



## Shemot

*Shemot* (Exodus) 1:1 – 6:1

As *Shemot* (Exodus) begins, a new Pharaoh, one who does not remember Joseph, arises in Egypt. Soon, the Egyptians enslave the Israelites, making life bitter for them. The Pharaoh instructs midwives to kill all male children born to Israelite women and when they do not obey, orders all newborn boys drowned in the Nile River.

When *Moshe* (Moses) is born, his parents hide him for three months. When the infant can no longer be hidden, his mother sets him afloat in the Nile River in a wicker basket. Miriam, the boy's sister, herself destined to be a great leader of the Jewish people, is stationed to watch what will become of him. The Pharaoh's daughter finds the infant and resolves to save him. Miriam arranges for her own mother to nurse and tend him. She names him *Moshe*, meaning "drawn out" of the water. Soon he is brought to the Pharaoh's daughter to live in the palace as her son.

Moses never loses his connection to his people. When he is grown, he kills an Egyptian taskmaster who was beating a Hebrew slave, after which he flees to Midian.

One day, while Moses, now a shepherd, is tending his sheep, G-d appears to him in a burning bush. G-d instructs Moses that he is to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into the land of Canaan. When Moses protests his inadequacy for the task, G-d gives him signs through which he is to convince the Israelites and Pharaoh. His brother Aaron is appointed to be his spokesperson.

Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh demanding, in the name of G-d, that the Israelites be permitted to leave Egypt to worship G-d in the wilderness. Pharaoh refuses to heed them, and instead, increases the labor of the Israelites, refusing to provide them with the straw they need to make bricks.



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