

Parsha Plug: Parshat Shemot

Shemot 2:1-10	שמות ב:א-י
<p>1 A man of the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi. 2 The woman conceived and bore a son, and [when] she saw him that he was good, she hid him for three months. 3 [When] she could no longer hide him, she took [for] him a reed basket, smeared it with clay and pitch, placed the child into it, and put [it] into the marsh at the Nile's edge. 4 His sister stood from afar, to know what would be done to him. 5 Pharaoh's daughter went down to bathe, to the Nile, and her maidens were walking along the Nile, and she saw the basket in the midst of the marsh, and she sent her maidservant, and she took it. 6 She opened [it], and she saw him the child, and behold, he was a weeping lad, and she had compassion on him, and she said, "This is [one] of the children of the Hebrews." 7 His sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call for you a wet nurse from the Hebrew women, so that she shall nurse the child for you?" 8 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go!" So the girl went and called the child's mother. 9 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse him for me, and I will give [you] your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. 10 The child grew up, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became like her son. She named him Moses, and she said, "For I drew him from the water."</p>	<p>א וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֵוִי; וַיִּקַּח, אֶת-בַּת-לֵוִי. ב וַתַּהַר הָאִשָּׁה, וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן; וַתֵּרָא אֹתוֹ כִּי-טוֹב הוּא, וַתְּצַפְנֵהוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה יָרְחִים. ג וְלֹא-יָכְלָה עוֹד, הַצְּפִינּוּ, וַתִּקַּח-לוֹ תֵבַת גֹּמָא, וַתַּחְמְרָהּ בַּחֲמֵר וּבְצֹפֹת; וַתִּשֶׂם בָּהּ אֶת-הַיֶּלֶד, וַתִּשֶׂם בְּסוּף עַל-שֹׁפַת הַיָּאֵר. ד וַתִּתְצַב אַחֲתוֹ, מֵרָחֵק, לִדְעוּהָ, מִה-יַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ. ה וַתֵּרֶד בַּת-פַּרְעֹה לְרַחֵץ עַל-הַיָּאֵר, וַנִּעְרַתֶּיהָ הַלֵּכֶת עַל-יַד הַיָּאֵר; וַתֵּרָא אֶת-הַתֵּבָה בְּתוֹךְ הַסּוּף, וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת-אִמְתָּהּ וַתִּקְחָהּ. ו וַתִּפְתַּח וַתֵּרְאֶהוּ אֶת-הַיֶּלֶד, וְהִנֵּה-נֹעֵר בְּכֹה; וַתַּחְמַל עָלָיו--וַתֹּאמֶר, מִיִּלְדֵי הָעִבְרִים זֶה. ז וַתֹּאמֶר אַחֲתוֹ, אֶל-בַּת-פַּרְעֹה, הֲאֵלֶךְ וְקִרְאתִי לְךָ אִשָּׁה מִיִּנְקָת, מִן הָעִבְרִיִּים; וַתִּיַּנֵּק לְךָ, אֶת-הַיֶּלֶד. ח וַתֹּאמֶר-לָהּ בַת-פַּרְעֹה, לְכִי; וַתֵּלֶךְ, הָעַלְמָה, וַתִּקְרָא, אֶת-אִם הַיֶּלֶד. ט וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ בַת-פַּרְעֹה, הֲיִלְכִי אֶת-הַיֶּלֶד הַזֶּה וְהִינְקֵהוּ לִי, וְאֲנִי, אֶתֵּן אֶת-שְׂכָרְךָ; וַתִּקַּח הָאִשָּׁה הַיֶּלֶד, וַתִּנְיָקֵהוּ. י וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד, וַתִּבְאֵהוּ לְבַת-פַּרְעֹה, וְהִיא-לָהּ, לְבֵן; וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ, מֹשֶׁה, וַתֹּאמֶר, כִּי מִן-הַמַּיִם מָשִׂיתֵהוּ.</p>

Masechet Megillah 13a	מסכת מגילה יג.
<p>Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi, as he opened Chronicles, said this: All of your words are one, and we know how to examine them. (I Chronicles 4:18) "And his wife the Judahite bore Yered the father of Gedor, and Hever the father of Socho, and Yekutiel the father of Zanoah; and these are the sons of Bityah the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered took." Why was she called a Judahite? Because she renounced the worship of foreign [gods], as it is written (Exodus 2:5) "And the daughter of Pharaoh went down to cleanse herself in the river." And Rabbi Yohanan said that she went down to cleanse herself from the idols of her father's house. 'She bore'. But didn't she only raise [Moses]? To say to you that anyone who raises an orphan boy or girl in his house, the verse treats him as though he bore him [or her].</p>	<p>רבי שמעון בן פזי כי הוה פתח בדברי הימים אמר הכי כל דבריך אחד הם ואנו יודעין לדורשן (דברי הימים א ד, יח) ואשתו היהודיה ילדה את ירד אבי גדור ואת חבר אבי שוכו ואת יקותיאל אבי זנוח ואלה בני בתיה בת פרעה אשר לקח מרד אמאי קרי לה יהודיה על שום שכפרה בע"ז דכתיב (שמות ב, ה) ותרד בת פרעה לרחוץ על היאור ואמר רבי יוחנן שירדה לרחוץ מגילולי בית אביה ילדה והא רבויי רביתה לומר לך שכל המגדל יתום ויתומה בתוך ביתו מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו ילדו.</p>

Masechet Sotah 12b	מסכת סוטה יב:
<p>“And she saw the ark among the willows” (Exodus 2:5). Once her maidens saw that the daughter of Pharaoh was intending to save Moses, they said to her: Our mistress, the custom of the world is that when a king of flesh and blood decrees</p>	<p>ותרא את התיבה בתוך הסוף כיון דחזו דקא בעו לאצולי למשה אמרו לה גבירתנו מנהגו של עולם מלך בשר ודם</p>

<p>a decree, even if all the world does not fulfill it, at least his children and members of his household fulfill it, and yet you are violating the decree of your father. After the maidens tried to convince her not to save Moses, the angel Gabriel came and beat them to the ground and they died.</p>	<p>גוזר גזירה אם כל העולם כולו אין מקיימין אותה בניו ובני ביתו מקיימין אותה ואת עוברת על גזירת אביך בא גבריאל והבטן בקרקע.</p>
--	--

<p>Shemot Rabbah 1:24</p>	<p>שמות רבה א:כד</p>
<p>The Rabbis said, the daughter of Pharaoh was suffering from a very serious skin disease, and therefore she went down to the river to bathe. But when she touched the basket, she was healed. Therefore she had mercy on Moses and she loved him with a great love. “She opened it and saw him”-- it does not say ‘She saw’, rather, ‘She saw him’. Rebbe Yossi bar Chanina said that she saw the Shechinah with him.</p>	<p>רבנן אמרין, בת פרעה מצרעת היתה, לפיכך ירדה לרחץ, פיון שנגעה בתבה נתרפאת, לכך חמלה על משה ואהבה אותו אהבה יתרה: ותפתח ותראהו, ותרא לא נאמר אלא ותראהו, אמר רבי יוסי בר חנינא שראתה עמו שכינה.</p>

<p>Vayikra Rabbah 1:3</p>	<p>ויקרא רבה א:ג</p>
<p>God said to Bitya daughter of Pharaoh, ‘Moses was not your son and yet you called him your son. So too you are not My daughter, but I will call you My daughter’, as it is said: ‘These are the children of Bitya, BatYa (daughter of God)’ (Divrei HaYamim 1: 4:18): ‘That Mered took’-- this is Calev... And Moses had ten names, but God said to Moses, ‘By your life, of all of the names that you are called, I will only call you by the name that Bitya daughter of Pharaoh called you’. And she called him Moses, so He called him Moses.</p>	<p>אמר לה הקדוש ברוך הוא לבתיה בת פרעה, משה לא היה בנך וקראתו בנך, אף את לא את בתי ואני קורא אותך בתי, שנאמר: אלה בני בתיה, בת קה. (דברי הימים א ד, יח): אשר לקח [לו] מרד, זה כלב... ומשה, הרי עשרה, אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה חניך מכל שמות שנקראו לך איני קורא אותך אלא בשם שקראתך בתיה בת פרעה (שמות ב, י): ותקרא שמו משה, ויקרא אל משה.</p>

<p>Masechet Kallah Rabbati 3:25</p>	<p>מסכת כלה רבתי ג:כה</p>
<p>Seven entered into Gan Eden while still alive, and these are they:....Bitya daughter of Pharaoh...‘For I drew him from the water’: God said, ‘She brought redemption to Israel and carried them out to life. Behold, I will lengthen your life’.</p>	<p>שבעה נכנסו בחייהם לגן עדן אלו הם...ובתיה בת פרעה...כי מן המים משיתהו אמר הקב"ה והביאה ישועה לישראל והוציאן לחיים הריני מאריך לך בחיים.</p>

<p>Chana Kroll, <i>A Transformed Identity: The Story of Batyah</i></p>	
<p>It is significant that the name given to Moses by Batyah is a word based on the act of saving his life, and not on the feelings of mercy that Batyah experienced. This detail conveys one of the Torah’s central lessons quite beautifully: we can claim to feel a variety of things, but it is our actions in this world that have lasting impact. A person’s Hebrew name is intimately connected with the person’s soul, both its source and its mission in this world. Not only is Moses’ name homage to the woman who raised him; it also reflects the way he led his life. When G-d threatened to destroy the Jewish people after the sin of the golden calf, Moses demanded, “Erase me from Your book.” In fact, all his actions were based on self-sacrifice for his fellow Jews—a trait that he acquired from Batyah’s daring rescue of him as an infant.</p>	

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *The Light at the Heart of Darkness* 5770

Instead of “Pharaoh’s daughter” read “Hitler’s daughter” or “Stalin’s daughter” and we see what is at stake. Tyranny cannot destroy humanity. Moral courage can sometimes be found in the heart of darkness. That the Torah itself tells the story the way it does has enormous implications. It means that when we come to people we must never generalize, stereotype. The Egyptians were not all evil: even from Pharaoh himself a heroine was born. Nothing could signal more powerfully that the Torah is not an ethnocentric text; that we must recognise virtue wherever we find it, even among our enemies; and that the basic core of human values – humanity, compassion, courage – is truly universal. Holiness may not be; goodness is. Outside Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, is an avenue dedicated to righteous gentiles. Pharaoh’s daughter is a supreme symbol of what they did and what they were. I, for one, am profoundly moved by that encounter on the banks of the Nile between an Egyptian princess and a young Israelite child, Moses’ sister Miriam. The contrast between them – in terms of age, culture, status and power – could not be greater. Yet their deep humanity bridges all the differences, all the distance. Two heroines. May they inspire us.