

Sefer Shmot, chapter 2, verses 1 - 10

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Megila page 13a (also Sota page 12a)

R. Simon b. Pazzi once introduced an exposition of the Book of Chronicles as follows: All thy words are one,² and we know how to find their inner meaning. [It is written], And his wife the Jewess bore Jered the father of Gedor, and Heber the father of Socho, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah, and these are the sons of Bithya the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered took.³ Why was she [the daughter of Pharaoh] called a Jewess? Because she repudiated idolatry, as it is written, And the daughter of Pharaoh went down to bathe in the river,⁴ and R. Johanan, [commenting on this,] said that she went down to cleanse herself⁵ from the idols of her father's house. Bore: But she only brought him [Moses] up? This tells us that if anyone brings up an orphan boy or girl in his house, the Scripture accounts it as if he had begotten him.

(2) I.e., numerous names in the Book of Chronicles refer to the same person.

(3) I Chron. IV, 18.

(4) Ex. II, 5.

(5) By means of the tevillah or ceremonial bath taken by a proselyte.

Midrash Raba, Leviticus, part 1, section 3

(After bringing the material that we saw above from the Babylonian Talmud) And these are the sons of Bithiah, the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered took. R. Joshua of Siknin said in the name of R. Levi: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh: Moses was not your son, yet you called him your son; you, too, though you are not My daughter, yet I will call you My daughter, even as it is said, These are the sons of Bithiah, i.e. Bath Jah (the daughter of God). Whom Mered took. Mered, that is Caleb. R. Abba b. Kahana and R. Judah b. Simon [differed]. One of them said: [Caleb was called Mered] because he rebelled (marad) against the counsel of the spies,¹ and she [i.e. Pharaoh's daughter], too, rebelled against the counsel of her father.² Let, therefore, him who rebelled come and take in marriage her who rebelled. The other said: Because he [Caleb] delivered the sheep³ and she [viz. the daughter of Pharaoh] delivered the shepherd.⁴

(1) Num. XIV, 7 ff.

(2) Pharaoh had ordered the destruction of the Hebrew babes, yet she saved Moses.

(3) I.e. Israel, often compared to sheep.

(4) Moses.-Hence it was fitting for them to marry.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sota page 12b

And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river.² R. Johanan said in the name of R. Simeon b. Yohai: It teaches that she went down there to cleanse herself of her father's idols;³ and thus it says: When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion etc.⁴ And her maidens walked along etc.⁵ R. Johanan said: ... And she saw the ark among the reeds.² When [the maidens] saw that she wished to rescue Moses, they said to her, Mistress, it is the custom of the world that when a

human king makes a decree, though everybody else may not obey it, at least his children and the members of his household obey it; but thou dost transgress thy father's decree! Gabriel came and beat them to the ground.

(2) Ex. II, 5.

(3) Since immersion is part of the ceremony of conversion, it is assumed that she became a proselyte.

(4) Isa. IV, 4.

(5) Ex. II, 5.

Midrash Avkir (brought in Yalkut Shimoni)

“She took pity on it” – This teaches that her maidens told her to leave it alone, but God filled her with pity and came back to him.

Midrash Raba on Exodus, section one

23. TO BATHE IN THE RIVER (II, 5). To cleanse herself from the idols of her father's palace.¹ AND HER MAIDENS WALKED ALONG. R. Johanan said ...They said to her: Your Highness, it is the general rule that when a king makes a decree, his own family will obey that decree even if everyone else transgresses it; but you are flagrantly disobeying your father's command? ' Whereupon Gabriel came and smote them to the ground. ... The Rabbis say that Pharaoh's daughter was leprous and went down to bathe, but as soon as she touched the ark she became healed. For this reason did she take pity upon Moses and loved him with an exceeding love.⁹

(1) Otherwise, who wants to know why she came down to the river?

(9) Cf. Pirke d'R. El. XLVIII.

Pirkei dRebbi Eleazar, chapter 48

“And the daughter of Pharaoh went down to bath” – Everything is foreseen by the Holy One Blessed be He. Batya the daughter of Pharaoh was suffering with a very serious skin disease. She was not able to bath in hot water and that is why she went down to the river to bathe. She saw a child crying and she put forth her hand and took hold of him, and she was cured. She then said that this child is righteous and his very existence is life-giving. .. Therefore the daughter of Pharaoh merited to cling under the wings of the Divine Presence, and she is called the daughter of God.

Sefer Be'ar Mayim Chaim, Rav Chaim Torer of Teshranovitz, Shmot chapter 2

Verse 2 – For our sages have said (Sota page 12b) “It teaches that she went down to cleanse herself from the idols of her father”. Now how is this related to here? Indeed, it is known that Pharaoh and Egypt worshipped the Nile, as it is written in Midrash Shmot Raba 9, 9, and certainly the daughter of Pharaoh was just like all of them and she also worshipped the Nile, and therefore when she wanted to rectify this matter (her religious life), the Holy One Blessed be He arranged for her a way to rectify it through the same thing through which it was blemished, as our sages said (Tractate Zevahim page 116 and see Rashi there) concerning Rachav on the verse (Sefer Yehoshua 2:15) “ And she let them down by a rope”, that she said ‘Master of the Universe, through this I sinned and through this please have mercy upon me, because her clients used to come up to her by way of the rope through the window and she would hide them among the logs of wood, and through these very three things she merited to save the emissaries etc., because the righteous, through the very thing by which they sinned, make their amends, as our sages said (Midrash Shmot Raba 23, 3). And therefore, when she went down to cleanse herself

form the idols of her father, the Holy One Blessed be He led her towards the Nile to rectify by means of the same thing through which she had sinned, to save this righteous one from the waters of the Nile. But 'her maidens were walking by way of the Nile', meaning that they still saw themselves as bound by the Nile, and they wished to worship it, and therefore they began to incite against her not to save Moshe, until Gavriel came and smote them to the ground, as our sages say (Tractate Sota page 12b).

Verse 10 – And she said 'Master of the Universe, through this I sinned and through this forgive me, for I will perform a great and awesome mitzvah as this to save this righteous one. And that is why she called his name Moshe, for 'I drew him out of the water', for she wanted this name to be continually upon this righteous one so that this merit would continually arise to heaven, to have remembered this rectification which she performed through the same water by means of which she had sinned. And this is what our sages said (Midrash Shmot Raba 1, 26) 'Even though Moshe had many names, the only one one used in the whole Torah is the one that the daughter of Pharaoh gave him, and even the Holy One Blessed by He did not call him by a different name etc.' ... And therefore God used only this name for him, to show how the penitent is beloved before God, for the penitent is called beloved, and beautiful and well loved, a friend and a neighbor and a soul mate, as the Rambam may his memory by a blessing, wrote (Hilchot Teshuva chapter 7, halacha 6).

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sota page 12b

Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women?30 Why just of the Hebrew women? It teaches that they handed Moses about to all the Egyptian women but he would not suck.

Midrash haGadol

"Take this child and nurse it for me" – She said to her: I am fearful of the decree of your father. She said to her: It is for me that you are nursing him".

Sefer Shmot, chapter 1, verses 15 - 22

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sota, page 11b

And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives etc. Rav and Shmuel: one said, a woman and her daughter, and the other said, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. The one who said a woman and her daughter [identified them as] Yocheved and Miriam, and the one who said mother-in-law and daughter-in-law [identified them as] Yocheved and Elisheva [Aaron's wife].

Josephus, Antiquities II, IX, 2, 1st century CE

Alarmed thereat, the king, on this sage's advice, ordered that every male child born to the Israelites should be destroyed by being cast into the river, and that the labors of Hebrew women with child should be observed and watch kept for their delivery by the Egyptian midwives: for this office was, by his orders, to be performed by women who, as compatriots of the king, were not likely to transgress his will.

Midrash Tadshe – identifies Shifra and Puah as gentile proselytes

And there went a man of the house of Levi.¹⁸ Where did he go? R. Judah b. Zebina said that he went in the counsel of his daughter. A Tanna taught: Amram was the greatest man of his generation; when he saw that the wicked Pharaoh had decreed Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, he said: In vain do we labour. He arose and divorced his wife.¹⁹ All [the Israelites] thereupon arose and divorced their wives. His daughter said to him, Father, thy decree is more severe than Pharaoh's; because Pharaoh decreed only against the males whereas thou hast decreed against the males and females. Pharaoh only decreed concerning this world whereas thou hast decreed concerning this world and the World to Come.²⁰ In the case of the wicked Pharaoh there is a doubt whether his decree will be fulfilled or not, whereas in thy case, because thou art righteous, it is certain that thy decree will be fulfilled, as it is said: Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee!²¹ He arose and took his wife back; and they all arose and took their wives back.

(19) Since all the male children to be born would be killed, and the primary object of marriage was the procreation of sons.

(20) The drowned babes would live again in the Hereafter; but unborn children are denied that bliss.

(21) Job XXII, 28.

ספר באר מים חיים לרב חיים טורר מטשרנוביץ, שמות פקר ב' ב גם יאמר ותרד וגו' ונערותיה וגו', כי חז"ל אמרו (סוטה י"ב ע"ב) מלמד שירדה לרחוץ מגלולי אביה, ולכאורה מה זה שייכות לכאן ואמנם נודע כי פרעה ומצרים עבדו להיאור כמו שאיתא (שמות רבה ט', ט') ובודאי גם בת פרעה כמוה כמוהם היתה לעבוד אותו ועל כן כשרצתה לתקן דבר זה הזמין לה הקב"ה דבר לתקן באותו דבר שקלקלה כאשר אמרו חז"ל (בזבחים קט"ז, ועיין ברש"י שם) אצל רחב בפסוק (יהושע ב', ט"ו) ותורידם בחבל שאמרה רבונו של עולם באלו חטאתי ובאלו תמחול לי כי המנאפים היו עולין אליה בחבלים דרך החלון וטמנתן בפשתי העץ ובאותן שלושה דברים עצמן זכרה להציל השלוחים וכו' כי הצדיקים בדבר שחוטאים בו מתרצים כמאמר חז"ל (שמות רבה כ"ג, ג'). ועל כן כאשר ירדה לרחוץ מגלולי בית אביה הוליכה הקב"ה אל היאור לתקן בדבר שחטאה, להציל את הצדיק הזה ממימי היאור. אבל ונערותיה הולכות על יד היאור פירוש שעוד להם חלק ונחלה ביאור (כי יד לשון חלק הוא) שרצו בעבודתו, ועל כן התחילו להסיתה שלא תציל את משה עד שבא גבריאל וחבטן בקרקע כמאמר חז"ל (סוטה י"ב ע"ב) אשר נביא להלן:

פסוק י' - ד"ה ובפשט הכתוב נראה באומר ויהי לה לבן באמת היא הצילתו בכל לבבה כי היא ירדה ליאור לרחוץ מגלולי בית אביה כמאמר חז"ל (סוטה י"ב ע"ב), כי בית אביה היו עובדין להיאור והיא ירדה לרחוץ מזה והזמין לה הקב"ה כדרך הצדיקים שבדבר שחוטאין בו מתרצין (עיין שמות רבה כ"ג, ג') כאשר כתבנו למעלה, ואמרה רבונו של עולם בזה חטאתי בזה תמחול לי שאעשה דבר מצוה גדול ונורא כזה ביאור להציל את הצדיק הזה. ועל כן קראה שמו משה כי מן המים משיתיהו כי חפצה להיות שם הזה תמיד על הצדיק כדי שיהיה זכות זה עולה תמיד למרום להזכיר לה תיקון אשר עשתה במים בדבר שקלקלה בו. ולזה אמרו חז"ל (שמות רבה א', כ"ו) אף על פי שהרבה שמות היה לו למשה לא נקבע לו שם בכל התורה אלא כמו שקראתו בתיה בת פרעה ואף הקב"ה לא קראהו בשם אחר וכו' עד כאן. והכל עבור זה כי היא כיוונה להיות תמיד השם הזה עולה לזכרון לפני ה' לומר כי מן המים משיתיהו על אשר חטאתי במים תקנתי במים הזה, ולכן קבע לו ה' שם זה לחביבות בעל תשובה לפני ה' שנקרא חביב ונחמד אוהב וריע קרוב וידיד כמו שכתב הרמב"ם ז"ל (בהלכות תשובה פרק ז' הלכה ו'):