

פרשת שמות Parshat Shmot

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Enhancing your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion



The Unnoticed Miracles

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The Torah's inclusion of many historical facts and exclusion of others invites the development of

a theory as to what makes the cut to be in the Torah. Following this line of inquiry, the Ibn Ezra (46:23) wonders why Moshe Rabbeinu's miraculous birth to Yocheved Bat Levi – who the midrash includes as part of the original entourage to enter Egypt 130 years earlier – was left out of the Torah when Sarah's miraculous conception and delivery were not. He explains its absence by appealing to the fact that one need not take that midrash literally.

On the other side of the coin, we have mefarshim like the Ramban and the Maharal (Ge

vurot Hashem 5:16) who do take this miracle as historical but contend that not every miracle that our forefathers experienced was recorded in the Torah. The gemara (Sotah 12b) exemplifies this point by enumerating the many miracles that occurred for Moshe Rabbeinu's benefit during his infancy, even though they were never explicitly recorded in the Torah. By the Nile banks alone there were three miracles: (1) The miraculous extension of Bat Pharaoh's arm far beyond its normal reach to fetch Moshe's basket. (2) The angel Gavriel striking down Bat Pharaoh's maidens for protesting against their matron's rescuing of Moshe; he killed them so that no one could question the rightness of Bat Pharaoh's merciful deed. (3) Pharaoh's gezeira to kill all children was rescinded with Moshe's rescue.

The original decree to execute all male children began with the astrologers' claim that the Jews' savior would be born and killed by means of water. As Moshe was in the water and his fate on the line, the ministering angels asked God: "How can the one to sing *shira* at the splitting of the sea and the one to receive the Torah be killed?" After Moshe was rescued from the water, the celestial signs that continuously predicted the forthcoming savior finally ceased due to Moshe's fate becoming a reality. In turn, this allowed for Moshe to settle in the house of Pharaoh.

God's hand was evident at every step of the way and still today constantly provides hidden miracles for His people. Just because each and every miracle we go through is not explicitly mentioned or seen does not mean that we should be any less appreciative of them. Without them, like Moshe Rabbeinu in his infancy, we could not survive.

Wonderful Women

Nesy Levitt ('24)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Shmot, women drive some of the most critical decisions that determine the outcome of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*. To start the story off, we are told that a man from the house of Levi took a woman from the house of Levi to be his wife. The Ramban infers from this pasuk that Miriam was the reason her parents got back together after she tells them they must do so. After having a child, Yocheved took extra precautions to hide her baby because she was worried the Egyptians would take her newborn son. She put him in a basket in the river, hoping to save his life. Miriam then went a step further and took it upon herself to watch out for him from the banks of the Nile, something she did not have to do. The midwives, Shifra and Puah, made bold decisions, and through their

bravery they saved many Jewish baby boys, without whom the Jewish population would have been significantly smaller.

Bat Pharaoh is also an example of being a leading woman by actively taking Moshe out of the Nile and caring for him, rather than passively allowing the basket to continue flowing down the river. Finally, Tzipora gives her son a brit milah when Moshe had not done so for him.

Rashi comments that this saved Moshe's life because Hashem was furious with him for refusing to perform the brit milah, but luckily Tzipora stepped up and took action.

Through the decisions made by these women at every juncture of the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, our *geulah* was achieved. They each nurtured Moshe on his way to becoming a leader, and to them we must be grateful for the strong nation we are today.

External Cry

Ariel Gedz ('24)

In Parshat Shmot, Pharaoh's daughter is surprised with a basket in the Nile carrying a "lad that was crying." In this pasuk, Moshe is described as both a child and a *na'ar*, a teenager. Why is it written this way? Why are both descriptions necessary?

The Rebbe of Sochatchov explains that a baby's cry is meant to alert the parents that he/she is uncomfortable. Later, the child develops empathy for others and instead of crying for selfish reasons, he cries because of other people's pain. Pharaoh's daughter realized that although Moshe had much to be uncomfortable about, his cry was for a greater nation, the Jewish people. She realized that

Moshe is Jewish because she was aware that feeling empathy for others was a hallmark of the Jewish people. Later in Moshe's life, he became a shepherd and cared for every single one of his sheep. When he witnessed a Jew being attacked by an Egyptian, he saved the person's life. When he went to the well in Midyan, he stood up for seven random strangers. Moshe sympathized with those in need and put himself in difficult situations in order to serve the needs of people around him, as seen in the previous examples.

The Torah teaches us that a great leader is one who cares about every individual around him. Moshe was born with empathy for the Jewish people and continued to demonstrate empathy for the rest of his life. Moshe's greatness doesn't come from the power he held, rather from his nature to help others. We can learn from Moshe and incorporate his great character traits into our own lives everyday. Shabbat Shalom.

Lifeguard

Yishai Schochet ('25)

In this week's parsha, Yocheved put baby Moshe in a basket and put it in the Nile. What was Yocheved's reason for doing this? Wouldn't it seem that by doing so she was sentencing the baby to certain death? Was her intention for someone to find the basket and take care of Moshe?

The pasuk doesn't say what Yocheved's intentions with this were, but the matter is open to speculation. Doing nothing would have condemned Moshe to certain death at the hands of the Egyptian authorities. Perhaps Yocheved was hoping that Moshe would be found by a merciful Egyptian and be spared from death. Stationing Miriam close by would then allow her to see where Moshe would end up, and hopefully allow her to

initiate contact with her son at some later time.

The Ibn Ezra suggests two reasons for Yocheved placing Moshe in the Nile: First, if her son was meant to die, then at the very least she wouldn't have to witness the unbearably painful scene of his execution. Second, Miriam prophetically informed her mother that this was the correct course of action for the moment.

The gemara (Sotah 11a) explains that Pharaoh originally decreed that the Jewish boys be cast into the river because his astrologers had predicted that water would be the catalyst for the "downfall" of the savior of the Jews. Based on this, the midrash explains that Moshe's mother — who was aware of her son's special destiny — hoped that as soon as Moshe would be placed in the water, the astrologers would see that the savior of the Jews had already been "cast" into the water and the decree against the Jewish boys would be annulled, allowing her to bring her son back home. This indeed is what happened, but at that point Moshe didn't die at the hand of the water because Pharaoh's daughter had already found him.

Have a great Shabbos!

Now I Know

Mia Kogan ('23)

In this week's parsha, the Torah points out that after Moshe killed the Egyptian, Datan and Aviram called him out and Moshe said, "אָכִן נִזְדַּע הַדָּבָר" – "surely, this thing is known" (2:14). What is this "thing" he is talking about? Rashi suggests that Moshe means that he sees why the Jews deserve to be punished. What did Moshe notice that

made him understand why the Jewish people earned exile in Egypt?

The Abarbanel in בינה לעתים answers by telling a story. One day, while Moshe went out to the fields, he noticed a group of Jews chatting. Suddenly, an Egyptian grabbed one of the Jews, separated him from his Jewish brothers, and started hurting him. This is referenced in the pasuk:

וירא איש מצרי מכה איש עברי מאחיו

– “And he saw an Egyptian man hit a Jewish man from amongst his brothers” (Shmot 2:11). Moshe questioned why none of the other Jews came to the rescue of the poor Jew being beaten. He thought the Jewish people were maybe very gentle or timid and could not fight. Seeing no alternative, Moshe killed the Egyptian. When he visited the fields on the second day and observed Jews fighting amongst themselves, he found out that the Jews certainly knew how to fight but apparently lacked interest in assisting a fellow Jew. Moshe became aware that there may be among the Jewish people. Consequently, after witnessing each incident and spotting the absence of אהבת ישראל amongst the Jewish people, he stated, “אַכְן נוֹדָע הַדָּבָר”, meaning, now I know/understand why the Jewish people are in exile.



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