

*Torah:* Exodus 1:1-6:1

*Haftarah:* Isaiah 27:6-28:13, 29:22-23

*Shlichim:* Acts 7:17-29

*Shabbat shalom mishpacha!* The events of *Parasha Shemot* began a new era for Jacob's descendants. Joseph has died and a new pharaoh is on the throne. This new era is reflected in the Greek name for this Book of *Torah*, *Exodos*, the name given by the Jewish writers of the Septuagint. It means "going out" or "going from," and refers to the first major event in the book, being freed from and going out from Egypt. The Hebrew name of this book, *Shemot*, which means names, reflects the first verse which says: *1 Now these are the names of Bnei-Yisrael who came into Egypt with Jacob,..* (Exodus 1:1 TLV).

A little boy returned home from Hebrew school and his father asked him, "what did you learn today?" He said, "The Rabbi told us how Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt." The father asked, "tell me about it?" The boy said, "Moses was a big strong man and he beat Pharaoh up. Then, while he was down, he got all the people together and they ran towards the Red Sea. When he got there, he has the Corps of Engineers build a huge pontoon bridge. Once they got on the other side, they blew up the bridge while the Egyptians were trying to cross." The father was shocked. "Is that what the Rabbi taught you?" The boy replied, "No. But, you'd never believe the story that he DID tell us!"

With regard to this pharaoh, *Torah* says that he did not know Joseph. The sense of the Hebrew word *yada*, translated as "know" is that he didn't know him personally, but most certainly he knew about Joseph. This pharaoh did not respect Joseph's legacy, but at the same time he was afraid of the increasing number of Israelites.

As you read the *Torah* account relating to the period between Joseph's death and the time of Moses birth, it seems to be a long time. But, it was actually only 64 years. That may be a long time to some of you, but it's not a long time to me. Sixty-four years ago, I was a freshman in college and at the end of that year, went to Alaska to seek my fortune. I sought it, but didn't find it, however. So, we have this 64 year period in Egypt. Moses' grandfather *Levi*, Joseph's brother, had only been dead for a short time. At this time sixty-four years before Moses' birth, the people of Israel had already lived in Egypt for 286 years. Now, as Moses is being born, they had been there for 350 years. During this 350 years, almost 9 generations of 40 years each, Israel had grown to be a huge group of people. And, the present pharaoh began to fear them because of their increasing number.

Because the pharaoh was afraid that they might try to work with his enemies against him, he devised a plan to physically control them. He made them slaves and forced them to build Egypt's treasure cities, *Pi'tom* and *Ramses*. Reading about Israel's slavery, we are almost immediately reminded of our Passover *Seder*. Each year we read these words: "My father Abraham was a wandering Aramean. ADONAI had promised the land of Israel to *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, and *Ya'akov*, but here were their children in captivity in Egypt. The Pharaoh in power was afraid of them because of their numbers. He forced upon them a harsh and bitter slavery. But ADONAI blessed his people and caused them to continue to increase in strength and number." And, we read this each year. If we take to heart the instructions of the *hagaddah* when it says that each of us is to consider that we were personally there, the *seder* through these words, personally connects each of us to the actual exodus. As we continue through the *seder*, we place ourselves back in their time in their place. For those of us who were not born Jewish, this means that now, we have a personal connection to the history of the Jewish people. When we trusted Yeshua and became covenant partners with Him through the New Covenant, we became a part of the total history of Israel and a part of all of *Torah*, the teaching and instruction found throughout the *Tanakh*. As we read about the slavery and torture of our Hebrew ancestors, we personally feel their pain and mourn for them along with our Jewish brothers and sisters.

But, slavery did not reduce the Israelite's birth rate and pharaoh came up with another plan. He would have the Hebrew midwives kill every boy baby, but *Shifrah* and *Puah*, feared ADONAI and let the boys live.

During this period, a man from the Tribe of *Levi* named *Amram*, married *Yocheved*, a woman from *Levi*. Before *Parasha Shemot* began, they had married and had a daughter, *Miryam* and a son, *Aharon*. Then *Yocheved* conceived another son, but because of the persecution, kept his birth a secret for three months. When it became too likely that he would be discovered, she put him in an ark constructed of papyrus reeds and placed it at the edge of the Nile River. Pharaoh's daughter found the boy, but rather than take him immediately with her, asked his mother to take him and nurse him. After that time, *Yocheved* gave the boy to Pharaoh's daughter to raise as her own son. She called him *Moshe*, Moses, because she said, "I pulled him out of the water." But, even though he was raised in the palace, Moses, knew of his Hebrew origin.

We next see Moses as an adult. The Book of Acts tells us that he was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in his words and deeds. But, even though he was well prepared, it was not his time to be Israel's leader. Everything has to do with ADONAI's timing. We frequently don't understand His timing, but we accept it as a matter of faith because we understand His sovereignty and omniscience. Moses killed an Egyptian when he saw him mistreating an Israelite. His age at this time is unknown, but is estimated to be about 25 years old. By knowing that he was 80 years old when he later began his leadership of Israel, we can calculate that he was away in the land of Midian for about 55 years, 55 more years that the Children of Israel would have to suffer the hardships of slavery in Egypt.

As the story continues, we will lightly touch in a few places and concentrate in a few places. After meeting *Tziporah* at the well, Moses began to live with her father *Re'u'el*, known by the other names Jethro and Hobab, and he served him as a shepherd. After a time, Ruel gave Moses Zipporah as his wife and they had a son, Gershom.

After the boy's birth, the story shifts to a time much later, over 50 years later, according to the calculations we made about Moses' age. The pharaoh that Moses fled from has now died and a new pharaoh is continuing the harsh slavery of the Israelites. They cried out to ADONAI and He heard their cries. We understand this statement to reflect the fullness of time for ADONAI's plan. This is a new era, but one which ADONAI had long planned. We understand that Israel's suffering during all these years, at least in part, was due to what was happening back in the Land of Canaan. They had to suffer these years of slavery because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet complete. ADONAI had spoken to Abraham and told him that his descendants would be in Egypt 400 years and that in the fourth generation would return to the land He promised to them. He said to Abraham: 16 "Then in the fourth generation they will return here—for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete" (Genesis 15:16 TLV). Everything depends upon ADONAI's timing and His plans and His purposes. Most often, we don't fully understand it.

At this time, Moses was tending the flock and they were grazing near the Mountain of G-d, *Ho'rebah*, Horeb. 2 Then the angel of Adonai appeared to him in a flame of fire from within a bush. So he looked and saw the bush burning with fire, yet it was not consumed. 3 Moses thought, "I will go now, and see this great sight. Why is the bush not burnt?" 4 When Adonai saw that he turned to look, He called to him out of the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" So he answered, "Hineni" (Exodus 3:2-4 TLV).

When we read verse 4 in most Bibles, we see Moses' response as "Here I am." But, the Hebrew word *heneni* has a deeper meaning. Yes, it does mean "here I am," but it also carries with it the readiness to obey whatever ADONAI has asked. This is the same response that Abraham gave to ADONAI prior to telling him that he was to take Isaac to a mountain and to offer him there as a sacrifice. It is the same response that Samuel gave when as a boy, he heard ADONAI calling. It is the same response that Isaiah gave when he heard the L-rd say, "whom shall I send." Hebrew words do many times have deeper meaning for us, a meaning which goes beyond the English. *Heneni* is a reminder to each of us that, we too, have responded to ADONAI's call. What we really replied when we said Yes to Yeshua was *henini*. At the time, we were expressing total readiness to give ourselves, making ourselves completely available to Him. In this regard, we are no different than Samuel, Abraham, Moses or Isaiah. We have all said *heneni*.

Back at Horeb, seeing a bush burning, but not being destroyed, each of us would likely have gone over to look at it. Humans have a thing with fire. We want to follow fire trucks and see what is burning. Moses, too, was curious and attracted by what he saw. And, when he got near ADONAI spoke to him. He said: 5 "... , "Come no closer. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." 6 Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Exodus 3:5-6 TLV). ADONAI told Moses that He had heard Israel's cries and that He was going to deliver them. And, that He was going to send him to do it. Initially, Moses was hesitant, but after ADONAI's assurances, he agreed. When he asked who he should tell his people who had sent him, G-d answered: 14 "I AM WHO I AM." Then He said, "You are to say

to Bnei-Yisrael, 'I AM' has sent me to you." 15 God also said to Moses: "You are to say to Bnei-Yisrael, Adonai, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My Name forever, and the Name by which I should be remembered from generation to generation" (Exodus 3:14-15 TLV). Moses most definitely knew that he was speaking to the G-d of his fathers, but ADONAI had not revealed Himself to any one of them personally since the time of Joseph. ADONAI said: *Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh* (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה), "I AM Who I Am." Literally translated, this means "I will be what I will be," but actually carries the meaning of "I am, I was and I will be." ADONAI is present in the past, the present and the future. He is Israel's Creator, the Elohim who is now with them and the One who will be their King at the end of days. And, ADONAI also said: "This is My Name [YHVH (יהוה)] forever, and the Name by which I should be remembered from generation to generation."

We certainly understand this revelation of "I Am" to Moses to be YHVH, The Father. But, there are a number of places in the Book of John in which Yeshua uses the words "I am" to identify Himself. In John 6:45 He said: "I am the bread of life." In John 8:12 He said: "I am the light of the world." In John 10:19 He said: "I am the door." In John 10:11 He said: "I am the good shepherd." In John 11:25 He said: "I am the resurrection and the life." In John 14:6 He said: "I am the way, the truth and the life." And, in John 15:5 He said: "I am the vine." In speaking these words, He was saying that He has the power and the authority of ADONAI to meet all of the physical and spiritual needs of those to whom He spoke at that time and to us who read His words today. All of these "I am's" relate to what ADONAI has just spoken to Moses. There is another place in the Book of John where Yeshua spoke these words, but this time, He did not use "I am" in the same way. He did not say, "I am the bread, the light or the door. He just said "I Am!" Responding to those who had challenged Him at the Temple, Yeshua said: 56 *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; he saw it and was thrilled.* 57 *Then the Judeans said to Him, "You're not even fifty years old and you've seen Abraham?"* 58 *Yeshua answered, "Amen, amen I tell you, before Abraham was, I am"* (John 8:56-58 TLV). From this, along with many other Scriptures, we understand and we believe that Yeshua is divine, that He is G-d who came in the flesh. I, personally, cannot go as far as some do, when they declare that the Angel of ADONAI, the *Malach*, the Messenger of ADONAI in Exodus 3, the one who spoke to Moses, was Yeshua. They also say that it was Yeshua who appeared to Joshua and to Abraham and in a number of places in *Torah*. There is another theology which goes even further and declares that Yeshua is also the Father. I cannot agree with these theologies. But, there is no way that we can reconcile these differences today. All that is being done at the present is to argue about them and to create even greater separation within Yeshua's body. We will have to find the answers when Yeshua returns, but at the present time, the Scriptures are not conclusive regarding these things. Those who follow these theologies have arrived at their conclusion by very weak and circumstantial evidence. Yes, Yeshua is the Son of G-d who came to earth but the Scriptures nowhere say that He is the Father. There is no direct evidence in Scripture that the pre-incarnate Yeshua appeared in human form in *Torah* events. We know in part and we prophesy in part until the perfect comes (1Corinthians 13:9-10). *Sha'ul* gives us a hint about these relationships which we will understand at the time of Yeshua's return. He said: 27 *For God has "put all things in subjection underneath His feet."* *But when the psalmist says that "all" has been put in subjection, it is clear that this does not include God Himself, who put all things under Messiah.* 28 *Now when all things become subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also become subject to the One who put all things under Him, so that God may be all in all"* (1Corinthians 15:27-28 TLV). After Yeshua's return, when He has defeated all of ADONAI's enemies, including death, He will then subject Himself to the Father so that He, *Elohim*, G-d, will be all in all, or everything. Does this mean "One?" We don't know, but at that time, we will fully understand. But for now, we acknowledge that there is but One G-d, but also understanding that the One G-d and all that He is, is way beyond our human understanding. We live by faith and should not have to have proof of everything in Scriptures to maintain that faith.

ADONAI continued speaking to Moses and told him what he was to say to Pharaoh and what the final result would be. The result would be Israel's redemption. That is the subject of this *parasha*. But, on Moses' journey back to Egypt, something happened which has no good explanation. 24 *It happened along the way, at a lodging place, that Adonai met him and sought to kill him!* 25 *But Zipporah took a flint, cut off the foreskin of her son, and threw it at his feet, saying, "You are surely a bridegroom of blood to me."* 26 *She said, "A bridegroom of blood" because of the circumcision. Then He let him alone* (Exodus 4:24-26 TLV). This passage appears to say that ADONAI sought to kill Moses because he had not circumcised, had not performed *b'rit milah*, for his son. But, *Torah* doesn't say which son. Just a few verses back, in verse 20, we learned that Moses took his sons, plural, and set out for Egypt. What does it mean when Zipporah calls him "a bridegroom of blood?" Our first thought is that this is related to Moses not circumcising his son; or sons. And, very likely, it is. But, there is a rabbinic explanation for this situation. I am not endorsing it, but presenting it as one explanation. The rabbis say that "sought to kill him" is a way of saying that Moses became seriously ill while staying at the lodging place overnight and that this illness may have been caused because Moses had not circumcised his son. These verses

indicate that ADONAI was now greatly displeased with Moses, so soon after ordaining him to go to Pharaoh. What we can understand is that Moses had the opportunity to circumcise his son in Midian at the age of eight days according to ADONAI's command to Abraham. And, he also could have performed it after ADONAI called him at Horeb. But, he had continued to put it off. Now, according to the rabbis, he was seriously ill and could not physically circumcise his son. Zipporah recognized the seriousness of the situation and stepped in to save her husband. After she circumcised the boy she threw his foreskin at Moses' feet to show him that she had done it. According to the rabbis, when she said: "*You are surely a bridegroom of blood to me*, she was not speaking to Moses and referring to him as "a bridegroom of blood," but was speaking to the boy. Bridegroom of blood, *chatan damim*, was her declaration to Gershom, their firstborn, that he was now a "son of the covenant," something which he had earlier been denied by not having had a *b'rit milah*. An Israelite boy who had been circumcised was considered to be a "bridegroom of the covenant," and he had entered into the covenant which G-d made with Abraham. After Ziporrah did this, Moses recovered from his serious illness. This is one possibility. But, it does seem that this was only about Gershom, the firstborn, because no mention was made of Eliezer, the second son. It may have been that Moses had already circumcised Eliezer, possibly at the age of 8 days, but had been putting off fulfilling the requirement for Gershom because he was now an older man close to 50 years of age.

The story continues with Moses and Aaron going before Pharaoh and presenting ADONAI's demands. But, Pharaoh refused and made working conditions for the Israelites even harder. The *parasha* concludes with this: *1 Adonai said to Moses, "Now you will see what I am going to do to Pharaoh. By way of a strong hand he will let them go, and drive them out of his land"* (Exodus 6:1 TLV).

The theme of this *Torah* portion, *Shemot*, is redemption, the redemption of Israel from the slavery of Pharaoh. The theme of our *Haftarah* portion is also about redemption, Isaiah's prophetic words about the redemption of Israel in the last days. But, everything in *Torah* is not about Israel. Israel is the nation through which ADONAI provided redemption, but Yeshua came so that redemption would be available to anyone, Jew or Gentile, who calls upon His name. Spiritual redemption comes through ADONAI, which He sent to us as the *Besorah*, the Good News of Yeshua. *Sha'ul* said: *3 And even if our Good News is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 In their case, the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, so they might not see the light of the Good News of the glory of Messiah, who is the image of God"* (2Corinthians 4:4 TLV). I have to understand those with blinded minds as "the minds of those who are perishing because they chose not to accept Yeshua through their free will." The "god of this world," *HaSatan*, although he has power, does not have the power to keep us from the truth. He does make very enticing many alternatives and obstacles, ungodly things, which often fit right into our human desires and appetites. He is the "tempter." But, while he has tempted, he has not completely blinded, and many have fallen prey to his temptation. He is the one who tempted Adam and Eve in the beginning and succeeded. He is the one who sought to destroy Israel in Egypt, he is the one who sought to destroy Messiah Yeshua through Herod, and he is the one who continues to do his best to keep people away from God's redemption. He is working even harder to do that today because he knows that his time is limited. *HaSatan* understands the Biblical timetable and the prophecies. He knows that he will not win, but in his anger and hatred he will do anything he can to keep people from entering into ADONAI's kingdom.

In our *parasha* today, allegorically, *HaSatan*, the god of this world, is Pharaoh. He seeks to keep ADONAI's children as slaves to sin. But with those of us living today, he will not succeed, if we do our part. *Sha'ul's* words to Timothy are words for us: *15 "Make every effort to present yourself before God as tried and true, as an unashamed worker cutting a straight path with the word of truth"* (2Timothy 2:15 TLV). In other words, after we have trusted Yeshua, we must know the truth of the Scriptures and then we must do our best to be faithful to them. That's our part. The redemption that we can receive comes from "I AM." As Yeshua said to his questioners: "*Amen, amen I tell you, before Abraham was, I am!*" The power to overcome is in our Messiah. Just as there was a set time for the judgment of the inhabitants of the Land of Canaan because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet complete, there is a set time for Messiah to return and to defeat His enemies. We know it's near and we cannot neglect to proclaim it as truth! Our redemption is near! The seed of the woman, Yeshua, will crush the head of the serpent, *HaSatan*. That day is coming soon! As Messianic *talmidim* of Yeshua, we are eagerly anticipating the day described in the *Aleinu* prayer: *Ve'ne'emar: V'haya Adonai l'melech al kal ha'aretz; ba'yom hahu, bayom hahu, yih'ye Adonai echad; u'sh'mo, u'sh'mo, u'sh'mo echad!* "For then shall the words be fulfilled: 'ADONAI shall be King forever,' and 'ADONAI shall be King over all the earth; 'on that day ADONAI shall be One and His Name One!" And, in that day, we will understand exactly how He is One. *Shabbat shalom!*

