

פרשת
שְׁמוֹת
♦
Parashas
Shemos



Shemos · שמות

Parashah Pointers

- ▶ Yosef dies and Egypt gets a new king.
- ▶ The Jewish population grows miraculously.
- ▶ Pharaoh says all baby boys should be killed.
- ▶ The Jews become slaves in Egypt.
- ▶ Moshe is born and adopted by the princess of Egypt.
- ▶ Moshe kills an Egyptian who was beating a Jew.
- ▶ Moshe stops a fight between two Jews.
- ▶ Moshe escapes from Egypt and goes to Midian.
- ▶ Moshe marries Tziporah.
- ▶ Moshe's children are born.
- ▶ Hashem speaks to Moshe from a burning bush.
- ▶ Hashem appoints Moshe to take the Jews out of Egypt.
- ▶ Moshe and Aharon tell Pharaoh to free the Jews.
- ▶ Pharaoh is angry and forces the Jews to work even harder.
- ▶ The Jews blame Moshe for making their life even worse.
- ▶ Moshe complains to Hashem.

Good Times

Yaakov, his sons, and their families had moved to Egypt. Life seemed wonderful there. They were very well off. Egypt was the most important country in the world. Their brother Yosef was the second most powerful man in Egypt, and he took care of the family.

The older generation passed away. First Yaakov died. One by one, Yaakov's sons, the shevatim, passed away. Yosef was the first to die and Levi was the last.

As long as any of the shevatim were alive, life was good for the Jews in Egypt. This lasted almost a hundred years.

Then the troubles started.

Living so comfortably in Egypt, the Jews started behaving like the Egyptians. Some of them even served idols.

But there were four things they did to remain Jewish:

1. They used Jewish names.
2. They did not speak lashon hara.
3. They behaved modestly.
4. They spoke Hebrew, the holy language.

Hashem's Promise

Hashem had told Avraham Avinu that his children would suffer in exile, and then, later, He would take them to Eretz Yisrael. It was now time for the suffering to start.

Tricked!

In Egypt the Jews were blessed with large families — VERY large families. Women gave birth to SIX babies at a time! That bothered the Egyptians. There were just so many Jews everywhere!

The ruler of Egypt by this time was a new Pharaoh. He made believe he never heard that Yosef had saved Egypt from starving. Pharaoh was worried that his country was in danger. He believed that if Egypt was attacked, all the Jews would fight on the side of the enemy. They might even throw the Egyptians out of Egypt! Pharaoh called his three advisers — Bilaam, Iyov, and Yisro — to discuss what to do.

"Destroy them!" Bilaam said firmly.

Iyov kept quiet.

"Leave the Jews alone," Yisro protested.

The wicked Pharaoh decided to listen to Bilaam. He would



destroy the Jews! He would turn them into slaves, forcing them to work harder and harder.

Pharaoh tricked the Jews into becoming slaves. He announced a new building project in the cities of Pison and Ramses. He asked all good citizens to come, to make bricks and help build the new cities. Even Pharaoh himself showed up carrying a basket and a shovel. He tried to show everyone how important the work was. He even worked together with the others.

The Jews came too. They worked along with everyone else, making bricks and putting up new buildings. They worked extra hard that day, harder than anyone else. They were good workers, eager to show how much they could do. At the end of the day, Pharaoh's men wrote down how many bricks each Jew had made.



The next time the Jews arrived at Pison and Ramses, they got the shock of their lives. They were the only ones there! No Egyptians had come to work. Pharaoh's soldiers surrounded them. "By Pharaoh's orders you are now slaves to Egypt," they declared. "You will spend your days making bricks." The Jews asked, "How many?" "The same number of bricks that you made on that first day."

Only one group of Jews didn't become slaves. That was Shevet Levi. They had ignored Pharaoh's first call for workers to build his cities. Their reason? They weren't going to stop their holy work of Torah study to go and make bricks. The Torah hadn't been given yet, but they learned about how to serve Hashem the way Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov had served Him.

Failure!

Pharaoh wanted to make sure the Jews did not have many children, so he made the slave laborers work very hard. But Hashem had different plans: The harder Pharaoh would make them work, the more Jewish babies would be born!

Pharaoh saw that his plan wasn't working. There were more Jews than when he started making them slaves! It must be that they weren't working hard enough, he thought, so he gave them even more work to do. When they came home at night, they were forced to serve the Egyptians, cleaning their homes, cooking and baking for them until late into the night. They had to clean the streets. They planted and harvested in the fields. The Egyptians even forced them to risk their lives capturing wild animals for them.

The Egyptian supervisors beat the Jews. They suffered terribly. Slavery was awful. But soon things were going to get even worse...

The Dream

One night Pharaoh had a terrifying dream.

He was sitting on his throne when an old man suddenly appeared. The man took all the princes and leaders of Egypt and put them on a scale. Then he took a little lamb and put it on the other side of the scale. The lamb weighed more than all of Pharaoh's men!



"How could one small lamb be heavier than all his government ministers?" Pharaoh wondered.

After Pharaoh woke up, he called an emergency meeting of all the wise men who knew how to find the meaning in dreams. After Pharaoh told them about his nightmare, they were scared. "The dream means that a Jewish boy will be born," one of them said. "He will destroy all of Egypt."

Pharaoh was determined to save himself and his country. If this boy would destroy Egypt, he would make sure the boy would not live.

The decision was made: They would kill all the Jewish baby boys. But how? Even though the Egyptians worshiped idols, they knew that the Jewish G-d was powerful. What if Hashem would take revenge against those who killed His people?

They tried to think of ways to outsmart Hashem. One Egyptian came up with an idea. He remembered that Hashem had promised Noach that He would never again bring a flood. If they ordered all Jewish boys thrown into the Nile River to drown, Hashem couldn't punish the Egyptians using water!

This Egyptian was right, and he was also really wrong. Yes, Hashem would not flood the entire world, but He could still flood one country. At the end, instead of bringing water to Egypt, Hashem brought the Egyptians to the water, when He drowned them during the great miracle of Kriyas Yam Suf (the Splitting of the Sea).

Soon the new law was announced throughout the land: All Egyptians were to look for Jewish baby boys — and throw them into the Nile!

The Divorce

The Jews heard the awful news: their newborn sons were doomed to death!

Amram, a grandson of Levi, was the leader of the Jews. When he heard about the new law, he thought, "Why should we have children if they are going to be killed?" With great sadness, he divorced his wife, Yocheved. Many Jews followed Amram's example and got divorced.

Then Miriam, Amram's daughter, told her father something that made him change his mind. "Pharaoh's evil order was only against the boys," she said, "but if you are not married, there won't be any girls either!"

Because of Miriam's words, Amram made a public wedding celebration and remarried Yocheved. Their children, Aharon and Miriam, danced joyously at their parents' new wedding. All the Jews got married again.

Miriam had brought new hope to the Jews!



Amram was such a tzaddik that he never sinned in his whole life!

WHO'S WHO IN THE TORAH

Yocheved

- ▶ Her father was Levi, the son of Yaakov.
- ▶ When Yaakov's family went down to Egypt, Yocheved was born just as her mother entered the country.
- ▶ She was the mother of Aharon, Moshe, and Miriam.
- ▶ She gave birth to Moshe when she was 130 years old!

FASCINATING FACTS

The day Moshe was put in the river was the sixth of Sivan, which would be the day the Torah would be given at Har Sinai.

When Noach made his teivah, it was covered on the outside and inside with tar to keep it waterproof. Here, the outside of Moshe's basket was protected with tar, but the inside was coated with clay. This way, the great tzaddik Moshe did not have to smell the unpleasant odor of tar.

Murder!

Shifrah and Puah were nurses who helped Jewish women give birth. (Their real names were Yocheved, who was Moshe's mother, and Miriam, who was his sister.) One sad day Pharaoh called them in and ordered them to kill all the Jewish baby boys as soon as they were born. He didn't mind keeping the girls alive. He figured the Egyptians would marry them when they got older.

These courageous and holy women did no such thing! A few months later Pharaoh realized they weren't following his orders. He brought them back to the palace. He was very angry and asked them why they didn't obey him. They answered wisely that Jewish women didn't call for a nurse until after the baby was already born. By a miracle Pharaoh accepted their excuse and did not punish them!

Food From Rocks

Once again Jewish children were being born. The question was how to make sure that the Egyptians didn't drown the newborn baby boys.

The Jewish mothers decided to have their babies in the forests, so the soldiers wouldn't find them. They would leave them in the forest. The mothers were sure that Hashem would take care of their children.

They were right! Hashem sent each baby two rocks. When the baby was hungry he would suck on the rocks. From one rock the baby drank honey. From the other rock, the baby drank oil. The babies grew big and strong on their Heaven-sent food. When they were old enough, they left the forest and went back to their homes. A miracle happened. Hashem let the children know exactly where their parents lived. Imagine their parents' joy when their children walked in the door and the families were together again.

And the Egyptians never figured out where all the new Jews were coming from!

Baby Moshe

After Amram and Yocheved remarried, Yocheved gave birth to a beautiful baby boy. The whole house was filled with a heavenly light when he was born. She named him Tov, which means good.

Afraid the Egyptians would find him, Yocheved put her baby into a waterproof basket. She put the basket in the Nile River, where it floated on the water. She left her daughter, Miriam, to see what would happen. Miriam stood close enough to keep an eye on her baby brother.

Miriam noticed Pharaoh's daughter, Princess Bisya, walking to the river. Bisya had a skin disease called tzaraas. Bathing in the river's cool



waters made her skin feel better.

Bisya saw the basket. Why was a waterproof basket floating on the river? She stretched out her hand toward the basket — but she couldn't reach it! She stretched as hard as she could, trying to grab the basket before the river would sweep the baby away! Suddenly, a miracle happened. Her hand *strrrrrreeetched* out far enough to grab the basket!

And then another miracle! When Bisya touched the basket, her skin disease disappeared!

The princess looked into the basket and saw a baby crying. She said that this must be a Jewish baby. She pitied him and decided to take care of him as if he were her own son. She named him "Moshe" because she pulled him out of the water. (The word "mashah" means to pull out.) It was the perfect name for the baby, who would grow up to "pull out" the Jews from Egypt!

From her hiding place in the bushes, Miriam saw what had happened. Bisya gave Moshe to several Egyptian nursemaids to feed him, but he would not nurse from them. Miriam then ran over to Bisya and asked if she should get a Jewish woman to nurse the baby. Bisya agreed, and Miriam ran home and brought Yocheved, Moshe's mother. Bisya gave her



Bisya

- ▶ She was Pharaoh's daughter, who saved Moshe and adopted him.
- ▶ She converted and became a Jew on the day she found Moshe.
- ▶ She left Egypt with all of the Jews.

the baby and even paid her to nurse and care for him. For two years Moshe was raised by his own mother in a Jewish home.

The Palace

When Moshe was two he moved into the palace with the princess, who loved him like a mother. Often she would bring him to Pharaoh, who would put Moshe on his lap and play with him.

On one of these visits Pharaoh was meeting with his advisers while holding Moshe on his lap. All of a sudden Moshe reached up and took Pharaoh's golden crown. Then he put it — on his own head! Seeing this, Pharaoh's advisers became upset. They thought it was a bad sign. "Maybe this is the baby who will take Egypt away from you and make himself king," they told Pharaoh. "The child is dangerous. Kill him!"

The Test

Fortunately for Moshe there was one adviser, Yisro, who told the king, "Why is everyone getting so upset? He's only two years old. He didn't know what he was doing. Young children always grab shiny things. Let's test him. We'll put gold and a glowing coal in front of him. Let's see which one he grabs."

So they put a piece of gold and a red-hot piece of coal in front of Moshe. The advisers and Pharaoh waited to see what Moshe would reach for. Would he reach for the glowing coal, proof that he was just playing when he took the king's crown? Or would he reach for the gold — and death?

Moshe raised his hand to reach for — the gold! Just in time, though, something pushed his hand away, and he grabbed the glowing coal instead. Moshe had passed the test. He would live! But — Ouch! The coal was hot! Instead of dropping it, he put it in his mouth and burnt his tongue. From then on Moshe couldn't speak clearly.

What pushed Moshe's hand? It was the angel Gavriel. Hashem sent him to make sure Moshe passed the test and was not put to death.

Shabbos Rest

When Moshe's mother was nursing him, she had taught him that he was Jewish. Though Moshe lived in the palace like a prince, he cared about his Jewish brothers who were suffering every day. He felt so bad that he cried for them. When he could, he tried to help them. He had an idea.

The Egyptians made the Jews work seven days a week. Moshe had a plan to give them a day of rest. He couldn't just tell Pharaoh, "Give the Jews one day off because I can't stand seeing how badly you treat them."



Bisya's reward for her kindness in saving the baby was that the name she gave him — "Moshe" — is the one we call him by.



Pharaoh hated the Jews; he would never listen.

Instead, Moshe told Pharaoh, "If you keep working the Jews every day, they will die. You won't have any slaves left to work for you."

By now Pharaoh liked having all these slaves. He didn't like the idea of losing them, so he told Moshe to give the Jews a day off. Yocheved had taught Moshe about Shabbos, so Moshe ordered that from now on every seventh day — Shabbos — the Jews would not have to work. You can imagine how happy the Jews were to hear that!

Moshe had helped his people — and Pharaoh didn't have a clue that he'd been outsmarted!

Moshe Saves a Jew

When Moshe was 20 years old something happened that would change his life. His comfortable life in the palace would be over.

Moshe saw an Egyptian guard hitting a Jewish slave. The Egyptian was whipping him so hard that the Jew would die.

Moshe looked in every direction. No one was around. He carefully said the holiest Name of Hashem, and the Egyptian instantly fell down dead!

Killing an Egyptian guard was a huge crime in Egypt, punishable by death. Moshe knew that if he were discovered, he'd be in big trouble, so he buried the Egyptian in the sand.



Even though Moshe was seconds away from death, he never gave up hope that Hashem would save him. No matter how sick or hurt someone is, don't give up hope and keep praying because Hashem can save him. And no matter how bad things seem to be for you, you should still believe that Hashem can make things better in just one second. He can do anything — even turn a neck into marble.

The next day, when Moshe went out for a walk, he saw two Jews arguing. This was so hard for him to understand. With all the problems the Jews had with the Egyptians, you would think they would never fight with each other. But these were two wicked men, Dassan and Aviram.

They were so angry at each other that Dassan actually picked up his fist to hit Aviram.

Moshe had seen enough. He said to Dassan, "Rasha, wicked person! Why would you want to hit another Jew?"

Dassan was angry that Moshe was stopping him. He shouted, "Who are you to tell us what to do? Are you going to kill me like you killed the Egyptian guard?"

When Moshe heard that, he was very frightened. His secret was out. He would be caught and killed.

Dassan and Aviram were so angry at Moshe that they told Pharaoh that he had killed the guard!

Escape

Pharaoh was furious that Moshe had killed an Egyptian. He ordered Moshe captured and publicly beheaded by a sword.

Moshe was brought before Pharaoh. Many others came to watch. Pharaoh's guard lifted his sharp sword and brought it down on Moshe's neck.

Nothing happened. Moshe's neck had turned to marble! The sword had no effect on Moshe's neck! It just bounced off his neck!

Then something even stranger happened. Some of Pharaoh's men suddenly became blind. Others became deaf. And Pharaoh couldn't give any orders — because he couldn't speak!

Now was the time to escape. Moshe ran away from Egypt, leaving everything he knew.

Moshe Protects the Weak

Exhausted from his travels, Moshe stopped at a well in Midian to take a drink of water and rest a little. As he sat there, seven shepherdesses came by with their sheep. They were sisters, the daughters of Yisro. He had been Pharaoh's adviser, who'd tried to save the Jews. He had once also been the high priest of Midian's idols, a very important man. That is, until the day he looked around at the statues that couldn't talk or move and said, "This is all nonsense!"

Yisro told the Midianites that he didn't believe in idols anymore. The Midianites did not like that at all. They decided not to have anything to do with him. No one would work for him or talk to him. With no choice, his seven daughters had to take care of the family's sheep.

Moshe watched Yisro's daughters begin the hard job of drawing heavy buckets of water up from the well. They then poured the water into a large, hollowed-out stone for the animals to drink from.

While their animals were drinking, some shepherds came by. They were mean. They pushed Yisro's daughters into the water, then they brought their own sheep to drink the water Yisro's daughters had pulled out of the well.



Moshe saw the girls being treated badly by the other shepherds. Moshe chased the shepherds away.

When the evil shepherds were gone, Moshe told the seven girls to rest. He would pull up water for their sheep. Moshe drew more water for the sheep to drink.

Moshe Gets a New Job

Yisro's daughters went home and told their father, "You will not believe what happened to us today. We were attacked by shepherds at the well and a stranger rescued us!"

"So why did you leave him there?" Yisro answered. "Go and bring the man who saved you."

Yisro's oldest daughter, Tziporah, immediately hurried and brought Moshe to their home. When Yisro found out that Moshe had no place to stay, he invited him to move in with them. Moshe found a new home and became a shepherd, taking care of Yisro's sheep.

A Stick and a Match

Sticking out of the ground in Yisro's garden was an amazing walking stick. It was beautiful, made of blue sapphire stone. The stick was very, very special and very, very old, and had great powers. Hashem had given it to Adam, the first man.

How did the stick wind up stuck in the ground of Yisro's backyard?

For thousands of years the stick was passed from tzaddik to tzaddik. Before Adam died, he gave the stick to Chanoch.

Chanoch gave it to Shem.

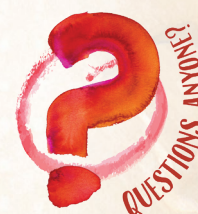
Shem gave it to Avraham.

Avraham gave it to Yitzchak.

Yitzchak gave it to Yaakov.

Yaakov gave it to Yosef.

When Yosef died, the stick remained in Pharaoh's palace. When Yisro left Egypt he took it with him.



The Torah tells us only three stories about the first eighty years of Moshe's life — how he killed the brutal Egyptian guard, stopped one Jew from hitting another Jew, and saved the shepherd girls who were being bullied. Why only these three?

The Torah wants to show us what was so special about Moshe, and why Hashem chose him to take the Jews out of Egypt. Moshe couldn't bear to see other people get hurt. He jumped in and helped them right away. That's the kind of leader Hashem wanted for the Jews — someone who would care for them and protect them!

When Yisro arrived in Midian, he put the stick into the ground. Later, when he tried to go near it to pull it out, he wasn't able to. Many strong people tried to go as well, but they had no luck! They couldn't come close!

Finally, Yisro offered a reward: Anyone who could remove the stick would be allowed to marry his daughter Tziporah.

When Moshe saw the stick, he noticed that it had Hebrew writing on it. Curious, he reached over and pulled it out. It came out easily, with no effort at all! The stick had been waiting for Moshe to come and get it.

This wondrous stick would be the one that Moshe would use when Hashem would make many of the miracles in Egypt and in the desert.

On the stick were written the letters **דָּצַךְ עֲדָשׁ בְּאֲחָב**. These ten letters represented the Makkos, the Ten Plagues that Hashem would bring against the Egyptians. Together, the letters spelled "d'tzach adash b'achav" — words that we say every year at the Pesach Seder!

When Yisro saw Moshe walk in with the stick, he was amazed. He realized Moshe was someone very special, and he gave him the reward he'd promised. Moshe married Tziporah.

After their marriage the new couple was blessed with their first child. Moshe named him Gershom, which means "a stranger there," because Moshe was a stranger in a foreign land.

A Burning Bush

Moshe didn't want the sheep to graze in other people's land. That would be stealing. Instead, he took them out into the desert. Since that land didn't belong to anyone, the sheep could eat all they wanted.

One day, he took his flock to a faraway mountain. The mountain's name was Har Sinai! Though Moshe didn't know it, this was the holy place where one day he would bring the Torah to the Jews.

But that would be in the future. Now, Moshe saw the strangest thing: a sneh, thornbush, that was on fire, but it wasn't burning up!

Strange. Very strange. This was the desert, which is very hot and dry. The plants that grow in the desert catch fire very, very quickly. And yet, though the bush was on fire, its branches and leaves weren't turning black or burning into ashes. They weren't burning up at all!

Why Choose Moshe?

Hashem wanted Moshe to pay attention to the bush that didn't burn. It was time for Hashem to send Moshe on his mission: to take the Jews out of Egypt.

Why was Moshe the one Hashem chose?

Moshe was a tzaddik. He was good to others and he loved Hashem. He was already eighty years old. Though he had left Egypt many years before, Moshe still thought about the suffering of his people, the Jews, all the time. He never forgot them.



FASCINATING FACTS

While Moshe was watching Yisro's animals, a kid goat ran off, and Moshe ran to bring it back. When he saw the kid stop to drink from a stream of water, Moshe said, "I did not realize that you were running because you were thirsty! You must be tired!"

He picked up the kid and carried it back to where the other animals were.

Hashem then said, "If you have the mercy to care for the sheep that belong to a person, you will be the one to lead my sheep, the Jewish people."

When the Torah talks about a land flowing with milk and honey, it means date honey, not bee honey.

This was the kind of person Hashem chose to be the leader who would take care of His people — a tzaddik who loved the Jews so much, that many years later he was still thinking about them.

Message of the Thornbush

The thornbush was a lot like the Jews. A thorny little bush seems to be the least important of the trees. It is much less important than beautiful maple trees or tall oaks. In the same way, at that time the Jews seemed to be the least important nation in the world. But just as the bush wasn't destroyed by fire, the Jews also will never be destroyed, no matter how hard our wicked enemies try. This was Hashem's message to Moshe. And it's also Hashem's message to us!

Moshe, Moshe

As Moshe was looking at the burning bush, Hashem called out to him, "Moshe! Moshe!"

Hashem told Moshe to remove his shoes because the place he was standing on was holy ground. It was holy because Hashem was there. Moshe realized that Hashem was talking to him. He was terrified. He covered his face out of fear and respect for Hashem.



GO!

Hashem told Moshe, "I am the G-d of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. It is time to save the Jews from Egypt and bring them to Eretz Yisrael, a land flowing with milk and honey. Go! I am sending you to Pharaoh to take the Jews out of Egypt."

Not Going

Moshe was very humble. He didn't think he was great enough to do such a big job. For seven days Moshe tried to prove to Hashem that He shouldn't send him.

He told Hashem, "How can I be Your messenger? I am a nobody, not important at all; why would Pharaoh listen to me?"

Another argument: "How will I feed so many people when we leave Egypt?"

Hashem told Moshe not to worry. He would be with him and take care of everything. Hashem promised Moshe that he would be successful and that he would bring the Jews to this very mountain to receive the Torah.

Moshe asked, "When I tell this to the Jews, they are going to ask me, 'What is Hashem's Name?' What should I tell them?"

Hashem answered, "Tell them E-heyeh Asher E-heyeh, which means 'I Shall Be As I Shall Be,' sent you." Hashem has many Names, which show different ways that He cares for us. The Name "I Shall Be As I Shall Be" tells us: "I have not forgotten you, I shall always be with you in your troubles in Egypt or anywhere else. And I will save you."

Hashem continued to speak with Moshe. "Go and gather all the Jewish wise men. Tell them these words: 'pakod pakadeti, remember, I have remembered' — to take you out of Egypt and bring you all to Eretz Yisrael."

Hashem told Moshe to use the words "pakod pakadeti" for a very special reason. These two words were code words. Many years before, Yosef told his brothers that these words would be used by the person whom Hashem would send to save the Jews.

"You and the Jewish wise men should go to Pharaoh's palace," Hashem commanded. "Tell Pharaoh that he should let the Jewish people go for a three-day trip to serve Hashem. He won't let them go, so I will punish him with great miracles. Afterward Pharaoh will finally send you away from Egypt. When the Jews leave they will be wealthy, carrying Egypt's silver and gold with them."

"The Jews won't believe me," Moshe objected. "They will say I made the whole thing up, that You never spoke to me."

Moshe should never have said that the Jews wouldn't believe him. It was lashon hara on the Jews. He should have realized that the Jews have faith in Hashem and in His messengers.

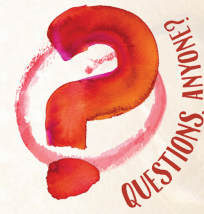
Snakes, Tzaraas, and Water

Hashem gave Moshe three signs to prove to the Jews that Hashem sent him. First, Hashem told Moshe to throw his stick on the ground. (Yes, that was the stick from Yisro's garden!) Moshe did it and the stick turned into a snake! Hashem told Moshe to pick it up and it turned back into a stick.

For the next sign, Hashem told Moshe to put his hand inside his robe and take it out again. When Moshe's hand came out it was covered with tzaraas. Moshe put his hand back inside his robe and his hand came out instantly healed. No whiteness at all, just healthy skin.

The final sign was that Moshe should take water from the Nile River and spill it on the ground. When it hit the ground the water would turn into blood.

Hashem used the sign of the snake and tzaraas to give a hint to Moshe. By speaking badly about the Jews — saying they would not believe him — he was behaving like the snake in Gan Eden, the Garden of Eden, who spoke badly about Hashem to Chavah. Tzaraas



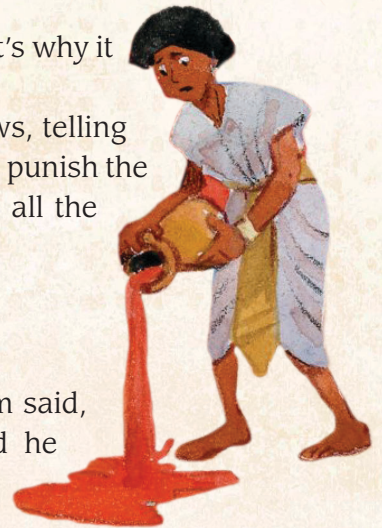
Why did Hashem use the two words "pakod pakadeti," which mean almost the same thing — "remember, I remember" — as the code words? One word — "pakadeti, I remember" — should have been enough.

The Jews needed Hashem to save them in two ways. One was to save them from the brutal slavery that made them weak and broken. And the second was to make them a holy people, the way they used to be when Yaakov was still alive. They had lived with the Egyptians for so long, they started acting like them. Hashem would have to lift them up from the low spiritual level of Egypt.



is a punishment for speaking lashon hara, and that's why it appeared on Moshe's hand.

Finally, the third sign was a message to the Jews, telling them that the first makkah (plague) Hashem would punish the Egyptians with would be the makkah that turned all the water into blood.



Angry!

Even after the signs and everything Hashem said, Moshe wouldn't give up. Again, he said he wasn't the right man for the job. "I can't speak properly," he said. (Moshe had burnt his tongue with a hot coal when he was a little boy, so he didn't speak clearly.)

That argument didn't work: Hashem told him that He would give him the power to speak properly.

Even though Moshe was humble, he should have understood that it was time to do what Hashem wanted.

But Moshe didn't stop.

"Send someone else!" he said. He meant that Hashem should send an angel, just like He had done to save Lot from S'dom's destruction.

Why was Moshe so against going? Didn't he want to help the Jews?

The reason was that Moshe loved his older brother, Aharon, very much. Aharon had been the leader of the Jews in Egypt for many years. How would Aharon feel if his younger brother came and took over? Moshe didn't want to make his brother feel bad.

Now Hashem got angry. For seven days He had told Moshe to go, and for seven days Moshe argued that he was not the right person to send. Even though Hashem had answered all his objections, Moshe kept saying no.

"Because of what you have done," Hashem said, "Aharon will be the Kohen and not you. You won't have to worry about how you speak. Aharon will go with you. You tell him what to say and he will speak for you."

Hashem also told Moshe that Aharon would not be upset. Not only that, Aharon would be happy that his younger brother had been picked to take the Jews out of Egypt.

Finally, Moshe agreed to lead the Jews out of Egypt.

The time had come!



The donkey that Moshe and his family were riding was no regular donkey. It was very, very old. And it is still alive today!

This was the same donkey that Avraham took with him when he was bringing Yitzchak as a korban at Akeidas Yitzchak.

And who will be riding this donkey once again? Mashiach, when he comes to end our long, long exile!

Back to Egypt

Moshe raced home. Every minute counted. The quicker he got to Egypt, the faster the Jews would be free! He packed up his belongings and asked permission from his father-in-law, Yisro.

Moshe and his family got ready to leave. But Moshe had a problem. His newborn son, Eliezer, hadn't had his bris milah yet! But if he gave him a bris, it would be dangerous for him to travel. Moshe would have to wait until the bris healed.

Though it's important to have a bris on time, there was no time to lose. Every day the Jews were suffering more and more!

What should Moshe do?

He decided it was more important to obey Hashem and get to Egypt right away.

Moshe put his wife and children on a donkey, and the family began the long trip to Egypt. They were off to save the Jews!

Tziporah Saves Moshe's Life

After traveling the whole day, Moshe and his family passed an inn. It seemed to be the perfect place to rest from their trip and spend the night.

Moshe began unpacking and making the family comfortable. Suddenly a fiery angel appeared. It turned itself into a huge snake and began swallowing Moshe! Tziporah was terrified. "How can I save my husband's life?" she thought.

"The baby! He needs a bris!" Quickly, Tziporah took Eliezer and gave him a bris. As soon as it was done, the angel/snake disappeared. Tziporah's quick thinking had saved Moshe's life.

What did Moshe do that he deserved such a scary fate? He was right to delay the bris because he had to go free the Jews. But once he stopped traveling he should have given his son a bris right away, before unpacking and moving into the inn.



The Brothers Meet

While this was going on, Hashem spoke to Aharon, in Egypt, and told him to go to Har Sinai. There he would meet his brother.

Aharon reached the mountain just as Moshe and his family got there. When they saw each other, Aharon hugged and kissed Moshe, overjoyed and so excited to meet him for the first time in many, many years!

Moshe introduced his wife and children to his brother. Aharon asked Moshe, "Why are you bringing them to Egypt? There are already so many Jews suffering in Egypt. Why bring more?"

Moshe, of course, listened to his older brother and sent his family back to Midian.

Then Moshe and Aharon traveled together to Egypt.



Wonderful News

When they arrived, Aharon told the Jews the happy news. Freedom was coming! Hashem had sent Moshe to take them out of Egypt, and Aharon was to be his spokesman. Aharon said the code words “pakod pakadeti,” and then showed them the signs. The Jews watched as Moshe’s walking stick turned into a snake, his hand got tzaraas and immediately recovered, and the river water turned into blood.

When they heard Aharon say the code words of freedom, the Jews knew Hashem had sent Moshe and Aharon!

What did they do when they heard the great news? They bowed down and thanked Hashem for His promise to end their suffering.

On the Way to Pharaoh’s Palace

And now it was time. Moshe, Aharon, and the Jewish sages were going to confront the most powerful man in the world. They were going to demand that Pharaoh listen to Hashem and let his slaves leave the country.

A strange thing happened on their way to the palace. One by one, the wise men turned back. They were afraid of Pharaoh, and of what he would do to them when they asked him to free the Jewish people. First there were seventy men ... then sixty men ... fifty ... And by the time Moshe and Aharon got to the huge palace gates they were on their own. Just the two of them.

Getting In

The palace gates were locked and guarded by tough Egyptian soldiers. How were they going to get in? Suddenly, Hashem sent the angel Gavriel to miraculously bring them into the palace.

But being in the palace didn’t mean they could see Pharaoh. They still had to get into his throne room. You couldn’t just knock on the door and walk in. It was guarded by wild animals like ferocious lions and other beasts. The animals attacked anyone trying to get in without permission.

The lions roared at the two Jews who stood before them, ready to attack! Moshe waved his sapphire stick over the animals — and instead of attacking them, the animals walked over to them, wagging their tails in friendship! The lions were as friendly as little puppies. The tigers were as tame as pussycats!

Escorted by the friendly animals, Moshe and Aharon walked into Pharaoh’s throne room.

What would await them there?

Happy Birthday!

The room was full of noise and people. There was a big celebration going on. It was Pharaoh's birthday party! Besides important Egyptians, there were kings from many other countries. Everyone had come to celebrate Pharaoh's birthday.

What do people bring to birthday parties? Presents, of course! There were lines of guests with expensive gifts of crowns for Pharaoh. Each one waited for his turn to wish Pharaoh a happy birthday.

The last to enter the room were Moshe and Aharon. The noise stopped. The room grew very quiet. All eyes were on the two holy tzaddikim.

With the fearsome and friendly beasts still behind them, Moshe and Aharon walked up to Pharaoh's throne.

Pharaoh Refuses

Moshe and Aharon stared at the man sitting before them. Though he was so powerful, Pharaoh was actually very short. He had a long beard, and wore a crown on his head.

Looking at the two Jews, Pharaoh, mighty Pharaoh, grew terrified. In a low, trembling voice, he managed to squeak out, "What do you want?"

"The G-d of the Jews has sent us," they answered, "to tell you to send His people out so they can serve Him in the desert."

Pharaoh got angry! No one ever told him what to do. He was Pharaoh, king of Egypt!

"Who is this G-d?" he said sharply. "I never heard of him." Pharaoh went into a room in his palace and picked up a large book that listed all the idols of Egypt and other countries. Pharaoh looked through it, looked up at Moshe and Aharon with a smirk on his face, and said, "Your G-d is not here."

He may have been the "birthday boy," and the most powerful leader in the world, but Pharaoh was also foolish. Did he really expect to find the Name of our living G-d in a book of dead stone and golden idols?

"Tell me," asked Pharaoh, "is your god a young, mighty warrior? What does He do?"

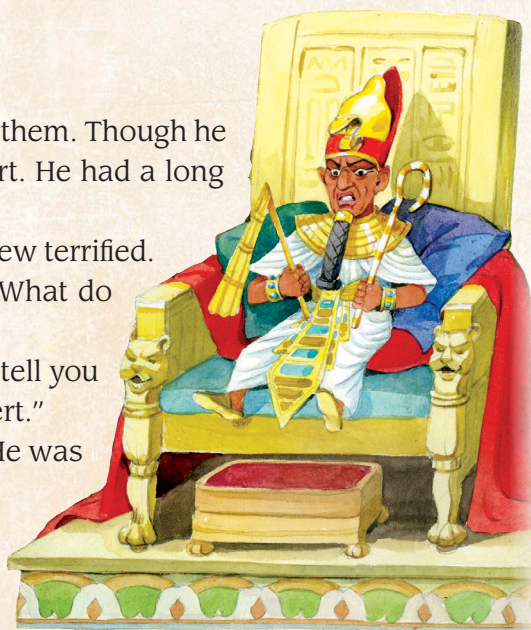
"He created the world, everything in it, and He gives you life."

Now Pharaoh wasn't frightened. He was just plain angry! "Liars! I am the master of the world. I created myself and the Nile River. I will not send out the Jews."

Moshe and Aharon repeated their request. "Let us go for a three-day trip into the desert to worship G-d."

"You want me to lose the work of hundreds of thousands of slaves for three days?" Pharaoh answered. "It's impossible!" He glared at them. "This is not your business! Don't try to stop my slaves from working."

Moshe and Aharon realized it was a waste of time to continue talking to Pharaoh. They turned around and left the palace.



Work Harder!

Pharaoh was burning mad at Moshe and Aharon. What chutzpah! Telling him to give his slaves a vacation!

He called the officers who were in charge of the slaves. "The problem with the Jews is that they are lazy," he said. "They don't want to work. That's why they are asking to leave."

His voice was hard and cold. "From now on, no more days off. We make life too easy for them. Instead of giving them the straw they need to make bricks, they will have to go out and gather straw on their own. Force them to make as many bricks as they did when we gave them straw. That will keep them busy and stop them from asking for days off!"

When they heard the awful news, the Jews were crushed. They were sure they were going to be free. Instead, their troubles got worse! They were forced to work more and were beaten harder than before Moshe had come to them.

Where was Moshe? they wondered. No one could find him.

They didn't know that after his meeting with Pharaoh, Moshe went back to Midian.

Six Months Later

Six difficult months passed. The Jews couldn't take it anymore. The extra work was unbearably hard. Worse, wherever they went to pick straw, Egyptians would bully them, pick on them, and beat them. There was no one to protect them.

The Jewish foremen, who were in charge of making sure the work went smoothly, finally went to Pharaoh. They begged and pleaded with him to stop making them work so hard, and to give them straw to make bricks.

Pharaoh told them, "You're all just lazy, that's why you ask for days off to serve Hashem. Nothing will change! Go back to work."

They left, discouraged and hopeless.

And on that very day, Moshe came back to Egypt.

A group of Jews met Moshe and Aharon. "Look what you've done!" they said bitterly to Moshe. "Because of you, Pharaoh hates us even more than he did before you came. Since you came, things have gotten a lot worse."

Moshe and Aharon were silent. What could they say?

Moshe Talks to Hashem

The complaints of the Jewish foremen made Moshe very sad. It hurt him that he was the cause of Jewish suffering. He prayed to Hashem and asked him, "Why did You send me? I only made things worse."

Hashem assured him, "Just wait and see what I'll do to Pharaoh."



If Pharaoh wanted to make the Jews work harder, why didn't he command them to make more bricks each day? Why come up with such a strange plan, that they would have to find their own straw?

This way Pharaoh would not only hurt their bodies, but he could hurt their minds as well. He would drive them crazy with worry. They had to find their own straw. This meant that instead of being able to get a good night's sleep after work, they would be up all night worrying, "Where will I get straw tomorrow? Where can I go, what should I do?" That was much worse than having to make extra bricks.