

Why Moshe: Turning towards Leadership  
Shabbat Shmot 5781, Yael Keller

**Shmot 2:2**

The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw how beautiful he was, she hid him for three months.

וַתַּהַר הָאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֵּרָא אֹתוֹ כִּי־טוֹב  
הוּא וַתִּצְפְּנֵהוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה יָרְחָיִם:

**Sotah 12a**

The verse states with regard to the birth of Moses: “And the woman conceived, and bore a son; **and when she saw him that he was a goodly [tov] child**, she hid him three months” (Exodus 2:2). It is **taught** in a *baraita* that **Rabbi Meir says: “Tov” is his, Moses’, real name**, as it was given to him by his parents when he was born. **Rabbi Yehuda says: His name was Toviya. Rabbi Nehemya says:** They said he was good because they saw that he was **fit for prophecy. Others say:** They said he was good because he was **born when he was already circumcised. And the Rabbis say: At the time when Moses was born, the entire house was filled with light, as it is written here: “And when she saw him that he was a goodly [tov] child,” and it is written there: “And God saw the light, that it was good [tov]”** (Genesis 1:4).

(שמות ב, ב) ותרא אותו  
כי טוב הוא תניא ר"מ  
אומר טוב שמו ר' יהודה  
אומר טוביה שמו רבי  
נחמיה אומר הגון  
לנביאות אחרים אומרים  
נולד כשהוא מהול  
וחכמים אומרים בשעה  
שנולד משה נתמלא  
הבית כולו אור כתיב  
הכא ותרא אותו כי טוב  
הוא וכתוב התם  
(בראשית א, ד) וירא  
אלהים את האור כי טוב

**Shmot 3:1-4**

Now Moses, tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, drove the flock into the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. An angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire out of a bush. He gazed, and there was a bush all aflame, yet the bush was not consumed. Moses said, “I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight; why doesn’t the bush burn up?” When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him out of the bush: “Moses! Moses!” He answered, “Here I am.”

וּמֹשֶׁה הָיָה רֹעֵה רֵעָה אֶת־צֹאן יִתְרוֹ חֹתֵנוּ כֹּהֵן  
מִדְיָן וַיִּנְהַג אֶת־הַצֹּאן אַחַר הַמִּדְבָּר וַיָּבֹא  
אֶל־הַר הָאֱלֹהִים חֹרֵבָה: וַיֵּרָא מִלְּאֲךָ יְהוָה  
אֵלָיו בְּלִבְת־אֵשׁ מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּנֵּה וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה  
הַסִּנֵּה בֹעַר בְּאֵשׁ וְהַסִּנֵּה אֵינּוּ אֹכֵל: וַיֹּאמֶר  
מֹשֶׁה אֶסְרֶה־נָּא וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת־הַמַּרְאֶה הַגָּדֹל  
הַזֶּה מִדּוֹעַ לֹא־בֹעַר הַסִּנֵּה: וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי סָר  
לְרִאֲוֹת וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו אֱלֹהִים מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּנֵּה  
וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִי:

**Nahum Sarna, Etz Hayim Chumash Torah Commentary**

To see that a bush is on fire is easy; to see that it is not consumed takes time and patience.

**Aryeh Bernstein, JewSchool**

Fugitive Moses is tending his sheep, when an unusual thing catches his eye: “He gazed, and there was a bush, all aflame, yet the bush was not consumed. Moses said, ‘I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight; why doesn’t the bush burn up?’ Although the reader already knows that this is a sign from God (v. 1), Moses does not. He just thinks it’s interesting. We see unusual things all the time, but how often do we pay attention to them? More often, we ignore

them, explain them away, or feel too busy tending our sheep to investigate. Had Moses not been driven by a need to understand, he never would have had the chance to hear God's voice. Note the language: "When Adonai saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him" (v. 4). It is Moses's expression of intellectual curiosity that justifies calling him and giving him the job. Strategizing within the well-defined parameters of the task at hand does not cut it: one must be constantly studying the entire world; after all, the source for solving the greatest national problems might lie in an unusual, small bush.

### Exodus Rabbah 2:6

Rabbi Shimon Ben Lakish said: he turned his face and looked, as it says, "the Lord saw that he had turned to look." And when God saw that Moses looked at Him, He said, "This is the one who is fit to lead Israel."

רבי שמעון בן לקיש אמר הפך פניו והביט, שנאמר: וירא ה' כי סר לראות. כיון שהביט בו הקדוש ברוך הוא אמר נאה זה לרעות את ישראל.

Rabbi Yitzchak said: What does it mean that he 'turned to look'? God saw that he turned and was outraged when he saw the suffering of the Israelites in Egypt. Therefore he was fit to be their leader. And that is when God called to him from the bush.

אמר רבי יצחק, מהו כי סר לראות, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא סר וזעף הוא זה לראות בצערן של ישראל במצרים, לפיכך ראוי הוא להיות רועה עליהן, מיד ויקרא אליו אלקים מתוך הסנה.