

Congregation Beth Israel of the Palisades

שבת פרשת שמות

Shabbat Parashat Sh'mot

January 6, 2018 | Tevet 19, 5778



בשעה!

TORAH STUDY

This Week: Shabbat Parashat Sh'mot Sh'mot 1.1-6,1, pages 317-341

FIRST ALIYAH: In verse 1.9, Pharaoh says Israel “is much too numerous for us.” What, then, is the point he is trying to make in verse 1.10, about not letting Israel increase further, if it already is “too numerous for us”?

FIFTH ALIYAH: This aliyah opens with a repeat of the instruction God just gave to Moshe in the previous verse. Why does God need to repeat Himself?

The haftarah, Yirmiyahu 1.1-2.3, begins on Page 347.

Next Week: Shabbat M'varchim Parashat Va-era Sh'mot 6.2-9.35, pages 351-368

FIRST ALIYAH: “Vay'daber Elohim el Moshe”—and God spoke to Moshe. God already “spoke” to him more than once, so what is particularly significant about this time?

SIXTH ALIYAH: As verse 9.14 puts it, “For this time, I will send all my plagues” upon Egypt and its people. Yet only four plagues follow this pronouncement. Surely God has many others, so what is He really saying here?

The haftarah, Ychezkel 28.25-29.21 begins on Page 370.

For haftarat, we follow S'fardi custom.

SH'MOT: EMPHASIZING LIBERATION OVER OPPRESSION

The closing chapters of B'reishit (Genesis) told of the settlement of the Israelites in Egypt. Yosef saved Egypt from starvation during a severe famine, while shrewdly enhancing the wealth and landed estates of the crown.

Sefer Sh'mot (the Book of Exodus) opens with a tale of base ingratitude on the part of a pharaoh, and the Egyptian people, which precipitates a radical reversal of fortune for the tribes of Israel.

The text rests upon a knowledge of B'reishit; it takes for granted that the reader knows the identity and experiences of Yosef, is aware of God's promises to the patriarchs, and is familiar with the account of the migration of Yaakov and his family to Egypt.

“Strangers in a land not theirs,” as B'reishit 15.13 puts it, the Israelites are to be enslaved and oppressed for a long period of time. However, the Biblical Narrator compresses the slavery and suffering into a few verses. Attention is concentrated on the process of liberation. Regarding that, the narrative is generously expansive.

A singular tone of secularity seems to pervade the introductory saga of Sh'mot. There is no explicit mention of God directing events. Nevertheless, these developments were foretold in connection with God's covenant with Avraham in that pivotal passage, B'reishit 15.13. As in the ostensibly secular story of Yosef, here too there is an unmistakable underlying sense of divine purposefulness.

As for the sons—that is, the tribes of Israel—they are listed within a formulaic framework (vv. 1, 4) that is clearly adapted from B'reishit 46.8, 26-27; yet the order does not follow the one given in that chapter. Instead, it is based on B'reishit 35.23-26. There is good reason for this seeming anomaly, for this latter chapter contains the divine blessing to Yaakov: “Be fertile and increase; / A nation, yea an assembly of nations, / Shall descend from you” [v. 11]. Here, in this opening section of Sh'mot, the text affirms that the promise has been fulfilled..

—Adapted from the JPS Commentary to Exodus

CBIOTP STANDARDS & PRACTICES

1. Men must keep their heads covered in the building and must wear a talit when appropriate. Women may choose to do either or both, but it is not mandatory.
2. Anyone accepting a Torah-related honor must wear a talit, regardless of gender.
3. Only one person at a time may take an aliyah.
4. No one should enter or leave the sanctuary during a K'dushah. One should not leave the sanctuary when the Torah scroll is being carried from or to the ark.
5. No conversations may be held in the hallway outside the sanctuary, or while standing in an aisle alongside a pew.
6. The use of recording equipment of any kind is forbidden on sacred days.
7. Also forbidden are cell phones, beepers and PDAs, except for physicians on call and emergency aid workers (please use vibrating option).
8. No smoking at any time in the building, or on synagogue grounds on Shabbatot and Yom Kippur.
9. No non-kosher food allowed in the building at any time.
10. No one may remove food or utensils from the shul on Shabbatot. An exception is made for food being brought to someone who is ailing and/or homebound.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Sunday Meryl Losick, Alex Edelman
Tuesday Ellen Grawi, Sarah & Elie Chalom
Wednesday Bruce Messing
Thursday Albert Ades

*Did we miss a birthday, anniversary, or other simchah?
Let us know. We can't print what we don't know.*

Присоединяйтесь к нам дл
освящение и обед
This week's kiddush and luncheon
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This week's Shabbat Booklet
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may their memories be for a blessing

and by

**CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL
OF THE PALISADES**

to celebrate ELLEN GRAWI'S 90th birthday

PHOTOS OF THE WEEK: Happy Chai Year!

If there's an "18" involved, someone is bound to get a "chai" in there somewhere. And so it is with 2018, as this piece of art making the rounds proves.



Rosh Hashanah it's not
Lots of smiling faces at
Nadia's and Joe's home,
and not a shofar in sight.
L to R from top: Marian
& Barnett Silverstein,
Roxanne Guinness, Joe
Massuda, Rivkah Glickman,
Judy Golub, Errol Kaget;
center: Nadia Massuda;
bottom row: Goldy Hess
& Alex Glickman (Photo
courtesy Nadia Massuda)

SEFER SH'MOT: MORE, MUCH MORE, THAN THE BIRTH OF A NATION

Sefer Sh'mot, the Book of Exodus, is the West's meta-narrative of hope. It tells an astonishing story of how a group of slaves were liberated from the mightiest empire of the ancient world.

Theologically, its message is even more revolutionary: the Supreme Power intervenes in history in defense of the powerless. Never before and never since has the message of monotheism been more world-transforming, and the exodus narrative has inspired many of those who, in later times, fought oppression in the name of freedom, and began the long journey across the wilderness in search of the promised land.

In the 17th century, it inspired the English Puritans and parliamentarians in their battle against an overbearing king. It was engraved on the hearts of the Pilgrim Fathers as they set sail across the Atlantic in search of a new world. Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin used it as their image when, in 1776, they drew their designs for the Great Seal of the United States. When African-Americans sang of freedom, they said, "Go down Moses, way down in Egypt land, tell old Pharaoh, Let my people go."

On April 3, 1968, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered a sermon in a church in Memphis, Tenn. At the end of his address, he referred

to the last day of Moses' life, when the man who had led his people to freedom was taken by God to the top of a mountain from which he could see in the distance the land he was not destined to enter. That, said King, was how he felt that night. "I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the promised land." That night was the last of his life. The next day, he was assassinated. Forty years later, for the first time in history, an African-American was elected president of the United States.

No story has been more influential in shaping the inner landscape of liberty, teaching successive generations that oppression is not inevitable, that it is not woven into the fabric of history. There can be another place, another kind of society, a different way of living. What happened once can happen again for those who have faith in the God who had faith in humankind.

The God of freedom calls on us to be free.

Nietzsche, the great atheist, put it best. He called Judaism "the slave revolt in morals." He understood that it was the faith of the powerless. Nietzsche believed in the opposite: "the will to power." Knowing as we do what happened in the century after Nietzsche's death—the bloodiest century since humans first walked the earth—we are entitled to conclude that Nietzsche was as wrong as it is possible to be. Power destroys the powerless and powerful alike, oppressing the

one while corrupting the other. If we are to build a society with a human face, we must always choose the way of Exodus, with its message of hope and human dignity.

As we move from B'reishit/Genesis to Sh'mot/Exodus, the entire biblical landscape changes, and the Jewish project takes on substance and form. For the first time, politics enters the narrative, center-stage. God intervenes in history in a series of miracles and wonders that have no precedent and no real sequels. (True, there are miracles recorded in later books: the Jordan divides for Yehoshua and the Israelites [Yehoshua 3] there are miraculous victories at Jericho and Gibeon [Yehoshua 6, 10], and the prophets Elijah and Elishah appear to have miraculous powers. But the tendency throughout the biblical books is a progressive move from the supernatural to the natural.) For the first time we encounter law in all its nuances—Torah, mitzvah, chok: and mishpat—as the substance of the divine will. And for the first time, we encounter a transformative leader, Moshe, who emerges from the shadows of a strange, improbable childhood to become, despite his many hesitations, the man who was to leave his mark on the Jewish people from that day to this.

The reason for all these changes is the appearance, early in the first chapter of Sh'mot, of one word we have not heard before in connection with the covenantal family: the word Ahm, "people" (1.9). Not accidentally, it is an outsider who uses it first, Pharaoh, ruler of Egypt, for it is he who first realizes the change that has come about. What, at the end of B'reishit, had been a family, has become a nation, just as God said it would in his first words to Avraham: "I will make you a great nation" (B'reishit 12.2). With that, the very terms of Israel's existence are transformed.

B'reishit was about individuals and their relationships: husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and their sibling rivalries. One of its recurring themes was the difficulty the matriarchs—Sarah, Rivkah, and Rachel—had in conceiving children. Despite the grandiose promises to the patriarchs—that they would have as many children as the stars of the sky, the sand of the seashore and the dust of the earth—having even a single child turned out to be difficult, even miraculous.

Yet as we turn the page and begin the new book, all of that vanishes, and a family of 70 members becomes a nation with 600,000 adult males. The Israelites, we are told in a cascade of verbs, "were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them" (Sh'mot 1.7). Even the attempt by Pharaoh to limit childbirth by subjecting the Israelites to hard labor, failed completely: "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew" (Sh'mot 1.12).

Sh'mot is about the birth of a nation, described variously as an ahm (people), goy (nation), kahal (congregation),

and *eidah* (community). No sooner do we see this than we understand what the Jewish project was intended from the very outset to be. It is about politics, society, and the principles on which a people can come together to form associations. It is about justice, freedom, and the rule of law. It is about the sanctity of life and human dignity. Ultimately, it is about the use and misuse of power. Sh'mot places frankly before us the risks inherent in power. It can be used to oppress, enslave, and, in extremis, to kill. That is what Pharaoh proposes at the beginning of Sh'mot.

It is important to understand precisely what is being argued in these opening pages. Pharaoh is not portrayed as the embodiment of evil. He is not a Haman. His people are not the Amalekites. Later in the Torah, Moshe will command his people not to hold lingering resentment against their former oppressors: "Do not abhor an Egyptian, for you were strangers in his land" (D'varim 23.7). Pharaoh is driven by political motives, not hate: "The Israelites have become much too numerous for us. Come, let us deal wisely with them, or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country" (Sh'mot 1.10).

The Exodus narrative is not a simple story of good versus evil. It is a critique of the politics of power, empires, hierarchical societies, and the division of populations into free human beings and slaves. Lord Acton summed it up in his famous dictum that "all power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." In its place, the Torah proposes a different kind of politics, based not on power, but on covenant, the free agreement of a free people who accord absolute sovereignty to God alone.

The idea could hardly be more radical, and it has shaped the history of the West. In an age when might triumphed over right, the Torah records one of the great turning points in the human story, when the Creator of heaven and earth intervened in defense of the powerless.

A Realistic Utopia

The enduring power of Sefer Sh'mot is that it is utopian in its aspirations. It envisages a society that will be the opposite of Egypt, in which justice prevails, human life is held sacred, and every individual has equal dignity as the image and covenant-partner of God.

But it is a realistic utopia.

There is, in Sh'mot, no attempt to airbrush away the flaws and faults of human beings. The Israelites are portrayed as fickle and shortsighted. They complain. They readily give way to despair. In an age in which rulers wrote history in the form of triumphal inscriptions, the Israelites alone recorded their failures more vividly than their successes.

There thus is every indication in Sh'mot that freedom will involve a long journey. It is fair to say, 3,300 years later, that we have still not arrived at the destination. But freedom is not a blind journey, a road without a map. The destination is clearly signaled, although it lies beyond the horizon. It is the promised land, flowing with milk and honey, the land Moshe spent his life leading his people towards, but was not privileged himself to enter. One of the underlying themes of the book was best stated in a later age by the talmudic sage Rabbi Tarfon in Mishnah Avot 2.21: "It is not for you to complete the task, but neither are you free to desist from it." The path to freedom is travelled one step, one generation, one era at a time, never losing heart or forgetting our aim.

History has no more unlikely heroes than the Israelites of Moshe's day. Capricious, fractious, wayward, hardly able to see tomorrow, let alone the unfolding drama of the centuries, they became, in Herman Melville's evocative phrase, the bearers of "the ark of the liberties of the world."

The Exodus story is the universal story of what happens when men and women are touched by the call of God, to relinquish their fetters and have the courage to begin travelling the long road to freedom.

—Adapted from the writings Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

WHY SHABBAT LOOMS LARGE IN SEFER SH'MOT

The key to Exodus politics, as it is to Judaism as a whole, is what elsewhere I have called "Utopia now." That is the significance of Shabbat, whose presence looms large in the book. It was the first commandment the Israelites received in the wilderness. It holds a pivotal place in the Ten Declarations. It is repeated immediately before and after the episode of the Golden Calf. It is central to the politics of freedom.

On Shabbat, we rehearse utopia, or what Judaism came later to call the

messianic age. One day in seven, all hierarchies of power are suspended. There are no masters and slaves, employers and employees. Even domestic animals cannot be made to work. We are not allowed to exercise control over other forms of life, or even forces of nature. On Shabbat, within the covenantal society, all are equal and all are free. It is the supreme antithesis of Egypt. What a stroke of genius it was to introduce a foretaste of the future into the present, to remind us constantly of

our ultimate destination, and to be strengthened by it regularly on the way.

So Sh'mot ends as B'reishit began, with the holy day on which God and His image, humankind, find rest at the still point of the turning world, in the midst of the otherwise restless strife of the human condition. The Israelites were called on to be among the nations what Shabbat is in the midst of time—a sign of what ought to be, in the midst of what actually is.

—Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

May He who blessed | מי שברך

May He who blessed our ancestors bless and heal all those whose names are listed here, those whose names will be called out, and those whose names we do not know because either we are unaware of their illness or they are.

We pray He mercifully quickly restore them to health and vigor. May He grant physical and spiritual well-being to all who are ill. אמן

Sydelle Klein	Sarah bat Malka	Avraham Yitzhak ben Masha
Bonnie Pritzker Appelbaum	Sarah Rifka bat Sarah	Aharon Hakohen ben Oodel
Deenah bat Sarah Leah	Shimona bat Flora	Chaim ben Golda
Rut bat Esther	Sura Osnat bat Alta Chayah	Ezra ben Luli
Miriam Zelda bat Gittel D'vorah	Tzipporah bat Yaffa	Gil Nechemiah ben Yisraela
Miriam Chanah Sarah bat Liba	Yospeh Perel bat Michlah	Mordechai ben Almah
Miriam Rachel bat Chanah	Michelle Blatteis	Moshe ben Shimon
Harav Mordechai Volff ben Liba Miryam	Diane Fowler	Harav R'fael Eliyahu ben Esther Malkah
Adina bat Freidel	Goldy Hess	Harab Shamshon David ben Liba Perel
Baila bat D'vorah	Fay Johnson	Harav Shimon Shlomo ben Taube v' Avraham
Chavah bat Sarah	Micki Kuttler	Yisrael Yitzhak ben Shayndel
Chayah bat Flora	Katie Kim	Yitzhak ben Tzivia
Devora Yocheved bat Yehudit	Elaine Laikin	Yonatan ben Malka
Esther bat D'vorah	Mira Levy	Yosef ben Flora
HaRav Ilana Chaya bat Rachel Esther	Robin Levy	Zalman Avraham ben Golda
Liba Ruchel bat Michlah	Lani Lipis	Larry Carlin
Masha bat Etl	Karen Lipsy	Harry Ikenson
Masha bat Rochel	Kathleen McCarty	Shannon Johnson
Matel bat Frimah	Gail Schenker	Itzik Khmishman
Mindel bat D'vorah	Linda State	Adam Messing
Ninette bat Aziza	Mary Thompson	Gabriel Neri
Pinyuh bat Surah	Michelle Lazar	Jeff Nicol
Rachel Leah bat Malkah	Norma Sugerman	Mark Alan Tunick
Rita bat Flora	Julia Yorke	
Rifkah bat Chanah	Avraham Akivah bat Chanah Sarah	

We pray for their safe return...

May He who blessed our ancestors bless, preserve, and protect the captive and missing soldiers of Tzahal—Ron Arad, Zecharia Baumel, Guy Chever, Zvi Feldman, Yekutiel Katz, and Zeev Rotshik—as well as those U.S. and allied soldiers, and the civilians working with them and around them, still missing in Afghanistan and Iraq, and all other areas of conflict, past and present.

And may He bless the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces and Tzahal, and those who serve the United States and Israel in foreign lands in whatever capacity, official or unofficial, members of our community or related to members, and their colleagues and companions. Guide them in peace and return them speedily to their families alive and unharmed. אמן

**HONOR YOUR DEPARTED LOVED ONES
WITH A PLAQUE ON OUR
VIRTUAL MEMORIAL BOARD.
CALL THE OFFICE TO ADD THEIR NAMES
TO OUR MEMORIAL BOARD.**

Yahrzeits for Today Through Next Friday

זכרונם לברכה — May their memories be for a blessing!

- 6 Louis Posin*
- 7 Frances Rosenberg*
Hilda Smoler*, *Marian Silverstein's mother*
Huri Rahavy
Morris Trachtenberg
Anna Nathanson*
Isaac Winikoff*
Morton Kleinman*
Ruth Saltzman
Harry Cudlitz*
Tiffany Lynn Greenfield*
- 8 Anne Montauk*, *Barry Montauk's mother*
Jennie Sodosky, *Ed Sodosky's mother*
Lifsha Buchman*
Rose Hellen Tillim*
William Schulman*
Abraham Raven*
Esther Miriam Slonim*
- 9 Samuel Abramson*
Henry Burd*
Herman Mitler*
- 10 Bella Laefsky*
David Dworkin
- 11 Rachel Wartsky*
Abel Abrams*
Esther Prashker*
Leon Offitzer*
George Saperstein*
William Cahn*
- 12 Mark Ikenson, *Harry Ikenson's brother*
Mark Brown*, *Judy Brown's husband*
Benjamin Labov*
Mother of Arnold Dreyfuss
Mollie Rabinowitz*
Theresa Frolow*
Rebecca Kreisberg*
- * A plaque in this person's name is on our memorial board.

Kaddish list

	Rebecca Kaplan
	Haviva Khedouri
Francine Feder	Judith Lorbeer
Nancy Friedlander	Norman Harry Riederman
Blanche Friedman	David Rosenthal
Jay Greenspan	David Shandalow
Jeanette Shandalow Herman	Paul Singman
Harvey Jaffe	Randolph Tolk

Are we in your will? *Shouldn't we be?*

When people prepare their wills, they usually look to leave a mark beyond the confines of their families. Thus it is that general gifts are left to hospitals, and other charitable organizations.

All too often ignored, however, is the synagogue, even though its role in our lives often begins at birth, and continues even beyond death. We come here on Yom Kippur and other days, after all, to say Yizkor, the prayer in memory of our loved ones.

Our Virtual Memorial Plaques remind everyone of who our loved ones were, and why we recall them. All of us join in saying the Kaddish on their yahrzeits.

Considering this, it is so unfortunate that, in our final act, we ignore the one institution in Jewish life that is so much a part of us.

The synagogue is here for us because those who came before us understood its importance and prepared for its preservation. By remembering it in our wills, we will do our part to assure that the synagogue will be there for future generations, as well.

Think about it. We have always been here for anyone who needed us in the past. Do not those who need us in the future have the same right to our help?

Of course they do. Do not delay! Act today! Help secure the future of your communal home.

Is there a yahrzeit
we should know about?

Congregation Beth Israel of the Palisades
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THANK YOU TO ALL WHO MADE
THE NEW SYNAGOGUE OF FORT LEE
ACQUISITION POSSIBLE

And especially...

- Board co-treasurer Gary Miller and trustee Aaron Klein,
- The New Synagogue team—including Ed Cohen, Lee Cohen, Steve Saiken, Harvey Sohmer, and Paula Goodis Gotthelf,
 - Our attorney Laura Kirsch, and
- Frank Kabrel and Frank Aghassi of Columbia Bank

Attention ALL Vets!
If you're not yet a member of
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Shabbat ends Saturday night with havdalah at 5:30 p.m. EST