

# MOSHE

## A Gift Drawn From the Water

Original Painting By: YORAM RAANAN

### YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Shemos

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

**Weely Video:** The Insidious Plot of the Egyptians Through Enslavement

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**Second Book: A Culmination Of Creation**

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**Not Intimidated By Unequaled Mortal Power**

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**The Actualization Of The Forecasted Destiny**

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**The Overriding Factor Was Their Reverence of G-d**

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**Finding Purpose In The Infrastructure of Creation**

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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 and 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 and 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. Gemara: Genesis is referred to as the Book of the Straight because the Holy Patriarchs were straight; unbiased totally objective.

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

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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

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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 and Ramseis.
4. Midrash: Upon completion, cities crumbled & 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 and 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 Commentary Series: Shemos



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## A Gift Drawn From the Water

### **Innate Value is Determined by One's Mindset**

*Torah* at the beginning of *Shemos*: "A new king (*melech chadash*) arose over Egypt, who did not know *Yosef*." After *Yosef* and his generation had passed away, Pharaoh established a new laws that were against the Jewish people. He acted as if he did not know *Yosef*. *Yosef* had been the Viceroy of Egypt who was responsible for Egypt's survival during the years of famine. In addition, it was only due to *Yosef*'s ingenuity and integrity that Egypt became the most advanced and wealthy civilization in existence. *Yosef*'s family was initially revered by the Egyptian people during his lifetime. They were treated as royalty. However, after that generation had passed away, the bondage was instituted and they were reduced to slaves.

*Midrash*: "The Prophet says, 'They (the Jewish People) betrayed G-d and they fathered children who were alien

to their heritage. Because of this, they will be consumed by '*chodesh*.' They bore children and did not circumcise them. We learn from this that when *Yosef* passed away, the Jewish people nullified the *mitzvah* of circumcision. They said, 'We shall be like the Egyptians.'

When G-d saw that they no longer wanted to identify themselves with Him, by nullifying the sign of the covenant, He nullified the love of the Egyptians for the Jewish people. As it states, 'He changed their heart to despise His people...' Now they will be consumed by '*chodesh*.' As it states, 'A new king (*melech chadash*) arose over Egypt.' (Without vowels the word *chodesh* is read *chadash* 'new') This king enacted new decrees to embitter their lives with bondage." How is the decree of severe bondage a consequence of the Jewish people nullifying the *mitzvah* of circumcision?

*Torah*: The Egyptian exile came about as a result of G-d's decree which was communicated to *Avraham*

our Patriarch at the time of the Covenant Between the Parts. "...Your children will be strangers in a land that is not their own for four hundred years..." The *Midrash* tells us that the 400-year period of exile began with the birth of *Yitzchak*. This is because G-d had said to *Avraham*, "Your children will be strangers..." If one were to calculate the time from the birth of *Yitzchak* until the redemption from Egypt it would be 400 years.

*Maharal of Prague* in his work *Gevuras Hashem*: If the exile of the Jewish people was to be one consisting of 400 years of bondage in a land that was not their own, how could this period commence with the birth of *Yitzchak*? At that time, *Avraham* and his family dwelled in the land of Canaan. *Avraham*, our Patriarch had amassed great wealth and gained world renown. He was acknowledged by the nations of the world as the "father of all nations."

After the birth of *Yitzchak*, *Avraham* continuously ascended through the many trials and tribulations that were presented to him. His greatest accomplishment was the *Akeidah* (binding of *Yitzchak*), which was the most difficult. How could this time period of monumental spiritual accomplishment be considered the equivalent to the years of bondage and affliction? This is also true regarding the lives of *Yitzchak* and *Yaakov*. In what context could their lives be seen as suffering and affliction?

*Maharal*: *Avraham*, *Yitzchak* and *Yaakov*, having profound spiritual sensitivity and understanding of G-d were continuously afflicted and pained by the spiritual void in the environment in which they had lived. Although they had wealth and fame, they suffered tremendously by being surrounded with impurity, such as paganism and depravity. G-d evaluated and valued their suffering to be the equivalent of exile and bondage. Because of their suffering, the *Torah* begins counting the 400 years of exile from the birth of *Yitzchak*.

The remaining 210 years of exile in Egypt began with the descent of *Yaakov* and his family. Although the actual physical bondage did not begin when *Yaakov* and his family entered Egypt, those years are also considered to be part of the bondage in Egypt. Until that generation, who had descended with *Yaakov* passed away, the Jewish people were not subjected to physical bondage. Because *Yaakov* and his family had an acute spiritual sensitivity, entering into an environment such as Egypt was the equivalent of bondage.

However, when the Jewish people began to admire the Egyptians and wanted to emulate them by choosing not to circumcise their children it was an indication that they were no longer pained by being in an environment that was devoid of spirituality. At that point the bondage needed to manifest itself through physical bondage and affliction in order to fulfill the decree of the Covenant Between the Parts. This is the reason the physical bondage began with the nullification of the *mitzvah* of circumcision.

Initially when G-d created the world, everything was provided to Adam without any need for him to take the initiative. However after Adam had sinned by eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, G-d cursed man by saying, "By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread..." From this moment forward, man needed to take the initiative to provide for himself.

*Ramchal* in *Mesilas Yesharim*: If the *Gemara* tells us that one's yearly allocation for livelihood is determined from *Rosh Hashanah* to *Rosh Hashanah*, why does one need to take initiative in order receive his allocation? In order for one to receive his allocation one must fulfill the prerequisite of the decree "By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread..." Thus, one must take the physical initiative to receive the allocation that G-d decides for him on *Rosh Hashanah*.

If one lives his life with a material perspective and is motivated by the acquisition of glory and honor, then working one or two hours a day would not be sufficient to achieve and attain one's allocation because it would not be considered "By the sweat of his brow..." This individual must therefore invest many hours of work in a day to receive his allocation. In contrast, if one is a spiritually attuned person whose perspective and ideal is to dedicate his life to G-d's Will, and thus utilizes every moment for spiritual pursuits, then it would only be necessary for him to invest a minimal amount of effort in order to fulfill the prerequisite of "By the sweat of your brow..." It is because the spiritual person will be pained when he must interrupt his *Torah* study for the sake of the physical. G-d will provide him with everything that was intended for him with a minimal effort. One's mindset will determine to what extent he must invest in the material.

*Rambam* in the Laws of Repentance: In order for one to atone for certain sins, one must experience suffering in addition to repentance, and the atonement

of *Yom Kippur*. If one is a spiritual person then that suffering will come in the form of spiritual setbacks and disappointments. However, if one's objective is to pursue the material, where a spiritual failing is less than insignificant, he will need to suffer within the context of the physical in order for it to be considered as suffering.

## **Descent, the Prerequisite for Ascent**

*Torah*: Pharaoh said to his people, "Behold! The people, the Children of Israel, are more numerous and stronger than we. Come, let us outsmart him lest he become numerous and it may be that if a war will occur, he too may join our enemies, and wage war against us..."

*Midrash*: "When Pharaoh said, 'Let us outsmart him...' he was not referring to the Jewish people but rather to G-d Himself. G-d decreed, 'As you (Pharaoh) will afflict them (the Jewish people), they will increase in number and they will thrive. When their enemy will wage war against them, they will overpower the enemy.' Whenever the Jewish people fall to the lowest level, it is exactly at that time that they will ascend to the highest level...As King David writes in Psalms, 'When we will be pressed to the dust with our bellies upon the ground, You will rise to redeem us because of Your Kindness.'" When the Jewish people will be at the lowest point, G-d will redeem them and cause their ascent.

*Torah*: G-d gave the promise to the holy Patriarchs, "I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth so that if one can count the dust of the earth, then your offspring too can be counted."

Although regarding quantification the dust cannot be determined; nevertheless, the connotation of dust is that it has no value and it is lowly. However, *Sforno* explains regarding G-d's blessing to *Yaakov* by citing the verse from Psalms, "When we will be pressed to the dust with our bellies upon the ground, then we will ascend..." Meaning, G-d's promise to the Jewish people is that when they will be downtrodden and oppressed to the point that their bellies have been pressed to the ground, then G-d will redeem them to ascend to great heights. Why will G-d only come to assist the Jewish people when they are oppressed to this degree?

One could say that until the Jews are downtrodden to this point, they could believe that the solution to their issues can be alleviated through their own initiative. However, after they have been downtrodden to the

point of understanding that their predicament is beyond the degree of being able to take initiative, they will merit G-d's salvation.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Chagigah*: "Poverty to the Jewish people is like the beautification of a white stallion with a red sash." Meaning, if one is in an impoverished state, he naturally becomes humble and thus recognizes the beneficence of his benefactor. Consequently, he will adhere to G-d's Will. Just as the red sash, in contrast to the whiteness of the stallion, brings out the beauty of the stallion, the impoverished state brings out spirituality.

The Jewish people have always thrived in times when they were in a state of poverty and repression. It is only when they attain material success that their spirituality falters and wanes. Therefore, only when they will be pressed to the ground in a distressed state, will they merit G-d's assistance and kindness.

*Ramchal* in *Daas Tevunos*: G-d created the world in such a manner that when one plants a seed it must first rot and deteriorate in the soil to a point of almost non-existence and then it will germinate and sprout. Identically, G-d will only resurrect the dead after it has decomposed in the ground.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: Although there are certain devoutly righteous people that do not decompose in the ground after internment because of their advanced spiritual state; however, immediately before resurrection they will be revert to dust. Everything must first go to a state of nothingness before it ascends.

*Torah* in *Chukas*: Regarding the *mitzvah* of the Red Heifer, "*Zos ha'Torah adam ki yamus b'ohel...* This is the *Torah*, (when) a man dies in the tent..."

*Chazal*: The *Torah* cannot be acquired or retained unless one is willing to die for its sake.

*Mishna* in Ethics of our Fathers: "Bread and salt you shall eat. Water in small measure you shall drink. On the ground you shall sleep. And a life of deprivation you shall live." This is stated as the prerequisite for one to acquire the ultimate level, which is the Crown of *Torah*. Meaning, although one as a living being has many needs for comfort and satisfaction, one must sacrifice his physicality in a manner that is similar to a nonexistent person who no longer has any material needs. One must only address his material needs at the most

minimal level. It is only when one is willing to live his life within a nonexistent physical context, will he ascend to the most profound level of *Torah* and spirituality.

*Moshe* was the ultimate Jew because of his state of negation and unique level of humility. He said, "What are we (*nachnu mah*)," Meaning, we are nothing. He was totally negated to G-d. Because of his unique level of humility and self-negation he merited to be the one through which G-d transmitted the *Torah*. He had achieved through his negation, the ultimate level.

*Torah* is the only conduit to G-d. As the *Zohar* states, "Israel (the Jewish people), the *Torah*, and G-d are all one." In order to for one to be able to cleave to Him, he must first humble himself and only then will he merit the *Torah*. *Yaakov* was the Patriarch who was the embodiment of *Torah*. The *Torah* quantifies him, "The perfect man who dwelt in the tent (of *Torah*)." *Yaakov's* name is derived from the word "*Akeiv*" which means "heel" which is the lowest part of the body. Because he was negated to G-d he ascended to become the most perfect patriarch.

## The True Leader

*Torah*: Regarding *Moshe*, "*Moshe* was a shepherd..."

*Midrash*: "G-d does not elevate one to greatness until he is tested in an area that is inconsequential. If he succeeds in this area then he will be elevated to be a leader. Two of the greatest people of all time were tested and were found to be faithful and G-d elevated them to greatness. G-d tested (King) *David* through sheep. What did *David* do? He took his flocks far out into the desert in order to distance himself from stealing by grazing upon land that did not belong to him...G-d said, 'Because you were faithful to your sheep, I will give you My sheep (the Jewish people) to shepherd.' ... *Moshe* shepherded the flocks of *Yisro*.

*Torah*: *Moshe* took the flocks into the desert to graze so that he would distance himself from stealing. G-d said to him, 'Because you were faithful to the sheep, I will give you My flock to lead...'" G-d tested *Moshe* and King *David* in areas of inconsequential significance before elevating them to greatness. They both were shepherds who distanced themselves from stealing, which demonstrated their faithfulness. Why is the issue of stealing considered to be something of an inconsequential nature? In addition, the *Midrash*

states that *Moshe* and *David* were both "faithful" to their flock. If one provides for his flock then one would be considered faithful to them; however, why would not stealing be considered faithful to the flock? It is the shepherd who is culpable if he should steal and not the sheep.

We see from the *Midrash* that both *Moshe* and King *David* took their flocks far into the desert thus distancing themselves from any privately owned lands. They wanted to place their flocks would not even have the most remote chance of benefiting from something that did not belong to them. *Moshe* and *David* understood that everything that one receives in life is G-d-given. Therefore, one does not compromise when it is for one's gain because ultimately, it will be a loss.

They appreciated the fact that their flocks could only thrive if they would adhere meticulously to the Word of G-d. They were faithful to their flock because they understood that the only way they could truly be responsible to their flock was to be faithful to G-d. A leader only compromises on his ethical and moral standard when he believes that it is necessary to satisfy the people. However, a true leader who is dedicated and faithful to his flock will not veer from the path of truth because it is not in the best interest of the flock.

*Mishna* in Ethics of our Fathers: "Make for yourself a mentor and acquire for yourself a friend."

*Rabbeinu Yonah*: "If one's friendship is based on providing for the other, what is the value of that friendship? Their friendship is only contingent on what one provides."

*Mishna*: There are times when a proper friend must say certain things to his fellow, although he does not want to hear what needs to be said. This is an expression of a true friend. This is the cost factor of true friendship." It is not that one only says what is endearing to the other, but rather what one needs to hear.

*Moshe* and *David* were faithful to their flocks because they understood that even doing something that was remotely incorrect is unacceptable. One's success in the material and spiritual realm is determined by G-d. They took the utmost care to distance themselves beyond any doubt of transgression. G-d said, "one who is careful to this degree is worthy of being the shepherd of My flock, the Jewish people."

## **G-d's Awesomeness, the Basis for His Rejection**

*Torah:* "G-d said to *Moshe*, 'I have indeed seen the affliction of My people in Egypt and I have heard their outcry... I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.... And now, go and I shall dispatch you to Pharaoh and you shall take My people the Children of Israel out of Egypt.'" *Moshe* heeded G-d's command and went to Egypt to tell Pharaoh in the name of G-d to release His people.

*Torah:* "Afterwards *Moshe* and *Aaron* came and said to Pharaoh, 'So said Hashem (YKVK), the G-d of Israel, Send out My people...'" Pharaoh replied, "Who is Hashem (YKVK) that I should heed His voice to send out Israel? I do not know Hashem, nor will I send out Israel!"

*Ramban* at the end of *Bo*: There are various positions of pagan belief. One opinion among pagans is that there was never a Creator or Supreme Being. The world did not need to be created because it always existed. Another position of paganism is that there is a Supreme Being, Creator who in fact did create the world. However, because of His exalted status as a Creator, He delegated the responsibility of maintaining existence to the various deities that He had Created such as the sun, the moon, etc. These pagans believed that the Creator was so awesome and exalted that He would not involve Himself with the minutia and mundane existence of the world.

When *Moshe* and *Aaron* had come to Pharaoh they referred to G-d with the appellation "*Hashem* (YKVK)" This appellation of G-d connotes that He is the Infinite and Omnipotent Being who has no limitation. Pharaoh because he appreciated the awesome dimension of the Creator could not accept that *Moshe* and *Aaron* were coming as his representative. Thus, Pharaoh rejected them. This is the reason Pharaoh responded, "Who is Hashem (YKVK)..."

*Midrash:* Pharaoh consulted his book of deities but did not locate the deity of "YKVK (the four letter Name of G-d) Hashem" listed. Therefore Pharaoh said, "I do not know Hashem (YKVK), nor will I send out Israel!" Meaning, He has no relevance to this existence as the deities do.

*Torah:* *Adam* had three sons, *Cain*, *Abel*, and *Shais*. *Cain* killed his brother *Abel* and was destined to wander the earth. *Shais* was devoutly righteous who served G-d.

He was the most special son of *Adam*, who was the handiwork of G-d Himself. One would think that the one to introduce idolatry into existence would be the son of *Cain*, who was evil. However, the *Torah* tells us that it was *Enoch*, the son of *Shais* who did so. How is it possible that the one who was raised and mentored by a person of *Shais's* spirituality be the one who introduced idolatry?

*Cain* was a heretic and denied that G-d was aware of what takes place in existence. *Shais* on the other hand was a devout and pious person who fully appreciated the Omnipotence of the Infinite G-d. He imparted this appreciation and understanding to his son *Enoch*. However, *Enoch* could not accept that a Being who is the Creator would have any relationship with an existence that is mundane and limited. It was because of *Enoch's* reverence of G-d that he rejected the notion that G-d has any relevance to the physical world. Therefore, G-d must have transferred the responsibility of maintaining existence to deities.

## **G-d's Hand in Yaakov's Life (from Vayechi)**

*Torah:* *Yaakov* worked seven years for *Lavan* as a payment to marry *Rachel*. After the seven year period was completed, rather than giving his daughter *Rachel* to *Yaakov*, *Lavan* placed his older daughter *Leah* in the place of *Rachel*, thus deceiving *Yaakov*. *Yaakov* only realized that he was deceived in the morning after he had consummated the marriage. There is a principle in Jewish law that is known as "*kiddushei taaus* – a marriage based on false pretense". Since *Yaakov* married *Leah* believing that she was *Rachel*, the marriage to *Leah* should not be considered valid. When *Yaakov* realized this, he should have sent her away and not retained her as a wife. Why did he choose to keep her?

*Vayechi:* Before *Yaakov* passed away, he blessed his sons. *Yaakov* said to *Reuvain*, his eldest (son of *Leah*), "You are the first of my strength."

*Rashi* citing *Chazal:* Although *Yaakov* was eighty-four years old when he married *Leah*, he did not waste even a droplet of semen during his lifetime. *Reuvain* was the first of his seed. Despite the fact that the marriage to *Leah* was consummated under false pretenses, *Yaakov* retained her as his wife because he had lived every aspect of his life with deliberateness G-d would not have allowed him to cohabit with a woman who was not meant to be his wife. He therefore retained her to be the matriarch of the Jewish people.

Since *Reuvain* came about from the first droplet of semen that emanated from *Yaakov*, he had the potential to be the most special and qualified from all of his sons. However, *Reuvain* forfeited his rights as it states, "*Reuvain*, you are my firstborn, my strength and my initial vigor, foremost in rank and foremost in power. Water-like impetuosity-you cannot be foremost because you mounted your father's bed."

*Midrash*: "*Yaakov* had said to *Reuvain* you as my firstborn had three crowns in your hand- priesthood, kingship, and that of getting a double portion (*bechorah*) and you were qualified to have all three...However you have forfeited them. What was the cause of this? You were impulsive like water that is unrestrained. Therefore, you will be no different then your brothers..."

*Reb Eliezer*: *Reuvain* was impulsive and had thus sinned. He had moved the bed of his father *Yaakov* from the location that he had designated it to be without permission. That act is considered by the *Torah* to be the equivalent of *Reuvain* cohabiting with his father's concubine *Zilpah*..."

*Torah*: When *Yaakov* came to bless *Manasheh* and *Ephraim* he switched his hands. Although *Manasheh* was on *Yaakov's* right side, he placed his left hand upon him and placed his right hand upon *Ephraim* who was to his left.

*Torah*: "*Yosef* saw that his father was placing his right hand on *Ephraim's* head and it displeased him; so he supported his father's hand to remove it from upon *Ephraim's* head to *Manasheh*...But his father refused." Despite the fact that *Yaakov's* sight was impaired at the time, he deliberately placed his hands as he had, because *Yaakov* understood that the spiritual potential of *Ephraim* was greater than that of *Manasheh*. *Yosef*, had believed that *Yaakov* had made a mistake by placing his right hand upon *Manasheh*.

*Midrash*: "*Yosef* attempted to move the hand of his father, *Yaakov*, but could not. *Yaakov* said to *Yosef*, 'Do you think that the hand that smashed the angel could be so easily moved!'" *Yaakov* was not telling *Yosef* that he could not move his hand because of physical strength but rather he was communicating to him that he did nothing in his life in an arbitrary manner. Every nuance and action was meticulously deliberate with the intent of fulfilling G-d's Will. Thus, *Yaakov* although he was mortal, had the ability to smite the angel. The concept of a mistake relating to *Yaakov's* behavior or action had no relevance. If *Yaakov* placed his right hand upon *Ephraim*, then it was meant to be there.

*Sforno*: The reason the angel was not able to defeat *Yaakov* because he was continuously connected to G-d in thought and speech.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Taanis*: "*Yaakov* did not die." Similarly, after *Moshe* was buried, the *Torah* attests, "*Moshe* was one hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eyes had not dimmed, and his vigor had not diminished..."

*Rashi* citing the *Midrash*: Even in the grave *Moshe* retained his profile of vitality. He continued in the grave as if he were alive because he was the embodiment of *Torah*. *Yaakov*, our Patriarch, being the one who personified the *Torah* had the greatest level of clarity and thus continued within a certain context to live on although he had passed away. The imprint of his life was still present.

