

These are the Names

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The video version is available at: <https://youtu.be/ulgmgyoN538>

The Scripture reading is Exodus 1:1-2:25, 4:1-8

The title of this Torah portion is Shemot which means “names.” It is also the Hebrew name for the second book of the Torah focusing on the names of Jacob’s sons who went into Egypt. In Christianity, we call this book Exodus focusing on God taking the children of Israel out of Egypt. The central character of the book is Moses, whom God chose to lead His people out of Egypt. How do both names for this book lead us to the redeemer of Israel and, ultimately, the whole world?

The book of Shemot or Exodus begins with a listing of names and numbers.

Exodus 1:1-5 NKJV 1 Now these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt; each man and his household came with Jacob: 2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah; 3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; 4 Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. 5 All those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy persons (for Joseph was in Egypt already).

Each name of the children of Jacob reflects God’s answer to Leah or Rachel about blessing them with a son. When we take the meanings of the names, each name reflects an aspect of redemption. First Fruits of Zion in Shadows of the Messiah explains the Jewish tradition associated with these meanings.

The *Midrash Rabbah* explains that the Torah recites the names of the sons of Israel because their names all allude to the redemption.ⁱ

All of these names refer in some way to the gift of a son along with an additional meaning. The names begin with the six sons of Leah; Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. These names mean look or see, hear, join, praise, reward and dwelling place. God saw and heard the cry of His people.

Exodus 2:24-25 NKJV 24 So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. 25 And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them.

God joined Himself to the children of Israel in His declaration that they were His people.

Exodus 6:7 NKJV 7 'I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

The children of Israel would praise God for this deliverance.

Exodus 15:2 NKJV 2 The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him.

The children of Israel received their wages or reward when they left Egypt with the wealth of Egypt given to them.

Exodus 3:22 NKJV 22 "But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, namely, of her who dwells near her house, articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing; and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."

When they left Egypt, God said that He would dwell among them.

Exodus 25:8 NKJV 8 "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.

After the listing of Leah's children, the Torah list Rachel's son Benjamin whose name means "right hand." God would bring the children of Israel out of Egypt with His strong right hand.

Exodus 15:6 NKJV 6 "Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O LORD, has dashed the enemy in pieces.

The next four sons listed are the sons of the handmaidens of Leah and Rachel; Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher. These names mean judge, wrestling, troop or good fortune, and happy or blessed. God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt with judgment against Egypt.

Exodus 7:4 NKJV 4 "But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.

For the next two names, the Jewish sages engage in Hebrew word play. The name Naphtali which literally means wrestling sounds like "no'feth" the Hebrew word for honey-comb. The sages liken the name Naphtali to receiving the Torah which the Psalmist says is sweeter than the honey-comb.

Psalms 19:10 NKJV 10 More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Jacob's prophecy over Naphtali reinforces this by stating that Naphtali uses beautiful words. We can also look at the literal meaning of wrestling to refer to the contest between God and Egypt that God handily wins.

The name "Gad" sounds like the word "gad" which means coriander. The manna was described as being like a coriander seed.

Exodus 16:31 NKJV 31 And the house of Israel called its name Manna. And it was like white coriander seed, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.

So, with the name Gad, God provides for His people throughout their redemption. For the literal meaning of Gad as a troop, we can see that God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt in troops or armies.

Exodus 6:26 NKJV 26 These are the same Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said, "Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies."

As a result of God's redemption, the prophet Malachi says that the nations will call Israel blessed because of the inheritance of the Promised Land.

Malachi 3:12 NKJV 12 "And all nations will call you blessed, For you will be a delightful land," Says the LORD of hosts.

Moses declares that the nations will be astonished that a nation would have God so near to it.

Deuteronomy 4:7-8 NKJV 7 "For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? 8 "And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?"

Finally, the list ends with Joseph the son who was already in Egypt. Joseph means "add." God would add to this redemption a second redemption even greater than the first.

Jeremiah 16:14-15 NKJV 14 "Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that it shall no more be said, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,' 15 "but, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.' For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers.

All of these names also refer to the blessing of a son. We know that God sent His only son to be our redeemer. The entire meaning of the name Reuben, who is the first son listed in this account, means "Look, a son." The entire meaning of Joseph's name means "God will add." Rachel declared at Joseph's birth that God would add another son. So, the redemption begins and ends with the son and the return of the son!

The account in Exodus about Jacob's sons concludes with the statement that there were seventy descendants who lived in Egypt. The number seventy is a number associated with the nations of the earth. Moses explains the connection.

Deuteronomy 32:8 NKJV 8 When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, When He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the children of Israel.

The presence of the number seventy tells us that God's redemption includes the nations as well. Egypt was the land in which the children of Israel were in slavery to Pharaoh. The children of Israel were redeemed out of this slavery. Paul speaks of the redemption from the slavery to sin. Therefore, Egypt represents the world of sin and the flesh in which all of the sons of Adam are in slavery.

Romans 6:16-17 NKJV 16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? 17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

The deeper meaning of these opening verses of Exodus or Shemot is that the promise of redemption is, literally, from slavery in Egypt and, metaphorically, from slavery to sin.

After the death of the Pharaoh who knew Joseph and honored his memory and his family, a new Pharaoh rose to power who saw Joseph's family as a threat.

Exodus 1:8-10 NKJV 8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. 9 And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; 10 "come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land."

Pharaoh conscripted the Hebrew men to build cities for him keeping them from tending their flocks and farming their land, and, thus driving them into poverty and slavery. Despite everything Pharaoh did, the Hebrew people continued to multiply. Fearing their rising numbers, Pharaoh responded by declaring that all Hebrew boys would be thrown into the Nile River at birth.

At this time, Moses' future parents already had two children, Miriam and Aaron. Yet the Bible tells us that a man from the tribe of Levi married a woman from the same tribe.

Exodus 2:1-2 NKJV 1 And a man of the house of Levi went and took as wife a daughter of Levi. 2 So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months.

Weren't they already married? The Talmud explains that many of the Hebrew men divorced their wives so they would not be tempted into going into their wives and conceiving a child that would then be killed at birth.

First Fruits of Zion in [Shadows of the Messiah](#) explains the Jewish tradition about the marriage of Amram and Jochabed and the conception of Moses.

The Talmud states that Amram (the father of Moses) divorced his wife Jochabed after the birth of Aaron and Miriam. Later, he remarried her after receiving a prophecy instructing him to do so. What is more, the Talmud suggests Amram's wife had miraculously conceived during his absence—though she had known no man.ⁱⁱ

This calls to mind the situation with Joseph and Mary. When Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant, he planned to divorce her until he found out that the child was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 1:19-20 NKJV 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. 20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

Like Mary, Jochabed conceived a child. This child was described as a beautiful child. The literal translation reads that "she saw that he was good." This connects us back to the very creation when God looked on his creation and "saw that it was good." There is no neutral pronoun in the Hebrew, so the phrase could be read that "God saw that he was good." The apostle John opens his gospel with the statement that Yeshua was with God from the beginning and was an integral part of creation.

John 1:1-3 NKJV 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

The patterns connecting Moses to Yeshua are firmly established from the time each was conceived! That pattern is strengthened by the early threat to both of their lives. Moses, as one of the Hebrew boys born in Egypt, was threatened by Pharaoh. Yeshua, as a child born in Bethlehem was threatened by Herod. Both children are taken into the house of the enemy and sheltered in plain sight. Moses is taken into Pharaoh's own household while being nursed by his own mother. Yeshua is taken into Egypt which we learned is a symbol of the world or the flesh. Matthew declares that Yeshua coming out of Egypt is a fulfillment of all of the children of Israel coming out of Egypt.

Matthew 2:14-15 NKJV 14 When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

While Moses lived in Pharaoh's household, he received the training that a son of the house would receive. One day when he was forty years old, Moses saw the mistreatment of two fellow Hebrews and sought to

intervene killing the taskmaster who had mistreated them. However, these two Hebrews did not appreciate his intervention and taunted Moses.

Exodus 2:14 NKJV 14 Then he said, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" So Moses feared and said, "Surely this thing is known!"

This reminds us of Yeshua hanging on the cross with two men beside Him. One man accepted Yeshua's offer of salvation while the other man heaped scorn on Yeshua.

Luke 23:39 NKJV 39 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."

As a result of the Hebrews rejecting Moses' intervention, Moses was forced to flee Egypt. During his forty years of exile, conditions in Egypt got worse for the children of Israel. Finally, they cried out to God for help.

Exodus 2:23-25 NKJV 23 Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. 24 So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. 25 And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them.

God heard their cry and sent Moses to them. Moses didn't think that he would be accepted because of the children of Israel's earlier rejection. Moses asked God what he could show them so they would know that God sent him. God gave Moses two signs. The first was to turn his staff into a serpent and back into a staff again.

Exodus 4:2-5 NKJV 2 So the LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A rod." 3 And He said, "Cast it on the ground." So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. 4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail" (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand), 5 "that they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

This sign reminds us that the authority over creation that God had given to Adam represented by Moses' staff had been turned over to Satan when Adam sinned represented by the staff turning into a serpent. By grasping the serpent and having it turn back into a staff, Moses demonstrated the authority being reclaimed by a son of Adam! Once again, we see this redemption extending to the whole of creation!

Revelation 12:10 NKJV 10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

The second sign God gave to Moses to show the children of Israel was authority over uncleanness.

Exodus 4:6-7 NKJV 6 Furthermore the LORD said to him, "Now put your hand in your bosom." And he put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, like snow. 7 And He said, "Put your hand in your bosom again." So he put his hand in his bosom again, and drew it out of his bosom, and behold, it was restored like his other flesh.

This represents Messiah taking on the uncleanness of the people. Moses' hand turning leprous represents taking on the uncleanness of the people. His hand, then, becoming clean represents the cleansing power given to Messiah. Yeshua took on our uncleanness. Paul says He became sin for us.

2 Corinthians 5:21 NKJV 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

When Moses returned to Egypt and demonstrated these signs for the children of Israel, they accepted him as being sent by God. The Jewish people for the most part have not yet accepted Yeshua as being sent by God. Yeshua said that He would not return until His people blessed the one sent by God.

Luke 13:35 NKJV 35 "See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"

Moses, the redeemer sent by God, is the shadow of Yeshua the redeemer sent by God to bring not only Israel out of slavery to sin, but to offer redemption to the whole world. Yeshua came once as the suffering servant; He will return as the ultimate redeemer.

Hebrews 9:28 NKJV 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

So, we see that both names for this second book of the Torah point to God's redemption of man. Shemot tells us that story of redemption in the name of Jacob's sons. Exodus tells us that God will take us out of slavery and accept us as His people.

Study Questions:

1. What parallels can you see between the Exodus story and our salvation in Yeshua?
2. Moses spent forty years in Midian as a shepherd. Read Luke 15:1-7 and John 10:11-16. What do each of the characters represent? For example, who is the lost sheep and who is the wolf?
3. Moses is given signs to convince the children of Israel that God sent him. Yeshua said that He would only give the children of Israel one sign. What was the sign? (Matt 12:39-40) Compare the Messianic signs that God gave Moses to demonstrate and the sign that God gave Yeshua to demonstrate.
4. When Moses returned to Egypt from Midian, God sought to kill him. (Exodus 4:24-26) Why did God seek to kill Moses? What is the significance of the circumcision?
5. God waited until after Pharaoh made the conditions of the children of Israel worse than ever before He started to deal with Pharaoh (Exodus 5:22-6:1) Why did God wait?
6. What were some other mysteries of Messiah that were revealed in this teaching and this Torah portion? What new insight did you gain from this teaching? How do you respond to this new insight? How will you realign your life based on this new understanding?

Bonus: When the sons of Jacob are born, each son's name is explained in Gen. 29-30. When read together, we get: Look a son, God has heard my cry. My husband will become attached to me. I will praise the LORD. God has judged my case; I have wrestled and prevailed. Good fortune comes and I am blessed. God has given me my wages, has endowed me with a good dowry, and my husband will dwell with me. God will add another son; the son of my sorrow is the son of my right hand.

Discuss the Messianic implications in the names of the sons as given here and in Exodus 1:2-5

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ⁱ Torah Club. Shadows of the Messiah. Book Two. D. Thomas Lancaster. First Fruits of Zion. 800.775.4807. www.ffoz.org. Page 309

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