

Shemot

Exodus 1:1-6:1

This translation was taken from the JPS Tanakh

Chapter 1

¹ These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each coming with his household: ² Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah; ³ Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; ⁴ Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. ⁵ The total number of persons that were of Jacob's issue came to seventy, Joseph being already in Egypt. ⁶ Joseph died, and all his brothers, and all that generation. ⁷ But the Israelites were fertile and prolific; they multiplied and increased very greatly, so that the land was filled with them.

⁸ A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph. ⁹ And he said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are much too numerous for us. ¹⁰ Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase; otherwise in the event of war they may join our enemies in fighting against us and rise from the ground." ¹¹ So they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor; and they built garrison cities for Pharaoh: Pithom and Raamses. ¹² But the more they were oppressed, the more they increased and spread out, so that the [Egyptians] came to dread the Israelites.

¹³ The Egyptians ruthlessly imposed upon the Israelites ¹⁴ the various labors that they made them perform. Ruthlessly they made life bitter for them with harsh labor at mortar and bricks and with all sorts of tasks in the field.

¹⁵ The king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, ¹⁶ saying, "When you deliver the Hebrew women, look at the birthstool: if it is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live." ¹⁷ The midwives, fearing God, did not do as the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live. ¹⁸ So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, letting the boys live?" ¹⁹ The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women: they are vigorous. Before the midwife can come to them, they have given birth." ²⁰ And God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and increased greatly. ²¹ And because the midwives feared God, He established households for them. ²² Then Pharaoh charged

all his people, saying, "Every boy that is born you shall throw into the Nile, but let every girl live."

Chapter 2

¹ A certain man of the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. ² The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw how beautiful he was, she hid him for three months. ³ When she could hide him no longer, she got a wicker basket for him and caulked it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child into it and placed it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. ⁴ And his sister stationed herself at a distance, to learn what would befall him.

⁵The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe in the Nile, while her maidens walked along the Nile. She spied the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to fetch it. ⁶ When she opened it, she saw that it was a child, a boy crying. She took pity on it and said, "This must be a Hebrew child." ⁷ Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a Hebrew nurse to suckle the child for you?" ⁸ And Pharaoh's daughter answered, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. ⁹ And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will pay your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. ¹⁰ When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, who made him her son. She named him Moses, explaining, "I drew him out of the water."

¹¹ Some time after that, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his kinsfolk and witnessed their labors. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsmen. ¹² He turned this way and that and, seeing no one about, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. ¹³ When he went out the next day, he found two Hebrews fighting; so he said to the offender, "Why do you strike your fellow?" ¹⁴ He retorted, "Who made you chief and ruler over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Moses was frightened, and thought: Then the matter is known! ¹⁵ When Pharaoh learned of the matter, he sought to kill Moses; but Moses fled from Pharaoh. He arrived in the land of Midian, and sat down beside a well.

¹⁶ Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. They came to draw water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock; ¹⁷ but shepherds came and drove them off. Moses rose to their defense, and he watered their flock. ¹⁸ When they returned to their father Reuel, he said, "How is it that you have come back so soon today?" ¹⁹ They answered, "An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds; he even drew water for us and watered the flock." ²⁰ He said to his daughters, "Where is he then? Why did you leave the man? Ask him in to break bread." ²¹ Moses consented to stay with

the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah as wife. ²² She bore a son whom he named Gershom, for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land."

²³ 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. ²⁴ God heard their moaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. ²⁵ God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them.

Chapter 3

¹ 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. ² 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. ³ Moses said, "I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight; why doesn't the bush burn up?" ⁴ 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." ⁵ And He said, "Do not come closer. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. ⁶ I am," He said, "the God of your father, 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.

⁷ And the Lord 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. ⁸ I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them out of that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the region of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹ Now the cry of the Israelites has reached Me; moreover, I have seen how the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ Come, therefore, I will send you to Pharaoh, and you shall free My people, the Israelites, from Egypt."

¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and free the Israelites from Egypt?" ¹² And He said, "I will be with you; that shall be your sign that it was I who sent you. And when you have freed the people from Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain."

¹³ Moses said to God, "When I come to the Israelites and say to them 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" ¹⁴ And God said to Moses, "Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh." He continued, "Thus shall you say to the Israelites, 'Ehyeh sent me to you.'" ¹⁵ And God said further to Moses, "Thus shall you speak to the Israelites: The Lord, the God of your fathers, the

God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you:

This shall be My name forever,

This My appellation for all eternity.

¹⁶ "Go and assemble the elders of Israel and say to them: the Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has appeared to me and said, 'I have taken note of you and of what is being done to you in Egypt, ¹⁷ and I have declared: I will take you out of the misery of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey.' ¹⁸ They will listen to you; then you shall go with the elders of Israel to the king of Egypt and you shall say to him, 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, manifested Himself to us. Now therefore, let us go a distance of three days into the wilderness to sacrifice to the Lord our God.' ¹⁹ Yet I know that the king of Egypt will let you go only because of a greater might. ²⁰ So I will stretch out My hand and smite Egypt with various wonders which I will work upon them; after that he shall let you go. ²¹ And I will dispose the Egyptians favorably toward this people, so that when you go, you will not go away empty-handed. ²² Each woman shall borrow from her neighbor and the lodger in her house objects of silver and gold, and clothing, and you shall put these on your sons and daughters, thus stripping the Egyptians."

Chapter 4

¹ But Moses spoke up and said, "What if they do not believe me and do not listen to me, but say: The Lord did not appear to you?" ² The Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" And he replied, "A rod." ³ He said, "Cast it on the ground." He cast it on the ground and it became a snake; and Moses recoiled from it. ⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Put out your hand and grasp it by the tail" — he put out his hand and seized it, and it became a rod in his hand — ⁵ "that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, did appear to you."

⁶ The Lord said to him further, "Put your hand into your bosom." He put his hand into his bosom; and when he took it out, his hand was encrusted with snowy scales! ⁷ And He said, "Put your hand back into your bosom." — He put his hand back into his bosom; and when he took it out of his bosom, there it was again like the rest of his body. — ⁸ "And if they do not believe you or pay heed to the first sign, they will believe the second. ⁹ And if they are not convinced by both these signs and still do not heed you, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and it — the water that you take from the Nile — will turn to blood on the dry ground."

¹⁰ But Moses said to the Lord, "Please, O Lord, I have never been a man of words, either in times past or now that You have spoken to Your servant; I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." ¹¹ And the Lord said to him, "Who gives man speech? Who makes him dumb or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? ¹² Now go, and I will be with you as you speak and will instruct you what to say." ¹³ But he said, "Please, O Lord, make someone else Your agent." The Lord became angry with Moses, and He said, "There is your brother Aaron the Levite. He, I know, speaks readily. Even now he is setting out to meet you, and he will be happy to see you. ¹⁵ You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth — I will be with you and with him as you speak, and tell both of you what to do — ¹⁶ and he shall speak for you to the people. Thus he shall serve as your spokesman, with you playing the role of God to him, ¹⁷ And take with you this rod, with which you shall perform the signs."

¹⁸ Moses went back to his father-in-law Jethro and said to him, "Let me go back to my kinsmen in Egypt and see how they are faring." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace."

¹⁹ The Lord said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who sought to kill you are dead." ²⁰ So Moses took his wife and sons, mounted them on an ass, and went back to the land of Egypt; and Moses took the rod of God with him.

²¹ And the Lord said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the marvels that I have put within your power. I, however, will stiffen his heart so that he will not let the people go. ²² Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord: Israel is My first-born son. ²³ I have said to you, "Let My son go, that he may worship Me," yet you refuse to let him go. Now I will slay your first-born son."

²⁴ At a night encampment on the way, the Lord encountered him and sought to kill him. ²⁵ So Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin, and touched his legs with it, saying, "You are truly a bridegroom of blood to me!" ²⁶ And when He let him alone, she added, "A bridegroom of blood because of the circumcision."

²⁷ The Lord said to Aaron, "Go to meet Moses in the wilderness." He went and met him at the mountain of God, and he kissed him. ²⁸ Moses told Aaron about all the things that the Lord had committed to him and all the signs about which He had instructed him. ²⁹ Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the Israelites. ³⁰ Aaron repeated all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses, and he performed the signs in the sight of the people, ³¹ and the people were convinced.

When they heard that the Lord had taken note of the Israelites and that He had seen their plight, they bowed low in homage.

Chapter 5

¹ Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Let My people go that they may celebrate a festival for Me in the wilderness." ² But Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord that I should heed Him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go." ³ They answered, "The God of the Hebrews has manifested Himself to us. Let us go, we pray, a distance of three days into the wilderness to sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest He strike us with pestilence or sword." ⁴ But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you distract the people from their tasks? Get to your labors!" ⁵ And Pharaoh continued, "The people of the land are already so numerous, and you would have them cease from their labors!"

⁶ That same day Pharaoh charged the taskmasters and foremen of the people, saying, ⁷ "You shall no longer provide the people with straw for making bricks as heretofore; let them go and gather straw for themselves." ⁸ But impose upon them the same quota of bricks as they have been making heretofore; do not reduce it, for they are shirkers; that is why they cry, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God!' ⁹ Let heavier work be laid upon the men; let them keep at it and not pay attention to deceitful promises."

¹⁰ So the taskmasters and foremen of the people went out and said to the people, "Thus says Pharaoh: I will not give you any straw. ¹¹ You must go and get the straw yourselves wherever you can find it; but there shall be no decrease whatever in your work." ¹² Then the people scattered throughout the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. ¹³ And the taskmasters pressed them, saying, "You must complete the same work assignment each day as when you had straw." ¹⁴ And the foremen of the Israelites, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten. "Why," they were asked, "did you not complete the prescribed amount of bricks, either yesterday or today, as you did before?"

¹⁵ Then the foremen of the Israelites came to Pharaoh and cried: "Why do you deal thus with your servants? ¹⁶ No straw is issued to your servants, yet they demand of us: Make bricks! Thus your servants are being beaten, when the fault is with your own people." ¹⁷ He replied, "You are shirkers, shirkers! That is why you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.' ¹⁸ Be off now to your work! No straw shall be issued to you, but you must produce your quota of bricks!"

¹⁹ Now the foremen of the Israelites found themselves in trouble because of the order, "You must not reduce your daily quantity of bricks." ²⁰ As they left Pharaoh's presence, they came upon Moses and Aaron standing in their path, ²¹ and they said to them, "May the Lord look upon you and punish you for making us loathsome to Pharaoh and his courtiers — putting a sword in their hands to slay us." ²² Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, "O Lord, why did You bring harm upon this people? Why did You send me? ²³ Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has dealt worse with this people; and still You have not delivered Your people."

Chapter 6

¹ Then the Lord said to Moses, "You shall soon see what I will do to Pharaoh: he shall let them go because of a greater might; indeed, because of a greater might he shall drive them from his land."