

Fill Your Own Cup 5786
 Winter Series – Session Seven – The Sheep

Shemot: Moses The Good Shepherd, by Avner Moriah
<https://www.929.org.il/lang/en/page/53/post/68671>



1) Exodus 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 GOD 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 GOD saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him out of the bush: "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am."

שמות ג:א-ד

וימֹשֶׁה הָיָה רֹעֵה רֶעִה אֶת־צֹאן יִתְרוֹ חֹתֵנוֹ כִּהְיוֹ
 מִדְיָן וַיִּנְהַג אֶת־הַצֹּאן אַחֲרֵי הַמִּדְבָּר וַיָּבֹא
 אֶל־הַר הָאֱלֹהִים חֹרֵבָה׃
 וַיֵּרָא מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה אֵלָיו בְּלִבְתֹּאֵשׁ מִתּוֹךְ
 הַסִּנֵּה וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה הַסִּנֵּה בֹעֵר בְּאֵשׁ
 וְהַסִּנֵּה אֵינֶנּוּ אֶכְלָל׃
 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶסְרֶה־נָּא וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת־
 הַמַּרְאֶה הַגָּדֹל הַזֶּה מֵדַע לֹא־יִבְעַר
 הַסִּנֵּה׃
 וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי סָר לִרְאוֹת וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו
 אֱלֹהִים מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּנֵּה וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה מֹשֶׁה
 וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִי

2) Exodus Rabbah 2:2

Moses, too, the Holy One blessed be He tested him only with flocks. Our Rabbis say: When Moses, may he rest in peace, was herding Yitro's flock in the wilderness, a kid fled from him. He pursued it until it reached cover. Once it reached cover, it happened upon a pool of water, and the kid stopped to drink. When Moses reached it, he said: 'I didn't know that you were running due to thirst. You are tired.' He carried it on his shoulder and was walking. The Holy Blessed One said: 'You have the compassion to behave with the flocks belonging to flesh and blood in this manner; by your life, you will herd My flock, Israel.' That is: "Moses was herding."

...
Likewise, regarding Moses it says: "He led the flock deep into the wilderness," to remove them from theft [by grazing in fields belonging to others], and the Holy Blessed One took him to herd Israel, as it is stated: "You led Your people like a flock in the hand of Moses and Aaron" (Psalms 77:21).

שמות רבה ב:ב

וְאִף מִשֵּׁה לֹא בְחִנּוֹ הִקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶלְאֵ בְצֵאוֹ, אֲמָרוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ, כְּשֶׁהָיָה מִשֵּׁה רִבִּינוּ עֲלֵיו הַשְּׁלוֹם רוּעָה צֵאנוּ שֶׁל יִתְרוֹ בַּמִּדְבָּר, בָּרַח מִמֶּנּוּ גָדִי, וְרָץ אַחֲרָיו עַד שֶׁהִגִּיעַ לַחֲסִית, כִּינּוֹן שֶׁהִגִּיעַ לַחֲסִית, נִזְדַּמְנָה לוֹ בְּרִכָּה שֶׁל מַיִם, וְעָמַד הַגָּדִי לִשְׁתּוֹת, כִּינּוֹן שֶׁהִגִּיעַ מִשֵּׁה אֶצְלוֹ, אָמַר אֲנִי לֹא הֵייתִי יוֹדֵעַ שֶׁרָץ הֵייתָ מִפְּנֵי צָמָא, עָנַף אֶתָּה, הִרְכִּיבוֹ עַל כְּתֵפוֹ וְהָיָה מֵהַלֶּדֶךְ. אָמַר הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, יֵשׁ לָךְ רַחֲמִים לְנִהַג צֵאנוּ שֶׁל בָּשָׂר וְדָם כִּף חֲסִיד אֶתָּה תִרְעָה צֵאנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל, הָיִי: וּמִשֵּׁה הָיָה רוּעָה.

...
וְכֵן בְּמִשֵּׁה הוּא אוֹמֵר (שמות ג, א): וַיִּנְהַג אֶת הַצֵּאוֹ אַחֲרֵי הַמִּדְבָּר, לְהוֹצִיאָן מִן הַגָּזֵל, וּלְקַחוּ הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְרֵעוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (תהלים עז, כא) נְחִית כְּצֵאוֹ עִמָּךְ בְּיַד מִשֵּׁה וְאֶהְרֶן.

3) Exodus 12:3-11

(3) Speak to the whole community of Israel and say that on the tenth of this month each of them shall take a lamb to a family, a lamb to a household. (4) But if the household is too small for a lamb, let him share one with a neighbor who dwells nearby, in proportion to the number of persons: you shall contribute for the lamb according to what each household will eat. (5) Your lamb shall be without blemish, a yearling male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. (6) You shall keep watch over it until the fourteenth day of this month; and all the assembled congregation of the Israelites shall slaughter it at twilight. (7) They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they are to eat it. (8) They shall eat the flesh that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs. (9) Do not eat any of it raw, or cooked in any way with water, but roasted—head, legs, and entrails—over the fire. (10) You shall not leave any of it over until morning; if any of it is left until morning, you shall burn it. (11) This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly: it is a Passover offering to the LORD.

שמות יב:ג-יא

(ג) דַּבְּרוּ אֶל־כָּל־עַדְתֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בְּעֶשֶׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם אִישׁ שֶׁה לְבֵית־אֲבֹתָי שֶׁה לְבֵית־אֲבֹתָי: (ד) וְאִם־יִמְעָט הַבֵּית מֵהֵלֶת מִשֵּׁה וְלָקַח הוּא וּשְׂכֵנּוֹ הַקָּרֵב אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ בְּמִכְסֵת נֶפֶשׁוֹ אִישׁ לְפִי אֶכְלוּ תִכְסּוּ עַל־הַשֵּׁה: (ה) שֶׁה תְּמִים זָכָר בְּרִשְׁוֹה וְהָיָה לָכֶם מִן־הַכֹּבָשִׂים וּמִן־הָעִזִּים תִּקְחוּ: (ו) וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת עַד אַרְבַּעָה עֶשֶׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה וְשַׁחֲטוּ אוֹתוֹ כָּל קֶהֱל עַדְתֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים: (ז) וְלָקַחוּ מִן־הַדָּם וְנָתְנוּ עַל־שְׁתֵי הַמְּזוּזוֹת וְעַל־הַמַּשְׁקוּף עַל הַבָּתִּים אֲשֶׁר־יֹאכְלוּ אוֹתוֹ בָּהֶם: (ח) וְאָכְלוּ אֶת־הַבָּשָׂר בַּלֵּילָה הַזֶּה צְלִיאֵשׁ וּמִצּוֹת עַל־מֵרִים יֹאכְלֵהוּ: (ט) אֶל־תֹּאכְלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ נֶאֱ וּבָשָׂל מְבֻשָׁל בְּמַיִם כִּי אִם־צְלִיאֵשׁ רֹאשׁוֹ עַל־כַּרְעֵיו וְעַל־קַרְבּוֹ: (י) וְלֹא־תוֹתִירוּ מִמֶּנּוּ עַד־בֹּקֶר וְהִנְתַּר מִמֶּנּוּ עַד־בֹּקֶר בָּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרְפוּ: (יא) וְכַכָּה תֹאכְלוּ אוֹתוֹ מִתְּנִיכֶם חֲגוּרִים נֹעְלִיכֶם בְּרַגְלֵיכֶם וּמִקְלָכֶם בְּיַדְכֶם וְאָכַלְתֶּם אוֹתוֹ בַּחֲפָזוֹן פֶּסַח הוּא לַיהוָה:

4) Mechilta DeRebbe Yishmael 5:10-11

(Exodus 12:6) "And it shall be to you for a keeping":

Why does the taking of the Pesach precede its slaughtering by four days?

Said Rabbi Yehuda ben Betayra: "the verse states that the people did not hearken to Moshe (when he announced the impending redemption – see [Shemot 6:9](#)) because they were 'short of breath and burdened with hard labor!' Is it possible that a person could be informed of glad tidings and not rejoice? If a person were told of the birth of their child would they not rejoice? If a slave was informed that their master was going to free them, would they not rejoice? Why then did the people ignore Moshe's encouraging words? Rather, it was difficult for them to part with idolatry!"

"And it shall be to you for a keeping" – What does this mean?
 As it is written (Exodus 12:21), Moses told the Israelites to go and select sheep for themselves. But the Israelites questioned him (Exodus 8:22), asking: "Moses our teacher: "How can we slaughter animals that the Egyptians consider sacred, right in front of them, without them killing us?" Moses said to them: The very fact that God will protect you while you are taking the animals – should give you confidence that you will also be safe when you slaughter them.

מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל ה: י-יא

וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת, " (שמות ו, י) מִפְּנֵי מָה הַקִּדִּים הַכְּתוּב לְקִיחָתוֹ שֶׁלְפָסַח קִדָּם לְשַׁחֲיֻטָּו אַרְבַּעָה יָמִים

רַבִּי יְהוּדָה בֶּן בֵּיתְרָה אוֹמֵר: הָרִי הוּא אוֹמֵר: (שמות ו, ט) "וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה בְּן אֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה, מִקְצָר רוּחַ וּמֵעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה." וְכִי יֵשׁ לָךְ אָדָם שֶׁהוּא מִתְבַּשֵּׁר בְּשׂוֹרָה טוֹבָה וְאֵינוֹ שָׂמֵחַ? נוֹלֵד לָךְ בֶּן זָכָר, רַבָּךְ מוֹצִיאָךְ לַחֲרוּת, וְאֵינוֹ שָׂמֵחַ? אִם כֵּן לָמָּה נֹאמַר "וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה"? אֲלֹא שֶׁהָיָה קוֹשֶׁה בְּעֵינֵיהֶם לְפָרֵשׁ מֵעֲבֹדָה זָרָה...

"וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת", לָמָּה נֹאמַר: לָפִי שֶׁנֹּאמַר: (שמות יב, כא) "וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לְכָל זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם: מִשְׁכּוּ וּקְחוּ לָכֶם צֹאן לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתֵיכֶם וְשַׁחֲטוּ הַפֶּסַח." אָמְרוּ לוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמֹשֶׁה: (שמות ח, כב) רַבִּינוּ מֹשֶׁה! "הֵן נִזְבַּח אֶת תּוֹעֲבַת מִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֵיהֶם, וְלֹא יִסְקְלֵנוּ!" אָמַר לָהֶן: מִן הַיּוֹם שֶׁהוּא עוֹשֶׂה לָכֶם בְּמִשְׁחִיכָתוֹ, אֲתֵם יוֹדְעִים מָה בְּשַׁחֲיֻטָּו.

5) Rabbi Toba Spitzer (from Social Action Torah Teachings, socialaction.com)

Up to this point in the Exodus story, the Israelites have been essentially passive characters in the unfolding drama of their redemption. Marking their doors with lamb's blood is the first thing that the people of Israel are asked to do for themselves. This act thus becomes their first step towards freedom...Rashi notes, verse 13 says that "the blood will be a sign for you"--that is, a sign for the Israelites, not for God. But why did the Israelites need this sign?

In order to take a step towards becoming a free people, the Israelites had to mark themselves. An essential first step on any journey towards liberation is a willingness to identify oneself: to step up, to speak out, to mark oneself simultaneously as oppressed and as ready to break the bonds of oppression. By painting their doorways, the Israelites were both claiming their identity and at the same time making public their rebellion. They willingly risked the possibility that nothing would happen that fateful night, that their Egyptian oppressors might not be killed and would rise the next morning to see the signs of a slave revolt, with the doors of each participant blatantly marked. They marked themselves as slaves, and they marked themselves as free.

This is the challenge that our ancestors leave for us. We may no longer be slaves, but the world is still far from redeemed, and these questions still echo for us: What are the steps that we need to take on our own journey of liberation? How do we mark ourselves as both oppressed and free? What is the risk that we each are willing to take, to signal the beginning of new possibilities? As the Israelite slaves were willing to mark themselves and take that first step, so too may each of us be willing to stand out, speak up, and make our mark on the road towards freedom.