

# שְׁמוֹת

## SHEMOT/NAMES

### Shemot/Exodus 1:1-6:1

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The book of **Shemot** is the story of a nation. In the womb of the country of Egypt, the people of Israel are born. But as they begin to mature, they find themselves oppressed to the point of despair. They are a people with a promise, wanting to embrace their mission but having to endure the silence of the One who spoke to their forefathers. How can they remain steadfast in their faith while their world is crashing down around them? Will their Elohim ever intervene to save them?



**Shemot/Exodus 1:13** So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. <sup>14</sup> And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage -- in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve *was* with rigor.

Our story of the redemption of the Israelites from Egypt begins with the birth of a baby. We know the story well – how the baby Moshe ended up in the house of the Pharaoh, brought up as a prince in the royal court. It's obvious that Moshe knew he was a Hebrew, as we read of him identifying with a slave:

**Shemot 2:11** Now it came to pass in those days, when Moshe was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a **Hebrew, one of his brethren**.

Moshe was 40 years old and probably at the height of his power and glory. From a worldly point of view, he had everything as an heir to the Egyptian empire. But something burned in him that would not go away. He was opposed to the slavery of his people. Perhaps יהוה had given him an understanding that delivering the children of Israel would be his calling. But he became confused when after killing an Egyptian, his fellow Israelites reacted with sarcasm. He was forced to flee for his life:

**Shemot 2:13** And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting, and he said to the one who did the wrong, "Why are you striking your companion?" <sup>14</sup> Then he said, **"Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?"** So, Moshe feared and said, "Surely this thing is known!" <sup>15</sup> When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moshe. But **Moshe fled** from the face of Pharaoh...

Moshe didn't understand that the timing for Israel's deliverance belonged to יהוה, not him. In fact, it would take another 40 years of training before he would be ready to begin leadership. The life of a shepherd was a completely different lifestyle for Moshe. One must assume that he learned how to be a shepherd from his wife. Moshe never owned any sheep of his own, but tended to his father-in-law's

sheep. Remember the patriarchs Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'acov all became prosperous with their own flocks. Moshe shepherded the flock of his **father** (in-law). Moshe would later shepherd the flock of the Almighty **Father**! And he would bring them to this very mountain!

The life of a shepherd required that one would sometimes move the sheep in order to find fresh pastureland. And this is how **יהוה** led Moshe to a particular spot in the wilderness known as the “**Mountain of Elohim**”:

**Shemot 3:1** Now Moshe was tending the flock of Yitro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And **he led the flock** to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the **Mountain of Elohim**.

What happens next is a description of Moshe's very first encounter with the Almighty:

**Shemot 3:2** And the Angel of **יהוה** appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So, he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush *was* not consumed. <sup>3</sup> Then Moshe said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn." <sup>4</sup>



So when **יהוה** saw that he turned aside to look, Elohim called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moshe, Moshe!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup> Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand *is* holy ground." <sup>6</sup> Moreover He said, "I *am* the Elohim of your father -- the Elohim of Avraham, the Elohim of Yitzchak, and the Elohim of Ya'acov." And Moshe hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon Elohim.

First let's try to understand the symbolism behind this site. According to Midrash, the lowly and despised thorn bush is none other than a symbol for the people of Israel oppressed in Egypt. Like a dry shrub, with no fruit, it is unable to find relief in the burning desert sun. The fire is a symbol of the oppression of Egypt. Moshe understands that Israel will not be destroyed, and that the fire will not consume them. Later in the book of **Devarim**, Moshe referred to the iron “**furnace**” of Egypt:

**Devarim/Deuteronomy 4:20** "But **יהוה** has taken you and brought you out of the iron **furnace**, out of Egypt, to be His people, an inheritance, as you are this day.

The trial of faith by “**fire**” only is meant to consume the impurities in us:

**1 Peter 1:6** In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup> that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is **tested by fire**, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Messiah Yeshua.

And here's another explanation, which is just as true. The fire does not refer to the Egyptian cruelty, but to the Divine Presence. יהוה is indicating that He is with them and completely identifying with them in their plight. In the first scenario, the flames want to incinerate them. In the second scenario, the flames sustain them. The fire is the source of their survival. The thorns signify the pain and difficulty of the oppression. Our Messiah also understood the pain of "**thorns**":

**Matthew 27:29** When they had twisted a **crown of thorns**, they put *it* on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

Moshe quickly responds to the calling of his name with... "**hineni**" (הִנְנִי – here I am). The meaning of the Hebrew word includes the sense of being fully engaged and ready to hear instruction. The small flame that was never extinguished in Moshe's heart will now be lit. He is ready to be used. However, when Moshe hears the calling, his insecurities immediately kick in. First the call:

**Shemot 3:7** And יהוה said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. <sup>8</sup> "So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. <sup>9</sup> "Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. <sup>10</sup> "**Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.**"

Moshe's initial reaction to the call was insecurity. He remembers what happened the first time he got involved, killed the Egyptian, and had to flee. Remember when the Hebrew asked Moshe, "**who made you judge?**" Now Moshe asks Elohim, "**Who am I?**" It is a humble, appropriate response.

**Shemot 3:11** But Moshe said to Elohim, "**Who am I** that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

יהוה responds. Below is the verse, but it may not appear the same way as it does in your Bible. All I've really done is change the punctuation. And remember Hebrew doesn't have punctuation:

**Shemot 3:12** For I am with you and **this for you is the sign** that I have sent you. When you bring out the people from Egypt, you shall serve Elohim on this mountain.

Now...what is the "**sign**" יהוה is referring to? The way it is written in most translations, the sign would appear to be "**when Moshe brings the people from Egypt and they serve Elohim on this mountain.**" But what if the sign is what Moshe is staring at, i.e., the "**burning bush?**" The burning bush that Moshe is observing is a supernatural event. Moshe you are that dry, thorn bush. But if you let the Holy Fire, the Spirit of the Living Elohim consume you, He can work through you. But you, Moshe, must have faith. And if you have faith...the second part of the sign... "**when you bring out the people from**

**Egypt, you shall serve Elohim on this mountain,”** will come to pass. If Moshe will surrender to the call, that is the promise.

As you know, the argument will go back and forth and there are many interesting details. But I would like to focus on just one interesting comment of Moshe's:

**Shemot 4:10** And Moshe said to יהוה, 'O, my Adonai, I *am* not a man of words, either yesterday, or before, nor since you have spoken to your servant, for I *am* **heavy of mouth** (kavad peh – כבד־פה), and **heavy of tongue** (kavad lashon – לשון־כבד).

If we put the above verse together with the last message spoken by the martyr **Stephen** in the book of **Acts**, we seem to have a contradiction:

**Acts 7:18** "till another king arose who did not know Yosef.<sup>19</sup> "This man dealt treacherously with our people, and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live.<sup>20</sup> "At this time Moshe was born, and was well pleasing to Elohim; and he was brought up in his father's house for three months.<sup>21</sup> "But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son.<sup>22</sup> "And Moshe was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was **mighty in words and deeds**.

In **Shemot 4**, did Moshe give יהוה a correct assessment of his inadequacies? Many commentators through the ages have come to the conclusion that Moshe was a stutterer. Let's analyze. In Hebrew, the word translated as “**heavy**” is “**כבד – kaved**” coming from the verb meaning “**to be heavy, weighty.**” The word is used again in **Parashat Shemot** referring to the oppressing work under the Egyptians:

**Shemot 5:9** "Let the work be **heavy** (כבד) on the men, that they may labor in it, and let them not regard false words."

“**Kaved**” is often used negatively in regard to sin. For instance, “**the sin of Sodom was very heavy**” (**Bereshith 18:20**). And it can also refer to “**wealth**”:

**Bereshith 13:2** And Avram was very **rich** (kaved – **weighty, wealthy**) in livestock, in silver, and in gold.

“**Glorify**” (**kavod**) comes from the same root word. To have “**glory**” is to have “**immense spiritual weight.**” יהוה's “**Name is glorious**”:

**Psalms 66:2** Sing out the **glory** (kavod - כבוד) of His **Name**; Make His praise **glorious** (כבוד).

So, what exactly did Moshe mean when he said he was “**heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue?**” Does it make any sense that this description refers to a speech impediment? Does the Bible itself support this? The truth is there are other words that describe speech problems more clearly. In **Isaiah**:

**Isaiah 28:11** For with stammering lips (la'agey saphah – לַעֲגִי שִׁפָּה) ...

**Isaiah 32:4** Also the heart of the rash will understand knowledge, And the tongue of the stammerers (lashon ilgim – לַשׁוֹן עֲלִילִים) will be ready to speak plainly.

But in **Ezekiel**, we find verses that parallel Moshe's own description of his problem. In these verses, **Ezekiel** is NOT referring to a speech impediment:

**Ezekiel 3:4** Then He said to me: "Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them. <sup>5</sup> "For you *are* not sent to a people of unfamiliar speech and heavy tongues (kavad lashon – כָּבֵד לַשׁוֹן), but to the house of Israel, <sup>6</sup> "not to many people of unfamiliar speech and of heavy tongues (kavad lashon – כָּבֵד לַשׁוֹן), whose words you cannot understand. Surely, had I sent you to them, they would have listened to you. <sup>7</sup> "But the house of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to Me; for all the house of Israel *are* impudent and hard-hearted.

Today we speak of someone who speaks the English language from a certain cultural region as having an accent. They may be difficult to understand because English is their second language, and we may even say, "**they have a heavy accent.**" In other words, they have a "**heavy tongue.**" This is what Moshe was concerned about.

In Egypt, Moshe was said by Stephen to speak "**powerfully.**" Although he probably learned Hebrew before he left his nursing mother, Moshe was raised in Egyptian culture and language until he was 40. Later Moshe will clarify his concern as "**uncircumcised speech**" (aral saphtaim – עֲרֵל שִׁפְתַּיִם):

**Shemot 6:12** And Moshe spoke before יְהוָה, saying, "The children of Israel have not heeded me. How then shall Pharaoh heed me, for I *am* of uncircumcised speech (aral saphtaim – עֲרֵל שִׁפְתַּיִם)?"

**Shemot 6:30** But Moshe said before יְהוָה, "Behold, I *am* of uncircumcised speech, and how shall Pharaoh heed me?"

Now we can more fully understand Moshe's fear. The "**speech**" or literally, the "**language**" (saphah – שִׁפָּה) of his lips lacks the spiritual "**weight**" of יְהוָה's authority and power to convince Israel to cooperate and at the same time, to persuade Pharaoh to set Israel free.

Throughout the Scriptures, "**uncircumcised**" refers to foreigners who were not physically circumcised as part of the covenant with Avraham. Moshe's first language was the language of the "**uncircumcised**," i.e., Egyptian! The Hebrew people had the set-apart language of יְהוָה's self-disclosure. Why would the Israelites ever listen to someone like Moshe...someone who spoke Hebrew with an Egyptian accent, who was nurtured in the culture and language of paganism? Moshe spoke powerfully and fluently the "**uncircumcised language**" of the uncircumcised Egyptian people. He was exactly what Stephen had

described – “**a man of power in words and deed**” .... that is, as long as he stuck with the Egyptian language.

Moshe feared neither the Israelites or the Pharaoh would listen to him, because he would not be able to speak eloquently with charisma to either side. He felt unqualified to appropriately represent the great יהוה. Moshe would need to speak Hebrew to Pharaoh as יהוה's ambassador. It would become a war of the languages. And the Pharaoh was a great speaker. יהוה repeatedly told Moshe He would equip him, but his fear prevented him from believing the Almighty's words with faith. He still did not understand that יהוה could use anyone He wanted to, to battle with the most powerful nation on earth.

Moshe's lack of adequate fluency in the Hebrew language was really a non-issue. The real language of יהוה is one of power and Presence. Remember, He spoke and the entire universe came into existence. Moshe was the Almighty's chosen vessel and He promised to equip him for the task. What would happen in Egypt was יהוה's language would be displayed through powerful actions resulting in deliverance for the Israelites. Moshe's role was only to say what he was told. The Almighty was in charge of everything else.

Moshe would come to understand the “**sign of the burning bush**.” He would come to understand that he was that dry, worthless bush that was not consumed because he surrendered to the flames of the Almighty. In so doing, Moshe would draw others to do what he did – take **another look at the flames**...

**Shemot 3:3** Then Moshe said, "**I will now turn aside and see this great sight**...

One more thing. Hebrew speaking **Rav Sha'ul** was also sent to a people of a language other than his mother tongue. The Greek-speaking assembly in Corinth was very distracted by his accent!

**2 Corinthians 10:10** "For *his* letters," they say, "*are* weighty and powerful, but *his* bodily presence *is* weak, and *his* **speech contemptible**."

But Sha'ul understood his mission. He understood that, like Moshe, representing Yeshua was not just a matter of words but of power and demonstration in the Holy Spirit:

**1 Corinthians 2:1** And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of Elohim. <sup>2</sup> For I determined not to know anything among you except Messiah Yeshua and Him crucified. <sup>3</sup> I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. <sup>4</sup> And **my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power**, <sup>5</sup> that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of Elohim.

Are you a child of the Most High? Then you have a calling. I can almost assure you it will be beyond your comfort zone. Step into it and see if you don't experience the “**fire**” of His Presence!

Shabbat Shalom!

*Ardelle*