

Shiur L'Yom Sh'lishi¹

[Tuesday's Study]

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| READINGS: | <i>Torah Sh'mot:</i> | Exodus 2:1-25 |
| | <i>Haftarah:</i> | Isaiah 27:8-13 |
| | <i>B'rit Chadasha:</i> | Acts 7:35-36 |

She took for him an ark ... put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds

[Exodus 2:3]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 18:1-3;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #11, *Y'rushalayim* [Jerusalem]

Veyelech ish mibeit Levi – Then a man of Levi stepped up/stepped forth ... *v'yikach et-bat-Levi* - and he took [to wife] a daughter of Levi. **Exodus 2:1.**

It is happening. The sons and daughters of the Covenant have been strategically deployed in Egypt as sheep among wolves. That means the great trial of the raging nations is officially 'on'. *Hear ye, hear ye – all rise ... court is now in session! All witnesses in the proceeding of Heaven v. Mitzrayim come forward and be sworn!*

What is this particular trial all about? There is really only one issue to be determined, one question to be answered: whether the nation/regime/culture/ethnicity under investigation is responding to the presence of the seed of Avraham in its midst with benevolence, blessing, and receptivity – or is instead choosing to *reject, curse, persecute, and mistreat* us. **See Genesis 12:3a** for further details – especially concerning consequences.

Who is on trial? The nation/regime/culture/ethnicity presently under scrutiny from Heaven – *i.e.* 'on trial' - is the world's western super-power. In the epoch from which our story emanates, that means Egypt. While Yosef was in *de facto* leadership in the land of the pyramids Egypt chose the path of blessing – and bore the good fruit of that choice. But now Yosef is dead, as is the Pharaoh of Yosef's day. A *melech chadash* – *i.e.* 'new king' – and a new regime – has arisen in the prior one's stead. This phase of 'the trial' is not starting out very well. So the Holy One is about to give Egypt a 'cheat code' – another Hebrew to assist them the way Yosef did – if they will receive him. His name will be Moshe. His pathway to the palace will require quite the odyssey – as, of course, did Yosef's! Let's start at the beginning of the story – shall we?

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A New Hebrew Leader Candidate Is About to be Offered to Egypt - How Will He Be Received?

Generations have come and gone since the Holy One sent the Hebrew Yosef to bless Mitzrayim with vision and prepare that country to play host to Avraham's seed. In the interval, the mood of the Egyptian populace and the policies of Egypt's governing cabal has changed drastically. The land of the pyramids is no longer a friendly place to visit or a safe place to sojourn. The leadership model followed by Egypt's famous *new king* is the polar opposite of the calm, wise, visionary approach modeled by his predecessor. This new Pharaoh has no interest in much of anything except building personal wealth and wielding tyrannical power. He has no interest in promoting *fruitfulness, shalom, or tikkun*. He could care less about *wisely stewardship of the world's resources with an eye toward the future*. This leader wants what he wants – and he wants it NOW. He does not have a 'good eye'. He only sees evil – never 'good' – in other cultures. He therefore comes across as an angry, vindictive, and narcissistic madman on a power trip. Under his occult spell all elements of Egyptian culture are now oozing ethno-centric paranoia. Egyptians, Africans, and anyone else who will listen are now constantly being told they should fear, hate and lay the blame for everything they do not like upon ... guess who - the *sons and daughters of Ya'akov*. More and more people each day are jumping on the bandwagon of the new Pharaoh's obscene delusions. Under his influence, government policies have devolved from illogical and ill-advised to criminally insane. *Inflammatory rhetoric* directed at all persons of Hebrew descent – carefully worded to trigger atrocious acts of physical violence against them - has been labeled 'the new progressivism'. Antisemitic sentiments have been systematized. *Racially motivated cruelty* has gone mainstream. *Ethnocentric virtue-signaling* is in all the rage. Anti-Semitic pogroms are coming in waves. First, adult Hebrews were rounded up, rustled into work camps, and put under inhuman work burdens; when that did not reduce their numbers, birthing rooms were converted to killing fields in which the most helpless and completely innocent segments of the Hebrew population could be 'eliminated'. A new and even more heinous genocidal mandate seems to be coming out every day. The latest word from Pharaoh is that our babies – at least the ones born male - are to be drowned in the Nile. Careful now, Egyptians – one of those male babies just might be your generation's version of a Yosef! Please be on your best behavior!

Ah, but Egyptians were not having it. They were angry, and a bloody holocaust of epic proportions unfolded right before Heaven's eyes. As usual, the victims of that holocaust felt powerless to prevent it. So, what were we to do? Were we to give up? Were we to just quit being who the Holy One called to be and doing what the Holy One are called to do – because it was suddenly unpopular, or even dangerous, to do so? Heaven forbid! We know that the Creator has a plan. We know that His

Plan -not Pharaoh's ethnic purge is the most important thing that is happening on earth in this season. We know that something is taking place every bit as wonderful as the aforementioned things are horrible - just below Pharaoh's radar. Fittingly, the 'something wonderful' is going to issue forth from one of Pharaoh's own slave ghettos. In the quiet of the night, while Pharaoh's brainwashed minions are wallowing in anti-Semitic hate, two Hebrews are doing the ancient equivalent of *falling in love*. When the Egyptians participate in state sponsored 'days of rage, we go on with life. When they threaten us with genocide, we plan marriages, dote on children, and trust a God we have never seen, but who supposedly loves us, watches over us, and will protect us for the sake of some 'deal' He worked out with our ancestors. When the Egyptians revile us – even kill some of us – we just shake our heads, bite our lips, and go about our business. The next morning we get up, say our prayers, put on our modest work clothes, report for duty in Pharaoh's mines, and carry on as if nothing was happening. While the Egyptians march in the streets, chant profane slogans, and go off on rant after rant about the 'Hebrew Problem'; we gather our children together, hug them, tell them once again Torah's timeless stories about Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya'akov, and Yosef, and encourage them to trust in the Holy One and His plan like we do. The raging nations and their vain imagination-obsessed peoples do what they do; we do what we do. It is all just part of the great dance we do with the 'raging nations'.

A Wedding – In the Midst of this Chaos? Yes, a Wedding is Exactly What We Need At A Time Such as This!

Come, children ... have you heard the news? A man of the tribe of Levi is taking a wife! The covenant continues in effect. A new Hebrew household – and with it, one more avenue of hope for this dark world – is about to be born! In the face of all the suffering, all the trauma, and all the bad news with which this dark place bombards us daily this wedding will testify to the world that we still have *emunah* for life, health, joy, goodness, and shalom. Our King's joyful declaration that ***an ish shall leave his av and his im and be joined/cleave to his isha, and they shall become l'basar echad*** is still inspiring us to dream of, and make plans for, a better future. No matter what our present level of pain and oppression, we continue with the celebration of the things that truly matter – our ***B'tzelem Elohim*** [in the image of God] Mission, our ***B'rachah*** [(be a) blessing] calling, our ***Hithalech L'Fanei*** [walk before My Face] lifestyle, and Yosef's ***Elohim Hashavah L'tovah*** [the Holy One turned I for good] worldview. Let us sing! Let us dance! Let us laugh! In so doing, we will testify to everyone around us: ***Ani ma'amin b'emunah sh'leimah b'viat ha-Mashiach*** – I trust with complete trust in the coming of the Messiah ... ***ve'af al-pi sh'yitmameah, im kol zeh achakeh lo b'chol yom sheyavo*** – and though he tarry,

each day I will eagerly anticipate his coming.

Everybody loves a wedding, it is said; but nobody loves a wedding quite like – or looks at marriage quite like – a person of the Covenant. To a person of the Covenant, you see, marriage is not about ‘settling down’, ‘finally making a commitment’, ‘forging a socio-economic partnership’, or ‘making an honest man or woman’ out of a significant other; it is about *two people entering into a covenant with the Creator of the Universe to merge together forever into one person so as to carry the purposes of the Avrahamic Covenant into another generation*. A Hebraic wedding is thus about a whole lot more than the celebration of one couple’s personal season of romance; it is about two families coming together in a solemn commitment to expand the ‘*great nation*’ through whom the Holy One has ordained that ‘*all families of the earth will be blessed*’. See **Genesis 12:2-3**. People of other cultures may think they have more glamorous *wedding ceremonies* – and they may, in some instances, even be right; but no culture on earth has anywhere close to as beautiful, meaningful, and potentially world-changing *marriages* as the Hebrews.

But wait – is the season about which we read in Exodus chapter 1 really a good time for marrying and giving in marriage? Our people are experiencing a cruel wave of anti-Semitic persecution. In such troubled and dangerous times as these, should men and women of the Covenant even *think about* marrying and bring forth children? Legitimate questions – but a son or daughter of the Covenant would answer with a knowing smile: “*What better time could there possibly be?*” he would ask. *When will the world need a Hebrew marriage – and the beginning of an exponential renewal and expansion of the Avrahamic Covenant that comes with such a marriage – more than in a time of deep spiritual darkness?*” he would laugh. ***Harei at-mekudeshet li*** - *Behold, you are consecrated to me ...* he would whisper.

No Retreat, No Surrender

These are indeed dangerous days. Like so many who have come before him - and for that matter who will follow him - a man of great political power and influence has surrendered to the darkness in his soul. This man has elected to surround himself with practitioners of the occult, who are every bit as full of spiritual darkness as he is. Together, these men have embraced greed, lust, and racial hatred as their primary motivations². They have embraced rage and paranoia - fueled by

² The eternal spirit of man is drawn to Light; but the temporal flesh of man is fascinated with - and loves to lurk near and peer into - darkness. The mystery of what secrets areas and people of darkness contain stimulates our fallen 'old man' voyeuristic nature. All those who traffic in 'dark energy knowledge' really have to do to lure victims in is label whatever lashon hara or conspiracy theory they are selling as 'HIDDEN OR CONCEALED TRUTH'. Then, those who think themselves wise - i.e who prefer human

narcissism - as their lifestyles. And in the process they have become obsessed with fear of and hatred toward the descendants of the woman Sarah. Once an ordinary and decent man, this leader now sits on a bloody throne, holding a bloody scepter - absolutely convinced that he has the right to say who should live and who should die. Behind his throne stands the image of Sobek, the crocodile god of Egypt - a great red dragon sporting seven heads and ten horns. Pharaoh - or is it Sobek? - has taken up a stance before the women of the Hebrews as they are ready to give birth. He is ravenous to devour their man-children as soon as they are born. He has therefore decreed concerning the sons and daughters of the Covenant: **“Every male child born, ha-Ye'orah tashlichuhu - into the Nile you are to throw him. Exodus 1:22.**

This man's maniacal decree hangs over Egypt like a *pall*. But into this pall another Voice speaks softly. The Voice of the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth whispers: *Fear not, little flock. You have not been placed on earth at such a time as this to become any arrogant ruler's victims. I will bring forth a great deliverance for you - in its proper and most advantageous time. In the meantime, come close to Me. Learn to listen to My Voice. Learn My Ways. Lean on My Strength. You were born for such a time as this. You will overcome. And when you have overcome, I will call you to Myself and commission you. And in the power of that encounter - and that commission - you will forth and tell the world the good news of a King Who inspires awe rather than fear, love rather than hate, empowerment rather than enslavement, and purification in the River of Life rather than suffocation in the river of death. This maniac will not change the world, my Beloved - YOU WILL!*

Oh, rulers of the earth! The prototype for all genocidal maniacs the world will ever know has arisen. Heed the words of the inspired Psalmist: **“Be wise, O kings; be instructed, you rulers of the earth. Serve the Holy one with reverence, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him”**. Psalm 2:10-12.

Pharaoh presently has no interest in being blessed by the Holy One. Like his

sources of information and education over Divine revelation - will buy into it wholesale. How can a person discern between the wisdom that is from above and the perverse 'knowledge' that is from below? It is actually very simple. The wisdom that is from above is always gentle, peaceable, restorative, healing, humble, inclusive, and produces good fruit in real people's lives. The wisdom that is from below - *i.e.* 'carnal' wisdom - on the other hand, is always self-seeking, self-promotional, argumentative, elitist, envious/critical of others, always generates confusion, and always accuses someone or other - or everyone else - of 'hypocrisy', deception, and/or ignorance.

pyramid-building predecessors, Pharaoh has an insatiable obsession with the occult. His chosen forms of art are weapons of war, instruments of sorcery, and achieving domination over as many people and nations of the world as possible. He is *no friend of life*. Life seems a bother to him. So as we begin today's study Pharaoh's hair-raising words hang in the air like an ominous cloud ready to burst forth with hail. Well-trained Egyptian soldiers with spears and swords stand at the ready to enforce the decree. The Nile rushes forward to claim its next prize. The situation looks dire.

Will this man's campaign of genocide be the end of the 'great nation' the Holy One promised Avram would one day arise from his loins? See **Genesis 12:2, 18:18, and 46:3**. Will the decree of a Pharaoh of Egypt terminate the promise the Creator of the Universe made to Ya'akov that ***a nation and a company of nations will proceed from you and kings will come from your loins***. **Genesis 35:11**. Of course not. Pharaoh only *thinks* he is in charge. He will find out soon enough that life is not his to give or take. For that matter, he will find out that even Egypt is not his – it, too, belongs to the Holy One. He will soon discover that every decree he issues is subject to veto by the One Who sits on the real Throne – the Eternal Throne of Heaven. That is why, despite Pharaoh's best efforts at genocide, *life goes on in the ghettos of the Hebrews*. And that is why, despite the dire circumstances, Torah goes out of its way to tell us that a Hebrew couple from the tribe of Levi find each other and marry.

It seems that the deliverance and redemption process of the Holy One for His people always begins – even as it will end - with a *bridegroom*, a *bride*, and *wedding*. Indeed, much, much more will be said on the subject of bridegroom, bride, and wedding even before we conclude our study of this sefer Torah.

May the Holy One Bless our 'Going Out'

The way in which Torah describes the marriage with which the Exodus narrative begins is very interesting. It starts with someone – in this case a man of the tribe of Levi –having a '*lech lecha*' awakening that dramatically changing the *status quo*.

Veyelech ish mibeit Levi

And a man of Levi stepped forth,

v'yikach et-bat-Levi

and took [to wife] a daughter of Levi.

[Exodus 2:1.]

The great drama of redemption and nation building actually started, Torah tells us, when a Hebrew man '*went out*' [Hebrew, *vayelech*]. Then we are told that, apparently in connection with his going '*out*' the man *took a woman – a female descendant of Levi - in a Biblical Covenant of marriage* [Hebrew, *vayikach*]. Why do you think

Torah begins the redemption narrative by telling us that the man ‘*went out*’ instead of simply telling us he *took a wife*? Is not the critical action of the man *the taking of a bride*?

*From what, and in what sense, exactly are we to understand that the man in question ‘went out’ anyway? Slaves are not ordinarily free to ‘go out’, are they? The ‘he went out’ statement really does not make much sense in English, does it? In Hebrew however the use of the verb *yalach* [yod, lamed, kof sofit] is very significant. After all, *yalach* was the verb root chosen by the Holy One to communicate the substance of His call to Avraham. At that time the Holy One told Avraham ‘**Lech lecha!** [go out for (to discover?) yourself]. **Genesis 12:1**. Is it possible the ‘*ish mibeit Levi*’ [i.e. a man from a House of Levi] *heard the same call* that his ancestor Avram heard? Is that why Torah tells us the man ‘went out’?*

A Few Details We Are Not Given

Initially we are not even told the names of the newlywed couple the Writer of Torah is talking about. We are also not told why this particular marriage was particularly special or more worthy of mention than the thousands of other marriages that were undoubtedly occurring on a day-by-day basis in *Mitzrayim*. Indeed all we are really told by Torah at this point in the narrative is that the couple who marry happen to be *descendants of Levi* - Ya’akov’s third son by Leah. Of course, it is expected by the Divine Writer that we know that both parties to the marriage - like all Hebrews living in Egypt at the time and apparently all human beings other than Pharaoh’s family members, advisors and priests - were Pharaoh’s *slaves*.

Why are the names of the couple not mentioned at this point in the narrative? To Pharaoh – indeed, to the mindset of Egypt - the names of Hebrew slaves and the details of their personal lives simply did not matter. Ah, but the names of Hebrews – and the personal details of Hebrew lives - *do* matter to the Holy One. Hence through Torah we will later learn that the man was named *Amram* and the woman *Yocheved*. We will learn that they were quickly blessed with two children – first a girl named Miryam, then a boy named Aharon. More than likely, Aharon was one of the boy babies Shifra and Puah - the midwives - refused to kill.

After Pharaoh changed the decree to require that all male babies of the Hebrews be thrown into the Nile however, we find out that the union of Amram and Yocheved brings forth a third child – alas, another *male child*. For that reason, and because he is a Hebrew, this child is conceived and born into the world already condemned.

Behold – the Child is ‘Tov’!

Even as the third child of Amram and Yocheved draws his first breath he is *a*

fragment of contraband in his mother's arms. He is an *illegal alien* for whom there is no amnesty program. He is *not supposed to be here*. He is indeed not supposed to be *anywhere*. But Yocheved sees him as *tov* – a fountain of good. According to Pharaoh's decree he must have *mikveh* in the waters of the Nile. And so in today's aliyah we experience the desperation of a Hebrew woman as she is driven to the unthinkable action of setting her 3-month-old infant adrift on the Nile – in a bulrush basket coated with *slime* [Hebrew *chemar*] and tar [Hebrew *zefet*].

Technically, Yocheved complied with the decree of Pharaoh. Indeed, she threw her male child into the Nile. She just added the 'basket factor'. The decree did not specifically prohibit the throwing in of baskets, did it? So in the little fellow goes – *basket and all*. Once the child and basket are thrown into the Nile, however, it was not the crocodiles which caught the infant, nor was it the northbound current of the river which carried him, Beloved - it was the Holy One! Pharaoh makes the decrees, you see, but the Holy One brings about His own Will.

What Child is This?

What child is this that floats in a basket upon the Nile? He is a child born into poverty to a subjugated race. He is a child condemned to death by the most powerful forces of this world. He is a child who would nevertheless be raised up to redeem his people from bondage, and establish a new nation. Of such stories legends are made. But Torah is *no legend*. Torah is *real life*; it is far stranger, and yet far more wonderful, than fiction. So let us see what Torah has to say.

As we peer into the details of the *Ruach HaQodesh*-inspired narrative of the birth of Israel's prototypical deliverer, let us keep in mind that this birth narrative foreshadows another even more dramatic birth – the birth narrative of Messiah. Why then, we may ask, was the tribe of *Levi* - instead of the tribe of *Yehudah* - selected as the tribe from which this prototypical deliverer would be born?

A Product of Questionable Genes!

Up to this point, after all, we know absolutely nothing good of *Levi*. When *Levi* was born, however, his mother *Leah* prophetically foresaw great things of her third son. She named him '*He will join us together*³'. Personally, she had hoped that his birth would bring *Ya'akov* – whose first love was still *Rachel* – closer to her. But alas, the personal aspect of *Leah*'s hopes in regard to *Levi* went unfulfilled. Even after she presented *Levi* to *Ya'akov*, *Ya'akov* continued to love *Rachel* more. *Levi* proved to be a disappointment. It was he, in conspiracy with *Sh'mon*, who plotted

³ The name **Levi** is derived from the Hebrew verb root *lavah*, lamed, vav, hey, Strong's Hebrew word #3867, pronounced *law-vaw*, meaning 'to join', or to 'bring close together'. When she gave birth to him, *Leah* declared: "*Now this time will my husband be joined* [Hebrew, *lavah*] *to me, because I have borne him three sons*", and hence she named him *Levi*.

and then carried out the massacre of all the residents of Shechem in retaliation for the kidnapping and rape of Dinah⁴. Levi demonstrated as a basic character flaw *an unwillingness to surrender vengeance to the Holy One*. He took it upon *himself* to be the avenger of his people. He usurped for himself the role only the Holy One has the right to play. And in so doing he not only made the name of Ya'akov a 'stench in the nostrils' of all the people of the land, but made his own name synonymous with *treachery* and *butchery* and *vigilante vengeance*.

The tribe of Levi was not during the time of Amram and Yocheved by any means recognized as a 'priestly' tribe. If anything, Levi was then regarded as the 'black sheep' tribe – the least honorable of all. Levi was in fact one of the three tribes⁵ over whom Ya'akov had on his deathbed uttered not a single kind word. Of Levi [and his partner in vengeance, *Sh'mon*] the patriarch's deathbed declaration was:

*Weapons of violence are their swords. My soul, don't come into their council;
My glory, don't be united to their assembly;
For in their anger they killed a man; in their self-will they hamstrung an ox.
Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel.
I will divide them in Ya'akov; scatter them in Yisra'el.*

The legacy Levi left behind for his descendants was that of a cruel, hot-tempered avenger of blood. Torah wants us to know that it is into the most ignominious tribe of Yisrael that the child who will be the human subject of today's aliyah is born. If genetics is determinative of one's future ... well, let's just say that *this child is destined to have his problems*. If therefore anyone who knew the details of his ancestry were going to choose a deliverer, or even a leader, for Yisrael – well, the baby born to Amram and Yocheved would almost certainly *not have been the one*. And as it turns out the third child born of Yocheved and Amram will indeed possess the same basic character flaws as his ancestor: *a hot temper, a streak of cruelty, a complete unwillingness to surrender vengeance to the Holy One, and a pronounced tendency to take it upon himself rather than to trust in the Holy One to act as the avenger of wrongs to his people*.

The Ruthless, Self-Righteous Avenger in Arises in Moshe's Flesh

Hence when Moshe saw an Egyptian strike a Hebrew slave, what did the young prince do? He let his ethnic offense dictate his behavior. He eschewed both *prayer* and *legal redress*. He took it on himself to avenge the Hebrew – just like Levi took it upon himself to avenge the rape of Dinah. He *usurped the role of the Holy One*, the Giver of Life, *murdered the taskmaster in cold blood*, and then *buried him in the sand* to cover up his crime. Alas, this particular character flaw will re-appear time and time again in Levi's descendants. At Sinai, it will be Levi's descendants

⁴ See Genesis 34, especially at verses 25 and 30.

⁵ In league with Reuven and Sh'mon.

who strap sword to thigh and slay 3,000 of their own people after the *chet egel* [calf sin]. Later, when the *Mish'kan* was set up at Shiloh it was Levi's descendants Hofni and Phineas who stole from and oppressed those who came to make approach to the Holy One according to covenant protocol. Fast-forwarding hundreds of years, it was also Levi's descendants who slaughtered Syrians, apostate Jews and innocents alike in the course of the bloody wars of the Maccabees.

At the darker levels of his fleshly soul, you see, Levi is a *hot-headed, cold-hearted, avenger of blood*. Sometimes, of course, in the course of events the coldness of heart that enables the emotionless shedding of blood can be *a very useful characteristic to have around*. But the wrath of man is *totally inconsistent with and cannot under any circumstances* produce the righteousness of the Holy One. **James 1:20**. Ultimately every sword – and every concept and plan of vengeance - *must be totally submitted to the Holy One*.

You see, Dear Reader, the life of the guilty, no less than the blood of innocents, is precious to the Holy One. And therefore only as a *sh'ma* response to the Holy One's direction, confirmed by others who are not hot-tempered or vengeful by nature, and in direct submission to the wise guidelines set forth in Torah, is the sword ever to be wielded against even the most egregious wrongdoer. Hence the Holy One determined that it would be a descendant of Levi who brought forth, in the Holy One's *perfect timing*, according to the Holy One's *specific directions*, the plagues by which the Holy One released judgment on Egypt for oppressing Ya'akov's descendants and for murdering their innocent children. Hence in later times the Holy One directed that it be descendants of Levi who would shed the blood of surrogates on the *mizbeach* [altar], at specific times, for specific reasons, all according to the Holy One's explicit directions. The Holy One had no *bloodthirst* that needed to be satisfied. The animals presented as surrogates were not *murdered* – they were made to ascend to Heaven, as a sweet savor. They were submitted to the judgment of the Holy One, in proper time, and in accordance with His perfect pattern. That, it appears, is how the Holy One ordained for the descendants of Levi to make *tikkun* for the sin of their ancestor at Shechem.

The pattern ordained by the Holy One for deliverance is *Levi*, followed by *Yosef*, followed by *Y'hudah*. The sequence is that Levi executes vengeance on the wrongdoer, then Yosef suffers and bears the sorrows of the nation, then Y'hudah establishes the kingdom in righteousness. This is the pattern established in the lives of the patriarchs. This is also the pattern followed in the story of the Exodus and the taking of possession of the land [Moshe of the tribe of Levi, followed by Y'hoshua descendant of Yosef, followed by Kalev descendant of Y'hudah⁶]. This is also the

⁶ See especially the account of Joshua 14.

pattern followed in the story of the transition from the period of judges to the period of kings [Eli of the tribe of Levi, followed by Sh'muel the descendant of Yosef, followed by David the descendant of Y'hudah]. This is also the pattern followed in the chronology of *the captivities* [the ministry of Levi was cut off by kings who served Ba'al, then the Northern Kingdom led by Yosef's descendants, was overrun, and finally the Southern Kingdom, led by Y'hudah's descendants, was taken captive]⁷.

Is it possible that this same Levi – Yosef -Y'hudah pattern of deliverance will be followed again in the course of the great conflict that lies ahead, in *the great regathering to come*, and the establishment of the Messianic kingdom in the days that lie ahead?

Obviously, Yocheved saw something *tov* [good, and capable of reproducing good in ever increasing quantities and ever-expanding ripple-like waves, forever] in the child she bore. She took all steps within her limited power to protect him from Pharaoh's decree. She hid him for 3 long months. Then she realized that she could hide him no more. If he was found, not only was he guaranteed to die, but the lives of his older brother Aharon, his sister Miryam, and Yocheved herself would be placed in jeopardy as well.

In the Holy One's redemptive plan, the pattern of deliverance seems to be well established that one who is sinless must be given over to death in order that others who are not sinless can live.

The Second 'Ark' – The Difference Between a Teivah and an Aron

The next step Yocheved chose to take seems incomprehensible to us. She took the 3-month-old baby she had borne and could no longer hide, put him in a basket or bassinet made of papyrus reeds, coated the outside with pitch, walked down to the Nile, and placed the whole kit and caboodle in the current of the great river. Torah describes it this way:

V'lo-yachlah od ha-tzfino v'tikach-lo tevat gomei
When she could no longer hide him, she took a papyrus box,

V'tachmerah v'chemar uvazafet
Then she coated it with asphalt and pitch,

⁷ To some degree this may explain why it was necessary that Yochanan the Immerser, who we are told in Luke 1 was a descendant of Levi [and, in fact, in the direct line of Aharon, the *kohen g'dol*], had to proceed – and be the forerunner of – Yeshua, the descendant of Y'hudah. The 'missing' element in this formula is the descendant of Yosef [although it is striking, to say the least, that the name of the man the Holy One chose as a father for Yeshua bore that name]. Or is it a coincidence that the man who gave up his own tomb for a burial place for – and the stage for the resurrection of Yeshua - was named Yosef – Yosef of Arimethea – a village in 'the hill country of Ephraim' [son of Yosef]?

v'tasem bah et ha-yeled
then she placed the child in it.

V'tasem b'suf al-sfat ha-Ye'or
And placed it in the bulrushes near the bank of the Nile.

The basket or box which in the King James Version is called an 'ark' in which Yocheved placed the infant is in Hebrew called a *teivah*⁸. This is the same word used to describe the vessel which the Holy One directed Noach to build [Genesis 6:14] and which the Holy One used to redeem mankind from the judgment of the Flood [Genesis 7:23; 8:19]. The Hebraic word picture this word – *teivah* - presents is that of a *covenant sign* [tav], in the form of a *house or household* [beit], which *brings forth revelation and light* [hey].

The materials with which Yocheved coated the basket in order to make it as watertight as she could were different from the material Noach used⁹. Noach used *kafar* – i.e. *kaf, feh, resh* - for the first ark. The materials Yocheved used for the second ark, on the other hand, are identified in Torah as *chemar* – i.e. *chet, mem, resh* - and *zafet* – i.e. *zayin, fey, tav*.

The two substances with which Yocheved coated the basket in which she placed Moshe deserve some consideration. *Chemar* [our English Bibles call it 'slime'], the first material used by Yocheved, is interestingly enough the exact same material Torah tells us the residents of Bavel used as mortar to build their famous 'tower'¹⁰ – see Genesis 11:3–4. *Zafet*, the other material used by Yocheved for the second ark, is alternately translated into English as *pitch, tar, or asphalt*, but is somewhat mysterious. The only other reference anywhere in Scripture to this material is found in the prophecy of Yeshayahu [Isaiah] 34, where, in the context of the end-times final judgment of the Holy One upon unredeemed mankind, in the day of the Holy One's vengeance, and the '*year of the recompenses for the controversy of Tziyon*', we are told that the streams of the nations will be turned to *zafet*, and their lands will be become *l'zafet ba'arah* [burning zafet], the burning of which will never be quenched. **Isaiah 34:9-10.**

Both of these materials therefore have spiritual implications as well as being suitable for waterproofing. Both deal with *the sin of the nations* of the world – in the one case, the sin of *self-determination* [declaring independence from the Creator and building the world in such a way as to serve themselves], and in the other case sins against the Holy One's chosen people, the Hebrews. The Pharaohs

⁸ *Teivah* is *tav, beit, hey*, Strong's Hebrew word #8392, pronounced *tay-vaw*'.

⁹ See Genesis 6:14. Noach was told by the Holy One to use *kafar* [*kof, feh, resh*] to coat the ark.

¹⁰ Very possibly it was this same material that Pharaoh was having the Hebrew slaves in Egypt use as mortar to build his storehouses.

of Egypt were guilty of both of these sins. And through the life of the child kept alive in the Nile through these substances, both of those sins of the Pharaohs of the world would be dealt with.

The Contraband Child Becomes a Prince of Egypt

Up to this point in the narrative the child who will become the deliverer and prototypical shepherd of Israel, though now 3-months of age, is apparently still *without a name*. According to the narrative of Torah we are not told that either Yocheved nor Amram – his mother or his father – either circumcised him on the eighth day of his life as Avraham's covenant with the Holy One directed nor gave him a name¹¹. According to Torah an Egyptian – in particular, the daughter of Pharaoh - named the child who was destined to be one of the most famous men that ever walked the planet. Here is how Torah describes what happened:

V'tered bat-Par'oh l'r'chotz al ha-Ye'or

And a daughter of Pharaoh went to bathe in the Nile,

V'na'aroteiha hol'chot al-yad ha-Ye'or

while her maids walked along the Nile's edge.

V'terei et ha-teivah b'toch ha-suf v'tishlach et-amatah v'tikacheiha

She saw the box in the rushes and sent her slave-girl to fetch it.

V'tiftach v'tir'eihu et ha-yeled v'hineh na'ar

Opening [the teivah] she saw the boy.

bocheh v'tachmol alav

The infant began to cry, and she had pity on it.

V'tomer m'yal'dei ha-Ivrim zeh

'It is one of the Hebrew boys,' she said.

V'yig'dal ha-yeled v'tevi'eihu l'bat-Par'oh

When the child matured, [his mother] brought him to Pharaoh's daughter.

vayehi-lah l'ven vatikra shemo Moshe

She adopted him as her own son, and called his name Moshe.

v'tomer ki min ha-mayim meshitihu

saying, 'I drew him from the water'

The child who will be our deliverer now has *a name*. In Egyptian the child's name may have been a form of *Amosis*, the founder of the dynasty of Pharaoh's likely then in power. But as it has been recorded for us in Hebrew the name Pharaoh's

¹¹ There is a talmudic legend that Amram and Yocheved did indeed give this child a name – *Yekusiel*. Hebrew Midrash assigns the child ten different names, with each referring either to a different attribute which he personified or to a commendable action which he had accomplished (for example, he was called *Yered* because he "brought down" the Torah from Mt. Sinai, and he was called *Chever* because he "joined" the Jewish people to their Father in heaven).

daughter bestowed upon the child she found afloat in the basket is *Moshe*¹². In Hebrew the name *Moshe* means ‘*plucked from water*’. It is derived from the Hebrew verb root *masha*¹³. It is a relative of the Hebrew verb root *yasha*, meaning *to rescue*, or to save, which forms the root verb for the name *Yeshua*. *Masha* means *to rescue out of a series of dangers coming in waves*.

What’s In a Name?

We have discussed in previous lessons that a Hebrew name - a *shem* - is not a random set of characters, but *a description of the essence of the person or item named*. Especially in *Sefer Sh’mot* – the book of names – each name mentioned by the text is very, very important. So let’s look for a few moments at the *shem* given to the one who will in time become *the prototype Deliverer*. The letter *mem* – the letter with which Moshe’s name begins - is a Hebrew pictograph of a *flowing wave of water*. The letter *shin* that follows is a Hebrew pictograph of *ascending flames of fire, particularly as in a manifestation of the Divine Presence*. The letter *hey* which concludes the name/Hebrew mural is a Hebrew pictograph of a *window, or source of light, fresh air, and revelation*. In Hebrew pictography the name Moshe thus means *one who receives and releases revelation after being carried, as on a wave of water, through a fiery manifestation of the Holy One*. This pictographic provides an amazingly accurate description of the life calling of this prototype Deliverer – from the bush that burned but was not consumed, to the Pillar of Fire which Moshe followed, to the mountain aflame with the Holy One’s Presence where the Holy One spoke forth the Torah, Moshe was continually propelled through both *water and fire to revelation*.

From the Nile to the well of Midyan; from the *Yam Suf* to *Marah* in the Wilderness; from the *mikveh* three days before *Matan Torah* to the waters of the bronze laver of the *Mish’kan*; and from the water that flowed from the Rock at *Merivah* to the banks of the Yarden [Jordan River], Moshe followed the fire of the Holy One, from Whom He constantly received and dispensed revelation. Put another way, what three things would you say characterize Moshe? In my opinion, they are water [*mem*], fire [*shin*], and revelation [*hey*].

Moshe’s Undisciplined Harshness – A Loose Cannon Wreaking Havoc

As we have already discussed briefly herein, Moshe was a descendant of Levi and as such was *predisposed to vigilantism*. This predisposition first manifested itself in Moshe when he turned 40. Here is how Torah records the event:

¹² *Moshe* is *mem, shin, hey*. Strong’s Hebrew word #4872, it is pronounced *mo’-shuh*.

¹³ *Masha* is *mem, shin, hey*. Strong’s Hebrew word #4871, it is pronounced *maw-shaw’*.

V'yehi b'yamim hahem v'yig'dal Moshe

And it came to pass, when Moshe was grown,

Vayeitze el-echav vayar b'sivlotam

and he went out and saw their hard labor. he began to go out to his own people

vayar ish Mitzri makeh ish-Ivri me'echav

And he saw an Egyptian strike one of his fellow Hebrews.

Vayifen koh vachoh vayar ki eyn ish

Moshe looked all around, and when he saw no one

v'yach et-ha-Mitzri v'yitmenieihu bachol

he killed the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand.

[Exodus 2:11-12]

This is one area of Moshe's identity - and one flaw in his character – that the Holy One is definitely going to have to work on. Not a problem. Divine identity reshaping and character-building 101 is a course that is offered every semester.

That Which Was Hidden is Revealed!

The Holy One arranges for Moshe to witness another fight, this time between two Hebrews. This time however, when Moshe attempts to play Levi/act as avenger for the one he sees as a victim, he is *stopped cold in his tracks*. His dirty little secret – the *Egyptian skeleton in his closet* – got brought right out in the open for everyone to see. In the process Moshe's prince-of-Egypt fantasy world suddenly came crashing down around his ears.

Vayish'ma Par'oh et ha-davar hazeh

When Pharaoh heard about the affair,

V'yevakesh l'harog et-Moshe

he took steps to have Moshe put to death.

vayivrach Moshe mipnei Par'oh

So Moshe fled from Pharaoh,

v'yeshev b'erezt-Midyan

and ended up in the land of Midyan.

[Exodus 2:15]

From prince and statesman of Egypt to fledgling shepherd of Midyan is a long, hard fall. The spiral parallels, in some respects, the experiences we read about recently of a man by the name of *Yosef* [Joseph]. Yosef spent 22 years as a prisoner and a slave, molding his character all the way. Moshe was about to spend 40 years as a fugitive from justice, running scared, and lying low, as a nobody on the backside of nowhere. Same *spiral*. Same *result*. From such experiences the Holy One molds humble vessels - vessels He can use for *His* glory.

Meanwhile, Back in Egypt

But the Holy One is not just twiddling His thumbs waiting for Moshe the deliverer to develop character. He is moving behind the scenes of history, re-arranging the geo-political landscape. And His Watchful Eye is ever on the heirs of the covenant He made with Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov.

V'yehi v'yamim ha-rabim hahem v'yamot melech Mitzrayim

A long time then passed, and the king of Egypt died.¹⁴

vaye'aneichu v'nei-Yisra'el min ha-avodah

The Israelites groaned in/because of their labor.

V'yiz'aku vata'al shav'atam el ha-Elohim min ha-avodah

When they cried out because of their labor, their pleas went up before God.

Vayish'ma Elohim et-na'akatam

And Elohim heard their cries,

V'yizkor Elohim et-brito et-Avraham et-Yitzchak v'et-Ya'akov

and He remembered His covenant with Avraham, with Yitzchak, and with Ya'akov.

Vayar Elohim et-b'nei Yisra'el

And Elohim saw the descendants of Yisrael;

V'ed Elohim

and Elohim knew them intimately.

The Holy One was *not oblivious* to the oppression being visited upon Yisrael. He *bore the sorrow* of every bereaved mother. He *felt the sting* of every taskmaster's whip. And He *whispered on every breeze¹⁵*, to all those with ears to *sh'ma*:

Hold on, my darling, my dove! Hold on just a little bit longer!

I am coming for you.

And when I come I will betrothe you to Me forever.

Questions For Today's Study

1. Today's aliyah is about the birth and early years of Moshe, the one chosen by the Holy One as the human instrument through which the Holy One would lead the descendants of Ya'akov out of Egyptian bondage, and forge them into a nation.

[A] Of which tribe was Moshe's father [*Amram*]? His mother [*Yocheved*]?

[B] How long did Moshe's mother hide him before she put him in the ark?

[C] How did Pharaoh's daughter know Moshe was a child of the Hebrews?

[D] List the people the Holy One used to save the life of the child Moshe.

What do they all have in common?

¹⁴ This probably refers to the death of Thutmose II in 1490 b.c.e. [year 2434 of the Hebrew calendar], making Thutmose III, who reigned from 1490-1436 b.c.e. the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

¹⁵ The statements attributed to the Holy One in this paragraph are, of course, merely a literary paraphrase.

2. Beginning in verse 11 Moshe, the “Prince of Egypt”, takes a journey outside the palace of Pharaoh that will change his life forever.

[A] What did Moshe see that profoundly changed his life?

[B] What do you think was the level of Moshe’s knowledge of the Holy One before this event happened?

[C] Do you think the Holy One told Moshe to kill the Egyptian?

[D] Do you think killing an abortionist is something the Holy One would tell an individual today to do? Why or why not?

3. After killing the Egyptian Moshe interferes in a fight between two Hebrews.

[A] Why do you think Moshe interrupted the fight between the two Hebrews?

[B] Write on your paper the specific question Moshe asked.

[C] Of whom did Moshe ask this question? How did he know this?

[D] In verse 14, one of the Hebrews asks Moshe “Who made you a prince and a judge over us?” Which one asked the question?

[E] Look up “prince” and “judge” in Strong’s. What Hebrew words are translated “prince” and “judge” in this verse? Write the definitions Strong gives for those Hebrew words.

4. In verse 15 of chapter 2 we see Moshe fleeing Egypt in disgrace, having been rejected by his countrymen and condemned to death by Pharaoh.

[A] To what location does Moshe flee?

[B] What people group lived at that location?

[C] How was Moshe’s confrontation with the shepherds at the well like his confrontations that led to his departure from Egypt?

[D] How was Moshe’s confrontation with these shepherds different from the confrontations that led to his departure from Egypt?

5. While in exile from Egypt and from his people Moshe is taken in by local residents, marries the princess of the people group with whom he stays, and has a son.

[A] What are the two names by which the chief of the people group with which Moshe sojourns is called in Torah? What does each such name mean?

[B] What was the name of the daughter of the chieftain who was given by him to Moshe as a wife? What does her name mean?

[C] What name did Moshe give to his son? What does that name mean?

[D] What was happening in Egypt while Moshe was sojourning in the desert?

[E] What does Torah tell us was happening in Heaven during that period?

6. Moving on to today's haftarah we find *Yeshayahu* (Isaiah) prophesying what will bring about the restoration of Israel as the Light to the Gentiles she was created to be - and the restoration of the Kingdom of Priests to the Land promised to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov.

*In measure, when you send them away, you do contend with them;
he has removed [them] with his rough blast in the day of the east wind.*

*Therefore by this shall the iniquity of Ya`akov be forgiven,
and this is all the fruit of taking away his sin:
that he makes all the stones of the altar as chalk stones that are beaten in sunder,
[so that] the Asherim and the sun-images shall rise no more.*

*For the fortified city is solitary, a habitation deserted and forsaken,
like the wilderness: there shall the calf feed,
and there shall he lie down and consume the branches of it.*

*When the boughs of it are withered, they shall be broken off;
the women shall come, and set them on fire;
for it is a people of no understanding:
therefore he who made them will not have compassion on them,
and he who formed them will show them no favor.*

*It shall happen in that day that the Holy One will beat off [his fruit]
from the flood of the River to the brook of Mitzrayim;
and you shall be gathered one by one, you children of Yisra'el.*

*It shall happen in that day that a great shofar shall be blown;
and they shall come who were ready to perish in the land of Ashshur,
and those who were outcasts in the land of Mitzrayim;
and they shall worship the Holy One in the holy mountain at Y'rushalayim.*

[A] What did Isaiah say would be required of Israel before its sin would be forgiven?

[B] List the things that Isaiah says will happen "in that day".

7. In today's corresponding reading from the B'rit Chadasha *Stefanos* [Stephen] refers in his defense to events birthed out of the verses of today's aliyah. Stefanos reminded his accusers that:

*This Moshe, whom they refused, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?'
The Holy One has sent him as both a ruler and a deliverer
by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush.*

*This man led them out, having worked wonders and signs in Mitzrayim,
in the Sea of Suf, and in the wilderness for forty years.*

[A] How did Stefanos describe Moshe in Acts 7:35-36. List the descriptions that Stefanos used and write a sentence explaining what they mean.

[B] In what three places does Stefanos say Moshe performed miracles?

[C] What does Stefanos say was the purpose for which Moshe performed miracles?

*May you look with compassion upon your brethren,
and show respect to those of your own household.
And may the Redeemer visit you and awaken you to your destiny!*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 18:1-3

*I love you, Oh Holy One, my strength.
The Holy One is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer;
My God, my rock in whom I take refuge;
My shield, and the horn of my salvation [a noun formed of the Hebrew verb yasha],
my high tower.
I call on the Holy One, who is worthy to be praised;
and I am saved [a form of the Hebrew verb yasha] from my enemies.*