

Beit Chachamin

PARSHAT SHEMOT

9TH JANUARY, 2026

COME & LEARN

THE BIG RECAP [PARSHA SUMMARY]

1 – Jacob and his twelve sons and all of that generation pass away. The Israelites are fruitful in the land of Egypt, and the old Pharaoh dies. A new king rises to power who does not know Joseph. He sees that the Israelites are numerous and afflicts them with forced labor. He tells the Israelite midwives that if they see a boy born, they should kill him, but the midwives fear God and do not listen to Pharaoh.

2 – Pharaoh notices that the midwives are not following his instructions and questions them, but they tell him that the Israelite women give birth quickly and do so before the midwives can arrive. Pharaoh insists that the baby boys be cast into the Nile. A Levite man and his wife have a son and try to hide him, but when they no longer can, they place him in a basket and set it in the Nile. His sister watches as he floats down the river to Pharaoh's daughter, who finds the basket. The boy's sister asks if she wants an Israelite nurse for the baby, and Pharaoh's daughter says yes. She names the boy Moses and raises him as her son.

3 – Moses grows up, and one day he sees an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man. Moses kills the Egyptian and hides him in the sand. The next day he sees two Hebrews fighting and asks why they fight with each other. One replies by asking if Moses intends to kill them as he killed the Egyptian. Realizing that others know of his actions, Moses flees to Midian, where he arrives at a well and gives water to seven daughters and their flock. Reuel, their father, invites Moses to his camp and gives him his daughter Zipporah as a wife. She bears him a son, Gershom. During this time, the king of Egypt dies, and the Israelites cry out, and God hears their pleas.

4 – Moses tends his flock when he sees a bush. Turning toward it, he asks how the bush is on fire but is not consumed. God calls out to Moses, and Moses replies, "Here I am." Moses comes closer, and God tells him to stop and take off his sandals. Moses is afraid. God tells him that He is the God of his ancestors and that He has heard the cry of the Israelites. Moses asks why he should lead them.

5 – God tells Moses to gather the elders of Israel and tell them that God appeared to him. Then he is to bring the elders to Pharaoh and tell him that they must go to the desert for three days to make sacrifices, but God says He will need to intervene. Moses asks what to do if they do not believe him, and God gives him two signs: his staff turns into a snake, and his hand appears leprous. Moses asks not to be God's agent, as he does not believe he can speak clearly, but God insists and tells him about his brother Aaron.

6 – Moses, his wife, and his sons travel to Egypt. On the way, God tells Moses that He will harden Pharaoh's heart. Zipporah circumcises her son. God tells Aaron to meet Moses, and he does. Moses tells Aaron what has happened. They assemble the elders, and Moses shows the signs, and they believe him.

7 – Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh to ask to serve God in the desert. Pharaoh refuses, saying the Israelites are too numerous, and orders that they no longer receive straw to make bricks and must still produce the same number of bricks. The Israelites are upset. Moses asks God why He is being harsh to His own people, and God replies that Moses will see what God will do to Pharaoh.

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In Parshat Shemot, the true steps towards exodus begin. As the Israelites become slaves in Egypt their suffering and pain does not go unnoticed.

EXODUS 2:23–25

וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָרַבִּים הָהֵם וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיֵּאָחֶז בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִרְהַעֲבֹדָה וַיִּזְעָקוּ וַתַּעַל
שׁוֹעַתָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים מִרְהַעֲבֹדָה:

וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת־נַאֲקָתָם וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם אֶת־יִצְחָק וְאֶת־
יַעֲקֹב:

וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּדַע אֱלֹהִים:

A long time after that, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites were groaning under the bondage and cried out; and their cry for help from the bondage rose up to God.

God **heard** their moaning, and God **remembered** the covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

God **looked** upon the Israelites, and God **took notice of them**.

God does four things in this section: Hears the cries, remembers his covenant, sees the Israelites, and notices them. These four steps are first just for God and later shared with Moses at the burning bush.

EXODUS 3:6-7

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב וַיִּסְתֵּר מֹשֶׁה פָּנָיו
כִּי יָרָא מֵהִבִּיט אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה רָאֵה רְאִיתִי אֶת־עַנְי עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֶת־צַעֲקָתָם שָׁמַעְתִּי מִפְּנֵי
נַגְשָׁיו כִּי יִדְעֹתִי אֶת־מַכְאֲבָיו:

and continued, “I am the God of your father’s [house]—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

And God continued, “I have marked well the plight of My people in Egypt and have heeded their outcry because of their taskmasters; yes, I am mindful of their sufferings.

These four verbs are not one-time descriptions but threads: God keeps hearing Israel, acting from remembered covenant, seeing their oppression, and knowing their suffering in a way that drives the entire story forward.