



MOSHE

A Gift Drawn From the Water

Original Painting By: YORAM RAANAN

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Shemos

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

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The Objective of Sefer Shemos

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Toras Chaim: A Representation of the Infinite

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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.

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. Pharaoh appointed taskmasters to ensure their enslavement.
3. They were to fortify the cities of Peesom & Ramseis.
4. Midrash: Upon completion, the 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 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 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

Yocheved and Miriam's Special Distinction

Torah: *Shifrah* (*Yocheved*) and *Puah* (*Miriam*) were the Jewish midwives who were responsible for the delivery of all the Jewish children who were born in Egypt.

Chazal: *Yocheved* was called *Shifrah* because her role, as a midwife, was to cleanse and beautify the newborn children (*I'shapeir* – to beautify), while *Miriam* was called *Puah* because she was the one who calmed and quieted the newborns (*Puah* is the sound that calms and quiets a crying child). By identifying *Yocheved* as *Shifrah* and *Miriam* as *Puah*, the *Torah* is revealing to us each of their affinities as midwives. *Yocheved* was uniquely qualified, because of her predisposition and dedication to cleanse and beautify the newborn children.

Similarly, *Miriam* was dedicated in her capacity to calm the newborns. Both *Yocheved* and *Miriam* were selflessly committed and devoted to the newborn Jewish children. Why is it necessary for the *Torah* to

share with us the qualities and capabilities of *Yocheved* and *Miriam* in their capacity as midwives?

Torah: “The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives (*Yocheved* and *Miriam*)... ‘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.’ 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* did not obey the directive of the king of Egypt. They did not acquiesce to his wishes to perpetrate his evil. It is understood that if one is commanded to kill his own child, he would defy the order and not bring harm upon the one that he loves. A mother would prefer to be killed rather than kill her own offspring.

Chazal: At this particular time in Egypt, the Jewish women were giving birth to six children in one pregnancy. This would mean that the dedication of *Yocheved* and *Miriam* to oversee the birthing of

Jewish children was overwhelming. Regardless of the unceasing involvement in their roles as midwives, their level of selfless dedication and love for the children was unaffected.

One would think that the reason they had defied the order of Pharaoh, not to kill the Jewish newborns, was because it was contrary to their essence. It was something that they could not do because their feelings for the Jewish children was no less than for their own children. However, the *Torah* attests and reveals that their defiance to Pharaoh was rooted in their fear of G-d and unrelated to their compassion and dedication to the children. They had transcended their natural feelings and only acted as G-d's servants.

Torah: "You shall surely open your hand..." There is a positive commandment to give charity to the poor. When one comes upon a person in need and wants to alleviate his plight, one must understand the motivation for his kindness. Is it because he feels the needy person's lack and pain? Or is because it is G-d's Will to assist his needy fellow? Is his interest driven by his humanitarianism or his desire to fulfill the Will of G-d?

If the reason for one's performance of the *mitzvah* is because it is his natural inclination to help one in need, regardless of it being the Will of G-d, that *mitzvah* is considered to be deficient on a qualitative level. A qualitative *mitzvah* is only when one performs the *mitzvah* solely for the sake of G-d. Therefore, one must take pause before performing a *mitzvah* in order to carry it because of one's intellect, rather than one's emotion and inclination.

Torah: Because *Yocheved* and *Miriam* had defied the dictate of Pharaoh because they had "feared G-d" and not because of their own natural love and compassion for the Jewish children, they merited special families, which are eternally an integral part of the Jewish people.

Torah: "G-d did good to the midwives – and the people increased and became very strong. And it was because the midwives feared G-d that He made houses for them."

Rashi citing the *Midrash*: The "houses" which refers to are the houses of Priesthood (*Kehunah*), which emanated from *Yocheved* and the house of Kingship/Royalty (*Malchus*), which emanated from *Miriam*.

Yaakov, the Totality of the Jewish People

Midrash: The only two people that G-d had named Himself were *Yitzchak* and *Yaakov*. These were the only individual to whom G-d gave names.

Torah regarding *Yitzchak*: "G-d said to *Avraham*, the son that you will have will be *Yitzchak*..." At the Covenant between the parts G-d decreed "...Your children will be strangers in a land that is not their own for four hundred years..."

Midrash: The 400-year period of exile began with the birth of *Yitzchak*. *Yitzchak* was named by G-d Himself because he was the first person who was circumcised on the eighth day. Although his father *Avraham* had performed the *mitzvah* of circumcision, he did so at the age of 100.

Midrash: "G-d named *Yaakov*. Who is *Yaakov* our Patriarch? His name contains four letters which correspond to the four crowns through which G-d's children will coronate Him. The letter "yud" corresponds to the Ten Commandments. The letter "ayin" (which is numerically 70) corresponds to the seventy elders of Israel. The letter "kuf" corresponds to the height of the Covered Sanctuary that the Jewish people had built for G-d. The letter "bais" (which is numerically two) corresponds to the two tablets upon which the Ten Commandments were inscribed. It was only in the merit of *Yaakov* that the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt. As it states, 'It was established as a statute to *Yaakov* (that the Jewish people must leave Egypt).'"

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos* citing a verse: "You should bring desolation upon the land..." One should not read the word in the verse as "*shamos*," which means "desolation" but rather it should be read as "*sheimos*," which means "names." From here, we learn the principle "*shma k'garim*" that the name that one is given determines that individual's potential and destiny. The reason *Ruth* (*Rus*) was given this name was because she was destined to have a grandson who would sate G-d with song and praise (*meraveh HaKadosh Baruch b'shiros v'tishbachos*). The name "*Ruth*" foretells the future that she would have a grandson, King *David*, who would author *Psalms*.

Yaakov was the most special of the Patriarchs because his destiny was set in place by G-d when He had named him "*Yaakov*." The spiritual potential that lies within

the letters of his name encompass the totality of the Jewish people, which touches upon the four crowns through which G-d will be coronated.

Midrash: The reason *Avraham*, our Patriarch merited to survive the fiery kiln of *Kasdim* was not because he merited was willing to sacrifice himself for G-d, but rather it was in the merit of his grandson *Yaakov* as the verse from *Isaiah* states, "Therefore, G-d said the House of *Yaakov*, who redeemed *Avraham*..." Meaning, because *Yaakov* our Patriarch needed to come into existence as the father of the tribes of Israel, *Avraham* could not perish in the fire.

Midrash: "In the merit of *Yaakov* the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt." The objective and purpose of being freed from the bondage of Egypt was so that the Jewish people should ascend to Sinai to receive the *Torah*. It was because *Yaakov* had encompassed the *Torah* and all that is associated with it, that he fathered tribes that had the potential to develop into G-d's people. It was therefore in his merit that they were redeemed from Egypt.

Although it was in the merit of *Yaakov* that *Avraham* was saved from the kiln of *Kasdim*, it was only because *Avraham* had established the spiritual foundation that allowed *Yaakov* to become who he was. This is clearly indicated from the words of *Chazal* who explain that although we say in *Amidah*, "the G-d of *Avraham*, the G-d of *Yitzchak*, and the G-d of *Yaakov*" the blessing concludes only with "...the shield of *Avraham*." This indicates that although *Yaakov* had been the most special of the Patriarchs it could not have come about unless *Avraham* had established his own spirituality as he had.

Payment of the Spiritual Debt

Midrash citing a verse from the prophet *Hosheiah*: "The prophet states, 'They (the Jewish people) betrayed G-d... ' How did the Jewish people betray G-d? They fathered children and would not have them circumcised. When *Yosef* had passed away in Egypt the Jewish people no longer circumcised themselves. They had said, 'We want to be similar to the Egyptians...' When G-d had seen what they had done, He had nullified the love that He had for them. As King *David* writes in *Psalms*, 'G-d changed His heart to despise His people.' It was because they ceased to circumcise themselves, G-d allowed a new king to rise upon Egypt with a mandate to enslave the Jewish people."

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. The verse states: "...Your children will be strangers in a land that is not their own for four hundred years..."

Midrash: 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 *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* had achieved at that time great wealth and 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. In the merit of the *Akeidah* the Jewish people are protected from the Attribute of Justice until the end of time.

Chazal: *Avraham* and his wife *Sarah* succeeded greatly in espousing monotheism. *Avraham* converted the men and *Sarah* converted the women. *Avraham* had made G-d's existence known to all mankind. How could this time period of monumental spiritual accomplishment be considered the equivalent to the years of bondage in Egypt?

Maharal: The Attribute of Justice is exacting in every respect. The application of Attribute of Justice in the context of punishment is exacting to the point that the person receives exactly what he deserves. Identically, regarding accomplishment, one is deserving of reward to the smallest detail based on what he accomplished. *Avraham* was selflessly dedicated to the service of G-d – only to utilize existence as a means to glorify His Name. He was pained by the spiritual void that existed in the world – and thus was motivated to engage in theological dialogue in order to dispel the falsehood of paganism from existence.

Avraham detested idolatry to such a degree that when the three wayfarers (who were in fact angels) were

approached by him to offer his hospitality, he provided the water to wash their feet through a third party. Although every aspect of their hospitality was attended by him and his wife personally, regarding the water, he chose not to be involved. Since *Avraham* had suspected that the three wayfarers were pagans who worshiped the dust, he did not want have any degree of association with the idolatrous object.

Avraham himself, having a profound sensitivity and understanding of G-d was continuously pained by the spiritual void in which he lived. *Avraham* and subsequently *Yitzchak*, the spiritual heir of his father, suffered tremendously by being surrounded with impurity. G-d evaluated and valued *Avraham's* suffering to be the equivalent of exile and bondage.

Although he had wealth and renown, *Avraham* suffered from the spiritual affliction of his environment no less than the Jewish people suffered under their Egyptian taskmasters in the physical sense. As a result of this, we begin calculating the 400 years of exile from the birth of *Yitzchak*. The remaining 210 years of exile in Egypt began when *Yaakov* had descended to Egypt. Although *Yaakov* was alive and provided protection for family not to be subject to spiritual diminishment, nevertheless those years are considered as part of the exile/bondage that was decreed upon *Avraham's* progeny.

Chazal: As long as *Yaakov* was alive, the eyes and hearts of the Jewish people were not closed to spirituality. Until the generation of those who had descended with *Yaakov* to Egypt had passed away, the Jewish people were not subjected to physical bondage. Because *Yaakov* and his family had great spiritual sensitivity, entering into an environment that was depraved and spiritual impure, caused them great pain which was the equivalent of bondage.

However, when the Jewish people chose not to circumcise themselves after the passing of *Yosef*, it was an indication that they no longer valued their spirituality. At this point, being denied a spiritual environment was no longer considered by them to be a state of bondage. Therefore, the bondage needed to manifest itself through the physical, which is what they truly valued. This is the reason the physical bondage began immediately after the passing of that generation.

One of the tenets of Jewish belief is that one's behavior has consequences. It is the principle of reward and punishment. This principle manifests itself in a manner

that has relevance to each individual. If one dedicates his life to spirituality, being deprived or failing spiritually would be considered a punishment because it is something over which the individual will agonize. However, if one does not value his spirituality to such a degree, a spiritual setback/deprivation would not be considered by that individual to be a loss. Therefore, this person must experience punishment through something in the physical/material realm.

Amram's and Yocheved's Contribution to the Jewish People

Torah: "A man went from the house of *Levi* and he took a daughter of *Levi*. The woman conceived and gave birth to a son..." The *Torah* does not reveal the identity of the "man" or the "daughter of *Levi*."

Rashi citing *Chazal*: The "man" was *Amram* and the "daughter of *Levi*" was *Yocheved*. *Amram* and *Yocheved* were *Moshe's* parents. *Amram* was the leading sage of his generation and *Yocheved* was the leading midwife (*Shifra*), who defied the edict of the Pharaoh regarding the killing of the Jewish newborn males. Why does the *Torah* conceal the identity of *Amram* and *Yocheved*?

Maharal of Prague in *Gevuras Hashem*: Most often a child's ability and potential is determined by the characteristics and genealogy of the parents. By concealing the parentage of *Moshe*, the *Torah* is telling us that his dimension of being was unrelated to the innate characteristics and genealogy of his parents. However because *Amram* and *Yocheved* were very special in their own right because of their own accomplishments, they merited having *Moshe*.

Chazal: *Moshe*, even at the time of his birth was obviously unique with special abilities. On the day that *Moshe* was born, he was able to speak and walk.

Gemara: On the day that *Moshe* was born, the house was illuminated with light because the Divine Presence was upon him. These endowments were in no way a reflection of the capabilities or potential of *Moshe's* parents. Thus, the *Torah* only identifies his parents as: "A man from the house of *Levi* who took a daughter of *Levi*."

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: Because *Yocheved* had defied the dictate of Pharaoh to kill the Jewish newborn males, she merited having *Moshe* – the most exceptional Jew as her son. Because of *Yocheved's* defiance and not

heeding the decree of Pharaoh, there is a Jewish people. Had she succumbed to his will, the Jewish people would have become gone into oblivion in Egypt.

Chazal: Moshe's dimension of spirituality was the equivalent of the entire Jewish people. Therefore, based on the principle of measure for measure – just as her sacrifice was the cause of having a Jewish people, she merited having a son that was the equivalent of the entire Jewish people – measure for measure. What was *Amram's* merit for having a son such as *Moshe*?

Chazal: The tribe of *Levi* merited having the Priesthood (*Kehuna*) because they were the only ones who did not participate in the sin of the Golden Calf. It seems however, that they had rejected idolatry not because of their special ability, but rather because they were not spiritually handicapped as the rest of the Jewish people. All of the tribes of Israel, with the exception of *Levi*, were subject to bondage in Egypt. It is because of this bondage that they had declined spiritually and ultimately had become idolaters.

In contrast, the tribe of *Levi*, because they had freedom of movement, would go out into the field with scrolls to teach the Jewish people about their spiritual antecedents – *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, and *Yaakov*. The Jewish people, when they had stood at Sinai to receive the *Torah*, were already weaned and purged of the idolatrous beliefs of Egypt because of all of the revealed miracles that they had seen and experienced. However, because of their past, there was a trace of that impurity that still existed within them.

When the Jewish people found themselves in a precarious position, believing that *Moshe* had died and they were stranded alone in the desert, they gravitated back to their idolatrous past. This was not the case regarding the tribe of *Levi*. They were never victimized in Egypt nor did they ever possess the impurity of idolatry because they were never enslaved. If this is so, then why do we see the tribe of *Levi* as extraordinary for not succumbing to the temptation of the Golden Calf?

Gemara in Tractate *Sotah*: Initially Pharaoh approached the Jewish people and asked them to participate and join with him in building the Egyptian civilization. He removed his regal garments and began to work with mortar and brick to show that he was willing to compromise on his position as king for the sake of building Egypt. His request of the Jewish people was very alluring and convincing. *Amram* told the Jewish

people that under no circumstance were they to reveal to Pharaoh their capability in this area. He should never know the potential and dimension of the capabilities of the Jewish people. He explained to them that the moment the Egyptians would understand their capability, they would be enslaved.

Every tribe rejected and defied *Amram's* warning, except for the tribe of *Levi*. The tribes had believed that it would be inappropriate and disrespectful to not heed the call of the monarch of Egypt – especially because Egypt was their host country. However, the tribe of *Levi*, although they understood the rationale of other tribes and their convincing argument, they nevertheless negated their feelings and understanding to accept the ruling of *Amram* – the leading *Torah* sage of the generation.

The tribe of *Levi* subordinated themselves to the Will of G-d which was communicated by *Amram* the leading *Torah* sage. *Levi* did not succumb to the temptation of the Golden Calf because initially when they were in Egypt, they had chosen to subordinate themselves to the ruling of *Amram* not to participate in the building of Egypt. It was their subordination to G-d's Will which allowed them to retain and maintain the purity of *Yaakov*, their forefather. The tribe of *Levi* was essential to the spirituality of the Jewish people. They were the officiants of G-d – the representatives of the Jewish people within the context of spiritual atonement. Their negation was only set in motion because of the ruling of *Amram*, the father of *Moshe*. Thus, he merited to have a child who was the equivalent of the entire Jewish people.

Being Denied the Blessing of Yaakov (from Vayechi)

Torah: When *Yosef* had taken his sons, *Ephraim* and *Menashe*, to *Yaakov*, his father, to receive his blessing, *Yaakov* had asked, "Who are these?"

Midrash: "Is it possible that *Yaakov* did not recognize *Yosef's* children? *Ephraim* had studied *Torah* with *Yaakov* for a period of seventeen-years that they were together in Egypt. How could he not recognize them? Rather, the Divine Presence departed from *Yaakov* at that moment. (He thus suspected that there was a spiritual deficiency in *Ephraim* and *Menashe* that prevented him from giving his blessing.)

When Yosef had realized what had happened, he prostrated himself on the ground and supplicated G-d for mercy. Yosef had said, 'Master of the world, if in fact my sons are worthy of my father's blessing, please do not allow me to be in a state of disgrace.' As a result of Yosef's supplication, the Divine Presence returned to his father Yaakov."

Torah: On the eighth day of the inauguration of the *Mishkan*, the Divine Presence was meant to descend upon the offering of Aaron, who began officiating as the High Priest, and consume it. However, this did not happen.

Chazal: Moshe and Aaron entered into the communion tent and supplicated G-d to allow His Presence to descend into the *Mishkan*. Consequently, the Divine Presence descended and consumed the offering. One would think that if Yaakov wanted his grandchildren Ephraim and Menashe to receive an effective blessing, he should have together with his son Yosef supplicated G-d to allow this to take place. Yet, it was only Yosef who had beseeched G-d for this to occur. Why did Yaakov not participate in the supplication as Moshe had done with Aaron?

When Aaron realized that his service was not accepted by G-d, he said to Moshe, "I know G-d is angry with me. It is because of me that the Fire did not descend. Moshe, my brother how could you have embarrassed me (by choosing me as the High Priest when I am seemingly not qualified).'" Moshe understood that Aaron was in fact the only one who qualified for the position because G-d Himself had commanded Moshe to anoint him as the High Priest.

When the Fire did not descend Moshe understood that in order to bring about the Presence of G-d in the *Mishkan*, he and Aaron needed to supplicate G-d for

this to take place. Yaakov, on the other hand, did not participate together with Yosef to restore the Divine Presence because he had understood that the blessing for Yosef's children was based upon Yosef's worthiness. If Yosef and his children were spiritually worthy then the Divine Presence would return to allow the blessing to take place. However, if it does not return it was a sign to Yaakov that Yosef had a spiritual deficiency that did not allow the Divine Presence to come upon him.

If Yaakov would have participated and the Divine Presence would have returned, Yaakov would have still been unsure regarding Yosef's spiritual viability. Therefore, only Yosef beseeched G-d for mercy. It is interesting to note that when Yosef supplicated G-d he had said, "Master of the world, if in fact my sons are worthy of my father's blessing, please do not allow me to be in a state of disgrace."

What is the significance of Yosef not wanting to be in a state of disgrace? Did he not want to be embarrassed before his father if in fact his sons were not worthy? Seemingly, he should have wanted his sons to be qualified to be the beneficiaries of his father's blessings. The only way that Ephraim and Menashe would be able to actualize their potential was through the blessing of Yaakov. If they did not receive his blessing they would not be able to succeed as tribes.

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: "A child brings merit to his father." If Ephraim and Menashe would be able to actualize their potential as tribes of Israel then Yosef would be able to be the beneficiary of his children's spiritual accomplishments end of time. However, if the Divine Presence did not return to Yaakov, and thus put limitation upon Ephraim and Menashe and their descendants, then they would not bring sufficient merit to Yosef. Therefore Yosef would be disgraced in the eyes of G-d.

