocheved merited the house of Priesthood and Miriam merited the house of Kingship.

Yocheved and Miriam, the Jewish midwives, each merited prominent descendants who were Priests and royalty because they spared the Jewish children. If this is so, Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh asks, “Why does the Torah mention in the interim of the verse, before stating that G-d established for them houses that **‘the Jewish people increased and became very**

**strong?** Seemingly this fact is unrelated to the outgrowth of their fear of G-d. What is the Torah revealing to us through this interjection?"

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains, "Because G-d saw that the midwives truly feared Him, He presented to them to do the mitzvos, which is unlimited until the end of time, in order to increase their merit." G-d wanted the actions of the midwives to have unlimited ramifications in order to bring them the most merit.

When one performs a mitzvah, the innate value of merit that is due to the individual who performed it is based on the ramifications and effect of that mitzvah. Chazal teach us a principle, "G-d brings merit to the meritorious."

For example, if one wants to perform the mitzvah of kindness (chesed): If the individual is truly worthy, G-d will allow him to perform that act of kindness on behalf of a special individual, thus bringing about greater spiritual value. If however, the recipient of the kindness was average, the act of kindness would have limited value.

Because Yocheved and Miriam feared G-d and did not kill the newborns, He wanted them to be beneficiaries of their act to the greatest extent. He thus caused that the Jewish people should increase in great numbers and become strong. Due to the exceptional and unlimited value of their actions, each of them merited to have "Houses" – Priesthood and Kingship.

The Torah tells us that Avraham our Patriarch provided hospitality to three wayfarers who were angels. The Gemara in Tractate Bava Metzia tells us that as a result of the hospitality that Avraham had provided for the angels, the Jewish people merited three special gifts in the desert which allowed them to survive, and it affected their spirituality until the end of time.

Chofetz Chaim asks, "Why does the Torah specifically address this particular act of hospitality of Avraham when he was ninety-nine years old and not all the other acts of kindness that he had done selflessly prior to this moment?"

He explains that because Avraham had dedicated himself to G-d through the espousal of monotheism by performing acts of selfless kindness, he merited to host the most special guests, the angels. Because the beneficiaries of Avraham's kindness were the most special, he merited unlimited and eternal benefit.

As a result of the midwives sparing the Jewish newborn males, there was a proliferation of the Jewish people that was not to be fathomed because of their number. This was the "benefit" to the midwives, that G-d allowed their sacrifice for His sake to bring about unlimited results. They thus each merited the House of Priesthood and the House of Kingship.

The Torah states, "**G-d said to Avraham, 'I will bless those who will bless you, those who curse you will be cursed.'**" Seemingly, the word structure of the verse is inconsistent. On one hand, G-d promised Avraham that He would bless those who will bless him, and regarding those who curse him, they will only be cursed after they will curse him. One would think that the verse should have stated that G-d will curse those who will curse Avraham in a similar vein as He will bless those who will bless him. Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh asks, "Why does the Torah differentiate between those who bless Avraham and those who curse him?"

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that G-d wanted Avraham to be the greatest beneficiary of His blessing. Thus, G-d blesses in advance those

who will bless Avraham so that he should be the greatest beneficiary of the blessing. It is because he would be the beneficiary of a blessing from one who was blessed by G-d. However, regarding the curse, there would be no value to Avraham if G-d were to curse someone before he cursed him. We see that when one is truly worthy, G-d wants to maximize on behalf of the individual to increase the value and benefit that he will receive.

## **The Significance of Yosef Adjoining His Brothers** (from Vayechi)

The Torah tells us that Yosef adjured his brothers that when the Jewish people will be redeemed from Egypt, they should take his remains along with theirs out of Egypt. The verse states, "**...you must bring my bones up out of here with you.**"

Rashi cites Chazal who explain the words "**with you**" to mean, "When your children will take out your remains from Egypt, you must ensure me that they will remove my remains with them."

Every one of the Tribes wanted their remains to be removed from Egypt when redemption would come about. Since every one of the Tribes wanted their remains to be removed from Egypt by their own descendants, why did Yosef need to adjure his brothers to do so? Yosef could have requested that his two sons Ephraim and Manasse assume this obligation as the other tribes assumed responsibility for their descendants? Why was it necessary for Yosef to obligate the entire Jewish people to take out his remains from Egypt?

By obligating the Jewish people in this manner, Yosef caused that it should be prerequisite for the redemption of the Jewish people from Egypt. If they fail in fulfilling their obligation to him, they would not be able to leave Egypt to become G-d's chosen people at Sinai.

The Torah states, "**Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him...**" The Gemara in Tractate Sotah cites a verse from Proverbs, "Chacham lev yeekach mitzvos – the wise hearted takes mitzvos." Chazal tell us that the "wise hearted person" is referring to Moshe, because he was the only one who chose to seek out the remains of Yosef. When Moshe was attending to the remains of Yosef, the rest of the Jewish people were preoccupied with borrowing the silver and gold vessels from the Egyptians as they were commanded to do by G-d. They gathered the wealth of Egypt as a fulfillment of the promise that G-d had made to Avraham, that the Jewish people would leave Egypt "**with great wealth.**"

Although Moshe understood the value of gathering the wealth of Egypt, he chose to seek out the remains of Yosef because the redemption from Egypt was contingent upon fulfilling the oath that he had made with the Jewish people before he passed away.

The Torah tells us that when Yosef was initially sent by his father to seek out the welfare of his brothers and their flocks, he encountered a man on the way in the field. Chazal tell us that this was the Archangel Gabriel. The man said to him, "**Your brothers traveled from this (meezeh)...**" Sifsei Chachamim (on Rashi) explains that the numerical value of the word "**meezeh**" is twelve. Gabriel, the angel was telling Yosef that he should understand that he is no longer viewed as part of the unit of twelve brothers but rather, the unit of twelve has been broken. He was no longer part of the twelve.

Yosef, as the Provider of the families of his brothers in Egypt, understood that the twelve sons of Yaakov, which are the foundation of the Jewish

people, must be reunited and unified in order to establish an eternal Jewish people. When Yosef adjured his brothers that their descendants should be responsible to bring his remains out of Egypt to be buried in the Land of Israel together with theirs, he was bringing about a correction to “twelve” that had been dismantled. The only way the Jewish people would be qualified to receive the Torah at Sinai at a proper level was only if the “twelve” was fully reinstated.

This is indicated in the verse, which states, “...then you must bring my bones up out of here with you (meezeh).” It was to establish the “zeh” (the twelve). He thus needed to obligate the entire Jewish people to bring out this unification. It was not sufficient for Yosef to rely on his own children to do so.

If the obligation was incumbent on the entire Jewish people to take out the remains of Yosef, why was Moshe qualified to act independently of all the tribes in order to bring this about? Why was this adequate and sufficient to bring about the correction?

Chazal tell us that the dimension of Moshe’s spirituality was the equivalent of the entire Jewish people. Maharal of Prague explains in his work *Gevuras Hashem*, that Moshe’s soul was connected to every Jew. The soul of an individual is his essence. Since Moshe was the equivalent of the entire Jewish people, he was thus qualified to take out the remains of Yosef and reinstate and permanently establish the unity of the “twelve” forever.

## **The Rise of Holiness from Spiritual Devastation** *(from Vayechi)*

Chazal tell us that the Ten Martyrs, who were the ten greatest Torah sages (who had lived in the same generation since the giving of the Torah at Sinai), were killed by the Romans in the most cruel manner to atone for the sin of the ten brothers selling Yosef into slavery.

As a result of the brothers selling Yosef in to slavery, their father Yaakov went into a state of melancholy for twenty two years during which he was denied prophecy. For twenty-two years, the Divine Presence did not rest upon him in the same manner that it had prior since the Divine Presence only rests in a location of joy. Yaakov not being able to prophesize for twenty-two years was a spiritual tragedy that cannot be fathomed.

The clarity of Torah was removed from the Jewish people for twenty-two years, which is a devastation that cannot be corrected until the end of time. Therefore, the punishment was measure for measure. Just as the ten brothers of Yosef denied their father unlimited spiritual growth, thus bringing about a lack of clarity, so too the ten martyrs being taken from the world caused the Jewish people to have an extreme lack of clarity within the context of Torah.

Although the devastation of losing the Ten Martyrs was unfathomable, it brought about the greatest level of sanctification of G-d’s name. The Avodah of Yom Kippur states that they asked Reb Yishmael to ask in heaven, “What is the Will of G-d regarding the Ten Martyrs?” G-d replied that it was crucial for the future of the Jewish people that the Ten Martyrs

should give their lives to sanctify G-d’s name. Thus, each of the Ten Martyrs gave their life to sanctify G-d’s name and for the sake of the Jewish people.

The Torah tells us that the brothers faulted Yehudah for the sale of Yosef. They claimed that just as he interceded and prevented them from killing Yosef, he could have interceded and prevented them from selling him into slavery. Thus, in a certain way, Yehudah carries more of the culpability than the other brothers do.

The Gemara asks, “What is the difference between Yehudah and Yosef?” When Yosef resisted the seduction of his mistress, the wife of Potiphar, it was considered a sanctification of G-d’s name. He thus merited to have in his name half of the name of G-d. G-d had added the letter “Hey” to Yosef’s name as it is written on the Choshen “YeHosef.”

Why did Yosef only merit to have half of the name of G-d in his name? It is because his sanctification of G-d’s name was in concealment. In contrast, Yehudah merited the entire name of G-d in his name “YKVK” because he brought about a public sanctification of G-d’s name.

When Yehudah admitted that he was wrong, regarding the issue of Tamar, he disgraced himself publically and did not take the lives of Tamar and her two unborn children in the presence of the entire Jewish people.

We see that although something came about because of the desecration of G-d’s name, such as the removal of clarity from the Jewish people through the actions of Yosef’s brothers, G-d presented an opportunity to bring about a sanctification of His name, namely through the Ten Martyrs. Although Yehudah initially failed seriously, G-d allowed him to bring about a public sanctification of His name.

We find something similar regarding Nadav and Avihu. Rashi, in the Portion of Mishpatim, cites the Midrash which states, “The original group of seventy elders and the sons of Aaron, Nadav and Avihu, deserved to die at the time of the giving of the Torah at Sinai because they had openly gazed upon the Divine Presence, which was considered inappropriate and disrespectful. Why did G-d not strike them down at their moment of disrespect at Sinai? Had He done so, it would have interfered with the joy at the time of the giving of the Torah.”

G-d therefore delayed the death of the sons of Aaron until the eighth day of the inauguration of the Mishkan. The death of the sons of Aaron, Nadav and Avihu, is considered to be a sanctification of G-d’s name. The verse states, “**I will be sanctified through those who are nearest to Me...**”

Although they had failed at Sinai and deserved to die, Nadav and Avihu were taken at a time that brought about the ultimate sanctification of G-d’s name. The Jewish people witnessed that G-d’s Divine Justice is meted out even on the most righteous if they waver even to the slightest degree. G-d’s Justice is exacting and consistent regardless of the individual. Therefore, although they died because of their spiritual failing, it was subsumed by a greater spiritual result- “**I will be sanctified by those who are closest to Me.**”



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