

Drash on Shemot (Exodus 1:1-6:1)

Ahavat Yeshua DC Service

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Parashat [Shemot](#) (שְׁמוֹת) is the first parashat of the second book of the Torah which shares its Hebrew name. The English title of the book, *Exodus*, is taken directly from the Ancient Greek title literally meaning *Way Out*. The Hebrew names arose from the second word which in English means *names*, referring to the immediately following list of the sons of Jacob. The book chronicles the history of the Jewish people from the waning of Joseph's influence in Egypt through God's arrival in the newly completed Wilderness Tabernacle.

The parashat can be summarized thusly:

After God's people had settled in Egypt, they lost their favored status while they multiplied greatly, until new leadership decided to enslave them and later forced grievous population controls upon them. Into this reality Moses was born and unexpectedly adopted by Pharaoh's daughter to be raised in her father's court. As an adult, Moses killed an Egyptian taskmaster and fled for his life to Midian where he became a shepherd for forty years. Then God appeared to him and called him to return to Egypt to lead the Jewish people out of Egypt and into a land of their own. His first meeting with Pharaoh resulted in worse conditions for the slaves, leading Moses to lament the situation to God who repeated He will compel Pharaoh to change his mind after tremendous tsumis has been experienced by Egypt.

Yah-a-mod, Elaine bat Benyamin Moshe. Elaine will read for us Exodus chapter 3, verse 11 in Hebrew and the English from the Complete Jewish Bible :

¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Thank you, my bride.

This particular drash may be considered an addendum to Roeh Hilton's message last Shabbat.

According to Numbers chapter 12, verse 3 [CJB], Moses was unusually special:

Now this man Moshe was very humble, more so than anyone on earth.

Was he equally humble when he asked "Who am I"? That is debatable, along with the meaning of the Hebrew translated as *humble* (more on that later).

His motivations for killing that Egyptian are uncertain. The Hebrew here (as well as in the Ten Commandments) has been translated as both *kill* and *murder*. Thus this Hebrew word requires contextual analysis, just as in English, to determine if moral culpability is assignable to such actions, but in this case, certainty is elusive. The Hebrew slave's question regarding Moses' authority to judge him as Moses had judged that Egyptian may be telling of God's point of view regarding Moses' possible guilt. However, it's very clear that Pharaoh, as God's installed supreme judge of the country, had no such belief that Moses had commendably administered a deserved sentence.

Please note the King James Version's choice of *kill* in the Ten Commandments has been quite problematic given the influence of that work, although these days most authorities agree that should have been rendered *murder*. Of course, it seems the Ten Commandments had not yet been written at the time of this parashat, but God's opinion of murder had been known from just prior to the first incident perpetrated by Cain upon Able, if not earlier.

Whether or not The LORD considered Moses guilty of murder, the consequences manifested quickly and were extremely life-changing.

After a forty-year timeout taking care of sheep, The LORD spoke to Moses about a new career. It is clear Moses had no absolutely no doubts about the identity of this unusual entity he had come across. His doubt appears to concern his own ability to do what has been directed. Finally he figures out he's been made an offer he can't refuse. Was this *humility*, or lack of *self-worth*? The Scriptures do not directly answer the question, even considering the subsequent circumcision performed under duress by Moses' wife who clearly came to understand its necessity if her husband was to remain alive. While it appears Moses had yielded to her apparent strong objection to such mutilation of her children, still, that is only circumstantial evidence regarding the state of Moses' self-assessment at this time in his life. Some might think he was not demonstrating the first requirement for eldership by failing to preside well over his household, but it should be remembered such Scriptures had apparently not yet been written.

The rendering of Micah chapter 6, verse 8 in the Amplified Version tells us humility is not optional for Believers—it is a requirement of God:

He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you Except [1] to be just, and [2] to love [and to diligently practice] kindness (compassion), And [3] to walk humbly with your God [setting aside any overblown sense of importance or self-righteousness]?

There are two ways to become humble according to Matthew chapter 23, verses 11 and 12 [CJB]:

¹¹ The greatest among you must be your servant, ¹² for whoever promotes himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be promoted.

So you can humble yourself or you can be humbled by God, but, as a Believer, by golly, you *will* become humble. In John 14 Yeshua ties this concept to the parable about seeking the seats of highest

honor at a wedding dinner, a teaching presented at a Pharisee's Shabbat meal where many had pursued that exact objective. Many translations of Romans chapter 12 verse 10 express this thought as , “*Honor one another above yourselves.*” This teaching is addressed to Believers regarding how they are to love each other, and it elevates the internal motivation from seeking what’s best for *me* up to seeking what’s best for *you*. C. S. Lewis said, “*true humility is not thinking less of yourself, it’s thinking of yourself less.*” While that is not Scripture, it nonetheless presents profound insight.

If true humility is not applicable to Moses’ self-assessment by the end of this parashat, by the time of Numbers 12:3 he seems to have arrived. But perhaps not. Be aware there is Hebrew translation controversy such that for Numbers 12:3 it may be more correct to render *humble* as *distressed*. Remember at that time Aaron and Merriam were contending with Moses about his significance vis-à-vis their own, which would have certainly been distressing to him given how God had dealt with like challengers previously. But also think of all the contention Moses endured from his people for decades. Don’t forget The LORD Himself threatened to wipe out all the Jews save Moses alone, and He had done something like that previously concerning Noah—that was no idle threat. Who else has endured such distress over a lifetime? Well, besides Jeremiah, perhaps. Certainly he and Moses are both major league hall-of-famers as far as enduring distress in concerned. Distress is part and parcel to being humbled, hence the different meanings of the same Hebrew word that have been carried over into the English. As the context may not be considered sufficiently clear to determine which meaning is intended, there is reason for doubt. But there is also the possibility that a double entendre of distressed *and* humble is intended here by The Author of Scripture.

Many have thought if you write something like Numbers 12:3 about yourself, you have only proven how humble you are *not*. That premise has caused many to defend Moses’ reputation by suggesting Moses never wrote any such thing—it was inserted later, possibly after Moses had died, by someone else. In fact, some translations place the entire verse within parentheses as an indication this is someone’s editorial remark. If, however, you believe the Torah was written by Moses taking letter-by-letter dictation from The LORD, that is sufficient explanation for the apparent lack of humility.

It *may* be possible Numbers 12:3 *is* considering the entirety of Moses’ life at an unexpected place in the Torah. If so, that could indicate Moses still hasn’t arrived at true humility when he says nothing to his siblings in response to their words in Numbers 12. But if his humility is still accruing, he still must be more humble here than when he first encountered The Almighty and eventually angered Him apparently as a consequence of how he persisted in viewing himself.

So those are my thoughts for this day’s drash. As usual please take to heart anything herein the Holy Spirit has highlighted to you and be good Bereans regarding everything I have said.

The next parashat is VaYera which spans Exodus chapter 6 verse 2 through chapter 9 verse 35. As we progress toward the next Simchat Torah, I suggest considering the development of Moses’ humility week-by-week as an example for us to likewise become humble as The LORD intends.