



## **Torah Portion: Shemot**

- Exodus 1:1-6:1
- Isaiah 27:6-28:13, 29:22-23, and Jeremiah 1:1-2:3
- 1 Corinthians 14:13-25

## **The Torah Portion at a Glance**

The children of Israel multiply in Egypt. Threatened by their growing numbers, Pharaoh enslaves them and orders the Hebrew midwives, Shifrah and Puah, to kill all male babies at birth. When they do not comply, he commands his people to cast the Hebrew babies into the Nile.

A child is born to Yocheved, the daughter of Levi, and her husband, Amram, and placed in a basket on the river, while the baby's sister, Miriam, stands watch from afar. Pharaoh's daughter discovers the boy, raises him as her son, and names him Moses or "Moshe" in Hebrew.

As a young man, Moses leaves the palace and discovers the hardship of his brethren. He sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and kills the Egyptian. The next day he sees two Hebrews fighting; when he admonishes them, they reveal his deed of the previous day, and Moses is forced to flee to Midian. There he rescues Jethro's daughters, marries one of them - Zipporah - and becomes a shepherd of his father-in-law's flocks.

YHWH appears to Moses in a burning bush at Mount Sinai and instructs him to go to Pharaoh and demand: "Let my people go, so that they may serve Me." The sacred name "YHWH" is given to Moses as a sign of the Almighty's power and existence. Moses' brother, Aaron, is appointed to serve as his spokesman. In Egypt, Moses and Aaron assemble the elders of Israel to tell them that the time of their redemption has come. The people believe; but Pharaoh refuses to let them go, and even intensifies the suffering of Israel.

Moses returns to YHWH to protest: "Why have You done evil to this people?" YHWH promises that the redemption is close at hand.

(adapted from chabad.org)

## **The Messiah in the Torah Portion**

Moses was never the same after YHWH spoke to him through the burning bush. This event changed Moses and altered the course of human history. Let's look a little closer at this account and find the Messiah right in the middle of one of mankind's greatest moments.

First, Moses saw the bush from far off. The brightness of the flame attracted him to go closer. Before we come to Y'shua we are in spiritual darkness. But, there is something about the goodness and mercy of Messiah's light that attracts us to Him. Our journey of faith is not always an easy path but it is one towards light. Moses, as well, had to climb up Mt Sinai to get closer to the Light of YHWH. As he approached, he found a bush that was on fire but was not consumed.

In Hebrew, the word used here for bush in Exodus 3 is "seneh." This word is spelled samekh-nun-hey and literally means "thorn bush." This term describes the burning bush as a bramble. The plant aflame wasn't a beautiful azalea or an evergreen holly. No, YHWH spoke to Moses through a thorn bush. The Bible says that it was actually, "the angle of YHWH" that appeared to reveal the great tetragrammaton of yod-hey-waw-hey YHWH. Acts 7:30 describes the scene by saying that the "angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mt. Sinai in the flame of a burning thorn bush," NASB. It is also interesting to note that later YHWH would tell Moses to build a tabernacle of acacia wood and cover it in gold in Exodus 26:29. Acacia is a small tree whose branches are covered with very long thorns. Would could these thorns symbolize?

As Moses heard the sacred name he also looked past the flames of yellow and red to see the spiky thorns. Perhaps Moses thought of the trapped lamb that Abraham once found in a thorny thicket. Or maybe, just maybe, the thorny bush was in a round shape like a crown – like the crown of thorns Messiah Y'shua would wear as He was being crucified? All we know is that it was a thorn bush one a mountain top that YHWH used to call his servant Moses and reveal the true name. YHWH is still using a crown of thorns from the hill of Golgotha to draw people to himself today.

## **Applying the Portion to Life Today**

Moshe and Aharon both took deep breaths as they approached the king of Egypt. They had a radical message to take to the ruler. Nevertheless, it had to be done. The Almighty had spoken to Moshe and now Moshe had to speak to Pharaoh. With butterflies in his stomach and a frog in his throat, Moshe began to speak. His brother also presented the Israelite case before Pharaoh. Their message was simple and their message was heard. "Here is what YHWH the Mighty One, the Elohim of Israel, says "Let my people go so that they can celebrate a festival in the desert to me," Shemot 5:1.

These powerful words fell on silence and Pharaoh shifted in his huge throne. He was definitely uncomfortable with this message. His eyes seemed to dart wildly from side to side. They seemed to be looking for something or someone. His face moved as he looked at his statues, as he looked at his gods. Perhaps he was searching for an altar to “YHWH” but he could not find it. Then, almost without a sound Pharaoh stood and spoke with a booming voice, “Who is YHWH that I should obey when he says to let Israel go? I don’t know YHWH, and I also won’t let Israel go.”

Pharaoh knows well the gods of Mitzrayim (Egypt). Yet he does not know or recognize the Elohim of Israel. Pharaoh doesn’t know YHWH so Pharaoh doesn’t obey YHWH.

Even today a distorted view of Father YHWH leads man to disobedience to His word and rebellion against his ways. To answer Pharaoh’s question (and maybe yours) let’s look to the events of this week’s parasha. Just who is the Elohim of Israel? The answers might surprise you.

### He is an Elohim to be feared

Early on in this portion Pharaoh instructed the midwives of Egypt to kill the children of the Hebrews if a boy was being born. Yet, the Torah states that the midwives disobeyed the ruler of Egypt because they feared Elohim. Fear, or deep respect, for YHWH will lead to obedience to YHWH. And obedience always leads to blessing. Evidently the midwives feared Elohim more than they feared Pharaoh. Their defiance to a ruler of this world brought blessing from the Ruler of the universe.

Fear though is a tricky thing. Fear of Elohim leads to profit but fear of man leads to bondage. If you fear something or someone then this emotion could lead you to act irrationally or be scared of events. For example, Pharaoh was motivated by fear to kill the Hebrews. The Talmud says that astrologers had warned Pharaoh that a savior was to be born to Israel soon. This caused Pharaoh to be afraid of what could happen in the future. So in response to his fear of man, Pharaoh sought to kill off all possible boys who could grow and become the Redeemer that was prophesied. The midwives preserved the lives of the Hebrew boys because they feared or respected YHWH. Fear of man leads to death, while fear of YHWH leads to life. When the Elohim of Israel is feared, actions of righteousness are performed and blessings come.

### He is an Elohim Who hears prayers

“During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to Elohim. Elohim heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac / Yitz’chak and with Jacob / Ya’acov. So Elohim looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them,” Exodus / Shemot 2:23-25.

The Israelites prayed for many years about their slavery. They groaned about their harsh conditions. YHWH heard their prayer and responded. He listened and He answered. The Elohim of Israel hears prayer and responds.

### He is Elohim of the mountain

In this parasha the burning bush is set aflame atop Mount Horev. This peak is also called Sinai and the “mountain of Elohim” throughout the scriptures. This is the mountain where YHWH reveals himself to Moshe. He tells Moshe that Israel will assemble at this very place to worship as a nation freed from bondage and slavery. Consequently it is here, on the mountain of Elohim that the Torah is given to Moshe. Mount Horev is a place of worship, a place of holiness; it is a place of YHWH. Here the “the glory of YHWH was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel,” Shemot

24:17. Many Bible teachers also agree that it was on Horev that Y'shua's transfiguration took place, thus revealing the glory of YHWH Y'shua.

You see, mountain peaks are very important to the message of the Bible. Much of the Messiah's ministry and life took place on mountaintops. The mountain is a place where man can do aliyah or ascension to meet with YHWH. "Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of YHWH, to the house of the Elohim of Ya'acov. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The Torah will go out from Zion, the word of YHWH from Jerusalem," says Micah 4:2. The mountain is a place of meeting for instruction from YHWH.

On these high peaks Moshe was instructed to go to Pharaoh, Torah was given to Israel, and Y'shua delivered the "sermon on the Mount." The mountain of Elohim is where YHWH is revealed as teacher. It is where man goes up and YHWH comes down and life is forever changed. Notice the eternal pattern here – man goes up and YHWH comes down.

#### The Elohim of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'acov

"Then he said, "I am the Elohim of your father, the Elohim of Avraham, the Elohim of Yitzchak, and the Elohim of Ya'acov." At this, Moshe hid his face, because he was afraid to look at Elohim," Shemot 3:6. It is here that this eternal phrase of the patriarchal name is first used. The mighty one of Israel is the Elohim of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'acov.

For Moshe each name must have brought to mind how YHWH had interacted with these patriarchs in times gone by. For us this title should still do the same. YHWH is a personal Elohim. He appeared and related personally to the founding fathers of the faith. He called out to Avraham, He appeared to Yitzchak, and He wrestled with Ya'acov. "Like the patriarchs each person should believe in YHWH on the basis of personal investigation, not merely tradition," says the classic Jewish book "Etz Yosef." As Father YHWH He was with Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'acov He was with Moshe. And is with us today.

This name is also a direct reference to the resurrection power of YHWH. Y'shua quoted the Torah and said, "But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what Elohim said to you, 'I am the Elohim of Avraham, the Elohim of Yitz'chak, and the Elohim of Ya'acov? He is not the Elohim of the dead but of the living." You see Avraham was dead yet YHWH is the Elohim of Avraham. Just as He was, and Is, and Is to come YHWH is the Elohim of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'acov.

#### The Elohim Whose name is YHWH

When you meet someone, usually the first thing you do is tell that person your name. Next you hear them tell you theirs. When a name is exchanged a bond is made. Well, the Elohim of Israel has a personal name. This designation is to be remembered forever and used for all eternity. When a person calls on the name of YHWH a bond is made and blessings abound. "Anyone who calls on the name of YHWH will be saved," says the scriptures.

"Elohim also said to Moshe, 'Say to the Israelites, 'YHVH, the Elohim of your fathers—the Elohim of Avraham, the Elohim of Yitzchak and the Elohim of Ya'acov—has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation,'" Shemot 3:14. What was spoken to him was four Hebrew letters that mirror the verb form of "to be." These four letters are "yod-heh-waw-heh" or "YHWH." This is THE name of the creator. "YHWH" is found over 6800 times throughout the scriptures hidden behind the capitalized term "LORD" in English Bibles. The Jewish Publication Society

says, “YHVH was probably pronounced “Yahweh,” but in Second Temple times, as an expression of reverence Jews began to avoid uttering it, substituting “Adonai” and other surrogates.” Why though would the Creator of the Universe reveal His name to Moshe, tell Moshe to use it, and command it to be used for all generations if He wanted to be called something different? The Elohim of Israel is YHWH. Moshe used His name and so should we.

### Who is YHWH?

Much more can be discovered about YHWH in this weekly Torah account. Just a little reading will discover that He is the Elohim of worship, the Elohim of miracles and wonders, and the Elohim of Israel. What also takes place in this parasha is the defiance of Pharaoh. Remember that it was Pharaoh who declared “Who is YHWH that I should obey when he says to let Israel go? I don’t know YHWH, and I also won’t let Israel go.” This trap of rebellion is easy to fall in if you don’t become acquainted with the truth about the Elohim of Israel.

The events that followed the dramatic conversation between Moshe and Pharaoh occurred to respond to that simple question. The miracles, the plagues, and even the exodus are answers to Pharaoh’s query. In our current portion, a battle began between the “gods” of Egypt/Mitzrayim and the Elohim of Israel. The god of the Nile, the sun, the animals, and the god of Pharaoh will soon be triumphed over. Pharaoh will finally obey YHWH and let Israel go. This will occur when Pharaoh at long last understands that YHWH is THE Elohim of the Universe.

Honestly though, it is hard to obey someone you don’t know. Many people don’t obey the commandments of the Torah because they don’t understand the Elohim of the Torah. So, get to know Father YHWH. Times of deception are now ending with the restoration of all things. This restoration includes a proper understanding and knowledge of YHWH the Almighty. Discover in this parasha and throughout scripture just Who YHWH is. When you do you’ll be amazed, humbled, and led to obedience.

### **Portion Points to Ponder**

1. Read Isaiah 27:6-28:13, 29:22-23, and Jeremiah 1:1-2:3. How does this relate to the story of Genesis this week?
2. Consider the words found in 1 Corinthians 14:13-25. What did you learn from studying this passage?
3. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y’shua?
4. Describe two ways that you can apply this week’s Torah portion to your life.
5. Why is this portion called “Shemot” in Hebrew? Where does the term “Exodus” come from?
6. Why doesn’t Exodus list the grandchildren of Jacob that came into Egypt?
7. The children of Israel were fruitful and multiplied. Where has this phrase been used before in the Bible?
8. The new Pharaoh did not “know” Joseph. What does this word “know” really mean in the Hebrew?
9. Pharaoh was afraid that Israel would multiply and take over his nation. What other rulers in the past have acted in fear and persecuted the Hebrew people?
10. What cities did the Hebrew people build for Pharaoh? Were the Israelites blessed in their service to Pharaoh?
11. In your opinion, why would the children of Israel grow in the face of persecution?
12. Explain how the Egyptians made the lives of the Hebrews bitter.

13. The midwives feared Elohim more than Pharaoh and did not obey his evil decrees. When is it acceptable to blatantly disregard the authority of the government? Did they sin by being untruthful to Pharaoh about the speed of the babies' delivery?
14. What river were the male children cast into to die? Explain how this river was a god to the Egyptians.
15. Pharaoh's sole concern was for all the boys to be cast into the river, while the fate of the girls did not seem to interest him. Why did he add, "Every daughter you shall sustain"?
16. Who were Moses' parents? From what tribe did they descend?
17. Moses was saved by being placed in an ark of wood. Explain how this deliverance was similar to the story of Noah.
18. How were the actions of Pharaoh to kill the sons of Israel similar to those of Herod in the New Testament? What spirit was behind these actions?
19. Why would the daughter of Pharaoh come to the wash herself in a river that was used to drown children? Couldn't she have had water brought to her? What does Judaism teach about her?
20. What emotion did the daughter of Pharaoh express upon looking at Moses in the basket? Where else in the Bible does this emotion prompt action?
21. Who named the baby "Moses?" What does this name mean? How is this name symbolic of his future as a redeemer of Israel?
22. In your opinion, do you think Moses knew he was a Hebrew and not an Egyptian as he grew up and when he killed the Egyptian?
23. Because of Moses' sin of manslaughter, he faced capital punishment. Moses was then exiled from the land and allowed to live in Midian. How is this pattern of sin-hiding-exile found in the Creation account?
24. What god did the priests of Midian worship?
25. Are there any parallels between the actions of Moses at the well and the actions of Rebekah at the well in Genesis 24?
26. Who was the wife of Moses? What was the name of their son?
27. Why did it take so long for YHWH to remember his chosen people and redeem them from harsh slaver?
28. Who was Moses' father-in-law?
29. At what mountain did Moses experience the burning bush?
30. Who is "the angel of YHWH" that appeared to Moses at the burning bush?
31. Why was Moshe told to remove his shoes? Did the high priests wear shoes as he ministered in the holy of holies?
32. What would later occur on the same mountain where the burning bush was sighted?
33. How does YHWH describe the Promised Land in Genesis 3?
34. What sign was Moshe to give to the leaders of Israel when they questioned Moses' authority to lead them out of Egypt?
35. What name did the Almighty reveal to Moses? Has this name ever changed or is it "eternal?"
36. Would the Hebrew leaders recognize the name of YHWH or would they be hearing it for the first time?
37. How is YHWH's name "a memorial to all generations?"
38. What is the traditional Jewish view of the name YHWH? What does mainstream Christianity do with YHWH's name? Why is there so much controversy about YHWH's name?
39. For what purpose was YHWH leading the people out of Egypt?
40. Did YHWH promise Moses an easy faith or would he have trials? Would Pharaoh agree to Moses' demands?
41. How did Moses answer YHWH at the burning bush? Was he speaking in faith?

42. Explain the sign of the rod and the serpent? How would the serpent later be lifted up as a symbol in the wilderness? What did Y'shua say about the serpent being lifted up in the wilderness in John 3?
43. Why did YHWH show Moses the miracle of leprosy? What does leprosy represent in the Torah?
44. How many signs did YHWH show Moses on the mountain?
45. Discuss how this verse speaks of Messiah Y'shua - Exodus 4:8, "It shall come to pass that if they do not believe the first sign that they shall believe the second sign."
46. What was the first plague given to the people of Egypt?
47. What does it mean that Moses was of "slow tongue?" Is this similar to Isaiah in Isaiah 1?
48. Was it right for Moses to bargain with YHWH about going to Pharaoh?
49. Compare Exodus 4:15 to Matthew 10:19.
50. How are the antichrist and the false prophet a counterfeit of Moses and Aaron?
51. What does it mean that "YHWH will harden Pharaoh's heart?"
52. Explain the Exodus 4:22 which says, "Israel is my son, even my first born." What is the significance of Israel being YHWH's "firstborn?"
53. Did YHWH give Pharaoh fair warning of the impending tenth plague death of the firstborn? Could Pharaoh have repented and listened to the voice of YHWH and stopped this plague?
54. How did Zipporah act righteously concerning her son's circumcision?
55. Study Exodus 4:25 which states "thou art a bloody husband to me." What did Zipporah mean when she said this? Is circumcision important today?
56. Where did Aaron and Moses meet? How did they greet each other?
57. How did the leaders/elders of the children of Israel respond?
58. What moed / feast were the Israelites to celebrate to YHWH in the wilderness? How long would it last?
59. How did the Hebrews make bricks without straw?
60. The Hebrew foreman and servants of Pharaoh spoke harshly to Moses and even called down judgment upon him. Were these naysayers focused on leaving the bondage of Egypt? Why or why not?

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