

Parsha Q&A



Parshas Shmos

For the week ending 21 Teves 5759
8 & 9 January 1999

Parsha Questions

1. Why does the verse say "And Yosef was in Egypt?"
2. Why did Pharaoh specifically choose water as the means of killing the Jewish boys? (Two reasons.)
3. "She saw that he was good." What did she see "good" about Moshe that was unique?
4. Which Hebrew men were fighting each other?
5. Why did the Midianites drive Yisro's daughters away from the well?
6. How did Yisro know that Moshe was Yaakov's descendant?
7. What lesson was Moshe to learn from the fact that the burning bush was not consumed?
8. What merit did the Jewish People have that warranted Hashem's promise to redeem them?
9. Which expression of redemption would assure the people that Moshe was the true redeemer?
10. What did the staff turning into a snake symbolize?
11. For how long did Moshe refuse to be the redeemer of the Jewish People?
12. Why didn't Moshe want to be the leader?
13. "And Hashem was angry with Moshe..." What did Moshe lose as a result of this anger?
14. How many names did Moshe's father-in-law have?
15. What was special about Moshe's donkey?
16. About which plague was Pharaoh warned first?
17. Why didn't the elders accompany Moshe and Aharon to Pharaoh? How were they punished?
18. Which tribe did not work as slaves?
19. Who were the: a) *nogsim* b) *shotrim*?
20. How were the *shotrim* rewarded for accepting the beatings on behalf of their fellow Jews?

Sherlock Holmes and the Midwife Mystery

"Scotland Yard, at my suggestion, investigated Mr. Lexington's new 'home.' Indeed, they discovered it was 'home' to his illegal activities," said world famous detective Sherlock Holmes.

"How did you know?" asked Watstein.

"He had claimed he was building it for his son. But it wasn't nearly the structure you would expect from a man of such means to build for his only son. The key was to carefully examine for whom the house was built."

"Speaking of building houses," said Watstein, "this text has me stumped: The verse says that because the midwives feared G-d, therefore 'vaya'as lahem batim — He made houses for them.'" (Shmos 1:21)

"Those midwives risked their lives defying Pharaoh's wicked decree," said Sherlock. "Pharaoh told them to kill the baby boys, but they ignored him. Do they not deserve reward?"

"It's Rashi that's stumped me. Rashi says that the 'houses' G-d made for them were the 'houses of Priesthood and Royalty.' These women were to become the mothers of the Aharonic and Davidic dynasties."

"Imagine!" said Sherlock. "Thousands of years of Royalty and Priesthood descending from two midwives, due to their love and self-sacrifice on behalf of little Jewish babies."

"I'm truly moved," said Watstein. "But is that the simple meaning of the word 'houses?' What's wrong with saying that G-d rewarded these women with actual houses, beautiful mansions to live in? We find many instances where G-d rewards people, at least partially, with material success in this world. So, why can't these houses be just houses?"

"The key," said Sherlock, "is to carefully examine for whom the houses were built."

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Parshas Shmos — 21 Teves 5759, 8 & 9 January 1999

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Answer

“Who were these houses built for?” asked Sherlock.

“For the midwives, of course,” said Watstein.

“Read the verse again, carefully.”

“And it was when the midwives feared G-d,” read Watstein, “He made for them... vaya’as lahem...” Suddenly, Watstein gasped.

“Shall I call a Doctor, Dr. Watstein?”

“The verse say ‘lahem!’ Lahem means ‘for them,’ but it is the masculine form! For women, the proper word is ‘lahen’ with the letter ‘nun’ at the end! If the houses were made for the midwives, the verse should have said ‘lahen.’”

“Exactly,” said Sherlock. “Therefore, to find out who the houses were made for, we must go back to the previous verse. The previous verse says ‘the nation increased’ (Shmos 1:20). As a reward for the midwives fearing G-d, G-d made for them, for the nation, that is, houses.”

“National houses, or national institutions, rather. The institutions of Priesthood and Royalty. And the midwives were rewarded by becoming the founding mothers of these national dynasties.”

“Nobly said, dear Watstein.”

(Based on Rabbi S.R. Hirsch; Sherlock” is by Reuven Subar, inspired by Dr. Avigdor Bonchek’s “What’s Bothering Rashi”)

I Did Not Know That!

“Remove your shoes from upon your feet” (Shmos 3:5)

Why does the verse say: “Remove your shoes from upon your feet?” Wouldn’t “Remove your shoes” be enough? Certainly Moshe’s shoes were on his feet!

Rather, the word for shoe, na’al, can also mean glove (in Biblical Hebrew), as in the glove that Boaz gave when purchasing a field (Ruth 4:7). Therefore, the verse needs to specify “from upon your feet.”

*Da’as Zekeinim M’Ba’alei HaTosefos
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Recommended Reading List

Ramban

- 1:10 Politics of Genocide
- 2:2 Certainty of Moshe’s Rescue
- 3:5 The Burning Bush
- 3:8 Qualities of *Eretz Yisrael*
- 3:12 Moshe’s Concerns
- 3:18 The Code Word for Redemption
- 4:10 Moshe’s Speech Impediment
- 4:13 Moshe’s Humility
- 4:19 Moshe’s Family as Proof

Sforno

- 2:10 Moshe’s Name
- 2:11,13,17 Reactions to Injustice

Kli Yakar

- 2:2 Light and Three Months
- 2:7 Prophecy of Miriam
- 2:13 Striking Words

Answers to this Week's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 1:5 - This verse adds that despite being in Egypt as a ruler, Yosef maintained his righteousness.
2. 1:10,22 - He hoped to escape Divine retribution, as Hashem promised never to flood the entire world. Also, his astrologers saw that the Jewish redeemer's downfall would be through water.
3. 2:2 - When he was born the house was filled with light.
4. 2:13 - Dasan and Aviram.
5. 2:17 - Because a ban had been placed on Yisro for abandoning idol worship.
6. 2:20 - The well water rose towards Moshe.
7. 3:12 - Just as the bush was not consumed, so too Moshe would be protected by Hashem.
8. 3:12 - The merit that they were destined to receive the Torah.
9. 3:16,18 - "I surely remembered (*pakod pakadeti*)."
10. 4:3 - It symbolized that Moshe spoke ill of the Jews by saying that they wouldn't listen to him, just as the original snake sinned through speech.
11. 4:10 - Seven days.
12. 4:10 - He didn't want to take a position above that of his older brother, Aharon.
13. 4:14 - Moshe lost the privilege of being a *kohen*.
14. 4:18 - Seven.
15. 4:20 - It was used by Avraham for *akeidas* Yitzchak and will be used in the future by *mashiach*.
16. 4:23 - Death of the firstborn.
17. 5:1 - The elders were accompanying Moshe and Aharon, but they were afraid and one by one they slipped away. Hence, at the giving of the Torah, the elders weren't allowed to ascend with Moshe.
18. 5:5 - The tribe of Levi.
19. 5:6 - a) Egyptian taskmasters; b) Jewish officers.
20. 5:14 - They were chosen to be on the Sanhedrin.