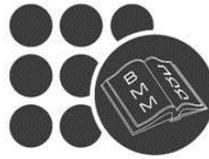


Parshat Shmot

Was Moses an Egyptian?

Was Pharaoh a Jew?



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Source 1: Shmot/Exodus 2:2-3; 5

2. The woman conceived and bore a son, and [when] she saw him that he was good, she hid him for three months.

ב. וַתֵּהָרֵהּ הָאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֵּרָא אֹתוֹ כִּי טוֹב הוּא וַתִּצְפְּנֵהוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה יָרְחִים:

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.

ג. וְלֹא יָכְלָה עוֹד הַצִּפְיָנוּ וַתִּקַּח לוֹ תֵבַת גִּמָּא וַתַּחְמְרָהּ בַּחֲמֶר וּבְצִפָּת וַתִּשֶׂם בָּהּ אֶת הַיֶּלֶד וַתִּשֶׂם בְּסוּף עַל שְׂפַת הַיָּאָר:

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.

ה. וַתֵּרֶד בַּת פַּרְעֹה לָרְחוֹץ עַל הַיָּאָר וַנְעֲרֹתֶיהָ הִלְכֹת עַל יַד הַיָּאָר וַתֵּרָא אֶת הַתֵּבָה בְּתוֹךְ הַסּוּף וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת אַמְתָּהּ וַתִּקְחָהּ:

Source 2: Sigmund Freud, Moses and Monotheism (emphases added)

The hero is the son of parents of the highest station, most often the son of a king. His conception is impeded by difficulties, such as abstinence or temporary sterility; or else his parents practise intercourse in secret because of prohibitions or other external obstacles. During his mother's pregnancy or earlier an oracle or a dream warns the father of the child's birth as containing grave danger for his safety. In consequence the father (or a person representing him) gives orders for the new-born babe to be killed or exposed to extreme danger; in most cases the babe is placed in a casket and delivered to the waves. The child is then saved by animals or poor people, such as shepherds, and suckled by a female animal or a woman of humble birth. When full grown he rediscovers his noble parents after many strange adventures, wreaks vengeance on his father and, recognized by his people, attains fame and greatness. The best known names in the series beginning with Sargon of Agade are Moses, Cyrus and Romulus. But besides these... many other heroes belonging to myth or poetry to whom the same youthful story attaches either in its entirety or in well recognizable parts, such as (Oedipus, Kama, Paris, Telephos, Perseus, Heracles, Gilgamesh, Amphion, Zethos and others.) The inner source of the myth is the so-called "family romance" of the child, in which the son reacts to the change in his inner relationship to his parents, especially that to his father. The child's first years are governed by grandiose over-estimation of his father; kings and queens in dreams and fairy tales. The royal family always represents, accordingly, the parents. Later on, under the influence of rivalry and real disappointments, the release from the parents and a critical attitude towards the father sets in. The two families of the myth, the noble as well as the humble one, are therefore both images of his own family as they appear to the child in successive periods of his life... It is all the more interesting to find that the myth of Moses' birth and exposure stands apart; in one essential point it even contradicts the others. We start with the two families between which the myth has cast the child's fate. We know that analytic interpretation makes them into one family, that the distinction is only a temporal one. In the typical form of the myth the first family, into which the child is born, is a noble and mostly a royal one; the second family, in which the child grows up, is a humble and degraded one, corresponding with the circumstances to which the interpretation refers. Only in the It is very different in the case of Moses. Here the first family—usually so distinguished—is modest enough. He is the child of Jewish Levites. But the second family—the humble one in which as a rule heroes are brought up—is replaced by the Royal house of Egypt; the princess brings him up as her own son. And here the new point of view may perhaps bring some illumination. It is that the first family, the one from which the babe is exposed to danger, is in all comparable cases the fictitious one; the second family, however, by which the hero is adopted and in which he grows up is his real one. If we have the courage to accept this statement as a general truth to which the Moses legend also is subject, then we suddenly see our way clear. Moses is an Egyptian—probably of noble origin— whom the myth undertakes to transform into a Jew. And that would be our conclusion!

Source 3: Ibn Ezra to Shmot 2:3

Yocheved did this because she said: "I cannot bear to see the death of the child." Or perhaps his sister prophesied to do this. And the thoughts of Hashem are deep – who can understand His secret? For Him alone reasons are established. Perhaps Hashem brought this about that Moshe would be raised in royalty so that his soul would be on a high level in the way of study and custom, and he would not be lowly and used to the house of slaves. Indeed, you see that he killed the Egyptian because he committed injustice...

ויוכבד עשתה כן, כי אמרה אל אראה במות הילד, אולי אחותו נתנבאה לעשות כן. ומחשבות השם עמקו, ומי יוכל לעמוד בסודו, ולו לבד נתכנו עלילות. אולי סבב השם זה שיגדל משה בבית המלכות להיות נפשו על מדרגה העליונה בדרך הלימוד והרגילות, ולא תהיה שפלה ורגילה להיות בבית עבדים. הלא תראה, שהרג המצרי בעבור שהוא עשה חמס. והושיע בנות מדין מהרועים,

Another reason is that if he grew amongst his brothers and they knew him from his youth, they would not be afraid of him, because they would think of him as one of them.

בעבור שהיו עושים חמס להשקות צאנן מהמים
שדלו.
ועוד דבר אחר, כי אלו היה גדל בין אחיו ויכירוהו
מנעוריו, לא היו יראים ממנו, כי יחשבוהו כאחד מהם

Source 4: Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *The Living Torah*, to Shmot

- In Egyptian, *Moshe* means a son. Thus, his naming is prefaced by a phrase that is literally translated, 'he became to her as a son' (cf. Ibn Ezra; *Hadar Zekenim*). Significantly, the suffix *moshe* is found (and exclusively so) in the names of many Pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty, such as Ka-moshe ('son of [Ra's] majesty'), Ach-moshe (Ahmose; 'son of the moon,' or 'the moon is born') and Toth-moshe (Thutmose; 'son of Toth').
- According to other ancient sources, the name Moses comes from the Egyptian *mo* (water) and *uses* (drawn from) (Josephus, *Antiquities* 2:9:6, *Contra Apion* 1:31; Philo *De Vita Moses* 2:17; Malbim).
- Some sources state that Moses' Egyptian name was Monius (Ibn Ezra; cf. Abarbanel; Josephus, *Contra Apion* 1:26, 28).

Source 5: Divrei Hayamim/Chronicles 1 4:18 and Rashi there

And his wife the Judahitess bore Jered, the father of Gedor, and Heber the father of Soco, and Jekuthiel, the father of Zanoah. And these are the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered married.

ואשתו היהדיה ילדה את ירד אבי גדר ואת חבר
אבי שוכו ואת יקותיאל אבי זנוח ואלה בני בתיה
בת פרעה אשר לקח מרד:

Caleb is Mered, who rebelled (שִׁמְרָד) against the counsel of the spies

כלב הוא מרד שמרד בעצת מרגלים

Source 6: Gemora Megilla 13a

Why is she called “**Yehudiya**”? Because she denied idol worship, as it says: “Pharaoh’s daughter went down to wash on the river” and Rabbi Yochanan said “She went down to wash from the idols of her father’s house.” “**She gave birth?**” But she raised him! This teaches you that who raises an orphan in his home, the Torah considers it as if he brought him into the world. “**Jered**” this is Moshe...

אמאי קרי לה יהדיה - על שום שכפרה בעבודה
זרה, דכתיב 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. ירד - זה משה

Source 7: Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Lecture at Oxford University: The Face of the Other, The Curious Nature of Biblical Narrative

Now look at this confrontation! You have Ramses and you have Mses, and now look at how the narrative suddenly changes its character, because Ra-Mses is the demiOgid, that is, he is the child of the sun god, the man who sees himself as god. And what is against Ramses? Just Mses, just a child. And all of a sudden we see the human drama, or the theological drama that is being described here... We are being inducted into one of the teachings here... that God made every human being in His image, which means that every child is holy, including a child of slaves... That drama is just below the surface, but we have to uncover it.

Source 8: Midrash Vayikra Rabba 1:3

The Holy One, Blessed is He, said to Bitya the daughter of Pharaoh “Moshe was not your son and you called him your son; I too, even though you are not my daughter I will call you my daughter.”...
The Holy One, Blessed is He, said to Moshe, “By your life! From all of the names that you are called, I will call you only by the name that Bitya, Pharaoh’s daughter, called you.”

אמ' לה הקדוש ברוך הוא לבתיה בת פרעה, משה לא
היה בנך וקראת אותו בנך, אף את לא את בתי ואני
קורא אותך בתי
אמ' לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה חייך מכל שמות
שנקראו לך איני קורא לך אלא בשם שקראתה לך
בתיה בת פרעה