

Parashah 13: Sh'mot (Names) Exodus 1:1-6:1; Isaiah 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23 Jeremiah 1:1-2:3; Matthew 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; 35-37; Luke 20:27-44; Acts 3:12-15; 5:27-32; 7:17-36; 22:12-16; 24:14-16; Hebrews 11:23-26

These are the names of the sons of Isra'el.

In the Hebrew Bible, the word sh'mot (names) is the title for the book of Exodus. The word Exodus is derived from the Greek exodos, which parallels an old Hebrew name, 'The book of the departure from Egypt.'

The opening chapters of Exodus relate narrative history-the dynamic story of the slavery and ensuing liberation of Israel with the following chapters providing God's instructions to the people of Israel. Through these many instructions which is 613 in the Torah (Genesis to Deuteronomy) according to Jewish tradition, he taught the Nation how to live in a righteous manner, reflecting his presence to the world around them. In Jewish thought, Exodus is often called 'the book of the covenant' since much of it shows God's faithfulness to his previous covenant promises to Israel, which he continues with ensuing generations.

Exodus guides the formation of ethical thought, and teaches how one's lifestyle can reflect the reality of being in a covenant relationship with Almighty God. It is a bridge between Genesis and Leviticus, filling in events and instructions needed to enter into God's redemptive history.

Now back to our reading for this week. This week's Torah portion (the first of the Book of Exodus) is called Shemot (שְׁמוֹת, "names") because it begins with a list of the "names" of the sons of Jacob who came to dwell in the land of Goshen: וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּאִים / מִצְרָיִם / "These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt" (Exod. 1:1). Now while it's true that the Scriptures here list the names of Jacob's descendants, this portion more importantly refers to the Names of the LORD God of Israel Himself. "These are the names..."

To see this, let's consider the central story of our reading, namely, the commissioning of Moses at the Burning Bush (see Exod. 3:1-20). Note that the Torah states that it was the Angel of the LORD (i.e., Malakh Adonai: מַלְאֲכֵי יְהוָה) who appeared to Moses בְּלִבְת־אֵשׁ / מִתּוֹךְ הַסֻּפָּה / "in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush" (Exod. 3:1-2). But then the Torah goes on to say that the LORD (יהוה) saw Moses drawing near to the bush while God (i.e., Elohim: אֱלֹהִים) called out to him. God (i.e., Elohim) then commanded Moses to remove

his sandals and identified Himself as the “God of Abraham (i.e., Elohei Avraham: אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם), the God of Isaac (i.e., Elohei Yitzchak: אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק), and the God of Jacob (i.e., Elohei Ya’akov: אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב).” In this short and dramatic account we have several Names of God presented - the Angel of the LORD, the LORD, God (Elohim), and the “God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” - all of which refer to YHVH, the One true God!

There arose a new king over Egypt. He knew nothing about Joseph. The Hebrew word for ‘knew’ here is yada, defined as having intimate knowledge. The Targum reads that the new king ‘did not maintain the decree of Joseph’ nor did he keep up the prior royal policy of upholding a good relationship with the tribes of Israel in Goshen. God, however has a way of getting His people out on the right time and while He is teaching them His way. Remember that at this stage, they were used for 400 years the customs of Egypt, surrounded by their gods and manner of doings. They were also settled in their ways, easy living and we can see in the chapters to follow that they kept referring back to Egypt. Then a son was born to Jochebed. Early Jewish biblical commentaries believed that Jochebed (Yocheved), Moses’ mother, saw a supernatural sign confirming the future role of her son, so she protected him. According to Rashi in Sotah 12a, Yocheved sensed something special about Moshe’s destiny that motivated her to take extraordinary measures to save his life.

When God called Moses, Moses answered with ‘here I am.’ It is the word hineni (I’m here or here I am). Based on every usage of this idiom in the Torah, hineni means ‘I’m already here, and I am willing to do whatever it is you wish, before you even ask.’ This is what Moshe meant when he said this to God in chapter 3:4

Although it is often explained that the removal of Moshe’s sandals was done out of reverence for the sanctity of this place, it is also possible that God told him to remove his footwear so he would not go anywhere. The phrase admat Kodesh (holy ground) stresses that God set this area aside for this encounter with Moshe. We should however note that the priests did not wear shoes in the holy place!

The calling of Moses was and is still today one of the best for me. Like a typical called leader, he had all the excuses. Usually, you will find the called with a lot of “I am not able”, this is beyond me etc etc. I think it is because God will always calls you to a position where you know that you can not do it on your own. When one becomes relaxed

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in your calling, be sure that He will shake your comfort zone. Also, when leaders become so self-centred and “I can do it better”, then you know that satan crept in somewhere. Moses is a very good example of a person not really willing, but he did it in the end, but humble before God, because he was a man not good of speech in his own eyes. Also we will see that his flaws were not hidden in Scripture, it is there for us to see that God calls who He wants and equip them and use them for His glory and YHWH is the only One to who belongs the glory. Not the one who recommends himself, but the one who is tested and approved by God YHWH.

Shalom Blessings
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