

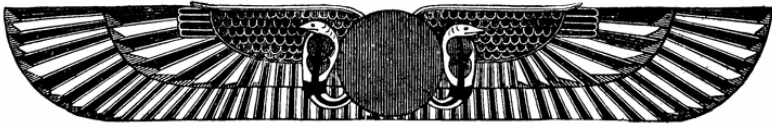
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እናቀርባለን።**

We present our many thanks to Our God-Father
and to Our King of Kings, to His Imperial
Majesty, HAILE SELASSIE I's Kingdome in the
Glorious name of *Iyesus Kristos*, Our Saviour –
Our Lord of Lords.

AMEN AND AMEN.



**THE BIBLE SOCIETY OF
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*Our mission is to bring good tidings, that publisheth peace;
that bringeth good tidings of good, that saith to Zion, Thy God
reigneth. – Isaiah 52:7*

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NAM ET IPSA SCIENTIA POTESTAS EST¹

«አውቀትም ደግሞ በራሱ ሥልጣን ሆኖ»²

¹ Often, translated as “Knowledge is power,” an aphorism borrowed and much repeated, based upon Francis Bacon’s original, “*for Knowledge too is itself power.*”

² Ras Iadonis Tafari’s accurate rendering, and translation into the AMHARIC, of the LATIN phrase favoured and quoted above by Sir Bacon.

שְׁמוֹת

SHEMOT

HEBREW BOOK OF THE
EXODUS:

TORAH PORTION VOL.2,

Introduction & compilation

by

Ras Iadonis Tafari



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INTRODUCTORY NOTES

WE, THE BLACK JEWS of the world, along with the progressive Rastafari and collectively, the “Ethiopian-Hebrews,” i.e. *the Beta-Israel (or, Falashas³) of the West*, for more than a two to three millennia prior to the other “Jews”, the other ‘Israel⁴’; also have a written testimony to our Divine Heritage, possessing our own ancient religious, metaphysical and spiritual literature that endeavours to explain, clarify and explicate the revealed word of scripture, the Holy Bible. Amongst the other “Israel,” or European converts called ‘Jews,’ these writings have been expanded upon and preserved in voluminous commentaries to the Torah, the Hebrew Bible, and thus further divided into various categories according to content. Overall, these traditional oral interpretations, scriptural ordinances, were compiled by certain Rabbis about A.D. 200; according to Orthodox Judaism, Judaic Studies and Yeshiva Schooling , i.e. **TALMUD, MISHNA, GEMARA, HAGGADAH, HALACHA**, and **THE KABBALAH**, inclusive of so-called **THE ZOHAR** and other like and similar ‘Extra-biblical’ and interlinear writings by distinguished (European) Jewish Rabbis.

THE FOLLOWING COMPILATIONS of each Book of the Hebrew Bible’s Weekly Torah Portions are intended as a basic and preliminary introduction to modern “JUDAISM”, as it presently, that is to say, the current form based predominantly upon the prevailing European-Jewish, i.e. Germanic-Polish tradition, commentaries, interpretations and related studies, that

³ *Falashas*, from the Ge’ez/Ethiopic root **ፈለሰ** *fellese* – meaning “to separate, go away, depart, emigrate, to secede, split off (from)”; **ፍልሰተ ባቢሎን** *filsete babilon*, the Babylonian exile; **ፈለሰ** *felasi* – “an exile, alien, pilgrim.” The implication here, is that, namely the “lost sheep” in the Americas and the Caribbean are also “Falashas of the West,” or Exilist in the Trans-Ethiopic, falsely called “TransAtlantic,” Ocean Slave Trade of the 16th and 17th centuries.

⁴ Particularly, the Israelis, i.e. those who also call themselves ‘Jews,’ the ‘wild olive grafted in,’ (Romans 11:17, 24) namely the so-called Gypsies, Khazars or better known, ‘European Jews’ (Ashkenaz), et al, who history documents converted to a form of Judaism after 70 A.D. and the global dispersion and later captivity of the ethnically African, or ‘Black’ Hebrews; see Rudolph R. Winsor’s, *From Babylon to Timbuktu*.

collectively are derived from what is called the Babylonian Talmud. Also inclusive in these Wikipedia free encyclopedia references are certain Sephardic, or Spanish-Jewish alternative points-of-view to the Torah studies that are highly instructive, especially in our exploration of the wide diversity of possible interpretation that have, and greatly continues to define modern Judaism.

We, the BLACK JEWS, are very conscious and aware of the fact that certain Black Hebrews and Ethiopian Jews may rightly object to the preponderance of whitewashed art and images in this volume, the majority created by the “wild olive tree” (Romans 11:17, 24), European-Jews, Anglo-Europeans and Romanist/Catholic pseudonymous Christians, all that were grafted, over nearly 16 centuries, since the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., into our natural vine tree, i.e. the True and Ancient Judaism that was Black, Egyptian/Kamite or Ethiopic in its primary origination, racial ethnicity, linguistic composition and biblical revelation. This we hope to, and intend to, by the Almighty’s help, sufficiently prove in our related volumes containing our Ethiopian-Hebrew commentaries (Amos 9:7) and exegesis, mainly based upon the various writings and research, by authors such as Mr. Gerald Massey, and others, both past and present, Black and White, who wrote (or, whose works and documents were subsequently translated) in English. We, for our part, have also studied, translated and interpreted from many of the original documents and manuscripts in order to compose our own extensive research and reconstruction of the Ethiopic Torah (Orit) from several of the ancient Black Race’s biblical languages (i.e., Kamo-Semitic) of the antiquity: namely, Ancient Egyptian (Hieroglyphs), Ethiopic (Western Semitic), Ge’ez, Tigre, biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, Assyrian (Eastern Semitic), Sabaeen, Oromo (or, Galla) dialects and even archaic Amharic.

HOWEVER, we must be greater in spirit and broader in outlook and approach this sensitive subject matter by dealing with the facts on the ground and what is believed, or thought to be the case by the other Jews, and then present our case and the other side of this suppressed, neglected and avoided controversial story, our Black “Jewish” or African-based, and Ethiopian-

Hebrew story. **The views presented in this volume are not our own** and do not necessarily reflect the Ethiopian-Hebraic interpretation to the Old Testament, or Ethiopic Orit (Torah) in particular, but is being compiled into these five volumes: Bereishit, Shemot, Vayikra, Bamidbar, and Devarim (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) and printed separately, largely due to side per volume. Nevertheless, this study, and these volumes have been compiled by THE LION OF JUDAH SOCIETY, and are designed for the Brotherhood of the Rastafari disciples and Ethiopian-Hebrew faithful to get better acquainted with the primary and prevailing opinions on Judaism and the interpretations of the Hebrew Bible.

THE TORAH PORTIONS IN THE SECOND BOOK, CALLED SHEMOT (Hebrew Exodus) are composed 11 portions, including the first portion, or self-named parsha of **Shemot • Va'eira • Bo • Beshalach • Yitro • Mishpatim • Terumah • Tetzaveh • Ki Tisa • Vayakhel • Pekudei**.

As ethnic, or “Black” Hebrews, and Afro-Israelities, we have several well-attested to, thoroughly researched and duly documented ancient Ethiopian books and manuscripts (MSS), that thankfully help serve as resource and reference materials, comprising what the present author and compiler has suitably named, the Ethiopic Talmud, many of these written in the Ge'ez language. These manuscripts assist us in forming our own Ethiopian-Hebrew and Black Jewish commentaries and exegeses, from a non-Eurocentric perspective. A few of the main Ethiopic Talmudic commentary source materials and titles are namely, but not strictly limited to, the following volumes:

The Queen of Sheba and Her only son Menyelek (Kebra Nagast), The Book of Jubilees, or Little Genesis (Kufale), the Book of Enoch (Ethiopic Henok), Gadla Adam (Conflict of Adam), Ancient Egyptian Wisdom & Kamite Mysteries (Gerald Massey's A Book of the Beginnings, Natural Genesis, Ancient Egypt: Light of the World, and Lectures), Lefafa Sedeq: Bandlet of Righteousness, to only name a few of the many texts, that we, by the Grace of the Almighty, soon expect to compose our Ethiopian-Hebrew commentaries and

exegesis based upon both the “Wisdom of the Egyptians (or, Egypt)” (Acts 7:22) coupled with our Judeo-Christian Ethiopian “Divine Heritage”. Yet, this is still to come, and we hope and pray to the Most High for guidance, perseverance and life eternal. Amen.

ONE FINAL NOTE is in order here, namely: There are several smaller volumes, some books, many fragments and a host of rare manuscripts written in Ethiopic, some of them original compositions, and others allegedly based on, what foreign scholars consider to be, translations from *Coptic* (or, Sabaeen?), *Hebrew*, *Syretic* (i.e. Arabic) and early *Greek* (κοινε); thus, these are not listed and enumerated in detail here because of the numerous and contradictory names, codices and other cataloging systems used by various museums and libraries, namely in England, France, Germany and elsewhere that have arbitrarily assigned to these Ethiopic writings, dubiously misappropriated from Ethiopia (sometime referred to by Orientalists as ‘Abyssinia’) over the past four to five centuries, by conservative estimations. Due to the anonymity of these Ethiopic ancient, cultural, historical and biblical documents, coupled the lack of access, and therefore the availability, presently to verify and thus corroborate these records, we cannot confirm all of the details without further study, but will reference, and quote, where possible, from any and all available sources and resources in circulation.

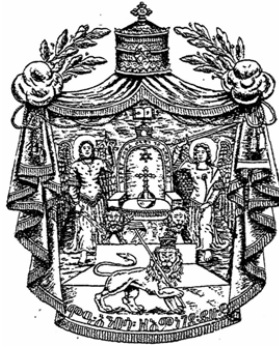
RAS IADONIS TAFARI ⁵

Chairman, LOJS

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & FINE-ARTS

c. 28th October, 2011

⁵ *Alius dictus*, **Debtera: Rasiadonis Tafari**, *A Sometime Scholar of LOJS' Black Christ College*; H.I.M. HAILE SELASSIE I University in Exile [USA], *An Ethiopian-Hebrew Scholar*; and Keeper of the *Department of Ethiopic & Amharic Antiquities* in the Black Lion Museum, USA-ET.



የሐገስ ራክዬ ምዕራፍ ፮ ቁጥር ፮
«ከሽማግሌዎቹም አንዱ። አታልቅሰኝ እነሆ፤ ከይሁዳ ነገድ
የሆነው አገበሳ ኦርሱም የዳዊት ሥር መጽሐፉን ይዘረጋ
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አለኝ።»

REVELATION CHAPTER 5, VERSE 5
“And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the
Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath
prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals
thereof.”

Shemot (parsha)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Jump to: [navigation](#), [search](#)

Shemot, **Shemoth**, or **Shemos** (שְׁמוֹת — [Hebrew](#) for “names,” the second word, and first distinctive word, of the parsha) is the thirteenth [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parsha*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the first in the [book of Exodus](#). It constitutes [Exodus 1:1–6:1](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it the thirteenth [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in late December or January.



Pharaoh's daughter finds Moses in the [Nile](#) (1886 painting by [Edwin Long](#))

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



Israel in Egypt (1867 painting by [Edward Poynter](#))



Pharaoh Notes the Importance of the Jewish People (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

[edit] Affliction in Egypt

Seventy descendants of [Jacob](#) came down to [Egypt](#), and the [Israelites](#) were fruitful and filled the land. ([Exodus 1:1–7.](#)) [Joseph](#) and all of his generation died, and a new [Pharaoh](#) arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph. ([Exodus 1:6–8.](#)) He told his people that the Israelites had become too numerous and required shrewd dealing, lest they multiply and in a war join Egypt's enemies. ([Exodus 1:9–10.](#)) So the Egyptians set taskmasters over the Israelites to afflict them with burdens — and the Israelites built store-cities for Pharaoh, [Pithom](#) and [Raamses](#) — but the more that the Egyptians afflicted them, the more they multiplied. ([Exodus 1:11–12.](#)) The Egyptians embittered the Israelites' lives with hard service in brick and mortar and in the field. ([Exodus 1:14.](#))

Pharaoh told the Hebrew [midwives Shiphrah](#) and [Puah](#) that when they delivered Hebrew women, they were to kill the sons, but let the daughters live. ([Exodus 1:15–16.](#)) But the midwives feared [God](#), and disobeyed Pharaoh, saving the baby boys. ([Exodus 1:17.](#)) Pharaoh asked the midwives why they had saved the boys, and the midwives told Pharaoh that the Hebrew women were more vigorous than the Egyptian women and delivered before a midwife could get to them. ([Exodus 1:18–19.](#)) God rewarded the midwives because they feared God, and God made them houses. ([Exodus 1:20–21.](#)) The Israelites continued to multiply, and Pharaoh charged all his people to cast every newborn boy into [the river](#), leaving the girls alive. ([Exodus 1:21–22.](#))



The Finding of Moses (1904 painting by [Lawrence Alma-Tadema](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Baby Moses



Pharaoh's Daughter Receives the Mother of Moses (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

A [Levite](#) couple had a baby boy, and the woman hid him three months. ([Exodus 2:1–2.](#)) When she could not longer hide him, she made an ark of bulrushes, daubed it with slime and pitch, put the boy inside, and laid it in river. ([Exodus 2:3.](#)) As his sister watched, [Pharaoh's daughter](#) came to bathe in the river, saw the ark, and sent her handmaid to fetch it. ([Exodus 2:4–5.](#)) She opened it, saw the crying boy, and had compassion on him, recognizing that he was one of the Hebrew children. ([Exodus 2:6.](#))

His sister asked Pharaoh's daughter whether she should call a [nurse](#) from the Hebrew women, and Pharaoh's daughter agreed. ([Exodus 2:7.](#)) The girl called the child's mother, and Pharaoh's daughter hired her to nurse the child for her. ([Exodus 2:8–9.](#)) When the child grew, his mother brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him as her son, calling him [Moses](#), because she drew him out of the water. ([Exodus 2:10.](#))

When Moses grew up, he went to his brethren and saw their burdens. ([Exodus 2:11.](#)) He saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, he looked this way and that, and when he saw no one, he struck the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. ([Exodus 2:11–12.](#)) When he went out the next day, he came upon two Hebrew men fighting, and he asked the wrongdoer why he struck his fellow. ([Exodus 2:13.](#)) The man asked Moses who had made him king, asking him whether he intended to kill him as he did the Egyptian, so Moses realized that his deed was known. ([Exodus](#)

[2:14.](#)) When Pharaoh heard, he sought to kill Moses, but Moses fled to [Midian](#), where he sat down by a well. ([Exodus 2:15.](#))



Moses Defending the Daughters of Jethro (painting circa 1523 by [Rosso Fiorentino](#))



Moses and the Daughters of Jethro (painting circa 1660–1689 by [Ciro Ferri](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Moses in Midian

The priest of Midian's seven daughters had come to water their father's flock, but shepherds drove them away. ([Exodus 2:16–17.](#)) Moses stood up and helped the daughters, and watered their flock. ([Exodus 2:17.](#)) When they came home to their father [Reuel](#), he asked how they were able to come home so early, and they explained how an Egyptian had delivered them from the shepherds, and had also drawn water for the flock. ([Exodus 2:18–19.](#)) Reuel then asked his daughters why they had left the man there, and told them to call him back to join them for a meal. ([Exodus 2:20.](#))

Moses was content to live with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter [Zipporah](#) to marry. ([Exodus 2:21.](#)) Moses and Zipporah had a baby boy, whom Moses called [Gershom](#), saying that he had been a stranger in a strange land. ([Exodus 2:22.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) The calling of Moses

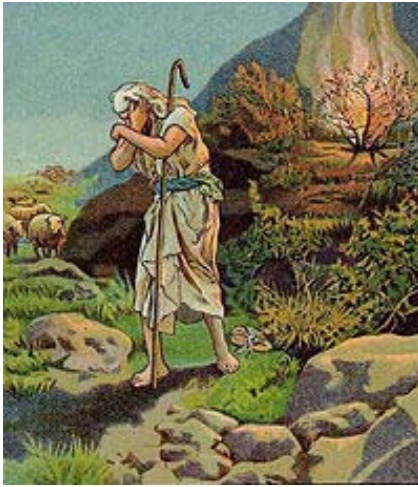
The Pharaoh died, and the Israelites groaned under their bondage and cried to God, and God heard them and remembered God's [covenant](#) with [Abraham](#), [Isaac](#), and Jacob. ([Exodus 2:23–25.](#))

When Moses was keeping his father-in-law [Jethro](#)'s flock at the mountain of God, Horeb (another name for the [Biblical Mount Sinai](#)), the [angel](#) of God appeared to him in a flame in the midst of a [bush that burned](#) but was not consumed. ([Exodus 3:1–2.](#))

God called to Moses from the bush, and Moses answered: “Here I am.” ([Exodus 3:4.](#)) God told Moses not to draw near, and to take off his shoes, for the place on which he stood was [holy](#) ground. ([Exodus 3:5.](#)) God identified as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, reported having seen the Israelites’ affliction and heard their cry, and promised to deliver them from Egypt to [Canaan](#), a land flowing with milk and honey. ([Exodus 3:6–8.](#)) God told Moses that God was sending Moses to Pharaoh to bring the Israelites out of Egypt, but Moses asked who he was that he should do so. ([Exodus 3:10–11.](#)) God told Moses that God would be with him, and after he brought them out of Egypt, he would serve God on that mountain. ([Exodus 3:12.](#))



Moses at the Burning Bush (painting circa 1615–1617 by [Domenico Fetti](#))

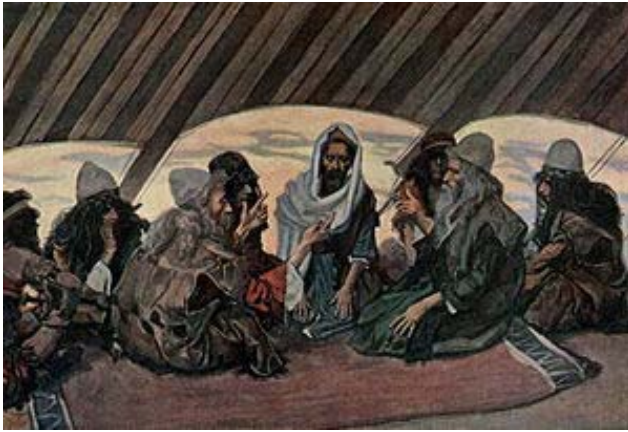


The Call of Moses (illustration from a Bible card published 1900 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

Moses asked God whom he should say sent him to the Israelites, and God said “I Will Be What I Will Be” (*Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh*), and told Moses to tell the Israelites that “I Will Be” (*Ehyeh*) sent him. ([Exodus 3:13–14](#).) God told Moses to tell the Israelites that the Lord (*YHWH*), the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had sent him, and this would be God’s Name forever. ([Exodus 3:15](#).) God directed Moses to tell [Israel](#)’s elders what God had promised, and predicted that they would heed Moses and go with him to tell Pharaoh that God had met with them and request that Pharaoh allow them to go three days’ journey into the [wilderness](#) to [sacrifice](#) to God. ([Exodus 3:16–18](#).) God knew that Pharaoh would not let them go unless forced by a mighty hand, so God would strike Egypt with wonders, and then Pharaoh would let them go. ([Exodus 3:19–20](#).) God would

make the Egyptians view the Israelites favorably, so that the Israelites would not leave empty handed, but every woman would ask her neighbor for jewels and clothing and the Israelites would strip the Egyptians. ([Exodus 3:21–22.](#))

Moses predicted that they would not believe him, so God told him to cast his rod on the ground, and it became a [serpent](#), and Moses fled from it. ([Exodus 4:1–3.](#)) God told Moses to take it by the tail, he did so, and it became a rod again. ([Exodus 4:4.](#)) God explained that this was so that they might believe that God had appeared to Moses. ([Exodus 4:5.](#)) Then God told Moses to put his hand into his bosom, he did, and when he took it out, his hand was [leprous](#), as white as snow. ([Exodus 4:6.](#)) God told him to put his hand back into his bosom, he did, and when he took it out, it had returned to normal. ([Exodus 4:7.](#)) God predicted that if they would not heed the first sign, then they would believe the second sign, and if they would not believe those two signs, then Moses was to take water from the river and pour it on the land, and the water would become blood. ([Exodus 4:8–9.](#)) Moses protested that he was not a man of words but was slow of speech, but God asked him who had made man's mouth, so Moses should go, and God would teach him what to say. ([Exodus 4:10–12.](#)) Moses pleaded with God to send someone else, and God became angry with Moses. ([Exodus 4:13–14.](#)) God said that Moses' well-spoken brother [Aaron](#) was coming to meet him, Moses would tell him the words that God would teach them, he would be Moses' spokesman, and Moses would be like God to him. ([Exodus 4:14–16.](#))



Jethro and Moses (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Moses returned to Jethro and asked him to let him return to Egypt, and Jethro bade him to go in peace. ([Exodus 4:18.](#)) God told Moses that he could return, for all the men who sought to kill him were dead. ([Exodus 4:19.](#)) Moses took his wife and sons and the rod of God and returned to Egypt. ([Exodus 4:20.](#)) God told Moses to be sure to perform for Pharaoh all the wonders that God had put in his hand, but God would harden his [heart](#), and he would not let the people go. ([Exodus 4:21.](#)) And Moses was to tell Pharaoh that Israel was God's firstborn son, and Pharaoh was to let God's son go to serve God, and should he refuse, God would kill Pharaoh's firstborn son. ([Exodus 4:22–23.](#))



Moses and Aaron Speak to the People (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[\[edit\]](#) Circumcision on the way

At the lodging-place along the way, God sought to kill him. ([Exodus 4:24.](#)) Then [Zipporah took a flint](#) and [circumcised](#) her son, and touched his legs with it, saying that he was a bridegroom of blood to her, so God let him alone. ([Exodus 4:25–26.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Meeting the elders

God told Aaron to go to the wilderness to meet Moses, and he went, met him at the mountain of God, and kissed him. ([Exodus 4:27.](#)) Moses told him all that God had said, and they gathered the Israelite elders and Aaron told them what God had said and performed the signs. ([Exodus 4:28–30.](#)) The people believed, and

when they heard that God had remembered them and seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshipped. ([Exodus 4:31.](#))



Moses Speaks to Pharaoh (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[\[edit\]](#) Moses before Pharaoh

Moses and Aaron told Pharaoh that God said to let God's people go so that they might hold a feast to God in the wilderness, but Pharaoh asked who God was that he should let Israel go.

([Exodus 5:1–2.](#)) They said that God had met with them, and asked Pharaoh to let them go three days into the wilderness and sacrifice to God, lest God fall upon them with pestilence or the sword. ([Exodus 5:3.](#)) Pharaoh asked them why they caused the people to rest from their work, and commanded that the taskmasters lay heavier work on them and no longer give them [straw to make brick](#) but force them to go and gather straw for themselves to make the same quota of bricks. ([Exodus 5:4–11.](#))

The people scattered to gather straw, and the taskmasters beat the Israelite officers, asking why they had not fulfilled the quota of brick production as before. ([Exodus 5:12–14.](#)) The Israelites cried to Pharaoh, asking why he dealt so harshly with his servants, but he said that they were idle if they had time to ask to go and sacrifice to God. ([Exodus 5:15–19.](#)) So the officers met Moses and Aaron as they came from meeting Pharaoh and accused them of making the Israelites to be abhorrent to Pharaoh and his servants and to give them a weapon to kill the people. ([Exodus 5:20–21.](#)) Moses asked God why God had dealt so ill with the people and why God had sent him, for since he came to Pharaoh to speak in God’s name, he had dealt ill with the people, and God had not delivered the people. ([Exodus 5:22–23.](#)) And God told Moses that now he would see what God would do to Pharaoh, for by a strong hand would he let the people go, and by a strong hand would he drive them out of his land. ([Exodus 6:1.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-Biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 1

The report of [Exodus 1:7](#) that the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied echoes [Genesis 47:27.](#)



Moses and Jethro (painting circa 1635 by [Jan Victors](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 2

The meeting of Moses and Zipporah at the well in [Exodus 2:15–21](#) is the Torah’s third of several meetings at watering holes that lead to marriage. Also of the same type scene are Abraham’s servant’s meeting (on behalf of Isaac) of [Rebekah](#) at the well in [Genesis 24:11–27](#) and Jacob’s meeting of [Rachel](#) at the well in [Genesis 29:1–12](#). Each involves (1) a trip to a distant land, (2) a stop at a well, (3) a young woman coming to the well to draw water, (4) a heroic drawing of water, (5) the young woman going home to report to her family, (6) the visiting man brought to the family, and (7) a subsequent marriage. (See Victor P. Hamilton. *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50*, 254–55. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995. [ISBN 0-8028-2309-2](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 4

The [Hebrew Bible](#) reports skin disease (*tzara'at*, תַּצְרַעַת) and a person affected by skin disease (*metzora*, מֵצֹרָע) at several places, often (and sometimes incorrectly) translated as “leprosy” and “a leper.” In [Exodus 4:6](#), to help Moses to convince others that God had sent him, God instructed Moses to put his hand into his bosom, and when he took it out, his hand was “leprous (*m'tzora'at*, מִצְרַעַת), as white as snow.” In [Leviticus 13–14](#), the Torah sets out regulations for skin disease (*tzara'at*, תַּצְרַעַת) and a person affected by skin disease (*metzora*, מֵצֹרָע). In [Numbers 12:10](#), after [Miriam](#) spoke against Moses, God’s cloud removed from the [Tent of Meeting](#) and “Miriam was leprous (*m'tzora'at*, מִצְרַעַת), as white as snow.” In [Deuteronomy 24:8–9](#), Moses warned the Israelites in the case of skin disease (*tzara'at*, תַּצְרַעַת) diligently to observe all that the priests would teach them, remembering what God did to Miriam. In [2 Kings 5:1–19](#) (part of the [haftarah](#) for parshah [Tazria](#)), the prophet [Elisha](#) cures [Naaman](#), the commander of the army of the king of [Aram](#), who was a “leper” (*metzora*, מֵצֹרָע). In [2 Kings 7:3–20](#) (part of the haftarah for parshah [Metzora](#)), the story is told of four “leprous men” (*m'tzora'im*, מִצְרַעִים) at the gate during the [Arameans'](#) siege of [Samaria](#). And in [2 Chronicles 26:19](#), after King [Uzziah](#) tried to burn incense in the [Temple in Jerusalem](#), “leprosy (*tzara'at*, תַּצְרַעַת) broke forth on his forehead.”

[\[edit\]](#) In early nonrabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 1

[Philo](#) explained that Pharaoh ordered that girl babies be allowed to live, because women were disinclined to and unfit for war, and Pharaoh ordered that boy babies be destroyed, because an abundance of men could be a fortress difficult to take and difficult to destroy. (*[On the Life of Moses, 1:3:8.](#)*)

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 1

Rabbi [Simon ben Yohai](#) deduced from [1 Samuel 2:27](#) that the [Shechinah](#) was with the Israelites when they were exiled to Egypt, and that the Shechinah went with the Israelites wherever they were exiled demonstrated how beloved the Israelites were in the sight of God. (*[Babylonian Talmud Megillah 29a.](#)*)

A [midrash](#) deduced from the words “these are the names of the sons of Israel” in [Exodus 1:1](#) that Israel is equal in importance to God with the host of heaven. For [Exodus 1:1](#) says “names,” and [Psalm 147:4](#) also says “names” in reference to the stars when it says of God, “He counts the number of the stars; He gives them all their names.” So when Israel came down to Egypt, God counted their number, too, and because they were likened to stars, God called them all by their names. Hence [Exodus 1:1](#) says, “these are the names.” (*[Exodus Rabbah 1:3.](#)*)

The [Sifre](#) asked why [Exodus 1:5](#) makes special note of Joseph, saying “Joseph was in Egypt already,” when the reader would already know this. The Sifre explained that Scripture meant thereby to tell of Joseph’s righteousness. Joseph was shepherding Jacob’s flock, and even though Pharaoh made Joseph like a king in Egypt, he remained Joseph in his righteousness. (Sifre to Deuteronomy 33:3:2.)

As [Exodus 1:6](#) reports that “Joseph died, and all his brethren,” the Rabbis concluded that Joseph died before his brothers. Rabbi [Judah haNasi](#) taught that Joseph died before his brothers because Joseph “commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father” (as [Genesis 50:2](#) reports). But the Rabbis taught that Jacob had directed his sons to embalm him, as [Genesis 50:12](#) reports that “his sons did to him as he commanded them.” According to the Rabbis, Joseph died before his brothers because nearly five times Judah said to Joseph, “Your servant my father, your servant my father” (four times himself in [Genesis 44:24](#), [27](#), [30](#), and [31](#), and once together with his brothers in [Genesis 43:48](#)), yet Joseph heard it and kept silent (not correcting Judah to show humility to their father). ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 100:3.)

Reading the report of [Exodus 1:7](#), “the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly,” a midrash taught that each woman bore six children at every birth (for [Exodus 1:7](#) contains six verbs implying fruitfulness). Another midrash said that each woman bore 12 children at every birth, because the word “fruitful” (פָּרָה, *paru*) implies two, “multiplied” (וַיַּשְׁרֵץ, *va-yishretzu*) another two, “increased” (וַיִּרְבּוּ, *va-yirbu*) another two,

“grew” (וַיַּעֲצֻמוּ, *va-ye'atzmu*) another two, “greatly, greatly” (בִּימֵי דְמָאָד, *bi-me'od me'od*) another two, and “the land was filled with them” (וַתִּמְלֵא הָאֶרֶץ, *va-timalei ha'aretz otam*) another two, making 12 in all. The midrash counseled that the reader should not be surprised, for the [scorpion](#), which the midrash considered one of the swarming things (*sberatzim*, which is similar to וַיִּשְׁרֹעַץ, *va-yisheretz*), gives birth to 70 offspring at a time. (Exodus Rabbah 1:8.)

The [Tosefta](#) deduced from [Exodus 1:7](#) that as long as Joseph and his brothers were alive, the Israelites enjoyed greatness and honor, but after Joseph died (as reported in [Exodus 1:6](#)), a new Pharaoh arose who took counsel against the Israelites (as reported in [Exodus 1:8–10](#)). (Tosefta Sotah 10:10.)

[Rav](#) and Samuel differed in their interpretation of [Exodus 1:8](#). One said that the “new” Pharaoh who did not know Joseph really was a different person, reading the word “new” literally. The other said that only Pharaoh’s decrees were new, as nowhere does the text state that the former Pharaoh died and the new Pharaoh reigned in his stead. The [Gemara](#) interpreted the words “Who knew not Joseph” in [Exodus 1:8](#) to mean that he issued decrees against the Israelites as if he did not know of Joseph. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11a](#); see also Exodus Rabbah 1:8.)



The Egyptians Afflicted the Israelites with Burdens (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

[\[edit\]](#) The Israelites' affliction

The Tosefta deduced from [Exodus 1:8](#) that Pharaoh began to sin first before the people, and thus God struck him first, but the rest did not escape. (Tosefta Sotah 4:12.) Similarly, a [Baraita](#) taught that Pharaoh originated the plan against Israel first in [Exodus 1:9](#), and therefore was punished first when in [Exodus 7:29](#), frogs came “upon [him], and upon [his] people, and upon all [his] servants.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11a.](#))



The Egyptians Are Destroyed (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

The Gemara noted that in [Exodus 1:10](#), Pharaoh said, “Come, let us deal wisely with *him*,” when he should have said “with *them*.”

Rabbi Hama ben Hanina said that Pharaoh meant by that:

“Come, let us outwit the Savior of Israel.” Pharaoh then considered with what to afflict them. Pharaoh reasoned that if the Egyptians afflicted the Israelites with fire, then [Isaiah 66:15–16](#) indicates that God would punish the Egyptians with fire. If the Egyptians afflicted the Israelites with the sword, then [Isaiah 66:16](#) indicates that God would punish the Egyptians with the sword. Pharaoh concluded that the Egyptians should afflict the Israelites with water, because as indicated by [Isaiah 54:9](#), God had sworn not to bring another flood to punish the world. The Egyptians failed to note that while God had sworn not to bring another flood on the whole world, God could still bring a flood on only one people. Alternatively, the Egyptians failed to note that they could fall into the waters, as indicated by the words of [Exodus 14:27](#), “the Egyptians fled towards it.” This all bore out what

[Rabbi Eleazar](#) said: In the pot in which they cooked, they were themselves cooked — that is, with the punishment that the Egyptians intended for the Israelites, the Egyptians were themselves punished. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11a](#); see also Exodus Rabbah 1:9.)

[Rabbi Hiyya](#) bar Abba said in the name of Rabbi Simai that [Balaam](#), [Job](#), and [Jethro](#) stood in Pharaoh's council when he formulated this plan against the Israelites. Balaam devised the plan and was slain; Job acquiesced and was afflicted with sufferings; and Jethro fled Pharaoh's council and thus merited that his descendants should sit in the [Hall of Hewn Stones](#) as members of the [Sanhedrin](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11a](#); see also Exodus Rabbah 1:9.)



The Israelites' Cruel Bondage in Egypt (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

The Gemara questioned why in [Exodus 1:10](#), Pharaoh expressed concern that “when war befalls us,” the Israelites would “leave the land.” The Gemara reasoned that Pharaoh’s concern should have been that “we [the Egyptians] will leave the land.” Rabbi Abba bar Kahana concluded that the usage was like that of a man who fears a curse on himself but speaks euphemistically in terms of a curse on somebody else. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11a](#); see also Exodus Rabbah 1:9.)



The Egyptians Afflicted the Israelites (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)

The Gemara noted that [Exodus 1:11](#) used the singular in “they set taskmasters over *him*,” when the text should have read “over *them*.” The School of Rabbi Eleazar ben [Simeon](#) deduced from this that the Egyptians hung a brick mold round Pharaoh's neck, and whenever an Israelite complained that he was weak, they would ask him, “Are you weaker than Pharaoh?” The Gemara thus noted the similarity between the Hebrew word “taskmasters” (“*missim*”) and something that forms (“*mesim*”). ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11a.](#))

The Gemara noted that [Exodus 1:11](#) used the singular in “to afflict *him* with their burdens,” when the text should have read “*them*.” The Gemara deduced from this that the verse foretold

that Pharaoh would be afflicted with the burdens of Israel.

([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11a](#).)

Rav and Samuel differed in their interpretation of the words in [Exodus 1:11](#), “and they built for Pharaoh store cities (*miskenot*).”

One said that they were called that because they endangered (*mesakkenot*) their owners, while the other said it was because they impoverished (*memaskenot*) their owners, for a master had declared (as reported in [Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 63a](#)) that whoever occupies himself with building becomes impoverished.

([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11a](#); see also Exodus Rabbah 1:10.)

Rav and Samuel differed in their interpretation of the names “Pithom and Raamses” in [Exodus 1:11](#). One said that the single city’s real name was Pithom, but it was called Raamses because one building after another collapsed (*mitroses*). The other said that its real name was Raamses, but it was called Pithom because the mouth of the deep (*pi tehom*) swallowed up one building after another. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11a](#); Exodus Rabbah 1:10.)

The Gemara questioned why the words “the more they afflicted him, the more he *will multiply* and the more he *will spread* abroad” in [Exodus 1:12](#) were not expressed in the past tense as “the more they *multiplied* and the more they *spread* abroad.” [Resh Lakish](#) interpreted the verse to teach that at the time, the Divine Spirit foretold to them that this would be the result of the affliction.

([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11a](#).)

The Gemara interpreted the words “And they were grieved (*wayakuzu*) because of the children of Israel” in [Exodus 1:12](#) to teach

that the Israelites were like thorns (*kozim*) in the Egyptians' eyes. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11a.](#))

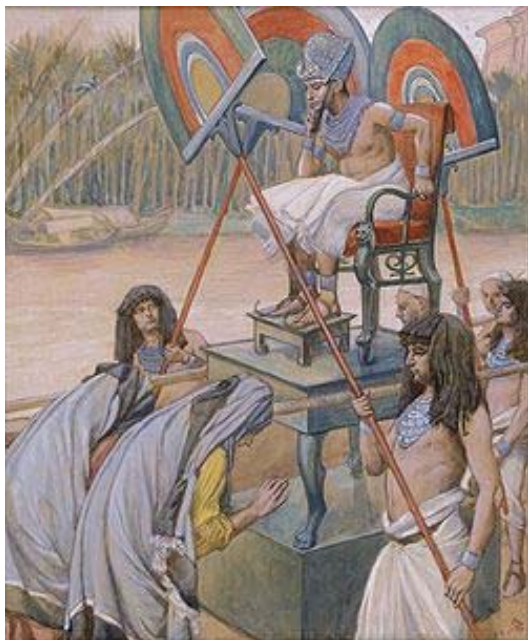
Rabbi Eleazar interpreted the words “with rigor (*parech*)” in [Exodus 1:13](#) to mean that Pharaoh lulled the Israelites into servitude “with a tender mouth (*peh rak*).” But Rabbi [Samuel bar Nahmani](#) interpreted the words to mean “with rigorous work (*perikah*).” ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11a–b.](#))

Rabbi Ahava the son of Rabbi Ze'ira taught that just as lettuce is sweet at the beginning (in the leaf) and bitter at the end (in the stalk), so were the Egyptians sweet to the Israelites at the beginning and bitter at the end. The Egyptians were sweet at the beginning, as [Genesis 47:6](#) reports that Pharaoh told Joseph, “The land of Egypt is before you; have your father and brethren dwell in the best of the land.” And the Egyptians were bitter at the end, as [Exodus 1:14](#) reports, “And they (the Egyptians) made their (the Israelites') lives bitter.” (Genesis Rabbah 95.)

[Rava](#) interpreted [Exodus 1:14](#) to teach that at first, the Egyptians made the Israelites' lives bitter with mortar and brick, but finally it was with all manner of service in the field. Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani said in the name of [Rabbi Jonathan](#) that the Egyptians assigned men's work to the women and women's work to the men. And even Rabbi Eleazar, who explained “rigor (*פָּרַח*, *parech*)” as meaning “with tender mouth” in [Exodus 1:13](#) admitted that at the close of [Exodus 1:14](#), *parech* meant “with rigorous work.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11b.](#))

Finding four instances of the verb “to charge,” for example in [Exodus 1:22](#) (וַיִּצַּח, *vayetzan*), a midrash taught that Pharaoh decreed upon the Israelites four decrees. At first, he commanded the taskmasters to insist that the Israelites make the prescribed number of bricks. Then he commanded that the taskmasters not allow the Israelites to sleep in their homes, intending by this to limit their ability to have children. The taskmasters told the Israelites that if they went home to sleep, they would lose a few hours each morning from work and never complete the allotted number of bricks, as [Exodus 5:13](#) reports: “And the taskmasters were urgent, saying: ‘Fulfill your work.’” So the Israelites slept on the ground in the brickyard. God told the Egyptians that God had promised the Israelites’ ancestor Abraham that God would multiply his children like the stars, as in [Genesis 22:17](#) God promised Abraham: “That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying, I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven.” But now the Egyptians were cunningly planning that the Israelites not increase. So God set about to see that God’s word prevail, and immediately [Exodus 1:12](#) reports: “But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied.” (Exodus Rabbah 1:12.) When Pharaoh saw that the Israelites increased abundantly despite his decrees, he then decreed concerning the male children, as [Exodus 1:15–16](#) reports: “And the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives . . . and he said: ‘When you do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, you shall look upon the birthstool: if it be a son, then you shall kill him.’” (Exodus Rabbah 1:13.) So finally (as [Exodus 1:22](#) reports), “Pharaoh

charged all his people, saying: ‘Every son that is born you shall cast into the river.’” (Exodus Rabbah 1:18.)



Pharaoh and the Midwives (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[\[edit\]](#) The righteous midwives

Rav Awira taught that God delivered the Israelites from Egypt as the reward for the righteous women who lived in that generation. When the righteous women went to draw water, God caused small fish to enter their pitchers. When they drew up their pitchers, they were half full of water and half full of fishes. They set two pots on the fire, one of water and the other of fish. They carried the pots to their husbands in the field. They washed,

anointed, and fed them, gave them to drink, and had relations with them among the sheepfolds, as reflected in [Psalm 68:14](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11b](#); see also Exodus Rabbah 1:12 (citing [Rabbi Akiva](#)) and [Babylonian Talmud Yoma 75a](#).)

The Gemara interpreted [Psalm 68:14](#) to teach that as the reward for lying among the sheepfolds, the Israelites merited the Egyptians' spoils, noting that [Psalm 68:14](#) speaks of "a dove covered with silver, and her pinions with yellow gold." ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11b](#); see also Exodus Rabbah 1:12.)

The Gemara taught that when the Israelite women conceived, they returned to their homes, and when the time for childbirth arrived, they delivered beneath apple trees, as reflected in [Song of Songs 8:5](#). God sent an angel to wash and straighten the babies as a midwife would, as reflected in [Ezekiel 16:4](#). The angel provided the infants cakes of oil and honey, as reflected in [Deuteronomy 32:13](#). When the Egyptians discovered the infants, they came to kill them, but the ground miraculously swallowed up the infants, and the Egyptians plowed over them, as reflected in [Psalm 129:3](#). After the Egyptians departed, the infants broke through the earth like sprouting plants, as reflected in [Ezekiel 16:7](#). When the children grew up, they came in flocks to their homes, as reflected in [Ezekiel 16:7](#) (reading not "ornaments (*ba'adi 'adayim*)" but "flocks (*be'edre 'adarim*)"). And thus when God appeared by the sea, they were the first to recognize the Divine, saying in the words of [Exodus 15:2](#), "This is my God and I will praise Him." ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11b](#); see also Exodus Rabbah 1:12.)

Rav and Samuel differed about the identity of the midwives Shiphrah and Puah, to whom Pharaoh spoke in [Exodus 1:15](#). One said that they were mother and daughter, and the other said that they were mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. According to the one who said that they were mother and daughter, they were [Jochebed](#) and Miriam; and according to the one who said that they were mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, they were Jochebed and [Elisheba](#), who married Aaron. A Baraita taught in accordance with the one who said that they were mother and daughter, teaching that Jochebed was called Shiphrah because she straightened (*meshapperet*) the limbs of the newborns. Another explanation was that she was called Shiphrah because the Israelites were fruitful (*sheparu*) and multiplied in her days. Miriam was called Puah because she cried out (*po'ah*) to the unborn children to bring them out. Another explanation was that she was called Puah because she cried out (*po'ah*) with the Divine Spirit to say: "My mother will bear a son who will save Israel." ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11b.](#))



Pharaoh and the Midwives (miniature on vellum from the early 14th century Golden [Haggadah](#), Catalonia)

The Gemara interpreted the words that Pharaoh spoke in [Exodus 1:16](#): “When you do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, you shall look upon the birthstool (אֲבָנִים, *obnayim*). Rabbi Hanan taught that Pharaoh gave the midwives a sign that when a woman bent to deliver a child, her thighs would grow cold like stones (*abanim*). Another explained that the word *obnayim* referred to the birthing stool, in accordance with [Jeremiah 18:3](#), which says: “Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he was at his work on the stones.” Just as a potter would have a thigh on one side, a thigh on the other side, and the block in between, so also a woman giving birth would have a thigh on one side, a thigh on the other side, and the child in between. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11b.](#))

Rabbi Hanina deduced from the words “If it is a son, then you shall kill him” in [Exodus 1:16](#) that Pharaoh gave the midwives a sign that when a woman was to give birth to a son, the baby’s face was turned downward, and if a daughter, the baby’s face was turned upward. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11b.](#))

Rabbi Jose son of Rabbi Hanina deduced from the words “to them (אֵלֵיהֶן, *aleihen*)” in [Exodus 1:17](#) that Pharaoh propositioned the midwives, but they refused him. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11b.](#))

A Baraita interpreted the words “but saved the boys alive” in [Exodus 1:17](#) to teach that not only did the midwives not kill the boy babies, but they supplied them with water and food. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11b.](#))

The Gemara interpreted the midwives’ response to Pharaoh in [Exodus 1:19](#) that the Israelite women “are lively (חַיִּוִּת, *chayot*)” to mean that they told him that the Israelites were like animals (*chayot*), for [Genesis 49:9](#) called [Judah](#) “a lion’s whelp,” [Genesis 49:17](#) called [Dan](#) “a serpent,” [Genesis 49:21](#) called [Naphtali](#) “a hind let loose,” [Genesis 49:14](#) called [Issachar](#) “a strong ass,” [Deuteronomy 33:17](#) called Joseph “a firstling bullock,” [Genesis 49:27](#) called [Benjamin](#) “a wolf that devours,” and [Ezekiel 19:2](#) called the mother of all of them “a lioness.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11b.](#))

Rav and Samuel differed in their interpretation of the report in [Exodus 1:21](#) that “because the midwives feared God,” God “made them houses.” One said that God made them the

ancestors of the priestly and Levitical houses, as Aaron and Moses were children of Jochebed. And the other said that God made them the ancestors of the royal house of Israel, teaching that [Caleb](#) married Miriam, whom [1 Chronicles 2:19](#) calls [Ephrath](#), and [1 Samuel 17:12](#) reports that [David](#) was the son of an Ephrathite. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11b.](#))

The Tosefta deduced from [Exodus 1:22](#) that the Egyptians took pride before God only on account of the water of the Nile, and thus God exacted punishment from them only by water when in [Exodus 15:4](#) God cast Pharaoh's chariots and army into the [Reed Sea](#). (Tosefta Sotah 3:13.)

Rabbi Jose son of Rabbi Hanina deduced from the words "Pharaoh charged all his people" in [Exodus 1:22](#) that Pharaoh imposed the same decree on his own people as well as the Israelites. Rabbi Jose thus concluded that Pharaoh made three successive decrees: (1) in [Exodus 1:16](#), Pharaoh decreed "if it be a son, then you shall kill him"; (2) in [Exodus 1:22](#), Pharaoh decreed "every son that is born you shall cast into the river"; and (3) in [Exodus 1:22](#), Pharaoh imposed the same decree upon his own people. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 12a.](#))



Jocheved, Miriam, and Moses (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)



Moses and Jochebed (1884 painting by [Pedro Américo](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 2

Reading the words “And there *went* a man of the house of Levi” in [Exodus 2:1](#), the Gemara asked where he went. Rav Judah bar Zebina taught that he followed the counsel of his daughter. A Baraita taught that when [Amram](#) heard that Pharaoh had decreed (as reported in [Exodus 1:22](#)) that “every son that is born you shall cast into the river,” Amram concluded that having children was in vain, he divorced his wife, and all the Israelite men followed suit and divorced their wives. But Amram’s daughter told him that his decree was more severe than Pharaoh’s, as Pharaoh’s decree affected only sons, while Amram’s decree affected both sons and daughters. Pharaoh’s decree affected only this world, but Amram’s decree deprived children of both this world and the world to come. And doubt existed whether Pharaoh’s decree would be fulfilled, but because Amram was righteous, it was certain that his decree would be fulfilled. Persuaded by her arguments, Amram took back his wife, and the Israelite men followed suit and took back their wives. The Gemara thus asked why [Exodus 2:1](#) reported that Amram “took to wife” Jochebed when it should have read that he took her back. Rav Judah bar Zebina taught that Amram remarried Jochebed as though it were their first marriage; he seated her in a [sedan chair](#) as was the custom for first brides, Aaron and Miriam danced before her, and the ministering angels called her (in the words of [Psalm 113:9](#)) “a joyful mother of children.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 12a.](#))

Reading literally the words “a daughter of [Levi](#)” in [Exodus 2:1](#), Rabbi Hama ben Hanina deduced that Jochebed was conceived

during Jacob’s family’s journey to Egypt (as [Genesis 46:8–27](#) did not list her among those leaving for Egypt) and was born within the walls of Egypt (as [Numbers 26:59](#) reports that Jochebed “was born to Levi in Egypt”). Even though this would thus make her by the Gemara’s calculation 130 years old, Rav Judah taught that she was called “a daughter” because the characteristics of a young woman were reborn in her. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 12a.](#))



Moses Laid Amid the Flags (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Interpreting the words “she hid [the baby] three months” in [Exodus 2:2](#), the Gemara explained that she was able to do this

because the Egyptians only counted the time of her pregnancy from the time when Amram and Jochebed were remarried, but by then, she had already been pregnant three months. The Gemara asks how then [Exodus 2:2](#) should report “the woman conceived and bore a son” when she had already been pregnant three months. Rav Judah bar Zebina explained that [Exodus 2:2](#) thus meant to compare Jochebed’s delivery of Moses to his conception; as his conception was painless, so was his birth. The Gemara deduced that Providence excluded some righteous women from the decree of [Genesis 3:16](#) on [Eve](#) that “in pain you shall bring forth children.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 12a.](#))

Interpreting the words “and when she saw him that he was good” in [Exodus 2:2](#), [Rabbi Meir](#) taught that his name was Tov, meaning “good.” [Rabbi Judah](#) said that his name was Tobiah, meaning “God is good.” [Rabbi Nehemiah](#) deduced from the word “good” that Jochebed foresaw that Moses could be a prophet. Others said that he was born needing no further improvement, and thus that he was born circumcised. And the Sages noted the parallel between [Exodus 2:2](#), which says, “and when she saw him that he was good,” and [Genesis 1:4](#), which says, “And God saw the light that it was good,” and deduced from the similar use of the word “good” that when Moses was born, the whole house filled with light. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 12a.](#))



Moses in the Bulrushes (19th Century painting by [Hippolyte Delaroche](#))

The Gemara asked why it was (as reported in [Exodus 2:3](#)) that “she could not longer hide him.” The Gemara explained that whenever the Egyptians were informed that a child was born, they would take other children into the neighborhood so that the newborn should hear the other children crying and cry along with them, thus disclosing the newborn’s location. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 12a.](#))

Rabbi Eleazar explained that Jochebed’s choice of bulrushes — a cheap material — for the ark (as reported in [Exodus 2:3](#)) demonstrated that righteous people’s money is dearer to them than their bodies, so that they should not be driven to steal. Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani explained that she chose bulrushes

for the ark because they provided a soft material that could withstand encounters with soft and hard materials alike.

([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 12a.](#))

A Baraita taught that Jochebed “daubed it with slime and with pitch” (as reported in [Exodus 2:3](#)) with the slime on the inside and the pitch on outside so that the righteous baby Moses would not be subjected to the bad odor of the pitch. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 12a.](#))

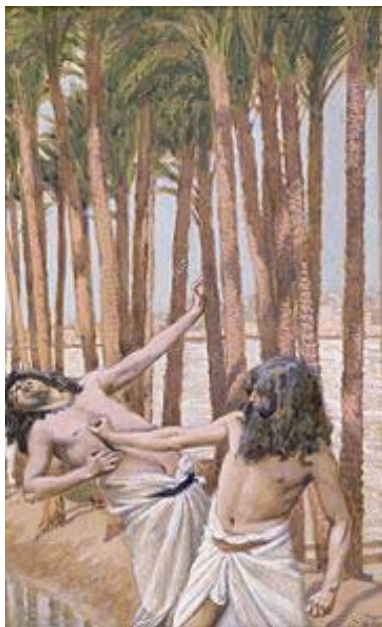
Interpreting the words “she put the child therein and laid it in the reeds (סוף, *suf*)” in [Exodus 2:3](#), Rabbi Eleazar read *suf* to mean the Red Sea (called the [Yam Suf](#), יַם-סוּף). But Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani said that *suf* means “reeds,” as it does in [Isaiah 19:6](#), where it says, “the reeds and flags shall wither away.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 12a–b.](#))



The Finding of Moses (1862 painting by [Frederick Goodall](#))

The [Mishnah](#) cited [Exodus 2:4](#) for the proposition that Providence treats a person measure for measure as that person treats others. And so because, as [Exodus 2:4](#) relates, Miriam waited for the baby Moses, so the Israelites waited seven days for her in the wilderness in [Numbers 12:15](#). (Mishnah [Sotah 1:7–9](#).) The Tosefta taught that a reward for good deeds is 500 times greater than the punishment for retribution. (Tosefta Sotah 4:1.) [Abaye](#) thus said that in connection with good deeds, the principle of measure for measure does not apply strictly with equivalence.

Rava replied that the Mishnah taught, “It is the same in connection with the good,” so the Mishnah must mean that Providence rewards good deeds with the same sort of measure, but the measure of reward for good is greater than the measure of punishment. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11a.](#))



Moses Slays an Egyptian (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Rabbi Isaac noted that [Exodus 2:4](#) used several words associated elsewhere in Scripture with the Shechinah, and deduced that the Divine Presence thus stood with Miriam as she watched over the baby Moses. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11a.](#))

Rabbi Judan said in the name of Rabbi Isaac that God saved Moses from Pharaoh’s sword. Reading [Exodus 2:15](#), Rabbi

Yannai asked whether it was possible for a person of flesh and blood to escape from a government. Rather, Rabbi Yannai said that Pharaoh caught Moses and sentenced him to be beheaded. Just as the executioner brought down his sword, Moses' neck became like an ivory tower (as described in [Song 7:5](#)) and broke the sword. Rabbi Judah haNasi said in the name of Rabbi Evyasar that the sword flew off of Moses' neck and killed the executioner. The Gemara cited [Exodus 18:4](#) to support this deduction, reading the words "and delivered me" as superfluous unless they were necessary to show that God saved Moses but not the executioner. Rabbi Berechyah cited the executioner's fate as an application of the proposition of [Proverbs 21:8](#) that a wicked ransoms a righteous one, and Rabbi Avun cited it for the same proposition applying [Proverbs 11:18](#). In a second explanation of how Moses escaped, [Bar Kappara](#) taught a Baraita that an angel came down from heaven in the likeness of Moses, they seized the angel, and Moses escaped. In a third explanation of how Moses escaped, Rabbi [Joshua ben Levi](#) said that when Moses fled from Pharaoh, God incapacitated Pharaoh's people by making some of them mute, some of them deaf, and some of them blind. When Pharaoh asked where Moses was, the mutes could not reply, the deaf could not hear, and the blind could not see. And it was this event to which God referred in [Exodus 4:11](#) when God asked Moses who made men mute or deaf or blind. ([Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 87a](#).)

Rabbi Eleazar deduced from [Exodus 2:23–25](#) that God redeemed the Israelites from Egypt for five reasons: (1) distress, as [Exodus](#)

[2:23](#) reports, “the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage”; (2) repentance, as [Exodus 2:23](#) reports, “and their cry came up to God”; (3) the merits of the [Patriarchs](#), as [Exodus 2:24](#) reports, “and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob”; (4) God's mercy, as [Exodus 2:25](#) reports, “and God saw the children of Israel”; and (5) the term of their slavery having come to an end, as [Exodus 2:25](#) reports, “and God took cognizance of them.” ([Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 2:23.)



Moses and the Burning Bush (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)



Moses Is Sent to Egypt (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

[[edit](#)] Exodus chapter 3

The [Sifra](#) cited [Exodus 3:4](#) along with [Leviticus 1:1](#) for the proposition that whenever God spoke to Moses, God first called out to him. (Sifra 1:1.) And the Sifra cited [Genesis 22:11](#), [Genesis 46:2](#), [Exodus 3:4](#), and [1 Samuel 3:10](#) for the proposition that when God called the name of a prophet twice, God expressed affection and sought to provoke a response. (Sifra 1:4.)

A Baraita taught that a person should not enter the [Temple Mount](#) either with a staff in hand or shoe on foot, or with money tied up in a cloth, or with a money bag slung over a shoulder, and should not take a short cut through the Temple Mount. The Baraita taught that spitting on the Temple Mount is forbidden a fortiori from the case of wearing a shoe. While the wearing of a

show does not show contempt, in [Exodus 3:5](#), God instructed Moses, “Put off your shoes.” The Baraita deduced that the rule must apply all the more to spitting, which does show contempt. But Rabbi Jose bar Judah said that this reasoning was unnecessary, for [Esther 4:2](#) says, “none may enter within the king's gate clothed in sackcloth.” And thus one may deduce a fortiori that if that is the rule for sackcloth, which is not in itself disgusting, and before an earthly king, how much more would that be the rule with spitting, which is in itself disgusting, and before the supreme King of Kings! ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 62b.](#))



Moses and the Burning Bush (painting circa 1450–1475 attributed to [Dirk Bouts](#))

A Baraita taught in the name of Rabbi Joshua ben Korhah that God told Moses that when God wanted to be seen at the burning

bush, Moses did not want to see God's face; Moses hid his face in [Exodus 3:6](#), for he was afraid to look upon God. And then in [Exodus 33:18](#), when Moses wanted to see God, God did not want to be seen; in [Exodus 33:20](#), God said, "You cannot see My face." But Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani said in the name of Rabbi Jonathan that in compensation for three pious acts that Moses did at the burning bush, he was privileged to obtain three rewards. In reward for hiding his face in [Exodus 3:6](#), his face shone in [Exodus 34:29](#). In reward for his fear of God in [Exodus 3:6](#), the Israelites were afraid to come near him in [Exodus 34:30](#). In reward for his reticence "to look upon God," he beheld the similitude of God in [Numbers 12:8](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 7a.](#))



Moses' Rod Turned into a Serpent (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

The Gemara reported a number of Rabbis' reports of how the Land of Israel did indeed flow with "milk and honey," as described in [Exodus 3:8](#) and [17, 13:5](#), and [33:3](#), [Leviticus 20:24](#), [Numbers 13:27](#) and [14:8](#), and [Deuteronomy 6:3](#), [11:9](#), [26:9](#) and

[15, 27:3](#), and [31:20](#). Once when Rami bar Ezekiel visited [Bnei Brak](#), he saw goats grazing under fig trees while honey was flowing from the figs, and milk dripped from the goats mingling with the fig honey, causing him to remark that it was indeed a land flowing with milk and honey. Rabbi Jacob ben Dostai said that it is about three miles from [Lod](#) to [Ono](#), and once he rose up early in the morning and waded all that way up to his ankles in fig honey. Resh Lakish said that he saw the flow of the milk and honey of [Sepphoris](#) extend over an area of sixteen miles by sixteen miles. Rabbah bar Bar Hana said that he saw the flow of the milk and honey in all the Land of Israel and the total area was equal to an area of twenty-two [parasangs](#) by six parasangs. ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 111b–12a](#).)

The Tosefta equated God's visitation with God's remembrance in verses such as [Exodus 3:16](#). (Tosefta Rosh Hashanah 2:13.)

[[edit](#)] Exodus chapter 4

Resh Lakish taught that Providence punishes bodily those who unjustifiably suspect the innocent. In [Exodus 4:1](#), Moses said that the Israelites “will not believe me,” but God knew that the Israelites would believe. God thus told Moses that the Israelites were believers and descendants of believers, while Moses would ultimately disbelieve. The Gemara explained that [Exodus 4:13](#) reports that “the people believed” and [Genesis 15:6](#) reports that the Israelites’ ancestor [Abraham](#) “believed in the Lord,” while [Numbers 20:12](#) reports that Moses “did not believe.” Thus,

Moses was smitten when in [Exodus 4:6](#) God turned his hand white as snow. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 97a.](#))

The Mishnah counted the miraculous rod of [Exodus 4:2–5,17](#) among ten things that God created at twilight at the end of the sixth day of creation. ([Mishnah Avot 5:6.](#))



Absalom's Death (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

A midrash explained why Moses returned to Jethro in [Exodus 4:18](#). The midrash taught that when Moses first came to Jethro, he swore that he would not depart without Jethro's knowledge. Thus when God commissioned Moses to return to Egypt, Moses first went to ask Jethro to absolve him of his oath. (Exodus Rabbah 4:1; see also [Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 65a.](#))

Rabbi Levi bar Hitha taught that one bidding farewell to a living friend should not say, “Go in peace (לֵךְ בְּשָׁלוֹם, *lech b'shalom*)” but “Go unto peace (לֵךְ לְשָׁלוֹם, *lech l'shalom*).” The Gemara cited

Jethro's farewell to Moses in [Exodus 4:18](#) as a proof of the proper farewell, for there Jethro said, "Go unto peace," and Moses went on to succeed in his mission. The Gemara cited David's farewell to [Absalom](#) in [2 Samuel 15:9](#) as a proof of an improper farewell, for there David said, "Go in peace," and Absalom went and got caught up in a tree and became easy prey for his adversaries, who killed him. ([Babylonian Talmud Moed Katan 29a.](#))

[Rabbi Johanan](#) said on the authority of Rabbi [Simeon ben Yohai](#) that wherever the Torah mentions "quarrelling" (*nizẓim*), the Torah refers to [Dathan](#) and [Abiram](#). Thus the Gemara identified as Dathan and Abiram the men whom [Exodus 4:19](#) reports sought the life of Moses. Resh Lakish further explained that they had not actually died, as [Exodus 4:19](#) appears to report, but had become impoverished, for (as a Baraita taught) the impoverished are considered as if they were dead (for they have similarly little influence in the world). ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 64b](#); see also Exodus Rabbah 5:4.)



Hillel (sculpture at the [Knesset](#) Menorah, Jerusalem

A Baraita cited the [Septuagint](#)'s Greek translation of [Exodus 4:20](#) as one of several instances where translators varied the original. Where the Hebrew of [Exodus 4:20](#) says, "And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon a *donkey*," the Baraita reported that the Greek translation said, "And Moses took his wife and his children, and made them ride on a *carrier of men*," so as to preserve the dignity of Moses. ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 9a.](#))

A non-Jew asked [Shammai](#) to [convert](#) him to Judaism on condition that Shammai appoint him [High Priest](#). Shammai pushed him away with a builder's ruler. The non-Jew then went to [Hillel](#), who converted him. The convert then read Torah, and when he came to the injunction of [Numbers 1:51](#), [3:10](#), and [18:7](#) that "the common man who draws near shall be put to death," he asked Hillel to whom the injunction applied. Hillel answered that it applied even to [David](#), King of Israel, who had not been a priest. Thereupon the convert reasoned *a fortiori* that if the injunction applied to all (non-priestly) Israelites, whom in [Exodus 4:22](#) God had called "my firstborn," how much more so would the injunction apply to a mere convert, who came among the Israelites with just his staff and bag. Then the convert returned to Shammai, quoted the injunction, and remarked on how absurd it had been for him to ask Shammai to appoint him High Priest. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 31a.](#))

A Baraita taught that Rabbi Joshua ben Karha said that great is circumcision, for all the meritorious deeds performed by Moses

did not protect him when he delayed circumcising his son [Eliezer](#), and that failure brought about what [Exodus 4:24](#) reports: “and the Lord met him, and sought to kill him.” [Rabbi Jose](#), however, taught that Moses was not apathetic towards circumcision, but reasoned that if he circumcised his son and then immediately left on his mission to Pharaoh, he would endanger his son’s life. Moses wondered whether he should circumcise his son and wait three days, but God had commanded him (in [Exodus 4:19](#)) to “return into Egypt.” According to Rabbi Jose, God sought to punish Moses because Moses busied himself first with securing lodging at an inn (rather than seeing to the circumcision), as [Exodus 4:24](#) reports, “And it came to pass on the way at the lodging-place.” Rabban [Simeon ben Gamaliel](#) taught that the Accuser did not seek to slay Moses but Eliezer, for [Exodus 4:25](#) reports, “Then Zipporah took a flint, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet; and she said: ‘Surely a bridegroom of blood are you to me.’” Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel reasoned that the one who could be called “a bridegroom of blood” was the infant who had been circumcised. Rabbi Judah bar Bizna taught that when Moses delayed circumcising Eliezer, two angels named Af (אף, Anger) and Hemah (המה, Wrath) came and swallowed Moses up, leaving nothing but his legs unconsumed. Zipporah deduced from the angels’ leaving the lower part of Moses exposed that the danger stemmed from failing to circumcise Eliezer, and (in the words of [Exodus 4:25](#)) she “took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son,” and right away Af and Hemah let Moses go. At that moment, Moses wanted to kill Af and Hemah, as [Psalm 37:8](#) says, “Cease from anger (Af)

and forsake wrath (Hemah).” Some say that Moses did kill Hemah, as [Isaiah 27:4](#) says, “I have not wrath (Hemah).” But [Deuteronomy 9:19](#) says, “I was afraid of anger (Af) and wrath (Hemah),” so the two must have been alive at that later time. The Gemara posited that there might have been two angels named Hemah. Alternatively, the Gemara suggested that Moses may have killed one of Hemah’s legions. ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 31b–32a.](#))



Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh (painting by [Benjamin West](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 5

While the [House of Shammai](#) argued that the requirement for the appearance [offering](#) was greater than that for the festival offering,

the House of [Hillel](#) cited [Exodus 5:1](#) to show that the festival offering applied both before and after the revelation at [Mount Sinai](#), and thus its requirement was greater than that for the appearance offering. (Tosefta Chagigah 1:4.)

A midrash interpreted the words of [Proverbs 29:23](#), “A man’s pride shall bring him low; but he that is of a lowly spirit shall attain to honor,” to apply to Pharaoh and Moses, respectively. The midrash taught that the words, “A man’s pride shall bring him low,” apply to Pharaoh, who in [Exodus 5:2](#) haughtily asked, “Who is the Lord that I should hearken to His voice?” and so, as [Psalm 136:15](#) reports, God “overthrew Pharaoh and his host.” And the midrash taught that the words, “but he that is of a lowly spirit shall attain to honor,” apply to Moses, who in [Exodus 8:5](#), humbly asked Pharaoh, “Have this glory over me; at what time shall I entreat for you . . . that the frogs be destroyed,” and was rewarded in [Exodus 9:29](#) with the opportunity to say, “As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread forth my hands to the Lord [and] the thunders shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail.” ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 13:3.)

The [Pharisees](#) noted that while in [Exodus 5:2](#) Pharaoh asked who God was, once God had smitten him, in [Exodus 9:27](#) Pharaoh acknowledged that God was righteous. Citing this juxtaposition, the Pharisees complained against heretics who placed the name of earthly rulers above the name of God. (Mishnah Yadayim 4:8.)

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are no [commandments](#) in the parshAH (Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#). [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 2 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:93. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah



[Isaiah](#) (1509 fresco by [Michelangelo](#))



[Jeremiah](#) (fresco circa 1508–1512 by Michelangelo)

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is:

- for [Ashkenazi Jews](#): [Isaiah 27:6–28:13](#) and [29:22–23](#)
- for [Sephardi Jews](#): [Jeremiah 1:1–2:3](#)

[[edit](#)] Ashkenazi — Isaiah 27

The parshah and haftarah in [Isaiah 27](#) both address how Israel could prepare for God’s deliverance. [Rashi](#) in his [commentary on Isaiah 27:6–8](#) drew connections between the fruitfulness of [Isaiah 27:6](#) and [Exodus 1:4](#), between the killings of [Isaiah 27:7](#) and God’s slaying of Pharaoh’s people in, for example, [Exodus 12:29](#), and between the winds of [Isaiah 27:8](#) and those that drove the [Reed Sea](#) in [Exodus 14:21](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Sephardi — Jeremiah 1

The parshah and haftarah in [Jeremiah 1](#) both report the commissioning of a prophet, Moses in the parshah and [Jeremiah](#) in the haftarah. In both the parshah and the haftarah, God calls to the prophet ([Exodus 3:4](#); [Jeremiah 1:4–5](#)), the prophet resists, citing his lack of capacity ([Exodus 3:11](#); [Jeremiah 1:6](#)), but God encourages the prophet and promises to be with him. ([Exodus 3:12](#); [Jeremiah 1:7–8](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy

The [Passover](#) Haggadah, in the *magid* section of the [Seder](#), quotes [Exodus 1:7](#) to elucidate the report in [Deuteronomy 26:5](#) that the Israelites had become “great” and “mighty.” (Menachem Davis. *The Interlinear Haggadah: The Passover Haggadah, with an Interlinear Translation, Instructions and Comments*, 44. Brooklyn: [Mesorah Publications](#), 2005. [ISBN 1-57819-064-9](#). Joseph Tabory. *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, 91. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. [ISBN 978-0-8276-0858-0](#).)



A page from a 14th century German Haggadah

Next, the Haggadah cites [Exodus 1:10–13](#) to elucidate the report in [Deuteronomy 26:6](#) that “the Egyptians dealt ill with us [the Israelites], and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage.”

(Davis, *Passover Haggadah*, at 45–46; Tabory, at 91–92.) The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 1:10](#) for the proposition that the Egyptians attributed evil intentions to the Israelites or dealt ill with them. (Davis, *Passover Haggadah*, at 45; Tabory, at 91.) The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 1:11](#) for the proposition that the Egyptians afflicted the Israelites. (Davis, *Passover Haggadah*, at 45; Tabory, at 92.) And the Haggadah quotes [Exodus 1:13](#) for the proposition that the Egyptians imposed hard labor on the Israelites. (Davis, *Passover Haggadah*, at 46; Tabory, at 92.)

Also in the *magid* section, the Haggadah quotes [Exodus 1:14](#) to answer the question: For what purpose do Jews eat bitter herbs (*maror*)? The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 1:14](#) for the proposition

that Jews do so because the Egyptians embittered the Israelites' lives in Egypt. (Davis, *Passover Haggadah*, at 59–60; Tabory, at 100.)

Also in the *magid* section, the Haggadah cites [Exodus 1:22](#), [2:23–25](#), and [3:9](#) to elucidate the report in [Deuteronomy 26:7](#) that “we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice, and saw our affliction, and our toil, and our oppression.” (Davis, *Passover Haggadah*, at 46–47; Tabory, at 92–93.) The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 1:22](#) to explain the Israelites' travail, interpreting that travail as the loss of the baby boys. (Davis, *Passover Haggadah*, at 47; Tabory, at 93.) The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 2:23](#) for the proposition that the Israelites cried to God. (Davis, *Passover Haggadah*, at 46; Tabory, at 92.) The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 2:24](#) for the proposition that God heard the Israelites' voice. (Davis, *Passover Haggadah*, at 46–47; Tabory, at 92.) The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 2:25](#) for the proposition that God saw the Israelites' affliction, interpreting that affliction as the suspension of family life. (Davis, *Passover Haggadah*, at 47; Tabory, at 92.) And the Haggadah quotes [Exodus 3:9](#) to explain the Israelites' oppression, interpreting that oppression as pressure or persecution. (Davis, *Passover Haggadah*, at 47; Tabory, at 93.)

And shortly thereafter, the Haggadah quotes [Exodus 4:17](#) to elucidate the term “signs” in [Deuteronomy 26:8](#), interpreting the “sign” to mean [the staff of Moses](#). (Davis, *Passover Haggadah*, at 50; Tabory, at 94.)

The “cry” (*tza'akah*) of the Israelites that God acknowledged in [Exodus 3:7](#) appears in the *Ana B'kboah*, prayer for deliverance

recited in the Kabbalat Shabbat [prayer service](#) between [Psalm 29](#) and [Lekhhah Dodi](#). ([Reuven Hammer](#). *Or Hadasb: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 20. New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#).)

According to a midrash, [Exodus 3:12](#) states God's intention in removing Israel from Egyptian slavery when it says, "you shall serve God upon this mountain." And it was to this service that Moses dedicated the [Tabernacle](#), and it was on the day that Moses completed the Tabernacle that Moses composed [Psalm 91](#), which Jews recite in the [Pseukei D'Zimrah](#) section of the morning ([Shacharit](#)) prayer service. (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals with an Interlinear Translation*, 272. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-697-3](#).)

The exchange of Moses and God in [Exodus 3:13–14](#) about God's name is in part about how we as humans can perceive God, and that in turn is one of the motivations of prayer. (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at XXVI.)

Some Jews read about the staff of Moses in [Exodus 4:17](#) as they study [Pirkei Avot chapter 5](#) on a Sabbath between Passover and [Rosh Hashanah](#). (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 571.)

[[edit](#)] The Weekly Maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), Sephardi Jews each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parshah. For Parshah Shemot, Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Rast, the maqam

that shows a beginning or an initiation of something. In this case it is appropriate because we are initiating the Book of Exodus.

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:



Sargon

[\[edit\]](#) Ancient

- Satire of Trades. [Papyrus Sallier II, column VI, lines 1-3](#)
Middle Kingdom Egypt. (life of bricklayers).
- The Legend of [Sargon](#). [Assyria](#), 7th century BCE.
Reprinted in e.g. [James B. Pritchard](#). *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 119. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. [ISBN 0691035032](#).
(child upon the water).

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 15:13–16](#) (sojourn in Egypt); [17:7–14](#) (circumcision); [21:14–16](#) (abandoned infant); [24:10–28](#) (courtship at the well); [29:1–12](#) (courtship at the well).
- [Exodus 7:3](#); [9:12](#); [10:1](#), [20](#), [27](#); [11:10](#); [14:4](#), [8](#) (hardening Pharaoh's heart).
- [Deuteronomy 2:30](#) (hardening of heart); [15:7](#) (hardening of heart); [33:16](#) (bush).
- [Joshua 11:20](#) (hardening of heart).
- [Ezekiel 16:3–5](#) (abandoned infant).
- [Job 38–39](#) (God asking who created the world).

[\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic

- [Ezekiel the Tragedian](#). *Exagōgē*. 2nd century BCE. Translated by R.G. Robertson. In *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume 2: Expansions of the "Old Testament" and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic works*. Edited by [James H. Charlesworth](#), 808–15. New York: [Anchor Bible](#), 1985. [ISBN 0-385-18813-7](#).
- [Romans 9:14–18](#). 1st century. (hardening Pharaoh's heart).

- [2 Timothy 3:8–9](#). Rome, 67 CE. (magicians opposing Moses).
- [Hebrews 11:23–27](#). Late 1st century. (Moses).
- [Matthew 2:16–18](#). Late 1st century. ([slaughter of the innocents](#)).
- [Acts 7:17–35](#). Late 1st century. (Moses).



Josephus

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[Talmud](#)

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- [Academy for Jewish Religion, California](#)
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Va'eira

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Va'eira, **Va'era**, or **Vaera** (וֵאֵרָא — [Hebrew](#) for “and I appeared” the first word that [God](#) speaks in the parshah, in [Exodus 6:3](#)) is the fourteenth [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the second in the [book of Exodus](#). It constitutes [Exodus 6:2–9:35](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it the fourteenth [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in January.



The Seventh Plague (1823 painting by [John Martin](#))

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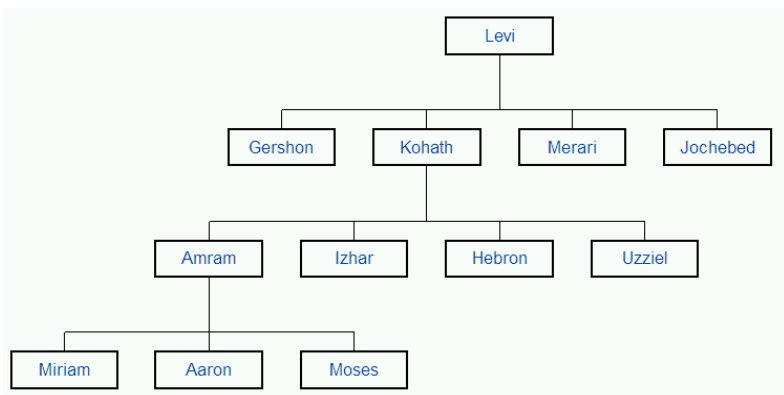


Moses (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

[God](#) spoke to [Moses](#), identified Himself as the God of the [Patriarchs](#), and acknowledged hearing the moaning of the [Israelites](#). ([Exodus 6:2–4](#).) God instructed Moses to tell the Israelites that God would free them, make them God's people, and bring them to the [Promised Land](#). ([Exodus 6:6–8](#).) But the

Israelites would not listen. ([Exodus 6:9.](#)) God told Moses to tell [Pharaoh](#) to let the Israelites go, but Moses complained that Pharaoh would not heed him, a man of impeded speech. ([Exodus 6:10–12.](#))

The text interjects a partial [genealogy](#) of [Reuben](#), [Simeon](#), and finally [Levi](#), including Moses and his family. ([Exodus 6:14–25.](#))



Aaron Cast His Rod Before Pharaoh and It Became a Serpent (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

God placed [Aaron](#) in the role of Moses' [prophet](#), to speak to Pharaoh. ([Exodus 7:1–2.](#)) God intended to [harden Pharaoh's heart, so that God might show signs and marvels.](#) ([Exodus 7:3.](#)) God told how Aaron could cast down his rod and it would turn into a [snake](#), and Aaron did so before Pharaoh. ([Exodus 7:9–10.](#)) Pharaoh caused his [magicians](#) to do the same, but Aaron's rod swallowed their rods. ([Exodus 7:11–12.](#)) Pharaoh's heart stiffened. ([Exodus 7:13.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) The plagues of Egypt



Water Is Changed into Blood (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

God began visiting [ten plagues on Egypt](#). God told Moses to go to Pharaoh at his morning bath, demand of him to let the Israelites go to worship in the [wilderness](#), and have Aaron strike the [Nile](#) with his rod and turn it into [blood](#). ([Exodus 7:14–18](#).) Moses and Aaron did so, and the [fish](#) died and the Nile stank. ([Exodus 7:20–21](#).) But when the Egyptian magicians did the same, Pharaoh’s heart stiffened. ([Exodus 7:22–23](#).) Seven days later, God told Moses to have Aaron hold his arm with the rod over the river and bring up [frogs](#), and they did so. ([Exodus 7:25–8:2](#).) The magicians did the same. ([Exodus 8:3](#).) Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron to plead with God to remove the frogs; Moses did so, but Pharaoh became stubborn. ([Exodus 8:4–11](#).)

God told Moses to have Aaron strike the dust with his rod, to turn it to [lice](#) throughout the land, and they did so. ([Exodus 8:12–13](#).) The magicians tried to do the same, but they could not. ([Exodus 8:14](#).) The magicians told Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God!” But Pharaoh’s heart stiffened. ([Exodus 8:15](#).)



The Plague of Flies (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

God loosed swarms of [insects](#) against the Egyptians, but not [Goshen](#), where the Israelites dwelt. ([Exodus 8:16–20.](#)) Pharaoh told Moses and Aaron to go sacrifice to God within Egypt, but Moses insisted on going three days into the wilderness. ([Exodus 8:21–23.](#)) Pharaoh agreed, in exchange for Moses' prayer to lift the plague. ([Exodus 8:24.](#)) But when God removed the insects, Pharaoh became stubborn again. ([Exodus 8:27–28.](#))

God struck the Egyptian's [livestock](#) with a pestilence, sparing the Israelites' livestock. ([Exodus 9:1–6.](#)) But Pharaoh remained stubborn. ([Exodus 9:7.](#))

God told Moses to take handfuls of soot from the kiln and throw it toward the sky, so that it would become a fine dust, causing [boils](#) on man and beast throughout Egypt, and he did so. ([Exodus 9:8–10.](#)) But God stiffened Pharaoh's heart. ([Exodus 9:12.](#))

God told Moses to threaten Pharaoh with [hail](#). ([Exodus 9:13–19.](#)) Those who feared God's word brought their slaves and livestock indoors. ([Exodus 9:20.](#)) God sent thunder and hail, which struck down all exposed in Egypt, but did not strike Goshen. ([Exodus 9:23–26.](#)) Pharaoh confessed his wrong, agreed to let the Israelites go, and asked Moses and Aaron to pray to end the hail. ([Exodus 9:27–28.](#)) Moses did so, but Pharaoh reverted to his guilty ways. ([Exodus 9:33–34.](#)) **In inner-biblical interpretation**

Exodus chapters 7–12

[\[edit\]](#)

The description of the 10 plagues exhibits patterns and progressions, as follows:

Cycle	Number	Plague	Verses	Was There Warning?	Time Warned	Introduction	Actor	Rod?	Israelites Shielded?	Did Pharaoh Concede?	Who Hardened Pharaoh's Heart?
First	1	blood	Exodus 7:14–25	yes	in the morning	לֹא אֶל-פַּרְעֹה Go to Pharaoh	Aaron	yes	no	no	passive voice
	2	frogs	Exodus 7:26–8:11 (8:1–15 in KJV)	yes	unknown	בֹּא אֶל-פַּרְעֹה Go in to Pharaoh	Aaron	yes	no	yes	passive voice
	3	gnats or lice	Exodus 8:12–15 (8:16–19 in KJV)	no	none	none	Aaron	yes	no	no	passive voice
Second	4	flies or wild beasts	Exodus 8:16–28 (8:20–32 in KJV)	yes	early in the morning	וְהִתְצַב לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה stand before Pharaoh	God	no	yes	yes	Pharaoh
	5	livestock	Exodus 9:1–7	yes	unknown	בֹּא אֶל-פַּרְעֹה Go in to Pharaoh	God	no	yes	no	Pharaoh
	6	boils	Exodus 9:8–12	no	none	none	Moses	no	no	no	God
Third	7	hail	Exodus 9:13–35	yes	early in the morning	וְהִתְצַב לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה stand before Pharaoh	Moses	no	yes	yes	passive voice
	8	locusts	Exodus 10:1–20	yes	unknown	בֹּא אֶל-פַּרְעֹה Go in to Pharaoh	Moses	yes	no	yes	God

Third	8	locusts	Exodus 10:1-20 ^a	yes	unknown	בא אל־פַּרְעֹה Go in to Pharaoh	Moses	yes	no	yes	God
	9	darkness	Exodus 10:21- 29 ^a	no	none	none	Moses	yes	yes	yes	God
	10	firstborn	Exodus 11:1-10; ^a 12:29- 32; ^a	yes	unknown	none	God	no	yes	yes	God

[Psalms 78:44–51](#) and [105:23–38](#) each recount differing arrangements of seven plagues. [Psalm 78:44–51](#) recalls plagues of (1) blood, (2) flies, (3) frogs, (4) locusts, (5) hail, (6) livestock, and (7) firstborn, but not plagues of lice, boils, or darkness. [Psalm 105:23–38](#) recalls plagues of (1) darkness, (2) blood, (3) frogs, (4) flies and lice, (5) hail, (6) locusts, and (7) firstborn, but not plagues of livestock or boils.

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 6

A [midrash](#) noted that God had already informed Moses that Pharaoh would not allow the Israelites to go, as in [Exodus 3:19](#) God told Moses, “I know that the King of Egypt will not allow you to go,” and in [Exodus 4:19](#) God told Moses, “I will harden his heart.” But Moses did not keep this in mind, but came instead

to doubt the wisdom of God's decree, and began to argue with God: “Lord, why have You dealt ill with this people?” For this reason, the Attribute of Justice sought to attack Moses, as [Exodus 6:2](#) says: “And God spoke to Moses” (employing the name of God (אֱלֹהִים, *Elohim*) indicative of God's Justice). But when God reflected that Moses only asked this because of Israel's suffering, God retracted and dealt with Moses according to the Attribute of Mercy, as [Exodus 6:2](#) says: “And He said to him: ‘I am the Lord’” (employing the name of God (יְהוָה, the [Tetragrammaton](#)) indicative of God's Mercy). ([Exodus Rabbah](#) 6:1.)





The Israelites' Cruel Bondage in Egypt (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

Rabbi Simai found evidence for the resurrection of the dead in the words, “And I also have established my covenant with them (the [Patriarchs](#)) to give them the land of Canaan,” in [Exodus 6:4](#). Rabbi Simai noted that [Exodus 6:4](#) does not say “to give you” but “to give them,” implying that God would give the land to the Patriarchs personally, and thus that God would resurrect them so as to fulfill the promise. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 90b.](#))



The Egyptians Afflicted the Israelites with Burdens (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

A [Baraita](#) deduced from [Exodus 6:6](#) that the Israelites' bondage in Egypt ended on [Rosh Hashanah](#). The Baraita noted that [Exodus 6:6](#) uses the word “burden” to describe the end of the

Israelites' bondage in Egypt, and [Psalm 81:7](#) uses the word “burden” to describe the end of [Joseph's](#) imprisonment, and the Baraita deduced that the two events must therefore have occurred at the same time of year. The Baraita further deduced from the words, “Blow the horn on the new moon, on the covering day for our festival . . . He appointed it for Joseph for a testimony when he went forth,” in [Psalm 81:4–6](#) that Joseph went forth from the prison on Rosh Hashanah. ([Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 11a–b.](#))

Rabbi Nehemiah cited the use of the words “will bring you out” in [Exodus 6:6](#) to demonstrate that using the word *hamotzi* in the blessing over bread would mean that God “*will* bring forth” bread from the land — not that God “*has* brought forth” bread from the land. Rabbi Nehemiah thus read [Exodus 6:6–7](#) to mean: “I am the Lord, the One Who *will bring* you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.” The [Gemara](#) reported that the Rabbis of a Baraita, however, read [Exodus 6:6–7](#) to mean: “When I *shall bring* you out, I will do for you something that will show you that I am the One Who *brought* you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.” ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 38a.](#))

The [Jerusalem Talmud](#) cited the four promises of salvation in [Exodus 6:6–7](#), (1) “I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians,” (2) “I will deliver you from their bondage,” (3) “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm,” and (4) “I will take you to Me for a people,” as one reason why Jews drink four cups of wine at the [Passover seder](#). (Jerusalem Talmud Pesachim 10:1; see also Exodus Rabbah 6:4; [Genesis Rabbah](#) 88:5.) And thus the

[Mishnah](#) taught that “On the eve of [Passover](#), . . . even the poorest man in Israel must not eat until he reclines; and they (the overseers of charity) should give him not less than four cups of wine.” ([Mishnah Pesachim 10:1](#); [Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 99b.](#))

A Baraita taught that Rabbi Simai deduced from the similarity of the phrases “And I will take you to me for a people” and “And I will bring you in to the land” in [Exodus 6:7](#) that the Israelites’ [Exodus](#) from Egypt occurred under circumstances similar to their entry into the [Land of Israel](#). Rabbi Simai thus deduced that just as only two out of 600,000 ([Caleb](#) and [Joshua](#)) entered the Promised Land, so only two out of every 600,000 Israelites in Egypt participated in the Exodus, and the rest died in Egypt. [Rava](#) taught that it will also be so when the [Messiah](#) comes that only a small portion of Jews will find redemption, for [Hosea 2:17](#) says, “And she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the days when she came up out of the land of Egypt,” implying that circumstances upon the coming of the Messiah will be similar to those upon the Israelites’ entry into the Land of Israel. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 111a.](#))

The Gemara asked why the [Tannaim](#) felt that the allocation of the Land of Israel “according to the names of the tribes of their fathers” in [Numbers 26:55](#) meant that the allocation was with reference to those who left Egypt; perhaps, the Gemara supposed, it might have meant the 12 tribes and that the Land was to be divided into 12 equal portions? The Gemara noted that in [Exodus 6:8](#), God told Moses to tell the Israelites who were

about to leave Egypt, “And I will give it you for a heritage; I am the Lord,” and that meant that the Land was the inheritance from the fathers of those who left Egypt. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 117b.](#))

A midrash interpreted the words of [Exodus 6:9](#), “they hearkened not to Moses for shortness of spirit,” to indicated that it was difficult for the Israelites to abandon idol worship. (Exodus Rabbah 6:5.)

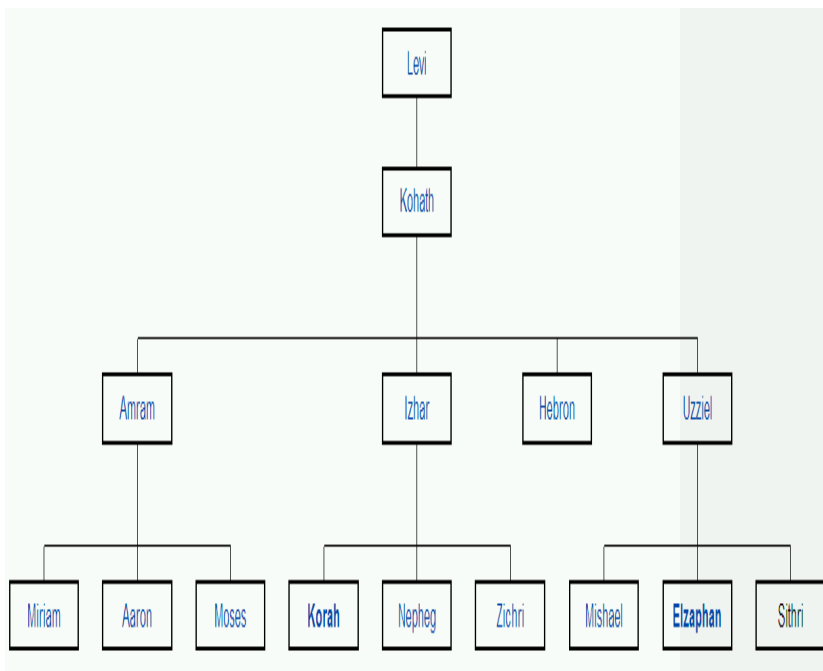
[Rabbi Ishmael](#) cited [Exodus 6:12](#) as one of ten *a fortiori* (*kal va-chomer*) arguments recorded in the [Hebrew Bible](#): (1) In [Genesis 44:8](#), Joseph’s brothers told Joseph, “Behold, the money that we found in our sacks’ mouths we brought back to you,” and they thus reasoned, “how then should we steal?” (2) In [Exodus 6:12](#), Moses told God, “Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened to me,” and reasoned that surely all the more, “How then shall Pharaoh hear me?” (3) In [Deuteronomy 31:27](#), Moses said to the Israelites, “Behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, you have been rebellious against the Lord,” and reasoned that it would follow, “And how much more after my death?” (4) In [Numbers 12:14](#), “the Lord said to Moses: ‘If her (Miriam’s) father had but spit in her face,’” surely it would stand to reason, “‘Should she not hide in shame seven days?’” (5) In [Jeremiah 12:5](#), the prophet asked, “If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you,” is it not logical to conclude, “Then how can you contend with horses?” (6) In [1 Samuel 23:3](#), [David](#)’s men said to him, “Behold, we are afraid here in [Judah](#),” and thus surely it stands to reason, “How much more then if we go to

[Keilah](#)?” (7) Also in [Jeremiah 12:5](#), the prophet asked, “And if in a land of Peace where you are secure” you are overcome, is it not logical to ask, “How will you do in the thickets of the [Jordan](#)?” (8) [Proverbs 11:31](#) reasoned, “Behold, the righteous shall be requited in the earth,” and does it not follow, “How much more the wicked and the sinner?” (9) In [Esther 9:12](#), “The king said to [Esther](#) the queen: “The Jews have slain and destroyed 500 men in [Shushan](#) the castle,”” and it thus stands to reason, ““What then have they done in the rest of the king’s provinces?”” (10) In [Ezekiel 15:5](#), God came to the prophet saying, “Behold, when it was whole, it was usable for no work,” and thus surely it is logical to argue, “How much less, when the fire has devoured it, and it is singed?” (Genesis Rabbah 92:7.)

A midrash interpreted the words of [Exodus 6:13](#), “And He gave them a charge concerning the children of Israel,” to convey that God warned Moses and Aaron that the Israelites were obstinate, bad-tempered, and troublesome, and that in assuming leadership over the Israelites, Moses and Aaron must expect that the Israelites would curse and even stone them. (Exodus Rabbah 7:3.)

A midrash interpreted God’s instructions to Moses and Aaron in [Exodus 6:13](#), “and to Pharaoh, King of Egypt,” to convey that God told Moses and Aaron that although God really ought to punish Pharaoh, God wanted Moses and Aaron to show Pharaoh the respect due to his regal position. And Moses did so, as [Exodus 11:8](#) reports that Moses told Pharaoh that God said, “And all these your servants shall come down to Me.” Moses did not say that Pharaoh would come down, only that Pharaoh’s

servants would do so. But Moses could well have said that Pharaoh himself would come down, for [Exodus 12:30](#) reports, “Pharaoh arose at midnight.” But Moses did not mention Pharaoh specifically so as to pay him respect. (Exodus Rabbah 7:3.)



A midrash taught that Korah took issue with Moses in [Numbers 16:1](#) because Moses had (as [Numbers 3:30](#) reports) appointed [Elizaphan](#) the son of [Uzziel](#) as prince of the [Kohathites](#), and Korah was (as [Exodus 6:21](#) reports) son of Uzziel's older brother [Izhar](#), and thus had a claim to leadership prior to Elizaphan. (Midrash [Tanhumah](#) Korah 1.)

Rava taught that he who wishes to take a wife should first inquire about the character of her brothers. For [Exodus 6:23](#) reports, “And Aaron took [Elisheva](#), the daughter of [Amminadab](#), the sister of [Nahshon](#).” As [Exodus 6:23](#) states “the daughter of Amminadab,” it is obvious that she was the sister of Nahshon. So [Exodus 6:23](#) expressly states “the sister of Nahshon” to imply that he who takes a wife should inquire about the character of her brothers, because most children resemble the brothers of their mother. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 110a](#); see also Exodus Rabbah 7:5.)

The Gemara asked whether the words in [Exodus 6:25](#), “And [Eleazar](#) Aaron’s son took him one of the daughters of [Putiel](#) to wife” did not convey that Eleazar’s son [Phinehas](#) descended from [Jethro](#), who fattened (*piteim*) calves for idol worship. The Gemara then provided an alternative explanation: [Exodus 6:25](#) could mean that Phinehas descended from Joseph, who conquered (*pitpeit*) his passions (resisting [Potiphar](#)’s wife, as reported in [Genesis 39](#)). But the Gemara asked, did not the tribes sneer at Phinehas and (as reported in [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 82b](#) and [Sotah 43a](#)) question how a youth (Phinehas) whose mother’s father crammed calves for idol-worship could kill the head of a tribe in Israel ([Zimri](#), Prince of [Simeon](#), as reported in [Numbers 25](#)). The Gemara explained that the real explanation was that Phinehas descended from both Joseph and Jethro. If Phinehas’s mother’s father descended from Joseph, then Phinehas’s mother’s mother descended from Jethro. And if Phinehas’s mother’s father descended from Jethro, then Phinehas’s mother’s

mother descended from Joseph. The Gemara explained that [Exodus 6:25](#) implies this dual explanation of “Putiel” when it says, “of the daughters of Putiel,” because the plural “daughters” implies two lines of ancestry (from both Joseph and Jethro). ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 109b–10a](#); see also Exodus Rabbah 7:5.)



Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh (painting by [Benjamin West](#))



Moses Speaks to Pharaoh (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Rabbi Simeon noted that in nearly every instance, the Torah mentioned Moses before Aaron, but [Exodus 6:26](#) mentioned Aaron before Moses, teaching that the two were deemed equivalent. ([Tosefta](#) Keritot 4:15; see also ([Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael](#) Pisha 6:1:2 (attributing to Rabbi [Judah haNasi](#)); [Song of Songs Rabbah](#) 4:13 (attributing to the Rabbis).) The Gemara taught that the use of the pronoun “he (*hu*)” in an introduction, as in the words “These are (*hu*) that Aaron and Moses” in [Exodus 6:26](#) signifies that they were the same in their righteousness from the beginning to the end. Similar uses appear in [Chronicles 1:27](#) to teach [Abraham](#)’s enduring righteousness, in [1 Samuel 17:14](#) to teach David’s enduring humility, in [Genesis 36:43](#) to teach [Esau](#)’s enduring wickedness, in [Numbers 26:9](#) to teach [Dathan](#) and [Abiram](#)’s enduring wickedness, in [2 Chronicles 28:22](#) to teach [Ahaz](#)’s enduring wickedness, and in [Esther 1:1](#) to teach

[Ahasuerus](#)'s enduring wickedness. ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 11a.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 7

The Tosefta cited [Exodus 7:1](#), where the lesser Aaron spoke for the greater Moses, for the proposition that in synagogue reading, a minor may translate for an adult, but it is not honorable for an adult to translate for a minor. (Tosefta Megillah 3:21.)

Rabbi Aibu bar Nagri said in the name of [Rabbi Hiyya](#) bar Abba that the words “with their enchantments” in [Exodus 7:11](#) refer to sorcery without exogenous assistance, while the words “with their sorcery” in [Exodus 7:22](#) refer to magic through the agency of demons. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 67b.](#))



Aaron's Rod Changed to a Serpent (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

Reading the words, “Aaron's *rod* swallowed up their *rods*,” in [Exodus 7:12](#), [Rabbi Eleazar](#) observed that it was a double miracle (as Aaron's serpent first became a rod again, and as a rod it swallowed up their serpents). ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 97a](#); Exodus Rabbah 9:7.) When Pharaoh saw this, he was amazed and expressed his fear of what would happen if Moses now told the rod to swallow up Pharaoh and his throne. Rabbi [Jose bar Hanina](#) taught that a great miracle happened to that rod, for although it swallowed up all the rods that had been cast down, sufficient to make ten heaps, still the rod did not all become any thicker, and all who saw it recognized it as Aaron's rod. On this account, Aaron's rod became a symbol for all the miracles and wonders that were to be performed for Israel throughout the generations. (Exodus Rabbah 9:7.)



The Rods of Moses and the Magicians Turned into Serpents (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

A midrash noted that [Exodus 7:13](#) reports that “Pharaoh's heart was hardened” without God’s action, and that this was so for the first five plagues. As the first five plagues did not move Pharaoh to release the Israelites, God decreed that from then on, even if Pharaoh had agreed to release the Israelites, God would not accept it. Thus starting with the sixth plague and thereafter (as [Exodus 10:27](#) reports), the text says, “the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart.” (Midrash Tanhuma Va’eira 3; see also Exodus Rabbah 11:6, below.)

Abitol the barber, citing [Rav](#), said that the Pharaoh whom Moses addressed was a puny fellow, a cubit tall, with a beard as long as he was tall, embodying the words in [Daniel 4:14](#) that “the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and . . . sets up over it the lowest of men.” And Abitol the barber, citing Rav, deduced from the words “Pharaoh . . . goes out to the water” in [Exodus 7:15](#) that this Pharaoh was a [magus](#) who went to the water to perform sorcery. ([Babylonian Talmud Moed Katan 18a.](#))



The Rod of Aaron Devours the Other Rods (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

A midrash cited [Exodus 7:20](#) as one proof for the proposition that God does all things together: God puts to death and brings to life at the same time; God wounds and heals at the same time. And thus the midrash noted, in [Exodus 7:20](#), “all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood,” and later, the blood became water again. ([Exodus Rabbah](#) 28:4.)

The Gemara deduced from the use of the word for fish, *dagab*, in the phrase “And the fish that were in the river died” in [Exodus 7:21](#) that the word *dagab* applies to fish both large and small. ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 51b.](#))

A midrash taught that the frogs were the most grievous of the ten plagues. The midrash taught that the frogs destroyed the Egyptians’ bodies, as [Psalm 78:45](#) says “frogs . . . destroyed them,” and the frogs emasculated the Egyptians, as [Exodus 7:28](#) says that the frogs would “come into . . . [the Egyptians] bed-chamber, and upon [their] bed.” The midrash taught that the frogs told the Egyptians that the coinage of their gods was abolished, and the Egyptians’ own coinage — their ability to procreate — was also rendered invalid. The midrash reasoned that as the word “destroyed” in [Genesis 38:9](#) applied to checking procreation in the passage about [Onan](#)’s seed, as “he destroyed it on the ground,” so the midrash reasoned that [Psalm 78:45](#) means to convey that the Egyptians’ procreation was checked as well when it says, “frogs . . . destroyed them.” And the midrash deduced that the frogs spoke because [Exodus 8:8](#) says, “concerning the frogs,” and the words for “concerning,” *al debar*, may also be read, “because of the words of.” (Exodus Rabbah 25:27.)



Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah) (painting by [Simeon Solomon](#))

Thaddeus of Rome taught that Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (also known as [Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego](#)) delivered themselves to the [Fiery Furnace](#) to sanctify the Divine Name in [Daniel 3:8–30](#) because they deduced from [Exodus 7:28](#) that the frogs of the plague, which had not been commanded to sanctify the Divine Name, nonetheless jumped into hot ovens at God's behest. So Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah reasoned that people, whom [Leviticus 22:32](#) does command to sanctify the Divine Name, should be willing to bear hot ovens for that reason. Thaddeus of Rome deduced that the ovens into which the frogs jumped were hot from the proximity of the words "ovens" and "kneading troughs" in [Exodus 7:28](#), reasoning that kneading troughs are found near ovens when ovens are hot. ([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 53b.](#))



The Plague of Frogs (1670 engraving by [Gerard Jollain](#))

The Tosefta deduced from [Exodus 1:8](#) that Pharaoh began to sin first before the people, and thus as indicated by [Exodus 7:29](#) and [8:4](#), God struck him first and then the people. (Tosefta Sotah 4:12.)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 8

Rabbi Eleazar taught that when [Exodus 8:2](#) reports that “the frog came up, and covered the land of Egypt,” it was initially just one frog, which bred prolifically and filled the land. The Tannaim disputed the matter. [Rabbi Akiba](#) said that one frog filled the whole of Egypt by breeding. But Rabbi [Eleazar ben Azariah](#) chastised Akiba for dabbling in [aggadah](#), and taught that one frog

croaked for others, and they joined the first frog. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 67b.](#))

A midrash interpreted the words of [Proverbs 29:23](#), “A man’s pride shall bring him low; but he that is of a lowly spirit shall attain to honor,” to apply to Pharaoh and Moses, respectively. The midrash taught that the words, “A man’s pride shall bring him low,” apply to Pharaoh, who in [Exodus 5:2](#) haughtily asked, “Who is the Lord that I should hearken to His voice?” and so, as [Psalm 136:15](#) reports, God “overthrew Pharaoh and his host.” And the midrash taught that the words, “but he that is of a lowly spirit shall attain to honor,” apply to Moses, who in [Exodus 8:5](#), humbly asked Pharaoh, “Have this glory over me; at what time shall I entreat for you . . . that the frogs be destroyed,” and was rewarded in [Exodus 9:29](#) with the opportunity to say, “As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread forth my hands to the Lord [and] the thunders shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail.” ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 13:3.)

Rabbi Eleazar deduced from the magicians’ recognition of “the finger of God” in [Exodus 8:15](#) that a demonic spirit cannot produce a creature less than a barleycorn in size. [Rav Papa](#) said that a spirit cannot even produce something the size of a camel, but a spirit can collect the elements of a larger object and thus produce the illusion of creating it, but a spirit cannot do even that with a smaller object. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 67b.](#))

Rabbi [Jose the Galilean](#) reasoned that as the phrase “the finger of God” in [Exodus 8:15](#) referred to 10 plagues, “the great hand” (translated “the great work”) in [Exodus 14:31](#) (in connection with

the miracle of the Reed Sea) must refer to 50 plagues upon the Egyptians, and thus to a variety of cruel and strange deaths. (Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael]] Beshallah 7; [Mekhilta of Rabbi Simeon](#) 26:6; see also Exodus Rabbah 5:14, 23:9.) And Rabbi Phinehas ben Hama reasoned that as the phrase “the finger of God” in [Exodus 8:15](#) referred to 10 plagues, “the hand of God” in [Job 19:21](#) (in connection with [Job’s](#) poverty) must refer to 50 plagues. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 116a](#); see also Exodus Rabbah 23:9.)



The Seventh Plague of Egypt (1828 engraving by John Martin)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 9

A midrash taught that when God perceived that Pharaoh did not relent after the first five plagues, God decided that even if

Pharaoh now wished to repent, God would harden Pharaoh's heart in order to exact the whole punishment from him. Thus [Exodus 9:12](#) reports that "the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh." And the midrash explained that the reference in [Exodus 9:12](#), "as the Lord had spoken to Moses," referred to God's prediction in [Exodus 7:3](#) that "I will harden Pharaoh's heart." (Exodus Rabbah 11:6.)



The Plague of Hail (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

In [Exodus 9:12](#), Pharaoh's heart is hardened. A midrash catalogued the wide range of additional capabilities of the heart reported in the Hebrew Bible. The heart speaks ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), sees ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), hears ([Kings 3:9](#)), walks ([2 Kings 5:26](#)), falls ([1 Samuel 17:32](#)), stands ([Ezekiel 22:14](#)), rejoices

[\(Psalm 16:9\)](#), cries ([Lamentations 2:18](#)), is comforted ([Isaiah 40:2](#)), is troubled ([Deuteronomy 15:10](#)), grows faint ([Deuteronomy 20:3](#)), grieves ([Genesis 6:6](#)), fears ([Deuteronomy 28:67](#)), can be broken ([Psalm 51:19](#)), becomes proud ([Deuteronomy 8:14](#)), rebels ([Jeremiah 5:23](#)), invents ([1 Kings 12:33](#)), cavils ([Deuteronomy 29:18](#)), overflows ([Psalm 45:2](#)), devises ([Proverbs 19:21](#)), desires ([Psalm 21:3](#)), goes astray ([Proverbs 7:25](#)), lusts ([Numbers 15:39](#)), is refreshed ([Genesis 18:5](#)), can be stolen ([Genesis 31:20](#)), is humbled ([Leviticus 26:41](#)), is enticed ([Genesis 34:3](#)), errs ([Isaiah 21:4](#)), trembles ([1 Samuel 4:13](#)), is awakened ([Song of Songs 5:2](#)), loves ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#)), hates ([Leviticus 19:17](#)), envies ([Proverbs 23:17](#)), is searched ([Jeremiah 17:10](#)), is rent ([Book of Joel 2:13](#)), meditates ([Psalm 49:4](#)), is like a fire ([Jeremiah 20:9](#)), is like a stone ([Ezekiel 36:26](#)), turns in repentance ([2 Kings 23:25](#)), becomes hot ([Deuteronomy 19:6](#)), dies ([1 Samuel 25:37](#)), melts ([Joshua 7:5](#)), takes in words ([Deuteronomy 6:6](#)), is susceptible to fear ([Jeremiah 32:40](#)), gives thanks ([Psalm 111:1](#)), covets ([Proverbs 6:25](#)), becomes hard ([Proverbs 28:14](#)), makes merry ([Judges 16:25](#)), acts deceitfully ([Proverbs 12:20](#)), speaks from out of itself ([1 Samuel 1:13](#)), loves bribes ([Jeremiah 22:17](#)), writes words ([Proverbs 3:3](#)), plans ([Proverbs 6:18](#)), receives commandments ([Proverbs 10:8](#)), acts with pride ([Obadiah 1:3](#)), makes arrangements ([Proverbs 16:1](#)), and aggrandizes itself ([2 Chronicles 25:19](#)). ([Ecclesiastes Rabbah](#) 1:36.)

The [Pharisees](#) noted that while in [Exodus 5:2](#) Pharaoh asked who God was, once God had smitten him, in [Exodus 9:27](#) Pharaoh

acknowledged that God was righteous. Citing this juxtaposition, the Pharisees complained against heretics who placed the name of earthly rulers above the name of God. (Mishnah Yadayim 4:8.)

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are no [commandments](#) in the parshah. (Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#). [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 2 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:93. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9](#).)



Ezekiel (painting by [Michelangelo](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

[\[edit\]](#) Generally

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Ezekiel 28:25–29:21](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Connection to the Parshah

Both the parshah and the haftarah describe God's instructions to a prophet to confront the Pharaoh of Egypt and bring on Israel's redemption. Both the parshah and the haftarah address God's judgments (*shefatim*) against Pharaoh and Egypt. ([Exodus 7:4](#); [Ezekiel 28:26](#).) A monster (*tannin*) plays a role in both the parshah and the haftarah: In the parshah, God turns Moses' rod into a monster ([Exodus 7:15](#)); the haftarah describes Pharaoh as a monster. ([Ezekiel 29:3](#).) In both the parshah and the haftarah, God attacks the river ([Exodus 7:17–19](#); [Ezekiel 29:10](#)) and kills fish. ([Exodus 7:20–21](#); [Ezekiel 29:4–5](#).) In both the parshah and the haftarah, God's actions would cause the Egyptians to know (*ve-yade'u*) God. ([Exodus 7:5](#); [Ezekiel 28:26](#); [6](#), [16](#), [21](#).) And in both the parshah and the haftarah, God proclaims, "I am the Lord." ([Exodus 6:2](#); [Ezekiel 29:21](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) On Shabbat Rosh Chodesh

When the parshah coincides with Shabbat [Rosh Chodesh](#) (as it does in 2010, 2013, and 2017), the haftarah is [Isaiah 66:1–24](#).



A page from a 14th century German Haggadah

[[edit](#)] In the liturgy

Reading the [Passover Haggadah](#), in the *magid* section of the [Seder](#), many Jews remove drops of wine from their cups for each of the ten plagues in [Exodus 7:14–12:29](#). (Menachem Davis. *The Interlinear Haggadah: The Passover Haggadah, with an Interlinear Translation, Instructions and Comments*, 51. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005. [ISBN 1-57819-064-9](#). Joseph Tabory. *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, 94–95. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. [ISBN 978-0-8276-0858-0](#).)

Next, the Haggadah recounts the reasoning of Rabbi Jose the Galilean that as the phrase “the finger of God” in [Exodus 8:15](#) referred to 10 plagues, “the great hand” (translated “the great

work”) in [Exodus 14:31](#) must refer to 50 plagues upon the Egyptians. (Davis, at 51–52; Tabory, at 95.)

And the haggadah in the *magid* section quotes [Exodus 9:3](#) to elucidate the term “a mighty hand” in [Deuteronomy 26:8](#), interpreting the “mighty hand” to mean the plague of pestilence on the Egyptian livestock. (Davis, at 49; Tabory, at 94.)

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 17:1](#) (El Shaddai); [28:3](#) (El Shaddai); [35:11](#) (El Shaddai); [43:14](#) (El Shaddai); [48:3](#) (El Shaddai); [49:25](#) (Shaddai).
- [Exodus 4:21](#); [10:1](#), [20](#), [27](#); [11:10](#); [14:4](#), [8](#) (hardening Pharaoh’s heart).
- [Numbers 14:30](#) (God lifted up God’s hand).
- [Deuteronomy 2:30](#); [15:7](#) (hardening of heart).
- [Joshua 11:20](#) (hardening of heart).
- [Jeremiah 7:23](#) (I will be your God and you will be my people); [11:4](#) (you will be my people, and I will be your God); [30:22](#) (you will be my people, and I will be your God); [31:32](#) (31:33 in NJPS) (I will be their God, and they will be my people).

- [Ezekiel 20:5](#) (God lifted up God's hand); [36:28](#) (you will be my people, and I will be your God).
- [Psalms 68:5](#) (name is the Lord); [78:44–51](#) (plagues); [105:23–38](#) (plagues).
- [Nehemiah 9:15](#) (God lifted up God's hand).

[edit] Early nonrabbinic

- [Ezekiel the Tragedian](#). *Exagōgē*. 2nd century BCE.
Translated by R.G. Robertson. In *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume 2: Expansions of the "Old Testament" and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic works*. Edited by [James H. Charlesworth](#), 814. New York: [Anchor Bible](#), 1985. [ISBN 0-385-18813-7](#).



Philo

- [Philo](#). [Allegorical Interpretation 1](#): 13:40; [3](#): 14:43; 60:172; [On the Birth of Abel and the Sacrifices Offered by Him and by His Brother Cain](#) 3:9; 12:51; 19:69; [That the Worse Is Wont To Attack the Better](#) 12:38–39; [On the Posterity of Cain and His Exile](#) 22:76; [On Drunkenness](#) 26:101; [On the Confusion of](#)

[Tongues](#) 9:29; 20:94; [On the Migration of Abraham](#) 15:83–85; [On Flight and Finding](#) 3:18; 23:124; [On the Change of Names](#) 2:13; 3:20–21; 22:125; 37:207; [On Dreams, That They Are God-Sent](#) 2:28:189; 39:259; 42:277. [Alexandria](#), Egypt, early 1st century CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [Charles Duke Yonge](#), 29, 55, 69, 95, 100, 103, 116, 139, 215, 237, 242, 261, 322, 332, 342–43, 352, 359, 401, 407–08. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1993. [ISBN 0-943575-93-1](#).

- [Romans 9:14–18](#). 1st century. (hardening Pharaoh’s heart).
- [2 Timothy 3:8–9](#). Rome, 67 CE. (magicians opposing Moses).
- [Revelation 16:12–16](#) (frogs); [17:17](#) (changing hearts to God’s purpose). Late 1st century CE.



Josephus

- [Josephus](#). [The Wars of the Jews](#), [5:9:4](#). Circa 75 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William](#)

[Whiston](#), 716. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987.
[ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).

- Josephus. [Antiquities of the Jews 2:13:3–2:14:4](#). Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 72–74. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).
- [Qur'an 7:103–126, 130–135; 10:75–83; 11:96–97; 17:101–102; 20:42–73; 23:45–48; 26:10–51; 28:36–39; 29:39; 40:23–27, 37; 43:46–54; 51:38–39; 73:15–16; 79:15–24](#). Arabia, 7th century.

[[edit](#)] Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah: Pesachim 10:1; Shevuot 5:3](#); Yadayim 4:8. Land of Israel, circa 200 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 249, 630, 1131. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Tosefta](#): Megillah 3:21; Sotah 4:12; Keritot 4:15. Land of Israel, circa 300 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 649, 848, 1571. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).
- [Jerusalem Talmud](#) Pesachim 10:1. Land of Israel, circa 400 CE.

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- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, California](#)
- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
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Bo (parsha)

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Bo (בּוֹ — in [Hebrew](#), the command form of “go,” or “come,” and the first word that [God](#) speaks in the parshah, in [Exodus 10:1](#)) is the fifteenth [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the third in the [book of Exodus](#). It constitutes [Exodus 10:1–13:16](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it the fifteenth [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in January or early February.

The parshah tells of the last three [plagues on Egypt](#) and the first [Passover](#).

As the parshah describes the first Passover, Jews also read part of the parshah, [Exodus 12:21–51](#), as the initial Torah reading for the first day of Passover, and another part, [Exodus 13:1–16](#), as the initial Torah reading for the first intermediate day (*[Chol HaMoed](#)*) of Passover. Jews also read another part of the parshah, [Exodus 12:1–20](#), which describes the laws of Passover, as the *[maftir](#)* Torah reading for the [Special Sabbath Shabbat HaChodesh](#), which falls on [Rosh Chodesh Nisan](#), the month in which Jews celebrate Passover.



The Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt (1830 painting by [David Roberts](#))

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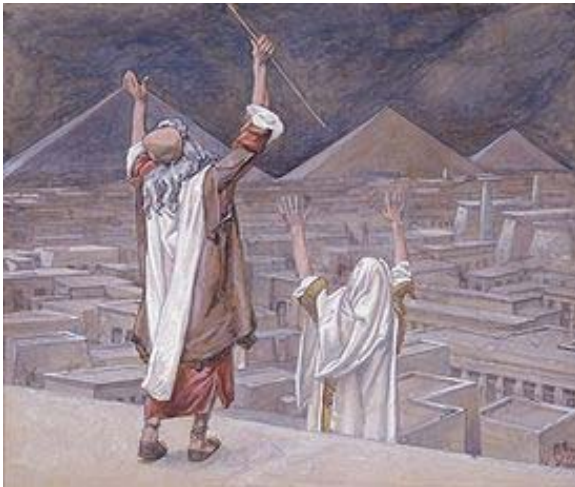
[\[edit\]](#) Summary



Moses Speaks to Pharaoh (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

[\[edit\]](#) The last plagues of Egypt

After seven plagues, God continued visiting plagues on Egypt. [Moses](#) and [Aaron](#) warned [Pharaoh](#) to let the [Israelites](#) go, or suffer [locusts](#) covering the land. ([Exodus 10:3–5.](#)) Pharaoh's courtiers pressed Pharaoh to let the men go, so Pharaoh brought Moses and Aaron back and asked them, "Who are the ones to go?" ([Exodus 10:7–8.](#)) Moses insisted that young and old, sons and daughters, flocks and herds would go, but Pharaoh rejected Moses' request and expelled Moses and Aaron from his presence. ([Exodus 10:9–11.](#))



The Plague of Locusts (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Moses held his rod over the land, and God drove an east wind to bring locusts to invade all the land. ([Exodus 10:12–15.](#)) Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron, asked forgiveness, and asked them

to plead with God to remove the locusts. ([Exodus 10:16–17.](#)) Moses did so, and God brought a west wind to lift the locusts into the [Sea of Reeds](#). ([Exodus 10:18–19.](#)) But God stiffened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let the Israelites go. ([Exodus 10:20.](#))

Then God instructed Moses to hold his arm toward the sky to bring [darkness](#) upon the land, and Moses did so, but the Israelites enjoyed light. ([Exodus 10:21–23.](#)) Pharaoh summoned Moses and told him to go, leaving only the Israelites’ flocks and herds behind, but Moses insisted that none of the Israelites’ livestock be left behind, for “[W]e shall not know with what we are to worship the Lord until we arrive there.” ([Exodus 10:24–26.](#)) But God stiffened Pharaoh’s heart, and he expelled Moses saying: “[T]he moment you look upon my face, you shall die.” ([Exodus 10:27–28.](#)) Moses warned Pharaoh that God would kill every firstborn in Egypt, but not a dog of the Israelites. ([Exodus 11:4–7.](#)) And Moses left Pharaoh in hot anger. ([Exodus 11:8.](#))



Lamentations over the Death of the Firstborn of Egypt (1877 painting by [Charles Sprague Pearce](#))

[\[edit\]](#) The first Passover

God told Moses and Aaron to mark that month as the first of the months of the year. ([Exodus 12:1–2](#).) And God told them to instruct the Israelites in the laws of Passover, and the Israelites obeyed. ([Exodus 12:3–28](#), [43–50](#); [13:6–10](#).) (See Commandments below.)

[\[edit\]](#) The plague of the firstborn

In the middle of the night, God struck down all the firstborn in Egypt. ([Exodus 12:29](#).) Pharaoh arose in the night to a loud cry in Egypt, summoned Moses and Aaron, and told them to take the Israelites and go. ([Exodus 12:30–32](#).) So the Israelites took their dough before it was leavened, borrowed [silver](#), [gold](#), and clothing from the Egyptians, and left the [Land of Goshen](#) for [Sukkot](#). ([Exodus 12:34–37](#).) God instructed Moses to tell the Israelites to consecrate to God every firstborn man and beast, and Moses did so. ([Exodus 13:1–2](#), [11–15](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) In ancient parallels

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapters 12

The command to apply blood to the lintel and the two door-posts in [Exodus 12:22](#) parallels [Babylonian](#) Namburbi rituals in which blood was smeared on doors and keyholes so that “evil [plague] shall not enter the house.” ([Jacob Milgrom](#), *Leviticus 1–16*, 3:1081. New York: [Anchor Bible](#), 1991. [ISBN 0-385-11434-6](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapters 7–12

The description of the 10 plagues exhibits patterns and progressions, as follows:

Cycle	Number	Plague	Verses	Was There Warning?	Time Warned
First	1	blood	Exodus 7:14–25 [ⓘ]	yes	in the morning
	2	frogs	Exodus 7:26–8:11 [ⓘ] (8:1–15 [ⓘ] in KJV)	yes	unknown
	3	gnats or lice	Exodus 8:12–15 [ⓘ] (8:16–19 [ⓘ] in KJV)	no	none
Second	4	flies or wild beasts	Exodus 8:16–28 [ⓘ] (8:20–32 [ⓘ] in KJV)	yes	early in the morning
	5	livestock	Exodus 9:1–7 [ⓘ]	yes	unknown
	6	boils	Exodus 9:8–12 [ⓘ]	no	none
Third	7	hail	Exodus 9:13–35 [ⓘ]	yes	early in the morning
	8	locusts	Exodus 10:1–20 [ⓘ]	yes	unknown
	9	darkness	Exodus 10:21–29 [ⓘ]	no	none
	10	firstborn	Exodus 11:1–10 [ⓘ] ; [ⓘ] 12:29–32 [ⓘ] ; [ⓘ]	yes	unknown

Introduction	Actor	Rod?	Israelites Shielded?	Did Pharaoh Concede?	Who Hardened Pharaoh's Heart?
לך אל-פרעה Go to Pharaoh	Aaron	yes	no	no	passive voice
ב'א אל-פרעה Go in to Pharaoh	Aaron	yes	no	yes	passive voice
none	Aaron	yes	no	no	passive voice
והתיצב לפני פרעה stand before Pharaoh	God	no	yes	yes	Pharaoh
ב'א אל-פרעה Go in to Pharaoh	God	no	yes	no	Pharaoh
none	Moses	no	no	no	God
והתיצב לפני פרעה stand before Pharaoh	Moses	no	yes	yes	passive voice
ב'א אל-פרעה Go in to Pharaoh	Moses	yes	no	yes	God
none	Moses	yes	yes	yes	God
none	God	no	yes	yes	God

Cycle	Number	Plague	Verses	Was There Warning?	Time Warned	Introduction	Actor	Rod?	Israelites Shielded?	Did Pharaoh Concede?	Who Hardened Pharaoh's Heart?
First	1	blood	Exodus 7:14–25 א	yes	in the morning	ה' יאמר אל פרעה Go to Pharaoh	Aaron	yes	no	no	passive voice
	2	frogs	Exodus 7:26–8:11 א (8:1–15 א in KJV)	yes	unknown	ה' יאמר אל פרעה Go in to Pharaoh	Aaron	yes	no	yes	passive voice
	3	gnats or lice	Exodus 8:12–15 א (8:16–19 א in KJV)	no	none	none	Aaron	yes	no	no	passive voice
Second	4	flies or wild beasts	Exodus 8:16–28 א (8:20–32 א in KJV)	yes	early in the morning	ה' יאמר אל פרעה stand before Pharaoh	God	no	yes	yes	Pharaoh
	5	livestock	Exodus 9:1–7 א	yes	unknown	ה' יאמר אל פרעה Go in to Pharaoh	God	no	yes	no	Pharaoh
	6	boils	Exodus 9:8–12 א	no	none	none	Moses	no	no	no	God
Third	7	hail	Exodus 9:13–35 א	yes	early in the morning	ה' יאמר אל פרעה stand before Pharaoh	Moses	no	yes	yes	passive voice
	8	locusts	Exodus 10:1–20 א	yes	unknown	ה' יאמר אל פרעה Go in to Pharaoh	Moses	yes	no	yes	God
	9	darkness	Exodus 10:21–29 א	no	none	none	Moses	yes	yes	yes	God
	10	firstborn	Exodus 11:1–10, א 12:29–32, א	yes	unknown	none	God	no	yes	yes	God

arrangements of seven plagues. [Psalm 78:44–51](#) recalls plagues of (1) blood, (2) flies, (3) frogs, (4) locusts, (5) hail, (6) livestock, and (7) firstborn, but not plagues of lice, boils, or darkness. [Psalm 105:23–38](#) recalls plagues of (1) darkness, (2) blood, (3) frogs, (4) flies and lice, (5) hail, (6) locusts, and (7) firstborn, but not plagues of livestock or boils.

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapters 12–13

[\[edit\]](#) Passover



The Search for Leaven (illustration circa 1733–1739 by [Bernard Picart](#))

[Exodus 12:3–28](#) and [43–50](#) and [13:6–10](#) refer to the [Festival](#) of Passover. In the [Hebrew Bible](#), Passover is called:

- “Passover” (*Pesach*, פֶּסַח) ([Exodus 12:11, 21, 27, 43, 48; 34:25; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 9:2, 4–6, 10, 12–14; 28:16; 33:3; Deuteronomy 16:1–2, 5–6; Joshua 5:10–11; 2](#)

[Kings 23:21–23](#); [Ezekiel 45:21](#); [Ezra 6:19–20](#); [2 Chronicles 30:1–2](#), [5](#), [15](#), [17–18](#); [35:1](#), [6–9](#), [11](#), [13](#), [16–19](#));

- “The Feast of Unleavened Bread” (*Chag haMatzot*, חַג הַמַּצּוֹת) ([Exodus 12:17](#); [23:15](#); [34:18](#); [Leviticus 23:6](#); [Deuteronomy 16:16](#); [Ezekiel 45:21](#); [Ezra 6:22](#); [2 Chronicles 8:13](#); [30:13](#), [21](#); [35:17](#)); and
- “A holy convocation” or “a solemn assembly” (*mikrah kodesh*, מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ) ([Exodus 12:16](#); [Leviticus 23:7–8](#); [Numbers 28:18](#), [25](#)).

Some explain the double nomenclature of “Passover” and “Feast of Unleavened Bread” as referring to two separate feasts that the Israelites combined sometime between [the Exodus](#) and when the Biblical text became settled. (See, e.g., [W. Gunther Plaut](#). *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, 456. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981. [ISBN 0-8074-0055-6](#).) [Exodus 34:18–20](#) and [Deuteronomy 15:19–16:8](#) indicate that the dedication of the firstborn also became associated with the festival.



The Passover Seder of the Portuguese Jews (illustration circa 1733–1739 by Bernard Picart)

Some believe that the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” was an agricultural festival at which the Israelites celebrated the beginning of the grain harvest. Moses may have had this festival in mind when in [Exodus 5:1](#) and [10:9](#) he petitioned Pharaoh to let the Israelites go to celebrate a feast in the wilderness. (Plaut, at 464.)

“Passover,” on the other hand, was associated with a thanksgiving sacrifice of a lamb, also called “the Passover,” “the Passover lamb,” or “the Passover offering.” ([Exodus 12:11, 21, 27, 43, 48](#); [Deuteronomy 16:2, 5–6](#); [Ezra 6:20](#); [2 Chronicles 30:15, 17–18](#); [35:1, 6–9, 11, 13](#).)

[Exodus 12:5–6](#), [Leviticus 23:5](#), and [Numbers 9:3](#) and [5](#), and [28:16](#) direct “Passover” to take place on the evening of the fourteenth of [Aviv](#) ([Nisan](#) in the [Hebrew calendar](#) after the [Babylonian](#)

[captivity](#)). [Joshua 5:10](#), [Ezekiel 45:21](#), [Ezra 6:19](#), and [2 Chronicles 35:1](#) confirm that practice. [Exodus 12:18–19](#), [23:15](#), and [34:18](#), [Leviticus 23:6](#), and [Ezekiel 45:21](#) direct the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” to take place over seven days and [Leviticus 23:6](#) and [Ezekiel 45:21](#) direct that it begin on the fifteenth of the month. Some believe that the propinquity of the dates of the two festivals led to their confusion and merger. (Plaut, at 464.)

[Exodus 12:23](#) and [27](#) link the word “Passover” (*Pesach*, פֶּסַח) to God’s act to “pass over” (*pasach*, פָּסַח) the Israelites’ houses in the [plague](#) of the firstborn. In the Torah, the consolidated Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread thus commemorate the Israelites’ liberation from [Egypt](#). ([Exodus 12:42](#); [23:15](#); [34:18](#); [Numbers 33:3](#); [Deuteronomy 16:1](#), [3](#), [6](#).)

The Hebrew Bible frequently notes the Israelites’ observance of Passover at turning points in their history. [Numbers 9:1–5](#) reports God’s direction to the Israelites to observe Passover in the wilderness of [Sinai](#) on the anniversary of their liberation from Egypt. [Joshua 5:10–11](#) reports that upon entering the [Promised Land](#), the Israelites kept the Passover on the plains of [Jericho](#) and ate unleavened cakes and parched corn, produce of the land, the next day. [2 Kings 23:21–23](#) reports that King [Josiah](#) commanded the Israelites to keep the Passover in [Jerusalem](#) as part of Josiah’s reforms, but also notes that the Israelites had not kept such a Passover from the days of the [Biblical judges](#) nor in all the days of the [kings of Israel](#) or the [kings of Judah](#), calling into question the observance of even Kings [David](#) and [Solomon](#). The more reverent [2 Chronicles 8:12–13](#), however, reports that Solomon

offered sacrifices on the festivals, including the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And [2 Chronicles 30:1–27](#) reports King [Hezekiah](#)’s observance of a second Passover anew, as sufficient numbers of neither the priests nor the people were prepared to do so before then. And [Ezra 6:19–22](#) reports that the Israelites returned from the Babylonian captivity observed Passover, ate the Passover lamb, and kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy.



The Plague of Locusts (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 10

A [midrash](#) taught that God brought the locusts upon the Egyptians in [Exodus 10:1–20](#) because the Egyptians had made the Israelites sow wheat and barley for them, and thus God brought locusts to devour what the Israelites had sown for them. ([Exodus Rabbah](#) 13:6.)

A midrash taught that God fixed a time of “tomorrow” for the plague of locusts in [Exodus 10:4](#) so that the Egyptians might feel remorse and do penitence (thus showing that the Egyptians were still not barred from doing penitence). (Exodus Rabbah 13:6.)

A midrash taught that God brought darkness upon the people in [Exodus 10:21–23](#) because some Israelite transgressors had Egyptian patrons, lived in affluence and honor, and were unwilling to leave Egypt. God reasoned that bringing a plague and killing these transgressors publicly would cause the Egyptians to conclude that the plagues punished Egyptians and Israelites alike, and thus did not come from God. Thus, God brought darkness upon the Egyptians for three days, so that the Israelites could bury the dead transgressors without the Egyptians seeing them do so. (Exodus Rabbah 14:3.)

Reading the words “even darkness that could be felt” in [Exodus 10:22](#), the Sages conjectured that it was as thick as a [denar](#) coin, for “even darkness that could be felt” implied a darkness that had substance. (Exodus Rabbah 14:1.)

Rabbi Abdimi of [Haifa](#) interpreted the words “thick darkness” in [Exodus 10:22](#) to teach that the darkness was doubled and redoubled. (Exodus Rabbah 14:3.)

The Rabbis taught that there were seven days of darkness. During the first three days, one who wished to arise from sitting could do so, and the one who wished to sit down could do so. Concerning these days [Exodus 10:22–23](#) says: “And there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days; and they did not see

one another.” During the last three days, one who sat could not stand up, one who stood could not sit down, and one who was lying down could not rise upright. Concerning these days [Exodus 10:23](#) says: “neither rose any from his place for three days.” (Exodus Rabbah 14:3.)

During the three days of thick darkness, God gave the Israelites favor in the eyes of the Egyptians, so that the Egyptians lent the Israelites everything. An Israelite would enter an Egyptian’s house, and if the Israelite saw gold and silver vessels or garments, and when the Israelite asked for them the Egyptian replied that the Egyptian had nothing to lend, the Israelite would say where the goods were. The Egyptians would then reason that had the Israelites desired to deceive the Egyptians, they could have easily taken the goods during the darkness and the Egyptians would not have noticed. But since the Israelites did not take the goods, the Egyptians reasoned that the Israelites would not keep them. And so the Egyptians lent the Israelites their things, so as to fulfill what [Genesis 15:14](#) foretold: “Afterward shall they come out with great substance.” (Exodus Rabbah 14:3.)

The midrash noted that [Exodus 10:23](#) says: “but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings,” not, “in the land of Goshen,” and concluded that light accompanied the Israelites wherever they went and illumined what was within barrels, boxes, and treasure-chests. Concerning them [Psalm 119:105](#) says: “Your word is a lamp for my feet.” (Exodus Rabbah 14:3.)

The midrash taught that the six days of darkness occurred in Egypt, while the seventh day of darkness was a day of darkness of

the sea, as [Exodus 14:20](#) says: “And there was the cloud and the darkness here, yet it gave light by night there.” So God sent clouds and darkness and covered the Egyptians with darkness, but gave light to the Israelites, as God had done for them in Egypt. Hence [Psalm 27:1](#) says: “The Lord is my light and my salvation.” And the midrash taught that in the [Messianic Age](#), as well, God will bring darkness to sinners, but light to Israel, as [Isaiah 60:2](#) says: “For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but upon you the Lord will shine.” (Exodus Rabbah 14:3.)

A midrash noted that [Exodus 7:13](#) reports that “Pharaoh’s heart was hardened” without God’s action, and that this was so for the first five plagues. As the first five plagues did not move Pharaoh to release the Israelites, God decreed that from then on, even if Pharaoh had agreed to release the Israelites, God would not accept it. Thus starting with the sixth plague and thereafter, as [Exodus 10:27](#) reports, the text says, “the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart.” (Midrash [Tanhuma](#) Va’eira 3; see also Exodus Rabbah 11:6.)



The Death of the Pharaoh's Firstborn (1872 painting by [Lawrence Alma-Tadema](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 11

The [Gemara](#) deduced from the words, “About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt,” in [Exodus 11:4](#) that even Moses did not know exactly when midnight fell. The Gemara reasoned that [Exodus 11:4](#) could not say “about midnight” because God told Moses “about midnight,” for God cannot have any doubt about when midnight falls. Thus the Gemara concluded that God told Moses “at midnight,” and then Moses told Pharaoh “about midnight” because Moses was in doubt as to the exact moment of midnight. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 3b](#); see also [Mekhilta Pisha 13](#).) But [Rav Zeira](#) argued that Moses certainly knew the exact time of midnight, but said “about midnight” because he thought that Pharaoh’s astrologers might make a mistake as to the exact moment of midnight and then accuse Moses of being a

liar. And [Rav Ashi](#) argued that in [Exodus 11:4](#), Moses spoke at midnight of the night of the thirteenth of Nisan as it became the fourteenth of Nisan, and thus Moses said: “God said: “Tomorrow at the hour like the midnight of tonight, I will go out into the midst of Egypt.”” ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 4a.](#))

[Rabbi Johanan](#) taught that [Song of Songs 2:12](#) speaks of Moses when it says, “The voice of the turtle (*tor*) is heard in our land,” reading the verse to mean, “The voice of the good explorer (*tayyar*) is heard in our land.” Rabbi Johanan taught that [Song 2:12](#) thus speaks of Moses at the time of which [Exodus 11:4](#) reports: “And Moses said: “Thus says the Lord: “About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt”” ([Song of Songs Rabbah 2:29.](#))

The Gemara advised that because of the principle that a dream’s realization follows its interpretation ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 55b](#)), one who dreams of a dog should rise early and say the fortunate words of [Exodus 11:7](#), “But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog whet his tongue,” before thinking of the unfortunate words of [Isaiah 56:11](#) (regarding Israel’s corrupt aristocracy), “Yea, the dogs are greedy,” so as to attribute to the dream the more favorable meaning and thus the more fortunate realization. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 56b.](#))

Rabbi Jannai taught that one should always show respect to a ruler, following the example of Moses, who in [Exodus 11:8](#), told Pharaoh that “all your servants shall . . . bow down to me,” but out of respect for royalty did not say that Pharaoh himself would seek favors of Moses, as reported in [Exodus 12:30–32.](#) ([Babylonian Talmud Menachot 98a](#); see also Mekhilta Pisha

13:2:13; Exodus Rabbah 18:1.) Similarly, a midrash interpreted God's instructions to Moses and Aaron in [Exodus 6:13](#), "and to Pharaoh, King of Egypt," to convey that God told Moses and Aaron that although God really ought to punish Pharaoh, God wanted Moses and Aaron to show Pharaoh the respect due to his regal position. And Moses did so, as [Exodus 11:8](#) reports that Moses told Pharaoh that God said, "And all these your servants shall come down to Me." Moses did not say that Pharaoh would come down, only that Pharaoh's servants would do so. But Moses could well have said that Pharaoh himself would come down, for [Exodus 12:30](#) reports, "Pharaoh arose at midnight." But Moses did not mention Pharaoh specifically so as to pay him respect. (Exodus Rabbah 7:3.)

Rabbi Joshua ben Karhah taught that a lasting effect resulted from every instance of "fierce anger" in the Torah. The Gemara questioned whether this principle held true in the case of [Exodus 11:8](#), which reports that Moses "went out from Pharaoh in hot anger," but does not report Moses saying anything to Pharaoh as a result of his anger. In response, the Gemara reported that [Resh Lakish](#) taught that Moses slapped Pharaoh before he left Pharaoh's presence. ([Babylonian Talmud Zevachim 102a](#).)



The Origin of the Paschal Lamb (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 12

The [Mishnah](#) reported that on the fourth Sabbath of the month of [Adar](#), congregations read [Exodus 12:1–20](#). ([Mishnah Megillah 3:4](#).)

Rav Assi of Hozna'ah deduced from the words, “And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month,” in [Exodus 40:17](#) that the Tabernacle was erected on the first of Nisan. With reference to this, a [Tanna](#) taught that the first of Nisan took ten crowns of distinction by virtue of the ten momentous events that occurred on that day. The first of Nisan was: (1) the first day of the Creation (as reported in [Genesis 1:1–5](#)), (2) the first day of the princes’ offerings (as reported in [Numbers 7:10–17](#)), (3) the first day for the priesthood to make

the sacrificial offerings (as reported in [Leviticus 9:1–21](#)), (4) the first day for public sacrifice, (5) the first day for the descent of fire from Heaven (as reported in [Leviticus 9:24](#)), (6) the first for the priests' eating of sacred food in the sacred area, (7) the first for the dwelling of the Shechinah in Israel (as implied by [Exodus 25:8](#)), (8) the first for the [Priestly Blessing](#) of Israel (as reported in [Leviticus 9:22](#), employing the blessing prescribed by [Numbers 6:22–27](#)), (9) the first for the prohibition of the [high places](#) (as stated in [Leviticus 17:3–4](#)), and (10) the first of the months of the year (as instructed in [Exodus 12:2](#)). ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 87b.](#))

Tractate [Beitzah](#) in the Mishnah, [Tosefta](#), [Jerusalem Talmud](#), and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws common to all of the [Festivals](#) in [Exodus 12:3–27, 43–49; 13:6–10; 23:16; 34:18–23; Leviticus 16; 23:4–43; Numbers 9:1–14; 28:16–30:1; and Deuteronomy 16:1–17; 31:10–13.](#) ([Mishnah Beitzah 1:1–5:7; Tosefta Yom Tov \(Beitzah\) 1:1–4:11; Jerusalem Talmud Beitzah 1a–49b; Babylonian Talmud Beitzah 2a–40b.](#))



Hillel (sculpture at the [Kneset](#) Menorah, Jerusalem)

Tractate [Pesachim](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the Passover in [Exodus 12:3–27, 43–49; 13:6–10; 23:15; 34:25; Leviticus 23:4–8; Numbers 9:1–14; 28:16–25; and Deuteronomy 16:1–8](#). ([Mishnah Pesachim 1:1–10:9](#); Tosefta Pisha (Pesachim) 1:1–10:13; Jerusalem Talmud Pesachim 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 2a–121b](#).) And elsewhere, the Mishnah in tractate Zevahim taught that intent to eat the Passover offering raw (violating the commandment of [Exodus 12:9](#)) or to break the bones of the offering (violating the commandment of [Exodus 12:46](#)) did not invalidate the offering itself. ([Mishnah Zevahim 3:6](#).) The Mishnah in tractate Challah taught that anyone who eats an olive's bulk of unleavened bread on Passover has fulfilled the obligation of [Exodus 12:18](#), and interpreted [Exodus 12:15](#) to teach that anyone who eats an olive's bulk of leavened bread (*chametz*) on Passover is liable to being cut off from the Jewish people. (Mishnah Challah 1:2.) Similarly, the Mishnah in tractate Beitzah reported that the [House of Shammai](#) held that an olive's bulk of leavening or a date's bulk (which is more than an olive's bulk) of leavened bread in one's house made one liable, but the [House of Hillel](#) held that an olive's bulk of either made one liable. ([Mishnah Beitzah 1:1](#).) The Gemara noted that the command in [Exodus 12:18](#) to eat [matzah](#) on the first night of Passover applies to women (as did the command in [Deuteronomy 31:12](#) for all Israelites to assemble), even though the general rule (stated in [Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 34a](#)) is that women are exempt

from time-bound positive commandments. The Gemara cited these exceptions to support Rabbi [Johanan's](#) assertion that one may not draw inferences from general rules, for they often have exceptions. ([Babylonian Talmud Eruvin 27a.](#))

The Mishnah taught that on the evening of the 14th of Nisan, Jews search for leaven in the house by candlelight. Any place into which one does not bring leaven does not require checking. The Sages taught that one must check two rows in a wine cellar, as it is a place into which one brings leaven. The House of Shammai taught that one checks the two front rows of the entire wine cellar, but the House of Hillel taught that one checks only the two outer rows that are uppermost. ([Mishnah Pesachim 1:1](#); [Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 2a.](#))



The Jews' Passover (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Chapter 10 of Mishnah Pesachim taught the procedure for the [Passover Seder](#). On the eve of Passover, no one was to eat from before the [Minhah](#) offering (about 3:00 pm) until nightfall. That night, even the poorest people in Israel were not to eat until they reclined in the fashion of free people. Every person was to drink not less than four cups of wine, even if the public charities had to provide it. ([Mishnah Pesachim 10:1](#); [Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 99b](#).)

The Rabbis taught that Jews are duty bound to make their children and their household rejoice on a Festival, for [Deuteronomy 16:14](#) says, “And you shall rejoice it, your feast, you and your son and your daughter.” The Gemara taught that one makes them rejoice with wine. [Rabbi Judah](#) taught that men gladden with what is suitable for them, and women with what is suitable for them. The Gemara explained that what is suitable for men is wine. And [Rav Joseph](#) taught that in Babylonia, they gladdened women with colored garments, while in the [Land of Israel](#), they gladdened women with pressed linen garments. [Rabbi Judah ben Bathyra](#) taught that in the days of the [Temple in Jerusalem](#), Jews could not rejoice without meat (from an offering), as [Deuteronomy 27:7](#) says, “And you shall sacrifice peace-offerings, and shall eat there; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God.” But now that the Temple no longer exists, Jews cannot rejoice without wine, as [Psalm 105:15](#) says, “And wine gladdens the heart of man.” ([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 109a](#).)



The Israelites Eat the Passover (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

They mixed the first cup of wine for the leader of the Seder. The House of Shammai taught that the leader first recited a blessing for the day, and then a blessing over the wine, while the House of Hillel ruled that the leader first recited a blessing over the wine, and then recited a blessing for the day. ([Mishnah Pesachim 10:2](#); [Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 114a.](#))

Then they set food before the leader. The leader dipped and ate lettuce (which was *karpas*) before the bread. They set before the

leader matzah, lettuce (*hazeret*), [*charoset*](#), and two cooked dishes. The *charoset* was not mandatory, although Rabbi Eleazar son of Rabbi Zadok said that it was. In the days of the Temple in Jerusalem, they would bring the body of the Passover lamb before the leader. ([Mishnah Pesachim 10:3](#); [Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 114a.](#))

They filled a second cup of wine for the leader. Then a child asked questions. If the child was not intelligent, the parent would instruct the child to ask why this night was different from all other nights. On all other nights they ate leavened and unleavened bread, while on this night they ate only unleavened bread. On all other nights they ate all kinds of herbs, while on this night they ate only bitter herbs. On all other nights they ate meat roasted, stewed, or boiled, while on this night they ate only roasted meat. On all other nights they dipped once, while on this night they dipped twice. And the parent instructed according to the child's intelligence. The parent began to answer the questions by recounting the people's humble beginnings, and concluded with the people's praise. The parent recounted the credo of [Deuteronomy 26:5–10](#), “My father was a wandering Aramean” ([Mishnah Pesachim 10:4](#); [Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 116a.](#))

[Rabbi Akiba](#) would distribute popcorn and nuts to children on the eve of Passover, so that they might not fall asleep but ask the four questions. [Rabbi Eliezer](#) taught that the matzah are eaten hastily on the night of Passover, on account of the children, so that they should not fall asleep. Rabbi Akiba never said in the house of study that it was time to stop studying, except on the

eve of Passover and the eve of the [Day of Atonement](#). On the eve of Passover, it was because of the children, so that they might not fall asleep, and on the eve of the Day of Atonement, it was so that they should feed their children before the fast. ([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 109a.](#))

Rabban [Gamaliel](#) said that one needed to mention three things on Passover to discharge one's duty: the Passover offering, unleavened bread (matzah), and bitter herbs (*maror*). The Passover offering was sacrificed because God passed over the Israelites' houses in Egypt. They ate unleavened bread because the Israelites were redeemed from Egypt. And they ate bitter herbs because the Egyptians embittered the lives of the Israelites in Egypt. In every generation, all were bound to regard themselves as though they personally had gone out of Egypt, because [Exodus 13:8](#) says, "You shall tell your child in that day: 'It is because of what the Lord did for *me* when *I* came out of Egypt.'" Therefore it was everyone's duty to thank and praise God for performing those miracles for the Israelites and their descendants. God brought them forth from bondage into freedom, from sorrow into joy, from mourning into festivity, from darkness into light, and from servitude into redemption. Therefore they were to say hallelujah! ([Mishnah Pesachim 10:5; Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 116a–b.](#))

The House of Shammai and the House of Hillel disagreed about how far one should recite into the [Hallel](#), [Psalms 113–118](#). The House of Shammai maintained that one recited until the words "as a joyous mother of children" in [Psalms 113:9](#), while the

House of Hillel said that one recited until the words “the flint into a fountain of waters” in [Psalms 114:8](#) and concluded with a formula of redemption. Rabbi [Tarfon](#) used to say, “who redeemed us and redeemed our fathers from Egypt,” but did not conclude with a blessing. Rabbi Akiba said, “So may the Lord our God and the God of our fathers allow us to reach other seasons and festivals in peace, rejoicing in the rebuilding of Your city and glad in Your service, and there we will eat the sacrifices and the Passover-offerings . . . ,” as far as “Blessed are You, o Lord, who have redeemed Israel.” (Mishnah Pesachim 10:6; [Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 116b.](#))



The Signs on the Door (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)



The Angel of Death and the First Passover (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)

They filled the third cup of wine. The leader then recited the [Grace After Meals](#). Over the fourth cup, the leader concluded the Hallel, and recited the grace of song. Between the first, second, and third cups, one could drink if one wished, but between the third and the fourth cups one was not permitted to drink.

(Mishnah Pesachim 10:7; [Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 117b](#).)

One may not conclude the Passover meal with dainties. (Mishnah Pesachim 10:8; [Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 119b](#).) If some of the party fell asleep, they could eat when they awoke, but if all fell asleep, they were not permitted to eat. (Mishnah Pesachim 10:8; [Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 120a](#).) [Rabbi Jose](#) said that if they slept only lightly, they could eat, but if they fell fast asleep, they

were not permitted to eat. (Mishnah Pesachim 10:8; [Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 120b.](#))

Rabban Gamaliel once reclined at a Passover seder at the house of Boethus ben Zeno in [Lud](#), and they discussed the laws of the Passover all night until the cock crowed. Then they raised the table, stretched, and went to the house of study. (Tosefta Pisha (Pesachim) 10:12.)

A midrash noted that God commanded the Israelites to perform certain precepts with similar material from trees: God commanded that the Israelites throw cedar wood and hyssop into the Red Heifer mixture of [Numbers 19:6](#) and use hyssop to sprinkle the resulting waters of lustration in [Numbers 19:18](#); God commanded that the Israelites use cedar wood and hyssop to purify those stricken with skin disease in [Leviticus 14:4–6](#); and in Egypt God commanded the Israelites to use the bunch of hyssop to strike the lintel and the two side-posts with blood in [Exodus 12:22](#). (Exodus Rabbah 17:1.)



The Plague of the Firstborn (1802 painting by [J. M. W. Turner](#))

The Mekhilta interpreted the words “the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne” in [Exodus 12:29](#) to teach that Pharaoh himself was a firstborn, as well. And the Mekhilta taught that God preserved him as the only firstborn of Egypt to survive the plague. (Mekhilta Pisha 13:2:3–4.)

The Mekhilta asked how the captives had sinned that God struck their firstborn, as [Exodus 12:29](#) reports. The Mekhilta explained that God struck them so that they should not say that their god brought this punishment on the Egyptians but not on them.

Alternatively, the Mekhilta told that God struck them because the captives used to rejoice over every decree that Pharaoh decreed against the Israelites. And the Mekhilta taught that the Egyptian servants did so, as well, thus explaining why God said in [Exodus](#)

[11:5](#) that God would strike the firstborn of the maidservant who was behind the mill. (Mekhilta Pisha 13:2:5.)



Pharaoh Urges Moses and Aaron to Depart (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

Reading the report of [Exodus 12:30](#) that “there was not a house where there was not one dead,” Rabbi Nathan asked whether there were no houses without firstborn. The Mekhilta explained that when an Egyptian firstborn would die, the parents would set up a statue of the firstborn in the house. The Mekhilta further taught that on the night of the plague of the firstborn, God crushed, ground, and scattered those statues as well, and the parents grieved anew as though they had just buried their firstborn. (Mekhilta Pisha 13:2:10.)



The Egyptian Firstborn Destroyed (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

The Mekhilta interpreted the words “and he called for Moses and Aaron” in [Exodus 12:31](#) to teach that Pharaoh went around the land of Egypt asking everyone where Moses and Aaron lived. (Mekhilta Pisha 13:2:11.)

The Mekhilta explained that the Egyptians said, “We are all dead men,” in [Exodus 12:33](#) because in many families, many sons died. The Egyptian men had thought that a man who had four or five

sons would have lost only the eldest, in accord with the warning of Moses in [Exodus 11:5](#) that “the *firstborn* in the land of Egypt shall die.” But they did not know, told the Mekhilta, that all their sons were the firstborn sons of different bachelors with whom their wives had committed adultery. God exposed the women’s adultery, and all of the sons died. The Mekhilta taught that if God makes public evil, which is of lesser importance, how much more will God reward good, which is of greater importance. (Mekhilta Pisha 13:3:2.)

Rab Judah in the name of [Samuel](#) deduced from [Genesis 47:14](#) that Joseph gathered in and brought to Egypt all the gold and silver in the world. The Gemara noted that [Genesis 47:14](#) says: “And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan,” and thus spoke about the wealth of only Egypt and Canaan. The Gemara found support for the proposition that Joseph collected the wealth of other countries from [Genesis 41:57](#), which states: “And all the countries came to Egypt to Joseph to buy corn.” The Gemara deduced from the words “and they despoiled the Egyptians” in [Exodus 12:36](#) that when the Israelites left Egypt, they carried that wealth away with them. The Gemara then taught that the wealth lay in Israel until the time of King [Rehoboam](#), when King [Shishak](#) of Egypt seized it from Rehoboam, as [1 Kings 14:25–26](#) reports: “And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem; and he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the

treasures of the king's house.” ([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 119a](#); see also [Avot of Rabbi Natan 41.](#))



Pharaoh and His Dead Son (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

A [Baraita](#) taught that in the time of [Alexander the Great](#), the Egyptians summoned the Israelites before Alexander, demanding from them the gold and silver that [Exodus 12:36](#) reported that the Israelites had borrowed from the Egyptians. The sages granted Gebiah ben Pesisa permission to be Israel’s advocate. Gebiah asked the Egyptians what the evidence was for their claim, and the Egyptians answered that the Torah provided their evidence. Then Gebiah said that he would also bring evidence from the Torah in Israel’s defense. He quoted [Exodus 12:40](#) and demanded back wages from the Egyptians for the labor of 600,000 Israelite men whom the Egyptians had compelled to work for them for 430 years. Alexander turned to the Egyptians for a proper answer. The Egyptians requested three days’ time,

but could not find a satisfactory answer, and they fled.

([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 91a.](#))



The Egyptians Urging Moses To Depart (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

Rabbi Eliezer interpreted the words “the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to sukkot” in [Exodus 12:37](#) to mean that the Israelites went to a place where they put up booths, [sukkot](#). Other Sages said that Succot was simply the name of a place, as in [Numbers 33:6](#). Rabbi Akiba taught that Succot in

[Exodus 12:37](#) means the clouds of glory, as in [Isaiah 4:5](#).

(Mekhilta Pisha 14:1:3; see also [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 11b](#).)



The Exodus (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

A midrash taught that the Israelites were counted on ten occasions: (1) when they went down to Egypt ([Deuteronomy 10:22](#)); (2) when they went up out of Egypt ([Exodus 12:37](#)); (3) at the first census in Numbers ([Numbers 1:1–46](#)); (4) at the second census in Numbers ([Numbers 26:1–65](#)); (5) once for the banners; (6) once in the time of [Joshua](#) for the division of the Land of Israel; (7) once by [Saul](#) ([1 Samuel 11:8](#)); (8) a second time by Saul ([1 Samuel 15:4](#)); (9) once by [David](#) ([2 Samuel 24:9](#)); and once in the time of [Ezra](#) ([Ezra 2:64](#)). (Midrash Tanhuma Ki Sisa 9.)

The Mekhilta interpreted the account of unleavened cakes of dough in [Exodus 12:39](#) to teach that the Israelites had kneaded the dough but did not have sufficient time to let it leaven before they were redeemed. (Mekhilta Pisha 14:1:9.)

A Baraita taught that when Moses broke the stone tablets in [Exodus 32:19](#), it was one of three actions that Moses took based on his own understanding with which God then agreed. The Gemara explained that Moses reasoned that if the Passover lamb,

which was just one of the 613 commandments, was prohibited by [Exodus 12:43](#) to aliens, then certainly the whole Torah should be prohibited to the Israelites, who had acted as apostates with the [golden calf](#). The Gemara deduced God's approval from God's mention of Moses' breaking the tablets in [Exodus 34:1](#). [Resh Lakish](#) interpreted this to mean that God gave Moses strength because he broke the tablets. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 87a](#).)

The Mekhilta asked why [Exodus 12:49](#) directed that there be one law for both the native and the stranger who sojourns among us when [Exodus 12:48](#) had just enjoined that the stranger be treated as one who is born in the land. The Mekhilta concluded that [Exodus 12:49](#) comes to declare that the [convert](#) is equal to the born Jew with respect to all the Torah's commandments. (Mekhilta Pisha 15:2:5.)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 13

The Mishnah taught that invalidity in any of the four portions of the Bible in [tefillin](#) — one of which is [Exodus 13:1–10](#) and another of which is [Exodus 13:11–16](#) — impair the validity of all four, and even one misshaped letter impairs their validity. ([Mishnah Menachot 3:7](#).)

Tractate [Bekhorot](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Talmud interpreted the laws of the firstborn in [Exodus 13:1–2](#), [12–13](#). ([Mishnah Bekhorot 1:1–6:12](#); Tosefta Bekhorot 1:1–7:15; [Babylonian Talmud Bekhorot 2a–61a](#).) Elsewhere, the Mishnah drew from [Exodus 13:13](#) that money in exchange for a firstborn donkey could be given to any [Kohen](#) (Mishnah Challah 4:9); that

if a person weaves the hair of a firstborn donkey into a sack, the sack must be burned (Mishnah Orlah 3:3); that they did not redeem with the firstborn of a donkey an animal that falls within both wild and domestic categories (*a keiy*) (Mishnah Bikkurim 2:9); and that one was prohibited to derive benefit in any quantity at all from an unredeemed firstborn donkey. ([Mishnah Avodah Zarah 5:9](#).)

The Gemara reported a number of Rabbis' reports of how the Land of Israel did indeed flow with "milk and honey," as described in [Exodus 3:8](#) and [17, 13:5](#), and [33:3, Leviticus 20:24, Numbers 13:27](#) and [14:8](#), and [Deuteronomy 6:3, 11:9, 26:9](#) and [15, 27:3](#), and [31:20](#). Once when Rami bar Ezekiel visited [Bnei Brak](#), he saw goats grazing under fig trees while honey was flowing from the figs, and milk dripped from the goats mingling with the fig honey, causing him to remark that it was indeed a land flowing with milk and honey. Rabbi Jacob ben Dostai said that it is about three miles from [Lod](#) to [Ono](#), and once he rose up early in the morning and waded all that way up to his ankles in fig honey. Resh Lakish said that he saw the flow of the milk and honey of [Sepphoris](#) extend over an area of sixteen miles by sixteen miles. Rabbah bar Bar Hana said that he saw the flow of the milk and honey in all the Land of Israel and the total area was equal to an area of twenty-two [parasangs](#) by six parasangs. ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 111b–12a](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are 9 positive and 11 negative [commandments](#) in the parshah:

- Courts must calculate to determine when a [new month](#) begins. ([Exodus 12:2.](#))



[Passover Seder Plate](#)

- To slaughter the Passover [lamb](#) at the specified time ([Exodus 12:6.](#))
- To eat the Passover lamb with [matzah](#) and [maror](#) on the night of the fourteenth of [Nisan](#) ([Exodus 12:8.](#))
- Not to eat the Passover meat raw or boiled ([Exodus 12:9.](#))

- Not to leave any meat from the Passover lamb over until morning ([Exodus 12:10.](#))
- To destroy all leavened bread on the fourteenth of Nisan ([Exodus 12:15.](#))
- To eat matzah on the first night of Passover ([Exodus 12:18.](#))
- Not to find chametz in your domain seven days ([Exodus 12:19.](#))
- Not to eat mixtures containing chametz all seven days of Passover ([Exodus 12:20.](#))
- An [apostate](#) must not eat from the Passover lamb. ([Exodus 12:43.](#))
- A permanent or temporary hired worker must not eat from it. ([Exodus 12:45.](#))
- Not to take the paschal meat from the confines of the group ([Exodus 12:46.](#))
- Not to break any [bones](#) of the Passover lamb ([Exodus 12:46.](#))
- An [uncircumcised](#) male must not eat from it. ([Exodus 12:48.](#))
- To set aside the firstborn animals ([Exodus 13:12.](#))

- Not to eat chametz all seven days of Passover ([Exodus 13:3.](#))
- Not to see chametz in your domain seven days ([Exodus 13:7.](#))
- [To relate the Exodus](#) from [Egypt](#) on the first night of Passover ([Exodus 13:8.](#))
- To redeem the firstborn [donkey](#) by giving a lamb to a [Kohen](#) ([Exodus 13:13.](#))
- To break the neck of the donkey if the owner does not intend to redeem it ([Exodus 13:13.](#))



[Jeremiah](#) Lamenting the Destruction of [Jerusalem](#) (1630 painting by [Rembrandt](#))

(*Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, vol. 1, 93–137. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9](#).)

[[edit](#)] Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Jeremiah 46:13–28](#).

[[edit](#)] Connection to the Parshah

Both the parshah and the haftarah describe God’s judgment against Egypt. The parshah reports that God told Moses to go (*bo*) to Pharaoh ([Exodus 10:1](#)); the haftarah reports God’s word that [Nebuchadrezzar](#) would come (*la-vo*) to Pharaoh. ([Jeremiah 46:13](#).) Both the parshah and the haftarah report a plague of locusts — literal in the parshah, figurative in the haftarah. ([Exodus 10:3–20](#); [Jeremiah 46:23](#).) Both the parshah and the haftarah report God’s punishment of Egypt’s gods. ([Exodus 12:12](#); [Jeremiah 46:25](#).) And both the parshah and the haftarah report God’s ultimate deliverance of the Israelites from their captivity. ([Exodus 12:51](#); [13:3](#); [Jeremiah 46:27](#).)



A page from a 14th century German Haggadah

[[edit](#)] In the liturgy

Reading the Passover [Haggadah](#), in the *magid* section of the Seder, many Jews remove drops of wine from their cups for each of the ten plagues in [Exodus 7:14–12:29](#). (Menachem Davis. *The Interlinear Haggadah: The Passover Haggadah, with an Interlinear Translation, Instructions and Comments*, 51. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005. [ISBN 1-57819-064-9](#). Joseph Tabory. *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, 94–95. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. [ISBN 978-0-8276-0858-0](#).)

Also in the *magid* section, the Haggadah quotes [Exodus 12:12](#) to elucidate the report in [Deuteronomy 26:8](#) that “the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand.” The Haggadah cites [Exodus 12:12](#) for the proposition that God took the Israelites out

of Egypt not through an [angel](#), not through a [seraph](#), not through an agent, but on God's own. (Davis, *Haggadah*, at 48–49; Tabory, at 93–94.)

Also in the *magid* section, the Haggadah quotes [Exodus 12:26](#) to provide the question of the wicked son and quotes [Exodus 13:8](#) to answer him. And shortly thereafter, the Haggadah quotes [Exodus 13:14](#) to answer the simple child and quotes [Exodus 13:8](#) again to answer the child who does not know how to ask. (Davis, *Haggadah*, at 38–40; Tabory, at 87.)



A page from the 14th century Kaufmann Haggadah

Also in the *magid* section, the Haggadah quotes [Exodus 12:27](#) to answer the question: For what purpose did the Israelites eat the Passover offering at the time of the [Temple in Jerusalem](#)? The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 12:27](#) for the proposition that the Israelites did so because God passed over the Israelites' houses in Egypt. (Davis, *Haggadah*, at 58; Tabory, at 99.)

In the concluding *nirtzah* section, the Haggadah quotes the words “it is the Passover sacrifice” from [Exodus 12:27](#) eight times as the refrain of a poem by [Eleazar Kallir](#). (Tabory, at 125–28.) Also in the *nirtzah* section, the Haggadah quotes the words “it was the middle of the night” from [Exodus 12:29](#) eight times as the refrain of a poem by Yannai. (Tabory, at 122–25.)

Also in the *nirtzah* section, in a reference to the Israelites’ despoiling of the Egyptians in [Exodus 12:36](#), the Haggadah recounts how the Egyptians could not find their wealth when they arose at night. (Davis, *Haggadah*, at 108.)

In the *magid* section, the Haggadah quotes [Exodus 12:39–40](#) to answer the question: For what purpose do Jews eat [matzah](#)? The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 12:39–40](#) for the proposition that Jews do so because there was not sufficient time for the Israelites’ dough to become leavened before God redeemed them. (Davis, *Haggadah*, at 59; Tabory, at 100.)

In the *magid* section, the Haggadah responds to a question that “one could think” that [Exodus 13:5–6](#) raises — that the obligation to tell the Exodus story begins on the first of the month — and clarifies that the obligation begins when Jews have their maztah and maror in front of them. (Tabory, at 88.)

Also in the *magid* section, the Haggadah quotes [Exodus 13:8](#) — emphasizing the word “for me” (*li*) — for the proposition that in every generation, Jews have a duty to regard themselves as though they personally had gone out of Egypt. (Davis, *Haggadah*, at 60; Tabory, at 100.)



[tefillin](#)

Many Jews recite [Exodus 13:1–10](#) and [13:11–16](#) two of the four texts contained in the [tefillin](#), either immediately after putting on the tefillin or before removing them, as Jews interpret [Exodus 13:9](#) to make reference to tefillin when it says, “and it shall be for a sign to you upon your hand, and for a memorial between your eyes,” and [Exodus 13:16](#) to make reference to tefillin when it says, “and it shall be for a sign upon your hand, and for frontlets between your eyes.” (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for Weekdays with an Interlinear Translation*, 10–12. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-686-8](#).)

Much of the language of the *leshem yibud* prayer before putting on [tefillin](#) is drawn from [Ramban’s](#) commentary on [Exodus 13:11](#). (Davis, *Siddur for Weekdays*, at 6.)

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 7:12–23](#) (God’s destruction employing the flood); [15:14](#) (leaving Egypt with wealth); [19:23–29](#) (God’s destruction of [Sodom and Gomorrah](#)).
- [Exodus 1:22](#) (command to kill sons); [4:21](#) (hardening Pharaoh’s heart); [7:3](#) (hardening Pharaoh’s heart); [9:12](#) (hardening Pharaoh’s heart); [14:4](#) (hardening Pharaoh’s heart); [14:8](#) (hardening Pharaoh’s heart); [22:28–29](#) (firstborn); [23:15](#) (Passover); [34:25](#) (Passover).
- [Leviticus 14:4–6, 49–52](#) (hyssop); [23:4–8](#) (Passover).
- [Numbers 3:11–13](#) (firstborn); [9:1–14](#) (Passover); [18:15–18](#) (firstborn); [19:6, 18](#) (hyssop); [28:16–25](#) (Passover).
- [Deuteronomy 2:30](#) (hardening of heart); [15:7](#) (hardening of heart); [15:13–14](#) (parting gifts for freed slaves); [15:19–23](#) (firstborn); [16:1–8](#) (Passover).
- [Joshua 2:18–21](#) (destruction of all but those with a red mark on their dwelling); [11:20](#) (hardening of heart).
- [Jeremiah 31:8](#) (firstborn).
- [Ezekiel 9:4–6](#) (slaying those without the mark).
- [Joel 2:2](#) (darkness).
- [Psalm 51:9](#) (“Purge me with hyssop”); [78:44–51](#) (plagues); [105:23–38](#) (plagues); [119:62](#) (midnight).

- [Job 34:20](#) (midnight).

[[edit](#)] Early nonrabbinic

- [The Passover Letter. Elephantine](#), 419–418 BCE.
Reprinted in, e.g., *The Context of Scripture, Volume III: Archival Documents from the Biblical World*, 116–17. Edited by [William W. Hallo](#). New York: Brill, 2002. [ISBN 90-04-10620-0](#).
- [Ezekiel the Tragedian](#). *Exagōgē*. Greece, 2nd century BCE. Translated by R.G. Robertson. In *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume 2: Expansions of the “Old Testament” and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic works*. Edited by [James H. Charlesworth](#), 814–17. New York: [Anchor Bible](#), 1985. [ISBN 0-385-18813-7](#).
- [Wisdom of Solomon 17:1–20](#). Alexandria, Egypt, 2nd–1st century BCE.
- [Romans 9:14–18](#). 1st century. (hardening Pharaoh’s heart).
- [Hebrews 9:19](#) (hyssop); [11:28](#) (Passover). Late 1st century.
- [Mark 14:12–26](#) (Passover). Circa 70 CE.
- [Matthew 26:17–30](#) (Passover). Circa 70–100 CE.



Josephus

- [Josephus](#). *The Wars of the Jews*, [5:9:4](#). Circa 75 CE.
Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 716. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).
- [Luke 22:14–20](#) (Passover). Circa 80–150 CE.
- Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* [2:14:4–2:15:1](#). Circa 93–94.
Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 73–74. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).
- [Revelation 17:17](#). Late 1st century. (changing hearts to God’s purpose).
- [John 19:29](#) (hyssop); [19:36](#) (“Not one of his bones will be broken”).

[[edit](#)] Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): Challah 1:2, 4:9; Orlah 3:3; Bikkurim 2:9; Pesachim 1:1–10:9; Beitzah 1:1; Megillah 3:4; Avodah

[Zarah 5:9](#); [Zevachim 3:6](#); [Menachot 3:7](#); [Bekhorot 1:1–6:12](#), [8:1](#); Keritot 1:1. 3rd century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 148, 157, 165, 171, 229–51, 291, 321, 672, 705, 739, 787–800, 803, 836. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).

- [Tosefta](#): Terumot 10:7; Challah 2:9; Pisha (Pesachim) 1:1–10:13; Sukkah 2:1; Yom Tov (Beitzah) 1:4–5; Rosh Hashanah 1:1, 3; Megillah 3:4; Sotah 4:5; Makkot 4:1; Zevachim 1:1; Menachot 8:28; Bekhorot 1:1–7:15. 3rd–4th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 198, 339, 471–522, 572, 585–86, 605, 645, 846, 1208–09, 1308, 1445, 1469–94. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).
- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Berakhot 9a, 21b, 37a, 61a; Challah 49a; Orlah 35a; Pesachim 1a–; Yoma 2a; Beitzah 1a–49b. Land of Israel, circa 400 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 1–2, 11–12, 21, 23. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005–2011.
- [Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael](#): Pisha 1:1–18:2. Land of Israel, late 4th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Mekhilta According to Rabbi Ishmael*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:1–119. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988. [ISBN 1-55540-237-2](#).



Talmud

- Babylonian Talmud: Berakhot 3b–4a, 9a–b, 10b, 37a, 38b, 56a–b; Shabbat 24b–25a, 28b, 60b, 87a, 108a, 114b, 133a, 147b; Eruvin 23a, 27a, 96a; Pesachim 2a–121b; Yoma 36a, 49b, 51a, 79b; Sukkah 11b, 13a, 27a, 29a, 33a, 42b; Beitzah 2a–b, 7b, 12b, 20b–21a, 22a, 28b, 32b; Rosh Hashanah 4b, 7a, 8b, 11b, 20a, 22a, 25b; Taanit 7a; Megillah 5a, 6b, 7b, 21a, 29a, 30a, 31a; Chagigah 7b, 10b, 16b–17a; Yevamot 5b, 40a, 46a, 48a, 62a, 70a–71a, 72a, 74a; Ketubot 7a, 102a; Nedarim 25a, 36a; Nazir 7a, 23a; Gittin 10a, 25a, 38a; Kiddushin 6b, 29a, 34a, 35a, 37a–b, 41b–42a, 57b, 72b, 76a; Bava Kamma 13a, 37b, 41a, 50b, 54a–b, 60a, 63a, 64a, 76b, 78a, 110b; Bava Metzia 6b, 42a, 115b; Bava Batra 97b, 118b; Sanhedrin 4b, 12b, 18a, 36a, 42a, 48b, 63a, 91a; Makkot 4b, 8b, 11a, 13a–b, 15a, 16a, 17a–b, 21b–22a; Shevuot 3b; Avodah Zarah 24a, 27a, 74a; Zevachim 7a–b, 9a, 10b–12a, 23a, 25b, 36a, 37b, 57b, 91a, 102a, 106b, 116a; Menachot 28a, 29a–b, 34a–b, 36b–37a, 42b, 47b, 49b, 53a, 66a, 67a, 82b, 83b, 98a; Chullin 11a, 17b, 68a, 69b–70a, 74b, 78b, 82b, 91a, 115a, 120a, 129a, 133b–34a, 136b, 141b; Bekhorot 2a–61a; Arakhin 8b, 13b, 18a–b, 19b, 24b; Temurah 4b, 5b,

[18b, 30b](#); [Keritot 2a, 4a, 28a](#); [Meilah 13a](#). Babylonia, 6th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.



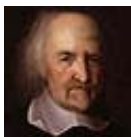
[Rashi](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Medieval

- [Exodus Rabbah](#) 13:1–19:8. 10th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Exodus*. Translated by S. M. Lehrman. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Rashi](#). *Commentary*. [Exodus 10–13](#). [Troyes](#), France, late 11th century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 2:91–141. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1994. [ISBN 0-89906-027-7](#).
- [Judah Halevi](#). [Kuzari](#). [2:80](#); [3:35](#). [Toledo](#), Spain, 1130–1140. Reprinted in, e.g., Jehuda Halevi. *Kuzari: An Argument for the Faith of Israel*. Intro. by Henry Slonimsky,

132, 166. New York: Schocken, 1964. [ISBN 0-8052-0075-4](#).

- [Zohar 2:32b–44a](#). Spain, late 13th century.



[Hobbes](#)

[[edit](#)] **Modern**

- [Thomas Hobbes](#). [Leviathan](#), 3:38. England, 1651. Reprint edited by [C. B. Macpherson](#), 487. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1982. [ISBN 0140431950](#).
- [Henry Wadsworth Longfellow](#) [The Jewish Cemetery at Newport](#). Boston, 1854. Reprinted in [Harold Bloom](#). “American Religious Poems”, 80–81. New York: Library of America, 2006. [ISBN 978-1-931082-74-7](#).
- [A. M. Klein](#). *Concerning Four Strange Sons*. Circa 1937. *Haggadah*. 1940. In *The Collected Poems of A.M. Klein*, 78–79, 143–46. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974. [ISBN 0-07-077625-3](#).
- [Thomas Mann](#). [Joseph and His Brothers](#). Translated by [John E. Woods](#), 79, 384–86, 715, 788. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. [ISBN 1-4000-4001-9](#). Originally published

as *Joseph und seine Brüder*. Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer Verlag, 1943.

- [Dan Jacobson](#). “A Plague of Darkness.” In *Gates to the New City: A Treasury of Modern Jewish Tales*. Edited by Howard Schwartz, 157–60. New York: Avon, 1983. [ISBN 0-380-81091-3](#). Reissue ed. Jason Aronson, 1991. [ISBN 0876688490](#).
- Mayer Rabinowitz. [“A Pesah Guide.”](#) New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1984. OH 453.1984.
- Ziony Zevit. “Three Ways to Look at the Ten Plagues: Were They Natural Disasters, a Demonstration of the Impotence of the Egyptian Gods or an Undoing of Creation?” [Bible Review](#), 6 (3) (June 1990).
- Gerald Skolnik. [“Should There Be a Special Ceremony in Recognition of a First-Born Female Child?”](#) New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1993. YD 305:1.1993. Reprinted in *Responsa: 1991–2000: The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement*. Edited by Kassel Abelson and David J. Fine, 163–65 New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2002. [ISBN 0-916219-19-4](#).
- [Aaron Wildavsky](#). *Assimilation versus Separation: Joseph the Administrator and the Politics of Religion in Biblical Israel*, 14. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1993. [ISBN 1-56000-081-3](#).

- Shimon Finkelman, Moshe Dov Stein, Moshe Lieber, [Nosson Scherman](#). *Pesach-Passover: Its Observance, Laws and Significance / A Presentation Based on Talmudic and Traditional Sources*. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 1994. [ISBN 0-89906-447-7](#).



[Obama](#)

- [Barack Obama](#). *Dreams from My Father*, 294. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995, 2004. [ISBN 1-4000-8277-3](#). (Moses and Pharaoh).
- [Jacob Milgrom](#). “The Alien in Your Midst: Every Nation Has Its Ger: The Permanent Resident. The Torah Commands Us, First, Not To Oppress the Ger, and Then To Befriend and Love Him.” *Bible Review*, 11 (6) (Dec. 1995).
- William H.C. Propp. *Exodus 1–18*, 2:290–461. New York: [Anchor Bible](#), 1998. [ISBN 0-385-14804-6](#).
- Martin Sicker. *A Passover Seder Companion and Analytic Introduction to the Haggadah*. New York: iUniverse, 2004. [ISBN 0-595-31369-8](#).

- [Diane Ackerman](#). *The Zookeeper's Wife: A War Story*, 181–82, 211. New York: W.W. Norton, 2007. [ISBN 978-0-393-06172-7](#). (Passover in the [Warsaw Ghetto](#)).
- Suzanne A. Brody. “Pidyon HaBen.” In *Dancing in the White Spaces: The Yearly Torah Cycle and More Poems*, 77. Shelbyville, Kentucky: Wasteland Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-60047-112-9](#).
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- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
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- [Academy for Jewish Religion, California](#)

- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
- [Aish.com](#)
- [American Jewish University](#)
- [Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles](#)
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- [Chabad.org](#)
- [eparsha.com](#)
- [G-dcast](#)
- [The Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash](#)
- [Jewish Agency for Israel](#)
- [Jewish Theological Seminary](#)
- [MyJewishLearning.com](#)
- [Ohr Sameach](#)
- [Orthodox Union](#)
- [OzTorah, Torah from Australia](#)
- [Oz Ve Shalom — Netivot Shalom](#)
- [Pardes from Jerusalem](#)
- [Parshah Parts](#)

- RabbiShimon.com
- [Rabbi Shlomo Riskin](http://RabbiShlomoRiskin.com)
- [Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld](http://RabbiShmuelHerzfeld.com)
- [Reconstructionist Judaism](http://ReconstructionistJudaism.org)
- [Sephardic Institute](http://SephardicInstitute.org)
- Shiur.com
- [613.org Jewish Torah Audio](http://613.org)
- [Talia Hava Davis](http://TaliaHavaDavis.com)
- [Tanach Study Center](http://TanachStudyCenter.org)
- [Teach613.org, Torah Education at Cherry Hill](http://Teach613.org)
- [Torah from Dixie](http://TorahfromDixie.com)
- Torah.org
- TorahVort.com
- [Union for Reform Judaism](http://UnionforReformJudaism.org)
- [United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth](http://UnitedHebrewCongregations.org)
- [United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism](http://UnitedSynagogue.org)
- [What's Bothering Rashi?](http://WhatsBotheringRashi.com)

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Beshalach

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Beshalach, **Beshallach**, or **Beshalah** (בֶּשַׁלַּח — [Hebrew](#) for “when [he] let go,” the second word and first distinctive word in the parshah) is the sixteenth [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the fourth in the [book of Exodus](#). It constitutes [Exodus 13:17–17:16](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it the sixteenth [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in January or February.

As the parshah describes [God’s](#) deliverance of the [Israelites](#) from [Egypt](#), Jews also read part of the parshah, [Exodus 13:17–15:26](#), as the initial Torah reading for the seventh day of [Passover](#). And Jews also read the part of the parshah about [Amalek](#), [Exodus 17:8–16](#), on [Purim](#), which commemorates the story of [Esther](#) and the Jewish people’s victory over [Haman’s](#) plan to kill the Jews, told in the [book of Esther](#). ([Esther 1:1–10:3](#).) [Esther 3:1](#) identifies Haman as an [Agagite](#), and thus a descendant of Amalek. [Numbers 24:7](#) identifies the Agagites with the Amalekites. A [midrash](#) tells that between King [Agag](#)’s capture by [Saul](#) and his killing by [Samuel](#), Agag fathered a child, from whom Haman in turn descended. ([Seder Eliyahu Rabbah](#) ch. 20; Targum Sheni to Esther 4:13.)

The parshah is notable for the “[Song of the Sea](#),” which is traditionally chanted using a different [melody](#) and is written by

the [scribe](#) using a distinctive brick-like pattern in the [Torah scroll](#). The Sabbath when it is read is known as *Shabbos Shirah*, and some communities have various customs for this day, including feeding birds and reciting the "Song of the Sea" out loud in the regular prayer service.



Pharaoh's Army Engulfed by the Red Sea (1900 painting by [Frederick Arthur Bridgman](#))

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



Israel's Escape from Egypt (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

When [Pharaoh](#) let the Israelites go, God led the people roundabout by way of the [Sea of Reeds](#). ([Exodus 13:17–18](#).) [Moses](#) took the bones of [Joseph](#) with them. ([Exodus 13:19](#).) God

went before them in a pillar of [cloud](#) by day and in a pillar of [fire](#) by night. ([Exodus 13:21.](#))



The Egyptians Are Destroyed (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Parting the Sea of Reeds

When Pharaoh learned that the people had fled, he had a change of heart, and he chased the Israelites with [chariots](#), overtaking them by the sea. ([Exodus 14:5–9.](#)) Greatly frightened, the Israelites cried out to God and complained to Moses. ([Exodus 14:10–12.](#)) God told Moses to lift up his rod, hold out his arm, and split the sea. ([Exodus 14:15–16.](#)) Moses did so, and God drove back the sea with a strong east wind, and the Israelites marched through on dry ground, the waters forming walls on their right and left. ([Exodus 14:21–22.](#)) The [Egyptians](#) pursued, but God slowed them by locking their chariot wheels. ([Exodus 14:23–25.](#)) On God's instruction, Moses held out his arm, and the waters covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the Egyptians. ([Exodus 14:26–28.](#)) Moses and the Israelites – and then [Miriam](#) –

sang a song to God, celebrating how God hurled horse and driver into the sea. ([Exodus 15.](#))



The Gathering of the Manna (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[\[edit\]](#) Bitter water turned sweet

The Israelites went three days into the [wilderness](#) and found no water. ([Exodus 15:22.](#)) When they came to [Marah](#), they could not drink the bitter water, so they grumbled against Moses. ([Exodus 15:23–24.](#)) God showed Moses a piece of wood to throw into the water, and the water became sweet. ([Exodus 15:25.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Manna in the wilderness

The Israelites came to the [wilderness of Sin](#) and grumbled in hunger against Moses and [Aaron](#). ([Exodus 16:1–3](#).) God heard their grumbling, and in the evening [quail](#) covered the camp, and in the morning fine flaky [manna](#) covered the ground like [frost](#). ([Exodus 16:4–14](#).) The Israelites gathered as much of it as they required; those who gathered much had no excess, and those who gathered little had no deficiency. ([Exodus 16:15–18](#).) Moses instructed none to leave any of it over until morning, but some did, and it became infested with [maggots](#) and stank. ([Exodus 16:19–20](#).) On the sixth day they gathered double the food, Moses instructed them to put aside the excess until morning, and it did not turn foul the next day, the Sabbath. ([Exodus 16:22–24](#).) Moses told them that on the Sabbath, they would not find any manna on the plain, yet some went out to gather and found nothing. ([Exodus 16:25–27](#).) Moses ordered that a jar of the manna be kept throughout the ages. ([Exodus 16:32–33](#).) The Israelites ate manna 40 years. ([Exodus 16:35](#).)



Victory O Lord (1871 painting by [John Everett Millais](#))

[\[edit\]](#) **Water from a stone**

When the Israelites encamped at [Rephidim](#), there was no water and the people quarreled with Moses. ([Exodus 17:1–2](#).) God told Moses to strike the rock at [Horeb](#) to produce water, and they called the place Massah (trial) and [Meribah](#) (quarrel). ([Exodus 17:5–7](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) **Amalek's attack**

Amalek attacked Israel at Rephidim. ([Exodus 17:8](#).) Moses stationed himself on the top of the hill, with the rod of God in his hand, and whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; but whenever he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. ([Exodus 17:9–11](#).) When Moses grew weary, he sat on a stone, while Aaron and [Hur](#) supported his hands, and [Joshua](#) overwhelmed

Amalek in battle. ([Exodus 17:12–13](#).) God instructed Moses to inscribe a document as a reminder that God would utterly blot out the memory of Amalek. ([Exodus 17:14](#).)



Possible routes of the Exodus

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 13

The [Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael](#) interpreted the words “God led them not by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near” in [Exodus 13:17](#) to indicate that God recognized that the way would have been nearer for the Israelites to return to Egypt. (Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael Beshallah 19:1:5.)

The Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael interpreted the word translated as “armed” (חָמֻשִׁים, *chamushim*) in [Exodus 13:18](#) to mean that only one out of five (חָמִישָׁה, *chamishah*) of the Israelites in Egypt left Egypt; and some say that only one out of 50 did; and others say

that only one out of 500 did. (Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael Beshallah 19:1:19.)

The [Mishnah](#) cited for the proposition that Providence treats a person measure for measure as that person treats others. And so because, as [Genesis 50:7–9](#) relates, [Joseph](#) had the merit to bury his father [Jacob](#) and none of his brothers were greater than he was, so Joseph merited the greatest of Jews, Moses, to attend to his bones, as reported in [Exodus 13:19](#). And Moses, in turn, was so great that none but God attended him, as [Deuteronomy 34:6](#) reports that God buried Moses. ([Mishnah Sotah 1:7–9](#).)



The Waters Are Divided (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)



The Destruction of Pharaoh's Army (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 14

[Rabbi Meir](#) taught that when the Israelites stood by the sea, the tribes competed with each other over who would go into the sea first. The [tribe of Benjamin](#) went first, as [Psalm 68:28](#) says: “There is Benjamin, the youngest, ruling them (*rodem*),” and Rabbi Meir read *rodem*, “ruling them,” as *rad yam*, “descended into the sea.” Then the princes of [Judah](#) threw stones at them, as [Psalm 68:28](#) says: “the princes of Judah their council (*rigmatam*),” and Rabbi Meir read *rigmatam* as “stoned them.” For that reason, Benjamin merited hosting the site of God’s [Temple](#), as

[Deuteronomy 33:12](#) says: “He dwells between his shoulders.” [Rabbi Judah](#) answered Rabbi Meir that in reality, no tribe was willing to be the first to go into the sea. Then [Nahshon ben Aminadab](#) stepped forward and went into the sea first, praying in the words of [Psalm 69:2–16](#), “Save me O God, for the waters come into my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing Let not the water overwhelm me, neither let the deep swallow me up.” Moses was then praying, so God prompted Moses, in words parallel those of [Exodus 14:15](#), “My beloved ones are drowning in the sea, and you prolong prayer before Me!” Moses asked God, “Lord of the Universe, what is there in my power to do?” God replied in the words of [Exodus 14:15–16](#), “Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward. And lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it; and the children of Israel shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground.” Because of Nahshon’s actions, Judah merited becoming the ruling power in Israel, as [Psalm 114:2](#) says, “Judah became His sanctuary, Israel His dominion,” and that happened because, as [Psalm 114:3](#) says, “The sea saw [him], and fled.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 36b–37a.](#))

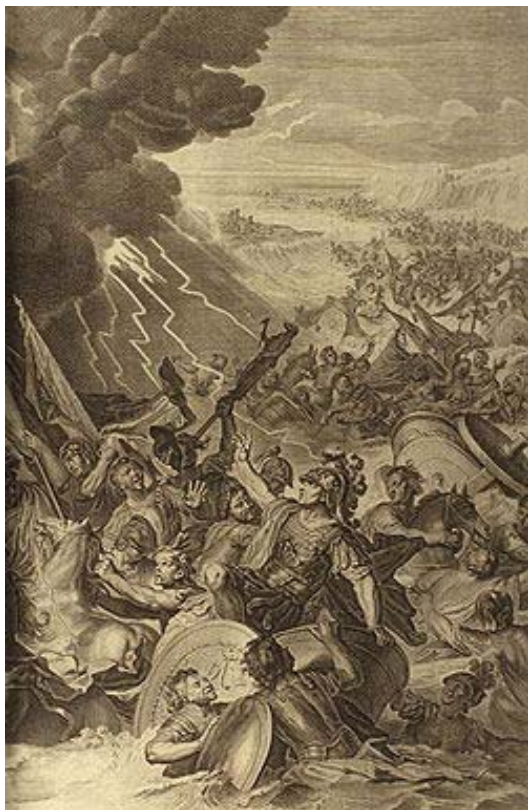


crossing the sea (illustration from the 1493 [Nuremberg Chronicle](#))

[Rabbi Johanan](#) taught that God does not rejoice in the downfall of the wicked. Rabbi Johanan interpreted the words *zeh el zeh* in the phrase “And one did not come near the other all the night” in [Exodus 14:20](#) to teach that when the Egyptians were drowning in the sea, the ministering [angels](#) wanted to sing a song of rejoicing, as [Isaiah 6:3](#) associates the words *zeh el zeh* with angelic singing. But God rebuked them: “The work of my hands is being drowned in the sea, and you want to sing songs?” Rabbi Eleazar replied that a close reading of [Deuteronomy 28:63](#) shows that God does not rejoice personally, but does make others rejoice. ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 10b.](#))

The midrash taught that the six days of darkness occurred in Egypt, while the seventh day of darkness was a day of darkness of

the sea, as [Exodus 14:20](#) says: “And there was the cloud and the darkness here, yet it gave light by night there.” So God sent clouds and darkness and covered the Egyptians with darkness, but gave light to the Israelites, as God had done for them in Egypt. Hence [Psalm 27:1](#) says: “The Lord is my light and my salvation.” And the midrash taught that in the [Messianic Age](#), as well, God will bring darkness to sinners, but light to Israel, as [Isaiah 60:2](#) says: “For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but upon you the Lord will shine.” (Exodus Rabbah 14:3.)



Pharaoh and His Host Drowned in the Red Sea (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

Rabbi Hama ben Hanina deduced from [Exodus 1:10](#) that Pharaoh meant: “Come, let us outwit the Savior of Israel.” Pharaoh concluded that the Egyptians should afflict the Israelites with water, because as indicated by [Isaiah 54:9](#), God had sworn not to bring another flood to punish the world. The Egyptians failed to note that while God had sworn not to bring another flood on the whole world, God could still bring a flood on only one people. Alternatively, the Egyptians failed to note that they could fall into the waters, as indicated by the words of [Exodus 14:27](#), “the Egyptians fled towards it.” This all bore out what Rabbi Eleazar said: In the pot in which they cooked, they were themselves cooked — that is, with the punishment that the Egyptians intended for the Israelites, the Egyptians were themselves punished. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11a](#); see also Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael Beshallah 7:2.)

Reading the words, “there remained not so much as one of them,” in [Exodus 14:28](#), Rabbi Judah taught that not even Pharaoh himself survived, as [Exodus 15:4](#) says, “Pharaoh’s chariots and his host has He cast into the sea.” [Rabbi Nehemiah](#), however, said that Pharaoh alone survived, teaching that [Exodus 9:16](#) speaks of Pharaoh when it says, “But in very deed for this cause have I made you to stand.” And some taught that later on Pharaoh went down and was drowned, as [Exodus 15:19](#) says, “For the horses of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his

horsemen into the sea.” (Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael Beshalah 7:8.)



The Egyptians Drown in the Red Sea (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

The Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael cited four reasons for why “Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore,” as reported in [Exodus 14:30](#): (1) so that the Israelites should not imagine that the Egyptians escaped the sea on the other side, (2) so that the Egyptians should not imagine that the Israelites were lost in the sea as the Egyptians had been, (3) so that the Israelites might take the Egyptians’ spoils of silver, gold, precious stones, and pearls, and (4) so that the Israelites might recognize the Egyptians and reprove them. (Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael Beshalah 7:18.)

Rabbi [Jose the Galilean](#) reasoned that as the phrase “the finger of God” in [Exodus 8:15](#) referred to 10 plagues, “the great hand” (translated “the great work”) in [Exodus 14:31](#) (in connection with

the miracle of the Reed Sea) must refer to 50 plagues upon the Egyptians, and thus to a variety of cruel and strange deaths. (Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael Beshallah 7:21; [Mekhilta of Rabbi Simeon](#) 26:6; see also [Exodus Rabbah](#) 5:14, 23:9.)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 15



Miriam and the Israelites Rejoicing (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

The Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael counted 10 songs in the [Tanakh](#): (1) the one that the Israelites recited at the first Passover in Egypt, as [Isaiah 30:29](#) says, “You shall have a song as in the night when a feast is hallowed”; (2) the Song of the Sea in [Exodus 15](#); (3) the one that the Israelites sang at the well in the wilderness, as [Numbers 21:17](#) reports, “Then sang Israel this song: ‘Spring up, O well’”; (4) the one that Moses spoke in his last days, as [Deuteronomy 31:30](#) reports, “Moses spoke in the ears of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song”; (5) the one that

Joshua recited, as [Joshua 10:12](#) reports, “Then spoke Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the [Amorites](#)”; (6) the one that [Deborah](#) and [Barak](#) sang, as [Judges 5:1](#) reports, “Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of [Abinoam](#)”; (7) the one that [David](#) spoke, as [2 Samuel 22:1](#) reports, “David spoke to the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul”; (8) the one that [Solomon](#) recited, as [Psalm 30:1](#) reports, “a song at the Dedication of the [House of David](#)”; (9) the one that [Jehoshaphat](#) recited, as [2 Chronicles 20:21](#) reports: “when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed them that should sing to the Lord, and praise in the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and say, ‘Give thanks to the Lord, for His mercy endures for ever’”; and (10) the song that will be sung in the time to come, as [Isaiah 42:10](#) says, “Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise from the end of the earth,” and [Psalm 149:1](#) says, “Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise in the assembly of the saints.” (Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael Shirata 1:5.)





The Songs of Joy (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

The [Tosefta](#) deduced from [Exodus 1:22](#) that the Egyptians took pride before God only on account of the water of the Nile, and thus God exacted punishment from them only by water when in [Exodus 15:4](#) God cast Pharaoh's chariots and army into the Reed Sea. (Tosefta Sotah 3:13.)

A midrash taught that as God created the four cardinal directions, so also did God set about God's throne four angels — [Michael](#), [Gabriel](#), [Uriel](#), and [Raphael](#) — with Michael at God's right. The midrash taught that Michael got his name (*Mi ka'el*, מִי-כָּאֵל) as a reward for the manner in which he praised God in two expressions that Moses employed. When the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, Moses began to chant, in the words of [Exodus 15:11](#), “Who (*mi*, מִי) is like You, o Lord.” And when Moses completed the Torah, he said, in the words of [Deuteronomy 33:26](#), “There is none like God (*ka'el*, כָּאֵל), O [Jeshurun](#).” The midrash taught that *mi* (מִי) combined with *ka'el* (כָּאֵל) to form the name *Mi ka'el* (מִי-כָּאֵל). ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 2:10.)

Rabbi Judah ben Simon expounded on God's words in [Deuteronomy 32:20](#), “I will hide My face from them.” Rabbi Judah ben Simon compared Israel to a king's son who went into the marketplace and struck people but was not struck in return (because of his being the king's son). He insulted but was not insulted. He went up to his father arrogantly. But the father asked the son whether he thought that he was respected on his own

account, when the son was respected only on account of the respect that was due to the father. So the father renounced the son, and as a result, no one took any notice of him. So when Israel went out of Egypt, the fear of them fell upon all the nations, as [Exodus 15:14–16](#) reported, “The peoples have heard, they tremble; pangs have taken hold on the inhabitants of Philistia. Then were the chiefs of Edom frightened; the mighty men of Moab, trembling takes hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan are melted away. Terror and dread falls upon them.” But when Israel transgressed and sinned, God asked Israel whether it thought that it was respected on its own account, when it was respected only on account of the respect that was due to God. So God turned away from them a little, and the Amalekites came and attacked Israel, as [Exodus 17:8](#) reports, “Then Amalek came, and fought with Israel in Rephidim,” and then the Canaanites came and fought with Israel, as [Numbers 21:1](#) reports, “And the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who dwelt in the South, heard tell that Israel came by the way of Atharim; and he fought against Israel.” God told the Israelites that they had no genuine faith, as [Deuteronomy 32:20](#) says, “they are a very disobedient generation, children in whom is no faith.” God concluded that the Israelites were rebellious, but to destroy them was impossible, to take them back to Egypt was impossible, and God could not change them for another people. So God concluded to chastise and try them with suffering. ([Ruth Rabbah](#) Prologue 4.)



Israel Enters the Promised Land (illustration from a Bible card published between 1896 and 1913 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

A Baraita taught that the words, “I will send My terror before you, and will discomfort all the people to whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you,” in [Exodus 23:27](#), and the words, “Terror and dread fall upon them,” in [Exodus 15:16](#) show that no creature was able to withstand the Israelites as they entered into the [Promised Land](#) in the days of Joshua, and those who stood against them were immediately panic-stricken and lost control of their bowels. And the words, “till Your people pass over, O Lord,” in [Exodus 15:16](#) allude to the first advance of the Israelites into the Promised Land in the days of Joshua. And the words, “till the people pass over whom You have gotten,” in [Exodus 15:16](#) allude to the second advance of the Israelites into the Promised Land in the days of [Ezra](#). The

Baraita thus concluded that the Israelites were worthy that God should perform a miracle on their behalf during the second advance as in the first advance, but that did not happen because the Israelites' sin caused God to withhold the miracle.

([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 36a.](#))

[Rabbi Akiva](#) said that he who whispered [Exodus 15:26](#) as an incantation over a wound to heal it would have no place in the world to come. ([Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1.](#))



The Israelites Gather Manna in the Wilderness (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 16

The Gemara asked how one could reconcile [Exodus 16:4](#), which reported that manna fell as “bread from heaven”; with [Numbers 11:8](#), which reported that people “made cakes of it,” implying that it required baking; and with [Numbers 11:8](#), which reported that people “ground it in mills,” implying that it required grinding. The Gemara concluded that the manna fell in different forms for different classes of people: For the righteous, it fell as bread; for average folk, it fell as cakes that required baking; and for the wicked, it fell as kernels that required grinding.

([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 75a.](#)) The Gemara asked how one could reconcile [Exodus 16:31](#), which reported that “the taste of it was like wafers made with honey,” with [Numbers 11:8](#), which reported that “the taste of it was as the taste of a cake baked with oil.” Rabbi Jose ben Hanina said that the manna tasted differently for different classes of people: It tasted like honey for infants, bread for youths, and oil for the aged. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 75b.](#))

The Mishnah taught that the manna that [Exodus 16:14–15](#) reports came down to the Israelites was among 10 miraculous things that God created on Sabbath eve at twilight on the first Friday at the completion of the Creation of the world. ([Mishnah Avot 5:6.](#))



The Giving of Quail (illustration from a Bible card published 1901 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

Tractate [Eruvin](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, [Jerusalem Talmud](#), and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of not walking beyond permitted limits in [Exodus 16:29](#). ([Mishnah Eruvin 1:1–10:15](#); Tosefta Eruvin 1:1–8:24; Jerusalem Talmud Eruvin 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Eruvin 2a–105a](#).)

A [Baraita](#) taught that [Josiah](#) hid the Ark, the bottle containing the manna (see [Exodus 16:33–34](#)), Aaron’s staff with its almonds and blossoms (see [Numbers 17:25](#)), and the chest that the [Philistines](#) sent as a gift (see [1 Samuel 6:8](#)), because Josiah read in [Deuteronomy 28:36](#): “The Lord will bring you, and your king whom you shall set over you, to a nation that you have not known.” Therefore he hid these things, as [2 Chronicles 35:3](#) reports: “And he said to the Levites, that taught all Israel, that

were holy to the Lord: ‘Put the holy ark into the house that Solomon, the son of David, King of Israel built. There shall no more be a burden upon your shoulders now.’” ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 52b.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 17

The Mishnah reported that in synagogues at Purim, Jews read [Exodus 17:8–16](#). ([Mishnah Megillah 3:6.](#))

The Mishnah quoted [Exodus 17:11](#), which described how when Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and asked whether Moses’ hands really made war or stopped it. Rather, the Mishnah read the verse to teach that as long as the Israelites looked upward and submitted their hearts to God, they would grow stronger, but when they did not, they would fall. The Mishnah taught that the fiery serpent placed on a pole in [Numbers 21:8](#) worked much the same way, by directing the Israelites to look upward to God. ([Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 3:8.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there is one negative [commandment](#) in the parshah:

- Not to walk outside permitted limits on the Sabbath ([Exodus 16:29.](#))

(Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#), [Negative Commandment 321](#). Cairo, Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel,

2:296. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:137–41. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9](#).)



Deborah Beneath the Palm Tree (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is:

- for [Ashkenazi Jews](#): [Judges 4:4–5:31](#); and

- for [Sephardi Jews](#): [Judges 5:1–31](#).

For Ashkenazi Jews, the haftarah is the longest of the year.



Jael Smote Sisera, and Slew Him (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[\[edit\]](#) Connection to the Parshah

Both the parshah and the haftarah contain songs that celebrate the victory of God’s people, the parshah in the “[Song of the Sea](#)” about God’s deliverance of the Israelites from Pharaoh ([Exodus 15:1–18](#)), and the haftarah in the “Song of Deborah” about the Israelites’ victory over the [Canaanite](#) general [Sisera](#). ([Judges 5](#).) Both the parshah and the haftarah report how the leaders of Israel’s enemies assembled hundreds of chariots. ([Exodus 14:6–7](#); [Judges 4:13](#).) Both the parshah and the haftarah report how God “threw . . . into panic” (*va-yabam*) Israel’s enemies. ([Exodus 14:24](#); [Judges 4:15](#).) Both the parshah and the haftarah report waters sweeping away Israel’s enemies ([Exodus 14:27–28](#); [Judges 5:21](#).) Both the parshah and the haftarah report singing by women to

celebrate, the parshah by [Miriam](#) ([Exodus 15:21](#)), and the haftarah by Deborah ([Judges 5](#)). Finally, both the parshah and the haftarah mention Amalek. ([Exodus 17:8–16](#); [Judges 5:14](#).)

The Gemara tied together God's actions in the parshah and the haftarah. To reassure Israelites concerned that their enemies still lived, God had the Reed Sea spit out the dead Egyptians. (See [Exodus 14:30](#).) To repay the seas, God committed the [Kishon River](#) to deliver one-and-a-half times as many bodies. To pay the debt, when Sisera came to attack the Israelites, God had the Kishon wash the Canaanites away. (See [Judges 5:21](#).) The Gemara calculated one-and-a-half times as many bodies from the numbers of chariots reported in [Exodus 14:7](#) and [Judges 4:13](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 118b](#).)



A page from a 14th century German Haggadah

[[edit](#)] In the liturgy

The concluding blessing of the [Shema](#), immediately prior to the [Amidah](#) prayer in each of the three [prayer services](#) recounts events from [Exodus 14:21–31](#). ([Reuven Hammer](#), *Or Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 114. New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2003. [ISBN 0916219208](#).)

The Passover [Haggadah](#), in the *magid* section of the [Seder](#), recounts the reasoning of Rabbi Jose the Galilean that as the phrase “the finger of God” in [Exodus 8:15](#) referred to 10 plagues, “the great hand” (translated “the great work”) in [Exodus 14:31](#) must refer to 50 plagues upon the Egyptians. (Menachem Davis. *The Interlinear Haggadah: The Passover Haggadah, with an Interlinear Translation, Instructions and Comments*, 51–52. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005. [ISBN 1-57819-064-9](#). Joseph Tabory. *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, 95. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. [ISBN 978-0-8276-0858-0](#).)

The Song of the Sea, [Exodus 15:1–18](#), appears in its entirety in the *P'sukei D'zimra* section of the [morning service](#) for Shabbat (Hammer, at 102–03.)

The references to God’s mighty hand and arm in [Exodus 15:6](#), [12](#), and [16](#) are reflected in [Psalm 98:1](#), which is also one of the six

Psalms recited at the beginning of the Kabbalat Shabbat prayer service. (Hammer, at 18.)

The statement of God's eternal sovereignty in [Exodus 15:18](#), "God will reign for ever and ever!" may have found paraphrase in [Psalm 146:10](#), "Adonai shall reign throughout all generations," which in turn appears in the *Kedushah* section of the *Amidah* prayer in each of the three Jewish services | prayer services. And the statement of God's eternal sovereignty in [Exodus 15:18](#) also appears verbatim in the *Kedushah D'Sidra* section of the *Minchah* service for Shabbat. (Hammer, at 4, 227.)

The people's murmuring at Massah and Meribah, and perhaps the rock that yielded water, of [Exodus 17:2–7](#) are reflected in [Psalm 95](#), which is in turn the first of the six Psalms recited at the beginning of the Kabbalat Shabbat prayer service. (Hammer, at 15.)

[\[edit\]](#) The Weekly Maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), Sephardi Jews each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parshah. For Parshah Beshalach, Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Ajam, the maqam that expresses happiness, to commemorating the joy and song of the Israelites as they crossed the sea.

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 1:9–10](#) (God separated water to reveal dry land); [14:7](#) (Amalekites); [36:12](#) (Amalek); [36:16](#) (Amalek); [50:24–26](#) (Joseph’s bones).
- [Exodus 4:21](#); [7:3](#); [9:12](#); [10:1](#), [20](#), [27](#); [11:10](#) (hardening Pharaoh’s heart).
- [Numbers 14:14](#) (pillar of fire).
- [Deuteronomy 2:30](#) (hardening of heart); [15:7](#) (hardening of heart); [25:17–19](#) (Amalekites).
- [Joshua 3:16–17](#) (crossing waters); [4:22–24](#) (crossing waters); [11:20](#) (hardening of heart); [24:32](#) (Joseph’s bones).
- [Psalms 9:6](#) (God blots out the names of enemies); [95](#) (God as “the Rock,” generation of the Wilderness); [114](#) (God’s power over the sea); [146:10](#) (God’s eternal sovereignty).
- [Esther 3:1](#) (Agagite, read as Amalekite via [Numbers 24:7](#)).
- [Nehemiah 9:12](#), [19](#) (pillar of fire).

[\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic

- [Ezekiel the Tragedian](#). *Exagōgē*. 2nd century BCE.
Translated by R.G. Robertson. In *The Old Testament*

Pseudepigrapha: Volume 2: Expansions of the “Old Testament” and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic works.
 Edited by [James H. Charlesworth](#), 816–19. New York: [Anchor Bible](#), 1985. [ISBN 0-385-18813-7](#).

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[\[edit\]](#) External links

[\[edit\]](#) Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, California](#)
- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)

- Aish.com
- [American Jewish University](http://AmericanJewishUniversity.com)
- [Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles](http://AnsheEmesSynagogue.com)
- [Bar-Ilan University](http://Bar-IlanUniversity.com)
- Chabad.org
- eparsha.com
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- [Jewish Theological Seminary](http://JewishTheologicalSeminary.com)
- MyJewishLearning.com
- [Ohr Sameach](http://OhrSameach.com)
- [Orthodox Union](http://OrthodoxUnion.com)
- [OzTorah, Torah from Australia](http://OzTorah.com)
- [Pardes from Jerusalem](http://PardesfromJerusalem.com)
- [Parshah Parts](http://ParshahParts.com)
- [Rabbi Sharon Brous](http://RabbiSharonBrous.com)
- [Rabbi Shlomo Riskin](http://RabbiShlomoRiskin.com)
- [Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld](http://RabbiShmuelHerzfeld.com)
- [Reconstructionist Judaism](http://ReconstructionistJudaism.com)

- [Sephardic Institute](#)
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- [What's Bothering Rashi?](#)

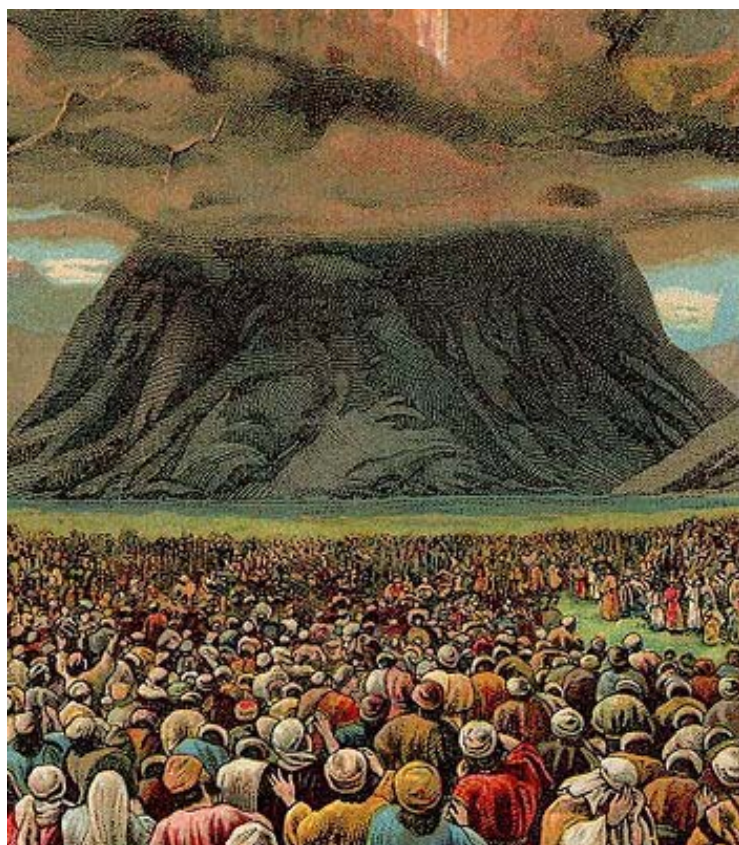
Yitro (parsha)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

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Yitro, **Yithro**, or **Yisro** (יִתְרוֹ — [Hebrew](#) for “[Jethro](#),” the second word and first distinctive word in the parshah) is the seventeenth [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the fifth in the [book of Exodus](#). It constitutes [Exodus 18:1–20:23](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it the seventeenth [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in late January or February.

Jews also read part of the parshah, [Exodus 19:1–20:23](#), as a Torah reading on the first day of the [Jewish holiday](#) of [Shavuot](#), which commemorates the giving of the [Ten Commandments](#).



The Ten Commandments (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



Jethro and Moses (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Jethro reforms adjudication

[Moses](#)’ father-in-law [Jethro](#) heard all that [God](#) had done for the [Israelites](#) and brought Moses’ wife [Zipporah](#) and her two sons [Gershom](#) (“I have been a stranger here”) and [Eliezer](#) (“God was my help”) to Moses in the [wilderness](#) at [Mount Sinai](#). ([Exodus 18:1–5](#).) Jethro rejoiced, blessed God, and offered [sacrifices](#) to God. ([Exodus 18:9–12](#).) The people stood from morning until evening waiting for Moses to adjudicate their disputes. ([Exodus 18:13](#).) Jethro counseled Moses to make known the law, and then choose capable, trustworthy, God-fearing men to serve as chiefs to judge the people, bringing only the most difficult matters to

Moses. ([Exodus 18:14–23.](#)) Moses heeded Jethro’s advice. ([Exodus 18:24.](#)) Then Moses bade Jethro farewell, and Jethro went home. ([Exodus 18:27.](#))



Moses Forbids the People to Follow Him (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[[edit](#)] The Ten Commandments

Three months to the day after the Israelites left [Egypt](#), they entered the wilderness at the foot of Mount Sinai. ([Exodus 19:1–2.](#)) Moses went up Mount Sinai, and God told him to tell the Israelites that if they would obey God faithfully and keep God’s covenant, they would be God’s treasured possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. ([Exodus 19:3–6.](#)) When Moses told the elders, all the people answered: “All that the Lord has spoken we will do!” And Moses brought back the people’s words to God. ([Exodus 19:7–8.](#)) God instructed Moses to have the people stay

pure, wash their clothes, and prepare for the third day, when God would come down in the sight of the people, on Mount Sinai. ([Exodus 19:10–11.](#)) God told Moses to set bounds round the mountain, threatening whoever touched the mountain with death, and Moses did so. ([Exodus 19:12–15.](#))



The Promulgation of the Law in Mount Sinai (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

At dawn of the third day, there was thunder, lightning, a dense cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud blast of the horn. ([Exodus 19:16.](#)) Moses led the people to the foot of the mountain. ([Exodus 19:17.](#)) Mount Sinai was all in smoke, the

mountain trembled violently, the blare of the horn grew louder and louder, and God answered Moses in thunder. ([Exodus 19:18–19.](#)) God came down on the top of Mount Sinai, and called Moses up. ([Exodus 19:20.](#)) God again commanded Moses to warn the people not to break through. ([Exodus 19:21.](#))

God spoke the Ten Commandments:



Moses Receives God’s Holy Commandments (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

- “I the Lord am your God.” ([Exodus 20:2.](#))
- “You shall have no other gods besides Me. You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them.” ([Exodus 20:2–5](#); 20:3–6 in the NJPS.)

- “You shall not swear falsely by the name of the Lord your God.” ([Exodus 20:6](#); 20:7 in the NJPS.)
- “Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.” ([Exodus 20:7–10](#); 20:8–11 in the NJPS.)
- “Honor your father and your mother.” ([Exodus 20:11](#); 20:12 in the NJPS.)
- “You shall not murder.”
- “You shall not commit adultery.”
- “You shall not steal.”
- “You shall not bear false witness.” ([Exodus 20:12](#); 20:13 in the NJPS.)
- “You shall not covet . . . anything that is your neighbor’s.” ([Exodus 20:13](#); 20:14 in the NJPS.)

(A note on verse numbering: The Mechon Mamre Hebrew–English Bible to which articles in this series link numbers its verses according to the Lower [Trope](#) Marks system, in which the verses are numbered naturally in their form for study. Many Jewish Bibles in both Hebrew and English (including the 1917 [Jewish Publication Society *Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text*](#), the [New Jewish Publication Society *Tanakh*](#), and the [ArtScroll *Chumash*](#)) use the numbering of the Upper Trope Marks system as used for public readings. Parallel verse numbering thus appears

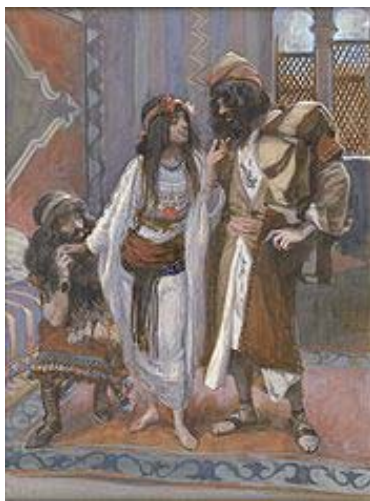
for the Ten Commandments here in [Exodus 20](#), as well as in [Deuteronomy 5](#).)

Seeing the thunder, lightning, and the mountain smoking, the people fell back and asked Moses to speak to them instead of God. ([Exodus 20:14–15](#); 20:15–16 in the NJPS.) God told Moses to tell the people not make any gods of silver or gold, but an altar of earth for sacrifices. ([Exodus 20:16–20](#); 20:17–21 in the NJPS.) God prohibited hewing the stones to make a stone altar. ([Exodus 20:21](#); 20:22 in the NJPS.) And God prohibited ascending the altar by steps, so as not to exposed the [priests'](#) nakedness. ([Exodus 20:22](#); 20:23 in the NJPS. |)



Jethro's Visit (engraving by [Gerard Jollain](#) from the 1670 *La Sainte Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation



The Harlot of Jericho and the Two Spies (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 18

The [Tannaim](#) debated what news Jethro heard in [Exodus 18:1](#) that caused him to [adopt the faith of Moses](#). [Rabbi Joshua](#) said that Jethro heard of the Israelites' victory over the [Amalekites](#), as [Exodus 17:13](#) reports the results of that battle immediately before [Exodus 18:1](#) reports Jethro's hearing of the news. Rabbi Eleazar of [Modim](#) said that Jethro heard of the giving of the Torah, for when God gave Israel the Torah, the sound travelled from one end of the earth to the other, and all the world's kings trembled in their palaces and sang, as [Psalm 29:9](#) reports, "The voice of the Lord makes the hinds to tremble . . . and in His temple all say: 'Glory.'" The kings then converged upon [Balaam](#) and asked him

what the tumultuous noise was that they had heard — perhaps another flood, or perhaps a flood of fire. Balaam told them that God had a precious treasure in store, which God had hidden for 974 generations before the creation of the world, and God desired to give it to God’s children, as [Psalm 29:11](#) says, “The Lord will give strength to His people.” Immediately they all exclaimed the balance of [Psalm 29:11](#): “The Lord will bless His people with peace.” [Rabbi Eleazar](#) said that Jethro heard about the dividing of the [Reed Sea](#), as [Joshua 5:1](#) reports, “And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites heard how the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the children of Israel,” and [Rahab](#) the harlot too told [Joshua](#)’s spies in [Joshua 2:10](#): “For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea.” ([Babylonian Talmud Zevachim 116a](#).)

Rabbi Joshua interpreted [Exodus 18:6](#) to teach that Jethro sent a messenger to Moses. Noting that [Exodus 18:6](#) mentions each of Jethro, Zipporah, and Moses’ children, [Rabbi Eliezer](#) taught that Jethro sent Moses a letter asking Moses to come out to meet Jethro for Jethro’s sake; and should Moses be unwilling to do so for Jethro’s sake, then to do so for the Zipporah’s sake; and should Moses be reluctant to do so for her sake, then to do so the sake of Moses’ children. ([Exodus Rabbah](#) 17:2.)

Rabbi Pappias read the words “And Jethro said: ‘Blessed be the Lord’” in [Exodus 18:10](#) as a reproach to the Israelites, for not one of the 600,000 Israelites rose to bless God until Jethro did. ([Mekhilta](#) Amelek 3:40:3:1.)



The Promulgation of the Law in Mount Sinai (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 19

The Mekhilta deduced from the use of the singular form of the verb “encamped” (*vayichan*, וַיִּיָּחַן) in [Exodus 19:2](#) that all the Israelites agreed and were of one mind. (Mekhilta Bahodesh 1:47:3:1.)

The [Mishnah](#) noted that oxen were the same as all other beasts insofar as they were required by [Exodus 19:12–13](#) to keep away from Mount Sinai. ([Mishnah Bava Kamma 5:7.](#))

The Mishnah deduced from [Exodus 19:15](#) that a woman who emits semen on the third day after intercourse is unclean. (Mishnah Shabbat 9:3.)

The Rabbis compared the Israelites' encounter at Sinai to [Jacob's](#) dream in [Genesis 28:12–13](#). The “[ladder](#)” in Jacob's dream symbolizes Mount Sinai. That the ladder is “set upon (בִּנְיָא, *mutzai*) the earth” recalls [Exodus 19:17](#), which says, “And they stood (בִּנְיָאֵי הַר, *vayityatzvu*) at the nether part of the mount.” The words of [Genesis 28:12](#), “and the top of it reached to heaven,” echo those of [Deuteronomy 4:11](#), “And the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven.” “And behold the angels of God” alludes to Moses and Aaron. “Ascending” parallels [Exodus 19:3](#): “And Moses went up to God.” “And descending” parallels [Exodus 19:14](#): “And Moses went down from the mount.” And the words “and, behold, the Lord stood beside him” in [Genesis 28:13](#) parallel the words of [Exodus 19:20](#): “And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai.” ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 68:12.)

Rabbi Levi addressed the question that [Deuteronomy 4:33](#) raises: “Did ever a people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live?” ([Deuteronomy 4:33](#), in turn, refers back to the encounter at Sinai reported at [Exodus 19:18–19](#), [20:1](#), and after.) Rabbi Levi taught that the world would not have been able to survive hearing the voice of God in God's power, but instead, as [Psalm 29:4](#) says, “The voice of the Lord is with power.” That is, the voice of God came according to the power of each individual — young, old, or infant — to receive it. ([Exodus Rabbah](#) 29:1.)

Reading the words “And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, to the top of the mount” in [Exodus 19:20](#), the Mekhilta supposed that one might think that God actually descended from heaven and transferred God’s Presence to the mountain. Thus the Mekhilta noted that [Exodus 20:18](#) (20:19 in the NJPS) says: “You yourselves have seen that I have talked with you from heaven,” and deduced that God bent down the heavens, lowering them to the top of the mountain, and spread the heavens as a person spreads a mattress on a bed, and spoke from the heavens as a person would speak from the top of a mattress. (Mekhilta Bahodesh 4:50:1:11–12.)



Moses Receiving the Tablets of the Law (fresco at the [Palazzi Pontifici](#) circa 1518–1519 by [Raphael](#))

Rabbi [Joshua ben Levi](#) taught that when Moses ascended on high (as [Exodus 19:20](#) reports), the ministering angels asked God what

business one born of woman had among them. God told them that Moses had come to receive the Torah. The angels questioned why God was giving to flesh and blood the secret treasure that God had hidden for 974 generations before God created the world. The angels asked, in the words of [Psalm 8:8](#), “What is man, that You are mindful of him, and the son of man, that You think of him?” God told Moses to answer the angels. Moses asked God what was written in the Torah. In [Exodus 20:2](#), God said, “I am the Lord your God, Who brought you out of the Land of Egypt.” So Moses asked the angels whether the angels had gone down to Egypt or were enslaved to Pharaoh. As the angels had not, Moses asked them why then God should give them the Torah. Again, [Exodus 20:3](#) says, “You shall have no other gods,” so Moses asked the angels whether they lived among peoples that engage in idol worship. Again, [Exodus 20:7](#) (20:8 in the NJPS) says, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” so Moses asked the angels whether they performed work from which they needed to rest. Again, [Exodus 20:6](#) (20:7 in the NJPS) says, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain,” so Moses asked the angels whether there were any business dealings among them in which they might swear oaths. Again, [Exodus 20:11](#) (20:12 in the NJPS) says, “Honor your father and your mother,” so Moses asked the angels whether they had fathers and mothers. Again, [Exodus 20:12](#) (20:13 in the NJPS) says, “You shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal,” so Moses asked the angels whether there was jealousy among them and whether the Evil Tempter was among them. Immediately, the angels conceded that God’s plan was

correct, and each angel felt moved to love Moses and give him gifts. Even the Angel of Death confided his secret to Moses, and that is how Moses knew what to do when, as [Numbers 17:11–13](#) reports, Moses told Aaron what to do to make atonement for the people, to stand between the dead and the living, and to check the plague. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 88b–89a.](#))



Moses Receiving the Tablets (painting circa 1900 by Gebhard Fugel)

[[edit](#)] Exodus chapter 20



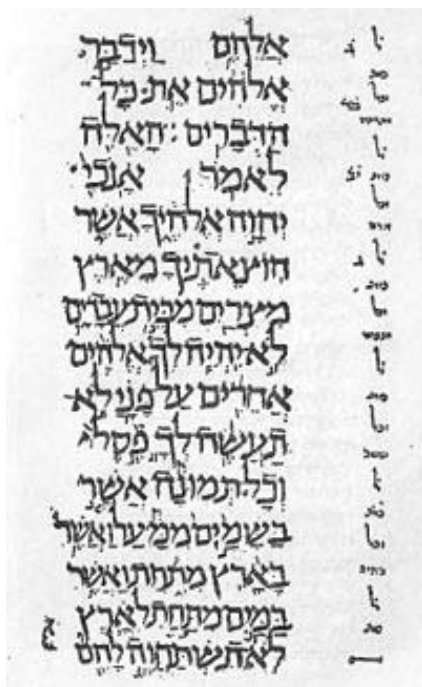
1768 Decalogue parchment by [Jekuthiel Sofer](#)

Rabbi [Joshua ben Levi](#) taught that with every single word that God spoke (as [Exodus 20:1](#) reports), the Israelites' souls departed, as [Song of Songs 5:6](#) says: “My soul went forth when He spoke.” But if their souls departed at the first word, how could they receive the second word? God revived them with the dew with which God will resurrect the dead, as [Psalm 68:10](#) says, “You, O God, did send a plentiful rain; You did confirm your inheritance, when it was weary.” Rabbi Joshua ben Levi also taught that with every word that God spoke, the Israelites retreated a distance of 12 *mils*, but the ministering angels led them back, as [Psalm 68:13](#) says, “The hosts of angels march, they

march (יִדְדוּן יִדְדוּן, *yiddodun yiddodun*).” Instead of *yiddodun* (“they march”), Rabbi Joshua ben Levi read *yedaddun* (“they lead”). ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 88b.](#))

Rabbi Levi said that the section beginning at [Leviticus 19:1](#) was spoken in the presence of the whole Israelite people, because it includes each of the Ten Commandments, noting that: (1) [Exodus 20:2](#) says, “I am the Lord your God,” and [Leviticus 19:3](#) says, “I am the Lord your God”; (2) [Exodus 20:2–3](#) says, “You shall have no other gods,” and [Leviticus 19:4](#) says, “Nor make to yourselves molten gods”; (3) [Exodus 20:6](#) (20:7 in the NJPS) says, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain,” and [Leviticus 19:12](#) says, “And you shall not swear by My name falsely”; (4) [Exodus 20:7](#) (20:8 in the NJPS) says, “Remember the Sabbath day,” and [Leviticus 19:3](#) says, “And you shall keep My Sabbaths”; (5) [Exodus 20:11](#) (20:12 in the NJPS) says, “Honor your father and your mother,” and [Leviticus 19:3](#) says, “You shall fear every man his mother, and his father”; (6) [Exodus 20:12](#) (20:13 in the NJPS) says, “You shall not murder,” and [Leviticus 19:16](#) says, “Neither shall you stand idly by the blood of your neighbor”; (7) [Exodus 20:12](#) (20:13 in the NJPS) says, “You shall not commit adultery,” and [Leviticus 20:10](#) says, “Both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death; (8) [Exodus 20:12](#) (20:13 in the NJPS) says, “You shall not steal,” and [Leviticus 19:11](#) says, “You shall not steal”; (9) [Exodus 20:12](#) (20:13 in the NJPS) says, “You shall not bear false witness,” and [Leviticus 19:16](#) says, “You shall not go up and down as a talebearer”; and (10) [Exodus 20:13](#) (20:14 in the NJPS) says,

“You shall not covet . . . anything that is your neighbor's,” and [Leviticus 19:18](#) says, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ([Leviticus Rabbah](#) 24:5.)



Exodus 20:1–5 in a manuscript from the [British Library](#)

The [Sifre](#) taught that to commit idolatry is to deny the entire Torah. (Sifre to Numbers 111:1:3.)

Tractate [Avodah Zarah](#) in the Mishnah, [Tosefta](#), [Jerusalem Talmud](#), and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws prohibiting idolatry in [Exodus 20:2–5](#) (20:3–6 in NJPS) and [Deuteronomy 5:6–9](#) (5:7–10 in NJPS). ([Mishnah Avodah Zarah 1:1–5:12](#); Tosefta Avodah Zarah 1:1–8:8; Jerusalem Talmud Avodah Zarah 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Avodah Zarah 2a–76b.](#))

The Mishnah taught that those who engaged in idol worship were executed, whether they served it, sacrificed to it, offered it incense, made libations to it, prostrated themselves to it, accepted it as a god, or said to it “You are my god.” But those who embraced, kissed, washed, anointed, clothed, or swept or sprinkled the ground before an idol merely transgressed the negative commandment of [Exodus 20:4](#) (20:5 in the NJPS) and were not executed. ([Mishnah Sanhedrin 7:6](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 60b.](#))

The [Gemara](#) reconciled apparently discordant verses touching on vicarious responsibility. The Gemara noted that [Deuteronomy 24:16](#) states: “The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin,” but [Exodus 20:4](#) (20:5 in the NJPS) says: “visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.” The Gemara cited a [Baraita](#) that interpreted the words “the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them” in [Leviticus 26:39](#) to teach that God punishes children only when they follow their parents’ sins. The Gemara then questioned whether the words “they shall stumble one upon another” in [Leviticus 26:37](#) do not teach that one will stumble through the sin of the other, that all are held responsible for one another. The Gemara answered that the vicarious responsibility of which [Leviticus 26:37](#) speaks is limited to those who have the power to restrain their fellow from evil but do not do so. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 27b.](#))

Tractates [Nedarim](#) and [Shevuot](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of vows in [Exodus 20:6](#) (20:7 in the NJPS), [Leviticus 5:1–10](#) and [19:12](#), [Numbers 30:2–17](#), and [Deuteronomy 23:24](#). ([Mishnah Nedarim 1:1](#)–11:11; Tosefta Nedarim 1:1–7:8; Jerusalem Talmud Nedarim 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 2a–91b](#); [Mishnah Shevuot 1:1](#)–8:6; Tosefta Shevuot 1:1–6:7; Jerusalem Talmud Shevuot 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Shevuot 2a–49b](#).)



Rabbi Akiba (illustration from the 1568 [Mantua](#) Haggadah)

Tractate [Shabbat](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the Sabbath in [Exodus 20:7–10](#) (20:8–11 in the NJPS). ([Mishnah Shabbat 1:1](#)–24:5; Tosefta Shabbat 1:1–17:29; Jerusalem Talmud Shabbat 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 2a–157b](#).)

The Mishnah interpreted the prohibition of animals working in [Exodus 20:9](#) (20:10 in the NJPS) to teach that on the Sabbath, animals could wear their tethers, and their caretakers could lead them by their tethers and sprinkle or immerse them with water. (Mishnah Shabbat 5:1; [Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 51b.](#)) The Mishnah taught that a donkey could go out with a saddle cushion tied to it, rams strapped, ewes covered, and goats with their udders tied. [Rabbi Jose](#) forbade all these, except covering ewes. Rabbi Judah allowed goats to go out with their udders tied to dry, but not to save their milk. (Mishnah Shabbat 5:2; [Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 52b.](#)) The Mishnah taught that animals could not go out with a pad tied to their tails. A driver could not tie camels together and pull one of them, but a driver could take the leads of several camels in hand and pull them. (Mishnah Shabbat 5:3; [Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 54a.](#)) The Mishnah prohibited donkeys with untied cushions, bells, ladder-shaped yokes, or thongs around their feet; fowls with ribbons or leg straps; rams with wagons; ewes protected by wood chips in their noses; calves with little yokes; and cows with hedgehog skins or straps between their horns. The Mishnah reported that Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah's cow used to go out with a thong between its horns, but without the consent of the Rabbis. (Mishnah Shabbat 5:4; [Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 54b.](#))



Honor Your Father and Your Mother (illustration from a Bible card published 1896 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

The Mishnah taught that both men and women are obligated to carry out all commandments concerning their fathers. ([Mishnah Kiddushin 1:7](#); [Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 29a, 30b.](#)) [Rav Judah](#) interpreted the Mishnah to mean that both men and women are bound to perform all precepts concerning a father that are incumbent upon a son to perform for his father. ([Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 30b.](#))

A [midrash](#) noted that almost everywhere, Scripture mentions a father's honor before the mother's honor. (See, for example, [Exodus 20:11](#) (20:12 in NJSP), [Deuteronomy 5:15](#) (5:16 in the NJPS), [27:16.](#)) But [Leviticus 19:3](#) mentions the mother first to teach that one should honor both parents equally. ([Genesis Rabbah 1:15.](#))

Our Rabbis taught in a Baraita what it means to “honor” and “revere” one’s parents within the meaning of [Exodus 20:11](#) (20:12 in NJSP) (honor), [Leviticus 19:3](#) (revere), and [Deuteronomy 5:15](#) (5:16 in the NJPS) (honor). To “revere” means that the child must neither stand nor sit in the parent’s place, nor contradict the parent’s words, nor engage in a dispute to which the parent is a party. To “honor” means that the child must give the parent food and drink and clothes, and take the parent in and out. ([Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 31b.](#))

According to the Mishnah, if witnesses testified that a person was liable to receive 40 lashes, and the witnesses turned out to have perjured themselves, then Rabbi Meir taught that the perjurers received 80 lashes — 40 on account of the commandment of [Exodus 20:12](#) (20:13 in the NJPS) not to bear false witness and 40 on account of the instruction of [Deuteronomy 19:19](#) to do to perjurers as they intended to do to their victims — but the Sages said that they received only 40 lashes. ([Mishnah Makkot 1:3; Babylonian Talmud Makkot 4a.](#))

Rabbi [Shimon ben Lakish](#) taught that the commandment of [Exodus 20:12](#) (20:13 in the NJPS) not to bear false witness included every case of false testimony. (Jerusalem Talmud Terumot 64a.)

[Rabbi Ishmael](#) interpreted the words “all the people perceived the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the voice of the horn” in [Exodus 20:14](#) (20:15 in the NJPS) to mean that the people saw what could be seen and heard what could be heard. But [Rabbi Akiba](#) said that they saw and heard what was perceivable, and

they saw the fiery word of God strike the tablets. (Mekhilta Bahodesh 55:1:1.)

The Gemara taught that [Exodus 20:16](#) (20:17 in NJPS) sets forth one of the three most distinguishing virtues of the Jewish People. The Gemara taught that [David](#) told the [Gibeonites](#) that the Israelites are distinguished by three characteristics: They are merciful, bashful, and benevolent. They are merciful, for [Deuteronomy 13:18](#) says that God would “show you (the Israelites) mercy, and have compassion upon you, and multiply you.” They are bashful, for [Exodus 20:16](#) (20:17 in NJPS) says “that God’s fear may be before you (the Israelites).” And they are benevolent, for [Genesis 18:19](#) says of [Abraham](#) “that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice.” The Gemara taught that David told the Gibeonites that only one who cultivates these three characteristics is fit to join the Jewish People. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 79a.](#))

The Mishnah deduced from [Exodus 20:20](#) (20:21 in the NJPS) that even when only a single person sits occupied with Torah, the [Shekhinah](#) is with the student. ([Mishnah Avot 3:6.](#))

Rabbi Isaac taught that God reasoned that if God said in [Exodus 20:20](#) (20:21 in NJPS), "An altar of earth you shall make to Me [and then] I will come to you and bless you," thus revealing God's Self to bless the one who built an altar in God's name, then how much more should God reveal God's Self to Abraham, who circumcised himself for God's sake. And thus, "the Lord appear to him." ([Genesis Rabbah 48:4.](#))

[Bar Kappara](#) taught that every dream has its interpretation. Thus Bar Kappara taught that the “ladder” in Jacob’s dream of [Genesis 28:12](#) symbolizes the stairway leading up to the altar in the [Temple in Jerusalem](#). “Set upon the earth” implies the altar, as [Exodus 20:20](#) (20:21 in NJPS) says, “An altar of earth you shall make for Me.” “And the top of it reached to heaven” implies the sacrifices, the odor of which ascended to heaven. “The angels of God” symbolize the High Priests. “Ascending and descending on it” describes the priests ascending and descending the stairway of the altar. And the words “and, behold, the Lord stood beside him” in [Genesis 28:13](#) once again invoke the altar, as in [Amos 9:1](#), the prophet reports, “I saw the Lord standing beside the altar.” (Genesis Rabbah 68:12.)





2nd Century B.C.E. Decalogue (from the [Nash Papyrus](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are 3 positive and 14 negative [commandments](#) in the parshah:

- To know there is a God ([Exodus 20:2.](#))
- Not to believe in divinity besides God ([Exodus 20:3.](#))
- Not to make an [idol](#) for yourself ([Exodus 20:4.](#))
- Not to worship idols in the manner they are worshiped ([Exodus 20:5.](#))
- Not to worship idols in the four ways we worship God ([Exodus 20:5.](#))
- Not to take God's Name in vain ([Exodus 20:7.](#))
- To sanctify the Sabbath with [Kiddush](#) and [Havdalah](#) ([Exodus 20:8.](#))
- Not to do prohibited labor on the Sabbath ([Exodus 20:10.](#))
- To respect your father and mother ([Exodus 20:11.](#))
- Not to murder ([Exodus 20:13.](#))
- Not to commit adultery ([Exodus 20:13.](#))

- Not to kidnap ([Exodus 20:13.](#))
- Not to testify falsely ([Exodus 20:13.](#))
- Not to covet another's possession ([Exodus 20:14.](#))
- Not to make human forms even for decorative purposes ([Exodus 20:20.](#))
- Not to build the altar with hewn stones ([Exodus 20:23.](#))
- Not to climb steps to the altar ([Exodus 20:26.](#))

(*Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:141–97. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9.](#))



Isaiah's Lips Anointed with Fire (1784 painting by [Benjamin West](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Isaiah 6:1–7:6](#) and [9:5–6](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Connection to the Parshah

Both the parshah and the haftarah recount God's revelation. Both the parshah and the haftarah describe Divine Beings as winged. ([Exodus 19:4](#); [Isaiah 6:2](#).) Both the parshah and the

haftarah report God's presence accompanied by shaking and smoke. ([Exodus 19:18](#); [Isaiah 6:4](#).) And both the parshah and the haftarah speak of making Israel a holy community. ([Exodus 19:6](#); [Isaiah 6:13](#).)

[[edit](#)] In the liturgy

The second blessing before the *Shema* speaks of how God “loves His people Israel,” reflecting the statement of [Exodus 19:5](#) that Israel is God's people. ([Reuven Hammer](#). *Or Hadasb: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 29. New York: The [Rabbinical Assembly](#), 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#).)

The fire surrounding God's Presence in [Exodus 19:16–28](#) is reflected in [Psalm 97:3](#), which is in turn one of the six [Psalms](#) recited at the beginning of the Kabbalat Shabbat [prayer service](#). (Hammer, at 17.)

The [Lekhah Dodi](#) liturgical poem of the Kabbalat Shabbat service quotes both the commandment of [Exodus 20:7](#) (Exodus 20:8 in the NJPS) to “remember” the Sabbath and the commandment of [Deuteronomy 5:11](#) (Deuteronomy 5:12 in the NJPS) to “keep” or “observe” the Sabbath, saying that they “were uttered as one by our Creator.” (Hammer at 21.)

And following the Kabbalat Shabbat service and prior to the Friday evening (*Ma'ariv*) service, Jews traditionally read rabbinic sources on the observance of the Sabbath, including [Genesis Rabbah 11:9](#). [Genesis Rabbah 11:9](#), in turn, interpreted the

commandment of [Exodus 20:7](#) (Exodus 20:8 in the NJPS) to “remember” the Sabbath. (Hammer at 26.)

The [Kiddusha Rabba](#) blessing for the Sabbath day meal quotes [Exodus 20:7–10](#) (Exodus 20:8–11 in the NJPS) immediately before the blessing on wine. (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals with an Interlinear Translation*, 458–59. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-697-3](#).)

Among the [ẓemirot](#) or songs of praise for the Sabbath day meal, the song Baruch Kel Elyon, written by Rabbi [Baruch ben Samuel](#), quotes [Exodus 20:7](#) (Exodus 20:8 in the NJPS) and in concluding paraphrases [Exodus 20:9](#) (Exodus 20:10 in the NJPS), saying “In all your dwellings, do not do work — your sons and daughters, the servant and the maidservant.” (Davis, at 466.)

Similarly, among the [ẓemirot](#) for the Sabbath day meal, the song Yom Zeh Mechubad paraphrases [Exodus 20:8–10](#) (Exodus 20:9–11 in the NJPS), saying, “This day is honored from among all days, for on it rested the One Who fashioned the universe. Six days you may do your work, but the Seventh Day belongs to your God. The Sabbath: Do not do on it any work, for everything God completed in six days.” (Davis, at 466–67.)

Many Jews study successive chapters of [Pirkei Avot](#) (Chapters of the Fathers) on Sabbaths between [Passover](#) and [Rosh Hashanah](#). And [Avot 3:6](#) quotes [Exodus 20:20](#) (20:21 in the NJPS) for the proposition that even when only a single person sits occupied with Torah, the Shekhinah is with the student. (Davis, at 549.)

[\[edit\]](#) The Weekly Maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), [Sephardi Jews](#) each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parshah. For Parshah Yitro, Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Hoseni, the maqam that expresses beauty. This is especially appropriate in this parshah because it is the parshah where the Israelites receive the Ten Commandments.

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Exodus 34:7](#) (punishing children for fathers' sin).
- [Leviticus 5:1–10](#) (vows); [19:12](#) (vows).
- [Numbers 14:18](#) (punishing children for fathers' sin); [30:2–17](#) (vows).
- [Deuteronomy 1:9–18](#) (sharing administrative duties); [5:2–28](#) (ten commandments); [5:8](#) (5:9 in the NJPS) (punishing children for fathers' sin); [23:22–24](#) (vows); [24:16](#) (*no* capital punishment of children for fathers' sin).
- [Jeremiah 31:28–29](#) (31:29–30 in the NJPS) (*not* punishing children for fathers' sin).
- [Ezekiel 18:1–4](#) (*not* punishing children for fathers' sin); [18:5–7](#) (the just does not rob).

- [Psalm 97:7](#) (graven images).



Josephus

[\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic

- [Josephus](#). *Antiquities of the Jews*. [3:3:1](#) = [3:5:6](#). Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 83–85. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): Shabbat 5:1–4, 9:3; [Nedarim 1:1](#)–11:11; [Bava Kamma 5:7](#); [Sanhedrin 7:6](#); [Makkot 1:3](#); [Shevuot 1:1](#)–8:6; [Avodah Zarah 1:1](#)–5:12; [Avot 3:6](#). Land of Israel, circa 200 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 184, 190, 515, 598, 610, 660–72, 679. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Tosefta](#): Maaser Sheni 5:27; Shabbat 1:21; Sukkah 4:3; Megillah 3:5, 24; Sotah 4:1, 7:2; Bava Kamma 3:2–3, 4:6, 6:4, 14, 7:5, 9:7, 17, 20, 22, 26; Sanhedrin 3:2, 4:7, 12:3;

Makkot 1:7; Shevuot 3:6, 8; Avodah Zarah 1:1–8:8;

Arakhin 2:10, 5:9. Land of Israel, circa 300 CE.

Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, vol. 1: 330, 360, 579, 645, 650, 844, 860; vol. 2: 962–63, 972, 978, 980, 987, 1001, 1004–06, 1150, 1159, 1185, 1201, 1232–34, 1261–93, 1499, 1514. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).

- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Berakhot 5a, 12b–13a, 39a, 50b, 87a; Peah 6b; Sheviit 1a, 2a; Terumot 64a; Bikkurim 23b; Shabbat 1a–; Sukkah 3a, 24a; Nedarim 1a–; Shevuot 1a–; Avodah Zarah 1a–. Land of Israel, circa 400 CE.
Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 1–3, 6a, 8, 12, 22. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005–2010.
- [Mekhilta According to Rabbi Ishmael](#) 47:1–57:1. Land of Israel, late 4th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Mekhilta According to Rabbi Ishmael*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 2:37–103. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988. [ISBN 1-55540-237-2](#). And *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*. Translated by Jacob Z. Lauterbach, 2:271–354. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1933, reissued 2004. [ISBN 0-8276-0678-8](#).
- [Mekhilta of Rabbi Simeon](#) 20:3; 26:1; 34:2; 44:1–2; 46:1–57:3; 68:1–2; 74:4, 6; 77:4; 78:4; 82:1. Land of Israel, 5th

century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai*. Translated by W. David Nelson, 83–84, 113, 147, 186, 195–209, 212–58, 305, 347, 349, 359, 364, 372–73. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2006. [ISBN 0-8276-0799-7](#).



Talmud

- Babylonian Talmud: [Berakhot 6a–b, 20b, 33a, 45a, 54a, 57a, 64a; Shabbat 10a, 33b, 51b, 86a–b, 87b–88b, 94a, 105a, 114b, 117b, 120a–b, 153a–b; Pesachim 5b, 47b–48a, 54a, 63b, 106a, 117b; Yoma 4a, 86a; Sukkah 5a, 53a; Beitzah 5a–b, 15b; Rosh Hashanah 3a, 24a–b, 27a; Taanit 21b; Megillah 31a; Moed Katan 5a, 7b, 13a, 15a; Chagigah 3b, 6a, 12b–13a, 14a, 18a, 27a; Yevamot 46b, 62a, 79a; Ketubot 103a, 111a; Nedarim 18a, 20a, 38a; Nazir 45a; Sotah 31a, 33a, 38a, 42a; Gittin 57b; Kiddushin 2b, 30a–32a, 76b; Bava Kamma 54b, 74b, 99b; Bava Metzia 5b, 30b, 32a, 61b; Sanhedrin 2b, 7a–b, 10a, 15b–17a, 18a–b, 21b, 34b, 35b, 36b, 45a, 50a, 56b, 59b, 61a–62a, 63a, 67a, 86a–b, 94a, 99a; Makkot 2b, 4a–b, 7b, 8b, 10a, 13b; Shevuot 20b–21a, 29a, 30b–31a, 39a, 47b; Avodah Zarah 2a–76b; Horayot 4b, 8a; Zevachim 8a, 19a, 58a, 59a, 61b, 115b–16a; Menachot 5b; Chullin](#)

[110b](#); [Arakhin 11a](#); [Temurah 3a–b](#); [Keritot 3b](#); [Niddah 13b](#), [42a](#). Babylonia, 6th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

[edit] Medieval

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Rashi

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[\[edit\]](#) See also

- [Jethro in Rabbinic Literature](#)

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- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [hear the parshah chanted](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, California](#)
- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
- [Aish.com](#)
- [American Jewish University](#)
- [Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles](#)
- [Bar-Ilan University](#)
- [Chabad.org](#)
- [eparsha.com](#)
- [Jewish Agency for Israel](#)
- [Jewish Theological Seminary](#)
- [MyJewishLearning.com](#)
- [Ohr Sameach](#)
- [Orthodox Union](#)

- [OzTorah, Torah from Australia](#)
- [Oz Ve Shalom — Netivot Shalom](#)
- [Pardes from Jerusalem](#)
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Mishpatim

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Mishpatim (מִשְׁפָּטִים — [Hebrew](#) for “laws,” the second word of the parshah) is the eighteenth [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the sixth in the [book of Exodus](#). It constitutes [Exodus 21:1–24:18](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it the eighteenth [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in February.

As the parshah sets out some of the laws of [Passover](#), Jews also read part of the parshah, [Exodus 22:24–23:19](#), as the initial Torah reading for the second intermediate day (*[Chol HaMoed](#)*) of Passover.

Jews also read the first part of parshah [Ki Tisa](#), [Exodus 30:11–16](#), regarding the half-[shekel](#) head tax, as the [maftir](#) Torah reading on the [special Sabbath](#) Shabbat Shekalim, which often falls on the same Sabbath as parshah Mishpatim (as it does in 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2018).



Moses Receives the Tablets of the Law (1868 painting by [João Zeferino da Costa](#))

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



The Covenant Confirmed (late 19th or early 20th Century illustration by John Steeple Davis)



Moses and the Elders See God (early 18th Century illustration by [Jacopo Amigoni](#))

[God](#) told [Moses](#) to give the people a series of laws (see "Commandments" below), which some scholars call the [Covenant Code](#). ([Exodus Exodus](#))

God invited Moses, [Aaron](#), [Nadab](#), [Abihu](#), and 70 elders to bow to God from afar. ([Exodus 24:1](#).) Moses repeated the commandments to the people, who answered: "All the things that the Lord has commanded we will do!" ([Exodus 24:3](#).) Moses then wrote the commandments down. ([Exodus 24:4](#).) He set up an altar and some young [Israelite](#) men offered [sacrifices](#). ([Exodus 24:4–5](#).) Moses read the covenant aloud to the people, who once again affirmed that they would follow it. ([Exodus 24:7](#).) Moses took [blood](#) from the sacrifices and dashed it on the people. ([Exodus 24:8](#).)

Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the 70 elders of Israel then ascended, saw God, ate, and drank. ([Exodus 24:9–11.](#))

Moses and [Joshua](#) arose, and Moses ascended [Mount Sinai](#), leaving Aaron and [Hur](#) in charge of legal matters. ([Exodus 24:13–14.](#)) A cloud covered the mountain, hiding the Presence of the Lord for six days, appearing to the Israelites as a [fire](#) on the top of the mountain. ([Exodus 24:15–17.](#)) Moses went inside the cloud and remained on the mountain 40 days and nights. ([Exodus 24:18.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 23

[\[edit\]](#) Passover

[Exodus 23:15](#) refers to the [Festival](#) of Passover. In the Hebrew Bible, Passover is called:

- “Passover” (*Pesach*, פֶּסַח) ([Exodus 12:11, 21, 27, 43, 48; 34:25; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 9:2, 4–6, 10, 12–14; 28:16; 33:3; Deuteronomy 16:1–2, 5–6; Joshua 5:10–11; 2 Kings 23:21–23; Ezekiel 45:21; Ezra 6:19–20; 2 Chronicles 30:1–2, 5, 15, 17–18; 35:1, 6–9, 11, 13, 16–19](#));
- “The Feast of Unleavened Bread” (*Chag haMatzot*, חַג הַמַּצּוֹת) ([Exodus 12:17; 23:15; 34:18; Leviticus 23:6;](#)

[Deuteronomy 16:16](#); [Ezekiel 45:21](#); [Ezra 6:22](#);
[2 Chronicles 8:13](#); [30:13](#), [21](#); [35:17](#)); and

- “A holy convocation” or “a solemn assembly” (*mikrah kodesh*, מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ) ([Exodus 12:16](#); [Leviticus 23:7–8](#); [Numbers 28:18](#), [25](#)).



The Search for Leaven (illustration circa 1733–1739 by [Bernard Picart](#))

Some explain the double nomenclature of “Passover” and “Feast of Unleavened Bread” as referring to two separate feasts that the Israelites combined sometime between [the Exodus](#) and when the Biblical text became settled. (See, e.g., [W. Gunther Plaut](#), *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, 456. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981. [ISBN 0-8074-0055-6](#).) [Exodus 34:18–20](#) and [Deuteronomy 15:19–16:8](#) indicate that the dedication of the firstborn also became associated with the festival.

Some believe that the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” was an agricultural festival at which the Israelites celebrated the beginning of the grain harvest. Moses may have had this festival in mind when in [Exodus 5:1](#) and [10:9](#) he petitioned Pharaoh to let the Israelites go to celebrate a feast in the wilderness. (Plaut, at 464.)

“Passover,” on the other hand, was associated with a thanksgiving sacrifice of a lamb, also called “the Passover,” “the Passover lamb,” or “the Passover offering.” ([Exodus 12:11, 21, 27, 43, 48](#); [Deuteronomy 16:2, 5–6](#); [Ezra 6:20](#); [2 Chronicles 30:15, 17–18](#); [35:1, 6–9, 11, 13](#).)



The Passover Seder of the Portuguese Jews (illustration circa 1733–1739 by Bernard Picart)

[Exodus 12:5–6](#), [Leviticus 23:5](#), and [Numbers 9:3](#) and [5](#), and [28:16](#) direct “Passover” to take place on the evening of the fourteenth of [Aviv](#) ([Nisan](#) in the [Hebrew calendar](#) after the [Babylonian](#)

[captivity](#)). [Joshua 5:10](#), [Ezekiel 45:21](#), [Ezra 6:19](#), and [2 Chronicles 35:1](#) confirm that practice. [Exodus 12:18–19](#), [23:15](#), and [34:18](#), [Leviticus 23:6](#), and [Ezekiel 45:21](#) direct the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” to take place over seven days and [Leviticus 23:6](#) and [Ezekiel 45:21](#) direct that it begin on the fifteenth of the month. Some believe that the propinquity of the dates of the two festivals led to their confusion and merger. (Plaut, at 464.)

[Exodus 12:23](#) and [27](#) link the word “Passover” (*Pesach*, פֶּסַח) to God’s act to “pass over” (*pasach*, פָּסַח) the Israelites’ houses in the [plague](#) of the firstborn. In the Torah, the consolidated Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread thus commemorate the Israelites’ liberation from [Egypt](#). ([Exodus 12:42](#); [23:15](#); [34:18](#); [Numbers 33:3](#); [Deuteronomy 16:1](#), [3](#), [6](#).)

The Hebrew Bible frequently notes the Israelites’ observance of Passover at turning points in their history. [Numbers 9:1–5](#) reports God’s direction to the Israelites to observe Passover in the wilderness of [Sinai](#) on the anniversary of their liberation from Egypt. [Joshua 5:10–11](#) reports that upon entering the [Promised Land](#), the Israelites kept the Passover on the plains of [Jericho](#) and ate unleavened cakes and parched corn, produce of the land, the next day. [2 Kings 23:21–23](#) reports that King [Josiah](#) commanded the Israelites to keep the Passover in [Jerusalem](#) as part of Josiah’s reforms, but also notes that the Israelites had not kept such a Passover from the days of the [Biblical judges](#) nor in all the days of the [kings of Israel](#) or the [kings of Judah](#), calling into question the observance of even Kings [David](#) and [Solomon](#). The more reverent [2 Chronicles 8:12–13](#), however, reports that Solomon

offered sacrifices on the festivals, including the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And [2 Chronicles 30:1–27](#) reports King [Hezekiah](#)'s observance of a second Passover anew, as sufficient numbers of neither the priests nor the people were prepared to do so before then. And [Ezra 6:19–22](#) reports that the Israelites returned from the Babylonian captivity observed Passover, ate the Passover lamb, and kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy.



offering of first fruits (illustration from a Bible card published between 1896 and 1913 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

[\[edit\]](#) Shavuot

[Exodus 23:16](#) refers to the Festival of [Shavuot](#). In the [Hebrew Bible](#), Shavuot is called:

- The Feast of Weeks (חג שבועות, *Chag Shavuot*) ([Exodus 34:22](#); [Deuteronomy 16:10](#); see also [2 Chronicles 8:13](#) (חג השבועות, *Chag haShavuot*));
- The Day of the First-fruits (יום הבכורים, *Yom haBikurim*) ([Numbers 28:26](#));
- The Feast of Harvest (חג הקציר, *Chag haKatzir*) ([Exodus 23:16](#)); and
- A holy convocation (מיקרא קדש, *mikrah kodesh*) ([Leviticus 23:21](#); [Numbers 28:26](#))

[Exodus 34:22](#) associates Shavuot with the first-fruits (בִּכּוּרֵי, *bikurei*) of the wheat harvest. (See also [Exodus 23:16](#); [Leviticus 23:17](#); [Numbers 28:26](#).) In turn, [Deuteronomy 26:1–11](#) set out the ceremony for the bringing of the first fruits.

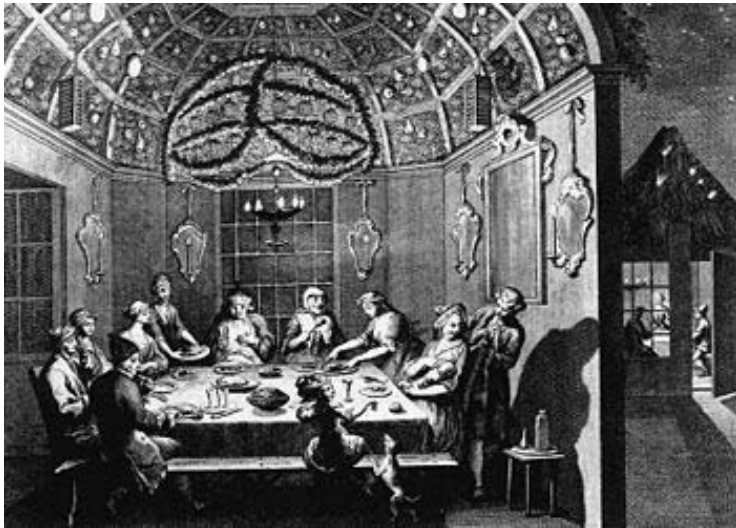
To arrive at the correct date, [Leviticus 23:15](#) instructs counting seven weeks from the day after the day of rest of Passover, the day that they brought the sheaf of barley for waving. Similarly, [Deuteronomy 16:9](#) directs counting seven weeks from when they first put the sickle to the standing barley.

[Leviticus 23:16–19](#) sets out a course of offerings for the fiftieth day, including a meal-offering of two loaves made from fine flour from the first-fruits of the harvest; burnt-offerings of seven lambs, one bullock, and two rams; a sin-offering of a goat; and a peace-offering of two lambs. Similarly, [Numbers 28:26–30](#) sets out a course of offerings including a meal-offering; burnt-offerings of two bullocks, one ram, and seven lambs; and one

goat to make atonement. [Deuteronomy 16:10](#) directs a freewill-offering in relation to God's blessing.

[Leviticus 23:21](#) and [Numbers 28:26](#) ordain a holy convocation in which the Israelites were not to work.

[2 Chronicles 8:13](#) reports that Solomon offered burnt-offerings on the Feast of Weeks.



Eating in a [Sukkah](#) (1723 engraving by Bernard Picart)

[\[edit\]](#) Sukkot

And [Exodus 23:16](#) refers to the Festival of [Sukkot](#). In the Hebrew Bible, Sukkot is called:

- “The Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths)” ([Leviticus 23:34](#); [Deuteronomy 16:13, 16; 31:10](#); [Zechariah 14:16, 18, 19](#); [Ezra 3:4](#); [2 Chronicles 8:13](#));

- “The Feast of Ingathering” ([Exodus 23:16, 34:22](#));
- “The Feast” or “the festival” ([1 Kings 8:2, 65; 12:32; 2 Chronicles 5:3; 7:8](#));
- “The Feast of the Lord” ([Leviticus 23:39; Judges 21:19](#));
- “The festival of the seventh month” ([Ezekiel 45:25; Nehemiah 8:14](#)); and
- “A holy convocation” or “a sacred occasion” ([Numbers 29:12](#)).



Celebrating Sukkot with the Four Species (painting circa 1894–1895 by Leopold Pilichowski)

Sukkot’s agricultural origin is evident from the name "The Feast of Ingathering," from the ceremonies accompanying it, and from the season and occasion of its celebration: "At the end of the year when you gather in your labors out of the field" ([Exodus 23:16](#)); "after you have gathered in from your threshing-floor and from

your winepress." ([Deuteronomy 16:13](#).) It was a thanksgiving for the fruit harvest. (Compare [Judges 9:27](#).) And in what may explain the festival's name, [Isaiah](#) reports that grape harvesters kept booths in their [vineyards](#). ([Isaiah 1:8](#).) Coming as it did at the completion of the harvest, Sukkot was regarded as a general thanksgiving for the bounty of nature in the year that had passed.

Sukkot became one of the most important feasts in Judaism, as indicated by its designation as "the Feast of the Lord" ([Leviticus 23:39](#); [Judges 21:19](#)) or simply "the Feast." ([1 Kings 8:2](#), [65](#); [12:32](#); [2 Chronicles 5:3](#); [7:8](#).) Perhaps because of its wide attendance, Sukkot became the appropriate time for important state ceremonies. Moses instructed the children of Israel to gather for a reading of the Law during Sukkot every seventh year. ([Deuteronomy 31:10–11](#).) King Solomon dedicated the [Temple in Jerusalem](#) on Sukkot. ([1 Kings 8](#); [2 Chronicles 7](#).) And Sukkot was the first sacred occasion observed after the resumption of sacrifices in Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. ([Ezra 3:2–4](#).)



Sephardic Jews Observe Hoshanah Rabbah (engraving circa 1723–1743 by Bernard Picart)

In the time of [Nehemiah](#), after the Babylonian captivity, the Israelites celebrated Sukkot by making and dwelling in booths, a practice of which Nehemiah reports: “the Israelites had not done so from the days of Joshua.” ([Nehemiah 8:13–17.](#)) In a practice related to that of the [Four Species](#), Nehemiah also reports that the Israelites found in the Law the commandment that they “go out to the mountains and bring leafy branches of [olive](#) trees, [pine](#) trees, [myrtles](#), [palms](#) and [other] leafy trees to make booths.” ([Nehemiah 8:14–15.](#)) In [Leviticus 23:40](#), God told Moses to command the people: “On the first day you shall take the product of *hadar* trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and [willows](#) of the brook,” and “You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths, in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in

booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.”

([Leviticus 23:42–43](#).) The book of Numbers, however, indicates that while in the wilderness, the Israelites dwelt in tents.

([Numbers 11:10](#); [16:27](#).) Some secular scholars consider [Leviticus 23:39–43](#) (the commandments regarding booths and the four species) to be an insertion by a late [redactor](#). (E.g., [Richard Elliott Friedman](#), *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 228–29. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003.)

[Jeroboam](#) son of Nebat, King of the northern [Kingdom of Israel](#), whom [1 Kings 13:33](#) describes as practicing “his evil way,” celebrated a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, one month after Sukkot, “in imitation of the festival in Judah.”

([1 Kings 12:32–33](#).) “While Jeroboam was standing on the [altar](#) to present the offering, the man of God, at the command of the Lord, cried out against the altar” in disapproval. ([1 Kings 13:1](#).)

According to [Zechariah](#), in the messianic era, Sukkot will become a universal festival, and all nations will make pilgrimages annually to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast there. ([Zechariah 14:16–19](#).)



Rabbi Akiva (illustration from the 1568 [Mantua](#) Haggadah)

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 21

[Rabbi Akiva](#) deduced from the words “now these are the ordinances that you shall put before them” in [Exodus 21:1](#) that the teacher must wherever possible explain to the student the reasons behind the commandments. ([Babylonian Talmud Eruvin 54b.](#))

The [Mishnah](#) taught that a Hebrew manservant (described in [Exodus 21:2](#)) was acquired by money or by contract, and could acquire his freedom by years of service, by the [Jubilee year](#), or by deduction from the purchase price. The Mishnah taught that a

Hebrew maidservant was more privileged in that she could acquire her freedom by signs of puberty. The servant whose ear was bored (as directed in [Exodus 21:6](#)) is acquired by boring his ear, and acquired his freedom by the Jubilee year or the master's death. ([Mishnah Kiddushin 1:2](#); [Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 14b](#).) Part of chapter 1 of Tractate [Kiddushin](#) in the Mishnah, [Tosefta](#), [Jerusalem Talmud](#), and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the Hebrew servant in [Exodus 21:2–11](#) and [21:26–27](#); [Leviticus 25:39–55](#); and [Deuteronomy 15:12–18](#). ([Mishnah Kiddushin 1:2](#); [Tosefta Kiddushin 1:5–6](#); [Jerusalem Talmud Kiddushin ch. 1](#); [Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 14b–22b](#).)

The Rabbis taught in a [Baraita](#) that the words of [Deuteronomy 15:16](#) regarding the Hebrew servant, “he fares well *with you*,” indicate that the Hebrew servant had to be “with” — that is, equal to — the master in food and drink. Thus the master could not eat white bread and have the servant eat black bread. The master could not drink old wine and have the servant drink new wine. The master could not sleep on a feather bed and have the servant sleep on straw. Hence, they said that buying a Hebrew servant was like buying a master. Similarly, [Rabbi Simeon](#) deduced from the words of [Leviticus 25:41](#), “Then he shall go out from you, he and his children *with him*,” that the master was liable to provide for the servant’s children until the servant went out. And Rabbi Simeon deduced from the words of [Exodus 21:3](#), “If he is married, then his wife shall go out *with him*,” that the master was responsible to provide for the servant’s wife, as well. ([Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 22a](#).)

The Mishnah interpreted the language of [Exodus 21:6](#) to teach that a man could sell his daughter, but a woman could not sell her daughter. ([Mishnah Sotah 3:8](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sotah 23a.](#))

[Rabbi Eliezer](#) interpreted the conjugal duty of [Exodus 21:10](#) to require relations: for men of independence, every day; for laborers, twice a week; for donkey-drivers, once a week; for camel-drivers, once in 30 days; for sailors, once in six months. ([Mishnah Ketubot 5:6](#); [Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 61b.](#))



Cities of Refuge (illustration from a Bible card published 1901 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

Chapter 2 of tractate [Makkot](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the cities of refuge in [Exodus 21:12–14](#), [Numbers 35:1–34](#), [Deuteronomy 4:41–43](#), and [19:1–13](#). ([Mishnah Makkot 2:1–8](#); Tosefta Makkot 2:1–3:10; Jerusalem Talmud Makkot ch. 2; [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 7a–13a.](#))

The Mishnah taught that those who killed in error went into banishment. One would go into banishment if, for example, while one was pushing a roller on a roof, the roller slipped over, fell, and killed someone. One would go into banishment if while one was lowering a cask, it fell down and killed someone. One would go into banishment if while coming down a ladder, one fell and killed someone. But one would *not* go into banishment if while pulling *up* the roller it fell back and killed someone, or while *raising* a bucket the rope snapped and the falling bucket killed someone, or while going *up* a ladder one fell down and killed someone. The Mishnah's general principle was that whenever the death occurred in the course of a downward movement, the culpable person went into banishment, but if the death did not occur in the course of a downward movement, the person did not go into banishment. If while chopping wood, the iron slipped from the ax handle and killed someone, [Rabbi](#) taught that the person did not go into banishment, but the sages said that the person did go into banishment. If from the split log rebounding killed someone, Rabbi said that the person went into banishment, but the sages said that the person did not go into banishment. (Mishnah Makkot 2:1; [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 7a–b.](#))



The City of Refuge (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)

Rabbi Jose bar Judah taught that to begin with, they sent a slayer to a city of refuge, whether the slayer killed intentionally or not. Then the court sent and brought the slayer back from the city of refuge. The Court executed whomever the court found guilty of a capital crime, and the court acquitted whomever the court found not guilty of a capital crime. The court restored to the city of refuge whomever the court found liable to banishment, as [Numbers 35:25](#) ordained, “And the congregation shall restore him to the city of refuge from where he had fled.” (Mishnah Makkot 2:6; [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 9b.](#)) [Numbers 35:25](#) also says, “The manslayer . . . shall dwell therein until the death of the high priest, who was anointed with the holy oil,” but the Mishnah taught that the death of a high priest who had been anointed with the holy anointing oil, the death of a high priest who had been consecrated by the many vestments, or the death of a high priest

who had retired from his office each equally made possible the return of the slayer. Rabbi Judah said that the death of a priest who had been anointed for war also permitted the return of the slayer. Because of these laws, mothers of high priests would provide food and clothing for the slayers in cities of refuge so that the slayers might not pray for the high priest's death.

(Mishnah Makkot 2:6; [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 11a.](#)) If the high priest died at the conclusion of the slayer's trial, the slayer did not go into banishment. If, however, the high priests died before the trial was concluded and another high priest was appointed in his stead and then the trial concluded, the slayer returned home after the new high priest's death. (Mishnah Makkot 2:6; [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 11b.](#))

The [Gemara](#) taught that the words "eye for eye" in [Exodus 21:24](#) meant pecuniary compensation. Rabbi [Simon ben Yohai](#) asked those who would take the words literally how they would enforce equal justice where a blind man put out the eye of another man, or an amputee cut off the hand of another, or where a lame person broke the leg of another. The school of Rabbi Ishmael cited the words "so shall it be given to him" in [Leviticus 24:20](#), and deduced that the word "give" could apply only to pecuniary compensation. The school of Rabbi Hiyya cited the words "hand for hand" in the parallel discussion in [Deuteronomy 19:21](#) to mean that an article was given from hand to hand, namely money. [Abaye](#) reported that a sage of the school of Hezekiah taught that [Exodus 21:23–24](#) said "eye for eye" and "life for life," but not "life and eye for eye," and it could sometimes happen that eye

and life would be taken for an eye, as when the offender died while being blinded. [Rav Papa](#) said in the name of [Raba](#) that [Exodus 21:19](#) referred explicitly to healing, and the verse would not make sense if one assumed that retaliation was meant. And [Rav Ashi](#) taught that the principle of pecuniary compensation could be derived from the analogous use of the term “for” in [Exodus 21:24](#) in the expression “eye for eye” and in [Exodus 21:36](#) in the expression “he shall surely pay ox for ox.” As the latter case plainly indicated pecuniary compensation, so must the former. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Kamma 84a.](#))

Tractate [Bava Kamma](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of damages related to oxen in [Exodus 21:28–32, 35–36](#), pits in [Exodus 21:33–34](#), men who steal livestock in [Exodus 21:37](#), crop-destroying beasts in [Exodus 22:4](#), fires in [Exodus 22:5](#), and related torts. ([Mishnah Bava Kamma 1:1–10:10](#); Tosefta Bava Kamma 1:1–11:18; Jerusalem Talmud Bava Kamma 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Bava Kamma 2a–119b.](#))

Noting that [Exodus 21:37](#) provides a penalty of five oxen for the theft of an ox but only four sheep for the theft of a sheep, [Rabbi Meir](#) deduced that the law attaches great importance to labor. For in the case of an ox, a thief interferes with the beast’s labor, while in the case of a sheep, a thief does not disturb it from labor.

Rabban [Johanan ben Zakkai](#) taught that the law attaches great importance to human dignity. For in the case of an ox, the thief can walk the animal away on its own feet, while in the case of a

sheep, the thief usually has to carry it away, thus suffering indignity. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Kamma 79b.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 22

The Mishnah interpreted the language of [Exodus 22:2](#) to teach that a man was sold to make restitution for his theft, but a woman was not sold for her theft. ([Mishnah Sotah 3:8](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sotah 23a.](#))

[Rabbi Ishmael](#) and Rabbi Akiba differed over the meaning of the word “his” in the clause “of the best of *his* own field, and of the best of *his* own vineyard, shall he make restitution” in [Exodus 22:4](#). Rabbi Ishmael read [Exodus 22:4](#) to require the damager to compensate the injured party out of property equivalent to the *injured party’s* best property, whereas Rabbi Akiba read [Exodus 22:4](#) to require the damager to compensate the injured party out of the *damager’s* best property. The Mishnah required that a damager compensates for damage done out of the damager’s best quality property. ([Mishnah Gittin 5:1](#); [Babylonian Talmud Gittin 48b.](#)) The Gemara explained that the Mishnah imposed this high penalty because [Exodus 22:4](#) requires it, and [Exodus 22:4](#) imposes this penalty to discourage the doing of damage. ([Babylonian Talmud Gittin 48b–49b.](#))

[Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani](#) in the name of [Rabbi Johanan](#) interpreted the account of spreading fire in [Exodus 22:5](#) as an application of the general principle that calamity comes upon the world only when there are wicked persons (represented by the thorns) in the world, and its effects always manifest themselves

first upon the righteous (represented by the grain). ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Kamma 60a.](#))

Rabbi Isaac the smith interpreted [Exodus 22:5](#) homiletically to teach that God has taken responsibility to rebuild the Temple, as God allowed the fire of man's sin to go out of Zion to destroy it, as [Lamentations 4:11](#) reports, "He has kindled a fire in Zion, which has devoured the foundations thereof," and God will nonetheless rebuild them, as [Zechariah 2:9](#) reports, "For I, says the Lord, will be to her a wall of fire round about, and I will be the glory in the midst of her." ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Kamma 60b.](#))

Portions of the latter chapters of Tractate [Bava Metzia](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of [bailment](#) in [Exodus 22:6–14](#). ([Mishnah Bava Metzia 7:8–8:3](#); Tosefta Bava Metzia 7:9–8:1; Jerusalem Talmud Bava Metzia; [Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 93a–99b.](#)) The Mishnah identified four categories of guardians (*shomrim*): (1) an unpaid custodian ([Exodus 22:6–8](#)), (2) a borrower ([Exodus 22:13–14a](#)), (3) a paid custodian ([Exodus 22:11](#)), and (4) a renter ([Exodus 22:14b](#)). The Mishnah summarized the law when damage befell the property in question: An unpaid custodian must swear for everything and bears no liability, a borrower must pay in all cases, a paid custodian or a renter must swear concerning an animal that was injured, captured, or died, but must pay for loss or theft. ([Mishnah Bava Metzia 7:8](#); [Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 93a.](#))

[Rabbah](#) explained that the Torah in [Exodus 22:8–10](#) requires those who admit to a part of a claim against them to take an oath, because the law presumes that no debtor is so brazen in the face of a creditor as to deny the debt entirely. ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 18a.](#))

Rabbi [Haninah](#) and Rabbi Johanan differed over whether sorcery like that in [Exodus 22:17](#) had real power. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 67b.](#))

[Rabbi Eliezer the Great](#) noted that the Torah warns about kindness to the stranger (*ger*) no less than 36 times, and some say 46 times (including twice in Parshah Mishpatim, in [Exodus 22:20](#) and [23:9](#)). ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 59b.](#))

Citing [Exodus 22:20](#) to apply to verbal wrongs, the Mishnah taught that one must not say to a repentant sinner, “remember your former deeds,” and one must not taunt a child of converts saying, “remember the deeds of your ancestors.” ([Mishnah Bava Metzia 4:10](#); [Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 58b.](#)) Similarly, a Baraita taught that one must not say to a convert who comes to study the Torah, “Shall the mouth that ate unclean and forbidden food, abominable and creeping things, come to study the Torah that was uttered by the mouth of Omnipotence!” ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 58b.](#))

The Gemara taught that the Torah provided similar injunctions in [Exodus 22:25](#) and [Deuteronomy 24:12–13](#) to teach that a lender had to return a garment worn during the day before sunrise, and

return a garment worn during the night before sunset.

([Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 31b.](#))

[[edit](#)] Exodus chapter 23

A Baraita taught that one day, Rabbi Eliezer employed every imaginable argument for the proposition that a particular type of oven was not susceptible to ritual impurity, but the Sages did not accept his arguments. Then Rabbi Eliezer told the Sages, “If the [halachah](#) agrees with me, then let this [carob tree](#) prove it,” and the carob tree moved 100 [cubits](#) (and others say 400 cubits) out of its place. But the Sages said that no proof can be brought from a carob tree. Then Rabbi Eliezer told the Sages, “If the halachah agrees with me, let this stream of water prove it,” and the stream of water flowed backwards. But the Sages said that no proof can be brought from a stream of water. Then Rabbi Eliezer told the Sages, “If the halachah agrees with me, let the walls of this house of study prove it,” and the walls leaned over as if to fall. But [Rabbi Joshua](#) rebuked the walls, telling them not to interfere with scholars engaged in a halachic dispute. In honor of Rabbi Joshua, the walls did not fall, but in honor of Rabbi Eliezer, the walls did not stand upright, either. Then Rabbi Eliezer told the Sages, “If the halachah agrees with me, let Heaven prove it,” and a Heavenly Voice cried out: “Why do you dispute with Rabbi Eliezer, for in all matters the halachah agrees with him!” But Rabbi Joshua rose and exclaimed in the words of [Deuteronomy 30:12](#): “It is not in heaven.” Rabbi Jeremiah explained that God had given the Torah at Mount Sinai; Jews pay no attention to

Heavenly Voices, for God wrote in [Exodus 23:2](#): “After the majority must one incline.” Later, [Rabbi Nathan](#) met [Elijah](#) and asked him what God did when Rabbi Joshua rose in opposition to the Heavenly Voice. Elijah replied that God laughed with joy, saying, “My children have defeated Me, My children have defeated Me!” ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 59b](#).)

The Mishnah interpreted [Exodus 23:8](#) to teach that judges who accept bribes and change their judgments on account of the bribe will not die of old age before their eyes grow weak. (Mishnah Peah 8:9.)

Tractate [Sheviit](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Jerusalem Talmud interpreted the laws of the Sabbatical year in [Exodus 23:10–11](#), [Leviticus 25:1–34](#), and [Deuteronomy 15:1–18](#), and [31:10–13](#). (Mishnah Sheviit 1:1–10:9; Tosefta Sheviit 1:1–8:11; Jerusalem Talmud Sheviit 1a–87b.) The Mishnah taught that exile resulted from (among other things) transgressing the commandment (in [Exodus 23:10–11](#) and [Leviticus 25:3–5](#)) to observe a Sabbatical year for the land. ([Mishnah Avot 5:9](#).) Rabbi Isaac taught that the words of [Psalm 103:20](#), “mighty in strength that fulfill His word,” speak of those who observe the Sabbatical year. Rabbi Isaac said that we often find that a person fulfills a precept for a day, a week, or a month, but it is remarkable to find one who does so for an entire year. Rabbi Isaac asked whether one could find a mightier person than one who sees his field untilled, see his vineyard untilled, and yet pays his taxes and does not complain. And Rabbi Isaac noted that [Psalm 103:20](#) uses the words “that fulfill His *word* (*dabar*),” and [Deuteronomy 15:2](#) says regarding

observance of the Sabbatical year, “And this is the *manner* (*dabar*) of the release,” and argued that “*dabar*” means the observance of the Sabbatical year in both places. ([Leviticus Rabbah](#) 1:1.)

The Gemara deduced from the parallel use of the word “appear” in [Exodus 23:14](#) and [Deuteronomy 16:15](#) (regarding appearance offerings) on the one hand, and in [Deuteronomy 31:10–12](#) (regarding the great assembly) on the other hand, that the criteria for who participated in the great assembly also applied to limit who needed to bring appearance offerings. A Baraita deduced from the words “that they may hear” in [Deuteronomy 31:12](#) that a [deaf](#) person was not required to appear at the assembly. And the Baraita deduced from the words “that they may learn” in [Deuteronomy 31:12](#) that a [mute](#) person was not required to appear at the assembly. But the Gemara questioned the conclusion that one who cannot talk cannot learn, recounting the story of two mute grandsons (or others say nephews) of Rabbi Johanan ben Gudgada who lived in [Rabbi](#)’s neighborhood. Rabbi prayed for them, and they were healed. And it turned out that notwithstanding their speech impediment, they had learned [halachah](#), [Sifra](#), [Sifre](#), and the whole Talmud. [Mar Zutra](#) and [Rav Ashi](#) read the words “that they may learn” in [Deuteronomy 31:12](#) to mean “that they may teach,” and thus to exclude people who could not speak from the obligation to appear at the assembly. Rabbi Tanhum deduced from the words “in their ears” (using the plural for “ears”) at the end of [Deuteronomy 31:11](#) that one who was deaf in one ear was exempt from appearing at the assembly. ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 3a.](#))



Passover (engraving by [Gerard Jollain](#) published 1670)

Tractate [Pesachim](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the Passover in [Exodus 12:3–27, 43–49; 13:6–10; 23:15; 34:25; Leviticus 23:4–8; Numbers 9:1–14; 28:16–25; and Deuteronomy 16:1–8](#). ([Mishnah Pesachim 1:1–10:9](#); Tosefta Pisha 1:1–10:13; Jerusalem Talmud Pesachim 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 2a–121b](#).)

The Gemara noted that in listing the several festivals in [Exodus 23:15](#), [Leviticus 23:5](#), [Numbers 28:16](#), and [Deuteronomy 16:1](#), the Torah always begins with Passover. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 2b](#).)

The Gemara cited [Exodus 23:15](#) to support the proposition, which both [Resh Lakish](#) and Rabbi Johanan held, that on the mid-festival days (*Chol HaMoed*) it is forbidden to work. For the

Rabbis taught in a Baraita the view of [Rabbi Josiah](#) that because the word “keep” is read to imply prohibition of work, the words, “The Feast of Unleavened Bread shall you keep, seven days,” in [Exodus 23:15](#) teach that work is forbidden for seven days, and thus work is forbidden on the mid-festival days. ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 18a.](#))

According to one version of the dispute, Resh Lakish and Rabbi Johanan disagreed over how to interpret the words, “None shall appear before Me empty,” in [Exodus 23:15](#). Resh Lakish argued that [Exodus 23:15](#) taught that whenever a pilgrim appeared at the Temple, even during the succeeding days of a multi-day Festival, the pilgrim had to bring an offering. But Rabbi Johanan argued that [Exodus 23:15](#) refers to only the first day of a Festival, and not to succeeding days. After relating this dispute, the Gemara reconsidered and concluded that Resh Lakish and Rabbi Johanan differed not over whether additional offerings were obligatory, but over whether additional offerings were permitted. ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 7a.](#))



Carrying Branches To Make Booths (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)

Tractate [Sukkah](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of Sukkot in [Exodus 23:16; 34:22; Leviticus 23:33–43; Numbers 29:12–34; and Deuteronomy 16:13–17; 31:10–13](#). ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:1–5:8; Tosefta Sukkah 1:1–4:28; Jerusalem Talmud Sukkah 1a–33b; Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 2a–56b.](#))

Tractate [Beitzah](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws common to all of the Festivals in [Exodus 12:3–27, 43–49; 13:6–10; 23:16; 34:18–23; Leviticus 16; 23:4–43; Numbers 9:1–14; 28:16–30:1; and Deuteronomy 16:1–17; 31:10–13](#). ([Mishnah Beitzah 1:1–5:7;](#)

Tosefta Yom Tov (Beitzah) 1:1–4:11; Jerusalem Talmud Beitzah 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Beitzah 2a–40b.](#))

The Mishnah taught that a sukkah can be no more than 20 [cubits](#) high. [Rabbi Judah](#), however, declared taller sukkot valid. The Mishnah taught that a sukkah must be at least 10 handbreadths high, have three walls, and have more shade than sun. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:1](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 2a.](#)) The [House of Shammai](#) declared invalid a sukkah made 30 days or more before the festival, but the [House of Hillel](#) pronounced it valid. The Mishnah taught that if one made the sukkah for the purpose of the festival, even at the beginning of the year, it is valid. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:1](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 9a.](#))

The Mishnah taught that a sukkah under a tree is as invalid as a sukkah within a house. If one sukkah is erected above another, the upper one is valid, but the lower is invalid. Rabbi Judah said that if there are no occupants in the upper one, then the lower one is valid. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:2](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 9b.](#))

It invalidates a sukkah to spread a sheet over the sukkah because of the sun, or beneath it because of falling leaves, or over the frame of a four-post bed. One may spread a sheet, however, over the frame of a two-post bed. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:3](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 10a.](#))

It is not valid to train a vine, gourd, or ivy to cover a sukkah and then cover it with sukkah covering (*s'chach*). If, however, the sukkah-covering exceeds the vine, gourd, or ivy in quantity, or if

the vine, gourd, or ivy is detached, it is valid. The general rule is that one may not use for sukkah-covering anything that is susceptible to ritual impurity (*tumah*) or that does not grow from the soil. But one may use for sukkah-covering anything not susceptible to ritual impurity that grows from the soil. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:4](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 11a.](#))

Bundles of straw, wood, or brushwood may not serve as sukkah-covering. But any of them, if they are untied, are valid. All materials are valid for the walls. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:5](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 12a.](#))

Rabbi Judah taught that one may use planks for the sukkah-covering, but Rabbi Meir taught that one may not. The Mishnah taught that it is valid to place a plank four handbreadths wide over the sukkah, provided that one does not sleep under it. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:6](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 14a.](#))

The Mishnah deduced from the words “the feast of harvest, the first-fruits of your labors, which you sow in the field” in [Exodus 23:16](#) that first fruits were not to be brought before [Shavuot](#). The Mishnah reported that the men of Mount [Zeboim](#) brought their first fruits before Shavuot, but the priests did not accept them, because of what is written in [Exodus 23:16](#). (Mishnah Bikkurim 1:3.)

Tractate [Bikkurim](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Jerusalem Talmud interpreted the laws of the first fruits in [Exodus 23:19](#), [Numbers 18:13](#), and [Deuteronomy 12:17–18](#) and [26:1–11](#). (Mishnah Bikkurim 1:1–3:12; Tosefta Bikkurim 1:1–2:16;

Jerusalem Talmud Bikkurim 1a–26b.) The Mishnah interpreted the words “the first-fruits of *your* land” in [Exodus 23:19](#) to mean that a person could not bring first fruits unless all the produce came from that person’s land. The Mishnah thus taught that people who planted trees but bent their branches into or over another’s property could not bring first fruits from those trees. And for the same reason, the Mishnah taught that tenants, lessees, occupiers of confiscated property, or robbers could not bring first fruits. (Mishnah Bikkurim 1:1–2.)

[Rav Nachman](#) taught that the [angel](#) of whom God spoke in [Exodus 23:20](#) was [Metatron](#) (מטטרון). Rav Nahman warned that one who is as skilled in refuting heretics as Rav Idit should do so, but others should not. Once a heretic asked Rav Idit why [Exodus 24:1](#) says, “And to Moses He said, ‘Come up to the Lord,’” when surely God should have said, “Come up to Me.” Rav Idit replied that it was the angel Metatron who said that, and that Metatron’s name is similar to that of his Master (and indeed the [gematria](#) (numerical value of the Hebrew letters) of Metatron (מטטרון) equals that of Shadai (שׂדַי), God’s name in [Genesis 17:1](#) and elsewhere) for [Exodus 23:21](#) says, “for my name is in him.” But if so, the heretic retorted, we should worship Metatron. Rav Idit replied that [Exodus 23:21](#) also says, “Be not rebellious against him,” by which God meant, “Do not exchange Me for him” (as the word for “rebel,” (*tamer*, תִּמְרָה) derives from the same root as the word “exchange”). The heretic then asked why then [Exodus 23:21](#) says, “he will not pardon your transgression.” Rav Idit answered that indeed Metatron has no authority to forgive sins,

and the Israelites would not accept him even as a messenger, for [Exodus 33:15](#) reports that Moses told God, “If Your Presence does not go with me, do not carry us up from here.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 38b.](#))

The Midrash [Tanhuma](#) taught that the words “the place which I have prepared” in [Exodus 23:20](#) indicate that the Temple in Jerusalem is directly opposite the Temple in Heaven. (Midrash Tanhuma Mishpatim 18.)

In [Genesis 28:18](#), [Jacob](#) took the stone on which he had slept, set it up as a pillar (מַצֵּבָה, *matzeivah*), and poured oil on the top of it. [Exodus 23:24](#) would later direct the Israelites to break in pieces the Canaanites' pillars (מַצֵּבֹתֵיהֶם, *matzeivoteihem*). [Leviticus 26:1](#) would direct the Israelites not to rear up a pillar (מַצֵּבָה, *matzeivah*). And [Deuteronomy 16:22](#) would prohibit them to set up a pillar (מַצֵּבָה, *matzeivah*), “which the Lord your God hates.”

The Gemara interpreted the words of Moses, “I am 120 years old *this day*,” in [Deuteronomy 31:2](#) to signify that Moses spoke on his birthday, and that he thus died on his birthday. Citing the words “the number of your days I will fulfill” in [Exodus 23:26](#), the Gemara concluded that God completes the years of the righteous to the day, concluding their lives on their birthdays. ([Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 11a](#); [Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 38a](#); see also [Babylonian Talmud Sotah 13b.](#))



Isaiah (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

The Gemara reported a dispute over the meaning of [Exodus 23:26](#). Raba taught that King [Manasseh of Judah](#) tried and executed Isaiah, charging Isaiah with false prophesy based, among other things, on a contradiction between [Exodus 23:26](#) and Isaiah's teachings. Manasseh argued that when (as reported in [Exodus 23:26](#)) Moses quoted God saying, "The number of your days I will fulfill," God meant that God would allow people to live out their appointed lifespan, but not add to it. But Manasseh noted that Isaiah told Manasseh's father [Hezekiah](#) (as reported in [2 Kings 20:5–6](#)) that God promised Hezekiah, "I will add on to your days fifteen years." According to Raba, Isaiah did not dispute Manasseh's charges, knowing that Manasseh would not accept Isaiah's argument, no matter how truthful, and Manasseh had Isaiah killed. The Gemara reported that the [Tannaim](#) disagreed about the interpretation of the words "the number of

your days I will fulfill” in [Exodus 23:26](#). A Baraita taught that “the number of your days I will fulfill” refers to the lifespan that God allots to every human being at birth. Rabbi Akiba taught that if one is worthy, God allows one to complete the full period; if unworthy, God reduces the number of years. The Sages, however, taught that if one is worthy, God *adds* years to one's life; if one is unworthy, God reduces the years. The Sages argued to Rabbi Akiba that Isaiah's prophesy to Hezekiah in [2 Kings 20:5–6](#), “And I will add to your days fifteen years,” supports the Sages' interpretation. Rabbi Akiba replied that God made the addition to Hezekiah's lifespan from years that God had originally intended for Hezekiah that Hezekiah had previously lost due to sin. Rabbi Akiba cited in support of his position the words of the prophet in the days of Jeroboam, before the birth of Hezekiah, who prophesied (as reported in [1 Kings 13:2](#)), “a son shall be born to the [house of David, Josiah](#) by name.” Rabbi Akiba argued that since the prophet prophesied the birth of Manasseh's son Josiah before the birth of Manasseh's father Hezekiah, it must be that at Hezekiah's birth God had allotted to Hezekiah enough years to extend beyond the time of Hezekiah's illness (when Isaiah prophesied in [2 Kings 20:5–6](#)) so as to include the year of Manasseh's birth. Consequently, Rabbi Akiba argued, at the time of Hezekiah's illness, God must have reduced the original number of years allotted to Hezekiah, and upon Hezekiah's recovery, God must have added back only that which God had previously reduced. The Rabbis, however, argued back that the prophet in the days of Jeroboam who prophesied in [1 Kings 13:2](#) did not prophesy that Josiah would necessarily descend *from*

Hezekiah. The prophet prophesied in [1 Kings 13:2](#) that Josiah would be born “to the house of David.” Thus Josiah might have descended either from Hezekiah or from some other person in the Davidic line. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 49b–50a.](#))



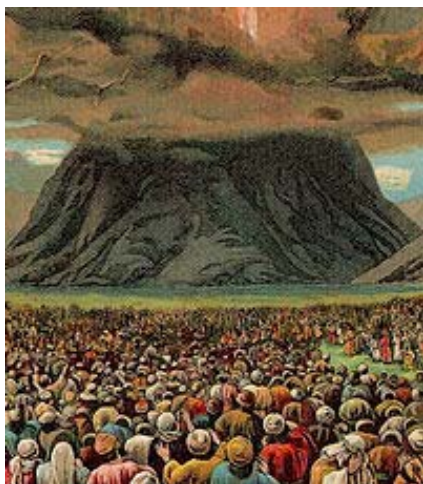
The Fall of Jericho (illustration from a Bible card published 1901 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

A Baraita taught that the words, “I will send My terror before you, and will discomfort all the people to whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you,” in [Exodus 23:27](#), and the words, “Terror and dread fall upon them,” in [Exodus 15:16](#) show that no creature was able to withstand the Israelites as they entered into the [Promised Land](#) in the days of Joshua, and those who stood against them were immediately panic-stricken and lost control of their bowels. And the words, “till Your people pass over, O Lord,” in [Exodus 15:16](#) allude to the first advance of the Israelites into the Promised Land in the

days of Joshua. And the words, “till the people pass over whom You have gotten,” in [Exodus 15:16](#) allude to the second advance of the Israelites into the Promised Land in the days of [Ezra](#). The Baraita thus concluded that the Israelites were worthy that God should perform a miracle on their behalf during the second advance as in the first advance, but that did not happen because the Israelites’ sin caused God to withhold the miracle.

([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 36a.](#))

A Baraita taught that the hornet that had aided the Israelites on the eastern side of the [Jordan River](#) during the time of Moses did not pass over the Jordan with them. Interpreting the words, “And I will send the hornet before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before you,” in [Exodus 23:28](#), Rabbi [Simeon ben Lakish](#) taught that the hornet stood by the bank of the Jordan and injected a virus into the Canaanites that blinded their eyes above and sterilized them below, as [Amos 2:9](#) says, “Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above and his roots from beneath.” Alternatively, Rav Papa taught that there were two hornets — one in the time of Moses and the other in the time of Joshua. The hornet in the time of Moses did not cross the Jordan, but the one in the time of Joshua did, and [Exodus 23:28](#) refers to this later hornet. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 36a.](#))



The Presence of the Lord Appeared as a Fire on the Top of the Mountain (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 24

Reading [Exodus 24:3](#), Rabbi [Simlai](#) taught that when the Israelites gave precedence to “we will do” over “we will hear,” 600,000 ministering angels came and set two crowns on each Israelite man, one as a reward for “we will do” and the other as a reward for “we will hearken.” But as soon as the Israelites committed the sin of the [golden calf](#), 1.2 million destroying angels descended and removed the crowns, as it is said in [Exodus 33:6](#), “And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments from mount Horeb.” ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 88a.](#))

[Rabbi Eleazar](#) taught that when the Israelites gave precedence to “we will do” over “we will hear,” a Heavenly Voice called out

that this was a secret employed by the Ministering Angels, as [Psalm 103:20](#) says, “Bless the Lord, you angels of His. You mighty in strength, who fulfill His word, who hear the voice of His word” — first they fulfill, then they hear. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 88a.](#))

Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Haninah taught that [Song of Songs 2:3](#) compared the Israelites to an apple tree with the words, “As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons.” Rabbi Hama explained that this teaches that just as the fruit of the apple tree precedes its leaves, so did the Israelites give precedence to “we will do” over “we will hear.” ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 88a.](#))

When a certain [Sadducee](#) saw Raba so engrossed in his studies with his fingers under his feet that Raba ground his fingers so that they bled, the Sadducee exclaimed that Jews were a rash people who in [Exodus 24:3](#) had given precedence to their mouth over their ears, and who persist in their rashness. First, the Sadducee explained, the Israelites should have listened, and then they should have accepted the law only if obeying the commandments was within their powers, but if it was not within their powers, they should not have accepted. Raba replied that the Israelites walked in integrity, for [Proverbs 11:3](#) speaks of the Jews when it says, “The integrity of the upright shall guide them.” But of others, who walked in perversity, [Proverbs 11:3](#) says, “but the perverseness of the treacherous shall destroy them.” ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 88a–b.](#))

Rabbi Azariah in the name of Rabbi Judah ben Rabbi Simon taught that once the Israelites said (as reported in [Exodus 24:7](#)), “All that the Lord has spoken will we do, and obey,” they left the infancy of Israel’s nationhood. Rabbi Azariah in the name of Rabbi Judah ben Rabbi Simon explained in a parable. A mortal king had a daughter whom he loved exceedingly. So long as his daughter was small, he would speak with her in public or in the courtyard. When she grew up and reached puberty, the king determined that it no longer befit his daughter's dignity for him to converse with her in public. So he directed that a pavilion be made for her so that he could speak with his daughter inside the pavilion. In the same way, when God saw the Israelites in Egypt, they were in the childhood of their nationhood, as [Hosea 11:1](#) says, “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.” When God saw the Israelites at Sinai, God spoke with them as [Deuteronomy 5:4](#) says, “The Lord spoke with you face to face.” As soon as they received the Torah, became God’s nation, and said (as reported in [Exodus 24:7](#)), “All that the Lord has spoken will we do, and obey,” God observed that it was no longer in keeping with the dignity of God’s children that God should converse with them in the open. So God instructed the Israelites to make a Tabernacle, and when God needed to communicate with the Israelites, God did so from the Tabernacle. And thus [Numbers 7:89](#) bears this out when it says, “And when Moses went into the tent of meeting that He might speak with him.” ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 12:4; see also [Pesikta de-Rav Kahana](#) 1:2, attributing the parable to Rabbi [Judah bar Ilai](#).)

Rabbi [Simeon ben Yohai](#) taught that because the generation of the Flood transgressed the Torah that God gave humanity after Moses had stayed on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights (as reported in [Exodus 24:18](#) and [34:28](#) and [Deuteronomy 9:9–11, 18, 25](#), and [10:10](#)), God announced in [Genesis 7:4](#) that God would “cause it to rain upon the earth 40 days and 40 nights.” ([Genesis Rabbah 32:5](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to the [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are 23 positive and 30 negative [commandments](#) in the parshah:

- To purchase a Hebrew slave in accordance with the prescribed laws ([Exodus 21:2](#).)
- To betroth the Jewish maidservant ([Exodus 21:8](#).)
- To redeem Jewish maidservants ([Exodus 21:8](#).)
- The master must not sell his Jewish maidservant. ([Exodus 21:8](#).)
- Not to withhold food, clothing, or sexual relations from one's wife ([Exodus 21:10](#).)
- The courts must execute by strangulation those who deserve it. ([Exodus 21:12](#).)
- Not to strike one's father or mother ([Exodus 21:15](#).)

- The court must implement laws against the one who assaults another or damages another's property.

([Exodus 21:18–19.](#))



- The court must carry out the death penalty of the sword. ([Exodus 21:20.](#))
- The court must judge the damages incurred by a goring ox. ([Exodus 21:28.](#))
- Not to benefit from an ox condemned to be stoned ([Exodus 21:28.](#))
- The court must judge the damages incurred by a pit. ([Exodus 21:33.](#))
- The court must implement punitive measures against the thief. ([Exodus 21:37.](#))

- The court must judge the damages incurred by an animal eating. ([Exodus 22:4.](#))
- The court must judge the damages incurred by fire. ([Exodus 22:5.](#))
- The courts must carry out the laws of an unpaid guard. ([Exodus 22:6.](#))
- The courts must carry out the laws of the plaintiff, admitter, or denier. ([Exodus 22:8.](#))
- The courts must carry out the laws of a hired worker and hired guard. ([Exodus 22:9.](#))
- The courts must carry out the laws of a borrower. ([Exodus 22:13.](#))
- The court must fine one who seduces a maiden. ([Exodus 22:15–16.](#))
- The court must not let the sorcerer live. ([Exodus 22:17.](#))
- Not to insult or harm a sincere convert with words ([Exodus 22:20.](#))
- Not to cheat a sincere convert monetarily ([Exodus 22:20.](#))
- Not to afflict any orphan or widow ([Exodus 22:21.](#))
- To lend to the poor and destitute ([Exodus 22:24.](#))

- Not to press them for payment if you know they don't have it ([Exodus 22:24.](#))
- Not to intermediate in an interest loan, guarantee, witness, or write the promissory note ([Exodus 22:24.](#))
- Not to curse judges ([Exodus 22:27.](#))
- Not to blaspheme ([Exodus 22:27.](#))
- Not to curse the head of state or leader of the Sanhedrin ([Exodus 22:27.](#))
- Not to preface one tithe to the next, but separate them in their proper order ([Exodus 22:28.](#))
- Not to eat meat of an animal that was mortally wounded ([Exodus 22:30.](#))
- Judges must not accept testimony unless both parties are present. ([Exodus 23:1.](#))
- Transgressors must not testify. ([Exodus 23:1.](#))
- The court must not execute through a majority of one; at least a majority of two is required. ([Exodus 23:2.](#))



Celebrating Sukkot

1. A judge who presented an acquittal plea must not present an argument for conviction in capital cases. ([Exodus 23:2.](#))
2. To decide by majority in case of disagreement ([Exodus 23:2.](#))
3. Not to pity a poor man in judgment ([Exodus 23:3.](#))
4. To help another remove the load from a beast which can no longer carry it ([Exodus 23:5.](#))
5. A judge must not decide unjustly the case of the habitual transgressor. ([Exodus 23:6.](#))

6. The court must not kill anybody on circumstantial evidence. ([Exodus 23:7.](#))
7. Judges must not accept bribes. ([Exodus 23:8.](#))
8. To leave free all produce that grew in the Sabbatical year ([Exodus 23:11.](#))
9. To rest on the seventh day ([Exodus 23:12.](#))
10. Not to swear in the name of an idol ([Exodus 23:13.](#))
11. Not to turn Israelites to idolatry ([Exodus 23:13.](#))
12. To celebrate on the three Festivals of Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot ([Exodus 23:14.](#))
13. Not to slaughter the Passover lamb while in possession of leaven ([Exodus 23:18.](#))
14. Not to leave the fat overnight ([Exodus 23:18.](#))
15. To set aside the first fruits and bring them to the Temple ([Exodus 23:19.](#))
16. Not to eat meat and milk cooked together ([Exodus 23:19.](#))
17. Not to make any treaty with the seven nations to be extirpated, or with any idol worshiper ([Exodus 23:32.](#))

18. Not to let them dwell in our land ([Exodus 23:33.](#))

(*Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, vol. 1, 197–355. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9.](#))



Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem (1630 painting by Rembrandt)

[\[edit\]](#) **Haftarah**

[\[edit\]](#) **Generally**

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Jeremiah 34:8–22](#) and [33:25–26](#).



Zedekiah (1553 etching published by Guillaume Rouille)

[\[edit\]](#) Summary

The word of the Lord came to [Jeremiah](#) after King [Zedekiah](#) made a covenant with the people of Jerusalem to proclaim liberty, that all should let their Hebrew slaves — both men and women — go free, and that none should make bondmen of them.

([Jeremiah 34:8–9](#).) All the princes and people listened and let their Hebrew slaves go free, but afterwards they turned and caused their servants whom they had freed to return to subjugation. ([Jeremiah 34:10–11](#).)

Therefore, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying that God had made a covenant with the Israelites' forefathers when God brought them out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage that in the seventh year they must let every Hebrew slave go free, but their forefathers did not listen. ([Jeremiah 34:12–14](#).) The people had turned and done what is right in God's eyes, proclaiming liberty to their neighbors, making a covenant before God in the Temple. ([Jeremiah 34:15](#).) But the people turned again and profaned God's name, causing their servants whom they had

freed to return to subjugation as servants once again. ([Jeremiah 34:16](#).) Therefore, God said that as the people had not listened to God to proclaim liberty to their neighbors, God would proclaim for the people liberty to the sword, pestilence, and famine, and would make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. ([Jeremiah 34:17](#).) God would give over to their enemies the princes of Judah, the princes of Jerusalem, the officers, the priests, and all the people of the land who had transgressed God's covenant, who had sealed the covenant by cutting a calf in half and passing between the two parts of the calf, and their dead bodies would be food for scavengers. ([Jeremiah 34:18–20](#).) And God would give Zedekiah and his princes into the hand of the king of [Babylon](#), who would return to burn Jerusalem and lay desolate the cities of Judah. ([Jeremiah 34:21–22](#).)

The Haftarah concludes by returning to [Jeremiah 33:25–26](#): God said that as surely as God had decreed the ordinances of heaven and earth, God would not cast away the descendants of Jacob and David, but God would make from among them rulers of the descendants of [Abraham](#), [Isaac](#), and Jacob; for God would have compassion on them and end their captivity. ([Jeremiah 33:25–26](#).)

[edit] Connection to the Parshah

Both the parshah and the haftarah address the law requiring the release of Hebrew slaves. Both the parshah and the haftarah use the words “Hebrew” (*ivri*) ([Exodus 21:2](#); [Jeremiah 34:9,14](#)), “slave” or “servant” (*eved*) ([Exodus 21:2,5,7](#); [Jeremiah 34:9–11](#)), “free” (*chofshi*) ([Exodus 21:2,5](#); [Jeremiah 34:9–11,14](#)), and

“covenant” (*brit*) ([Exodus 24:7](#); [Jeremiah 34:13](#).) The haftarah literally quotes the parshah. ([Jeremiah 34:14](#); [Exodus 21:2](#).) And the haftarah recites the setting of the parshah (described in the previous parshah), the time at which God brought the Israelites “out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” ([Jeremiah 34:13](#); [Exodus 20:2](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) On Shabbat Shekalim

When the parshah coincides with the special Sabbath Shabbat Shekalim (as it does in 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2018), the haftarah is [2 Kings 12:1–17](#).

[\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy

The laws of the servant in [Exodus 21:1–11](#) provide an application of the tenth of the Thirteen Rules for interpreting the Torah in the [Baraita of Rabbi Ishmael](#) that many Jews read as part of the readings before the [Pesukei d’Zimrah prayer service](#). The tenth rule provides that an item included in a generalization that is then singled out to discuss something of a kind different from the generalization is singled out to be more lenient and more stringent. [Exodus 21:1–6](#) describes the laws of the Jewish indentured servant, who goes free after six years. Then [Exodus 21:7–11](#) turns to the female Jewish indentured servant, who one might have thought was included in the generalization about Jewish indentured servants. Instead, [Exodus 21:7](#) says that her avenues to freedom are not as those of her male counterpart. Rather, the Torah applies a more lenient rule to the female Jewish

indentured servant, as she may go free before six years have passed — upon the onset of puberty or the death of her master. And [Exodus 21:7–11](#) also applies a more stringent rule to the female Jewish indentured servant, as she may be betrothed against her will to the master or his son. (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals with an Interlinear Translation*, 245. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-697-3](#).)

And the laws of trespass in [Exodus 22:8](#) provide an example of the sixth of the Thirteen Rules for interpreting the Torah in the Baraita of Rabbi Ishmael. The sixth rule provides that when a generalization is followed by a specification followed by another generalization, one may not infer anything except that which is like the specification. One might read the generalizations to teach that all things are included, but the specification implies that only the specific items are included. The rule resolves the apparent contradiction by inferring that everything is included, provided it is similar to the items specified. Thus, [Exodus 22:8](#) begins by referring to “every matter of trespass” and concludes by referring to “any manner of lost thing” — two generalizations. But between the two generalizations, [Exodus 22:8](#) refers to a number of specific items — “for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for garment.” Applying the sixth rule teaches that the fine applies to movable things with intrinsic value — like an ox, donkey, sheep, or garment — but not to immovable real estate and not to contracts, which have no intrinsic value. (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 244.)

Some Jews recite [Exodus 23:20](#) three times as part of the Wayfarer's Prayer (*Tefilat HaDerech*), said on setting out on a journey. (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for Weekdays with an Interlinear Translation*, 311–13. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-686-8](#).)

Some Jews recite the words “we will do, and we will obey” in [Exodus 24:7](#) as part of the song (*zemer*) Yom Shabbaton sung at the Sabbath day meal. (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 469.)

[\[edit\]](#) The Weekly Maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), [Sephardic Jews](#) each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parshah. For Parshah Mishpatim, Sephardic Jews apply Maqam Saba, the maqam that symbolizes the covenant between man and God. By performing mitzvot and following commandments, one obeys God's covenant, and therefore in this parshah, with its multitude of mitzvot and commandments, it is appropriate to apply Maqam Saba.

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:



Hammurabi

[[edit](#)] Ancient

- Laws of Eshnunna 53–55. Sumer, circa 2100 BCE. Reprinted in, e.g., Reuven Yaron. *The Laws of Eshnunna*. Brill Academic Publishers, 1997. [ISBN 9004085343](#). (ox that gores).
- Code of Hammurabi [194–214](#), [250–51](#). Babylonia, Circa 1780 BCE. Reprinted in, e.g., James B. Pritchard. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 175, 178. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. [ISBN 0691035032](#). ([lex talionis](#), ox that gores).

[[edit](#)] Biblical

- 1 [Genesis 31:39](#) (domestic animals lost to wild animals).
- 2 [Exodus 12:3–27](#), [43–49](#) (Passover); [13:6–10](#) (Passover); [34:22–26](#) (three pilgrim festivals).
- 3 [Leviticus 23:4–43](#) (three pilgrim festivals); [25:8–10](#), [39–55](#).
- 4 [Numbers 9:1–14](#) (Passover); [28:16–31](#) (Passover, Shavuot); [29:12–34](#) (Sukkot).
- 5 [Deuteronomy 15:12–18](#) (Hebrew servant); [16:1–17](#) (three pilgrim festivals); [20:10–14](#); [21:10–14](#); [23:16–17](#) (Passover); [31:10–13](#) (Sukkot).
- 6 [Joshua 5:10–11](#) (Passover).

- 7 [Judges 21:19](#) (Sukkot).
- 8 [1 Kings 8:1–66](#) (Sukkot); [12:32](#) (northern feast like Sukkot).
- 9 [2 Kings 4:1–7](#).
- 10 [Jeremiah 34:8–22](#).
- 11 [Ezekiel 45:25](#) (Sukkot).
- 12 [Amos 2:6](#).
- 13 [Zechariah 14:16–19](#) (Sukkot).
- 14 [Ezra 3:4](#) (Sukkot).
- 15 [Nehemiah 5:1–13](#) (Hebrew slaves); [8:14–18](#) (Sukkot).
- 16 [2 Chronicles 5:3–14](#) (Sukkot); [7:8](#) (Sukkot); [8:12–13](#) (three Pilgrim festivals).

[[edit](#)] Early nonrabbinic

- John [7:1–53](#) (Sukkot).

[[edit](#)] Classical rabbinic

- Mishnah: Peah 8:9; Sheviit 1:1–10:9; Terumot 3:6–7; Challah 4:10; Bikkurim 1:1–3:12; [Pesachim 1:1–10:9](#); [Sukkah 1:1–5:8](#); Beitzah 1:1–5:7; [Rosh Hashanah 2:9](#); [Chagigah 1:1–3](#); [Ketubot 3:2](#), [5:6](#); [Sotah 3:8](#); [Kiddushin 1:2–3](#); [Bava Kamma 1:1–10:10](#); [Bava Metzia 2:10](#), [3:12](#), [4:10](#), [5:11](#), [7:8–8:3](#); [Sanhedrin 1:1](#), [4](#), [6](#), [7:6](#), [8:6](#), [9:1](#), [11:1](#);

[Avot 5:9](#); [Zevachim 14:2](#); [Chullin 8:4](#); [Bekhorot 1:7](#), [8:7](#); [Arakhin 3:1](#), [3–4](#); Zavim 2:3. Land of Israel, circa 200 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 36, 68–93, 99, 158, 166–75, 229–51, 279–99, 303, 328–29, 383, 388–89, 453, 487–88, 503–28, 533, 537, 540, 544, 548–51, 583–85, 598, 601–02, 607, 687, 730, 781, 790, 806, 812–13, 1111. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).

- Tosefta: Berakhot 4:15; 6:1; Sheviit 1:1–8:11; Terumot 7:8; Bikkurim 1:1–2:16; Shabbat 15:17; Pisha (Pesachim) 1:1–10:13; Shekalim 3:24; Sukkah 1:1–4:28; Yom Tov (Beitzah) 2:12; Chagigah 1:1; Ketubot 3:7; 12:2; Nedarim 2:6; Sotah 8:7; 11:6; Bava Kamma 1:1–11:18; Bava Metzia 2:25–26; 4:2; 7:9–8:1; 8:20–21; Sanhedrin 3:2, 7; 11:5, 9; 12:3; Makkot 2:1–3:10; Shevuot 3:8; 5:2; 6:1, 3; Eduyot 1:15; Avodah Zarah 6:11; Zevachim 8:26; Chullin 8:11; Arakhin 2:10; 3:2; 5:9. Land of Israel, circa 300 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:25, 37, 178, 203–49, 345–53, 418, 471–522, 538, 567–84, 594, 663, 752, 778, 789, 870, 879; 2:951–1022, 1033, 1044, 1063–66, 1071–72, 1150, 1153–54, 1183–85, 1202–08, 1233–34, 1236, 1240–41, 1250, 1285, 1347, 1397, 1499, 1501, 1514. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).

- Jerusalem Talmud: Berakhot 39a, 60a, 72b, 88a; Peah 3a, 6b, 41b, 47b, 49a, 57b, 73a; Demai 28a; Sheviit 1a–87b; Terumot 29b, 31a, 61a, 75b, 101b; Maaser Sheni 38a; Challah 47b, 48b; Orlah 33b–34b; Bikkurim 1a–26b; Pesachim 1a–; Sukkah 1a–33b; Beitzah 1a–49b. Land of Israel, circa 400 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 1–4, 6b–8, 10–12, 22–23. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005–2010.
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[29a, 30b, 33a; Temurah 3b–4a, 25b, 30a–b; Keritot 4a, 8b–9a;](#)
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[\[edit\]](#) External links

[\[edit\]](#) Texts

1. [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)

2. [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, California](#)
- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
- [Aish.com](#)
- [American Jewish University](#)
- [Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles](#)
- [Bar-Ilan University](#)
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- [eparsha.com](#)
- [Jewish Agency for Israel](#)
- [Jewish Theological Seminary](#)
- [MyJewishLearning.com](#)
- [Ohr Sameach](#)
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- [OzTorah, Torah from Australia](#)
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- [RabbiShimon.com](#)
- [Rabbi Shlomo Riskin](#)
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- [Shiur.com](#)
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- [Tanach Study Center](#)
- [Teach613.org, Torah Education at Cherry Hill](#)
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- [What's Bothering Rashi?](#)

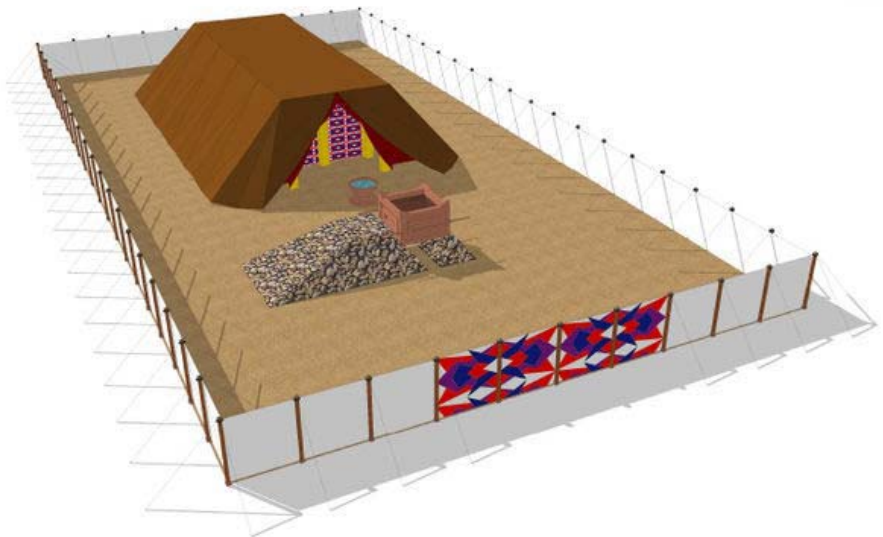
Terumah (parsha)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

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Terumah or **Trumah** (תְּרוּמָה — [Hebrew](#) for "gift" or "offering," the twelfth word and first distinctive word in the parshah) is the nineteenth [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the seventh in the [book of Exodus](#). It constitutes [Exodus 25:1–27:19](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it the nineteenth [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in February or early March.

The parshah tells of [God's](#) instructions to make the [Tabernacle](#) and its furnishings.





The Tabernacle (2009 [Google Sketchup](#) model by Gabriel Fink)

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary

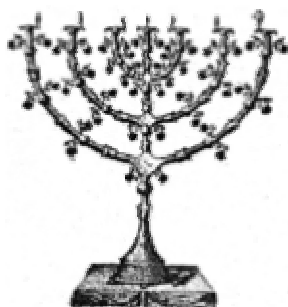


The [Ark of the Covenant](#) (replica in George Washington Masonic National Memorial)

God instructed [Moses](#) to tell all [Israelites](#) whose heart so moved them to bring gifts of [gold](#), [silver](#), [copper](#), colored [yarns](#), fine [linen](#), [goats’](#) hair, tanned [ram](#) skins, [acacia](#) wood, oil, spices, [lapis lazuli](#), and other fine stones to make a sanctuary — the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*, מִשְׁכָּן) — and its furnishings, so that God could dwell among them. ([Exodus 25:1–8](#).)

God instructed them to make the [Ark of the Covenant](#) of acacia wood overlaid with gold in which to deposit the tablets setting

forth God's commandments. ([Exodus 25:10–16.](#)) God told them to make two [cherubim](#) of gold to place on the ark's cover or [mercy seat](#). ([Exodus 25:17–21.](#)) God promised to impart commandments to Moses from between the two cherubim above the cover of the Ark. ([Exodus 25:22.](#)) God instructed them to make a table of acacia wood overlaid with gold, on which to set the bread of display or [showbread](#). ([Exodus 25:23–30.](#))



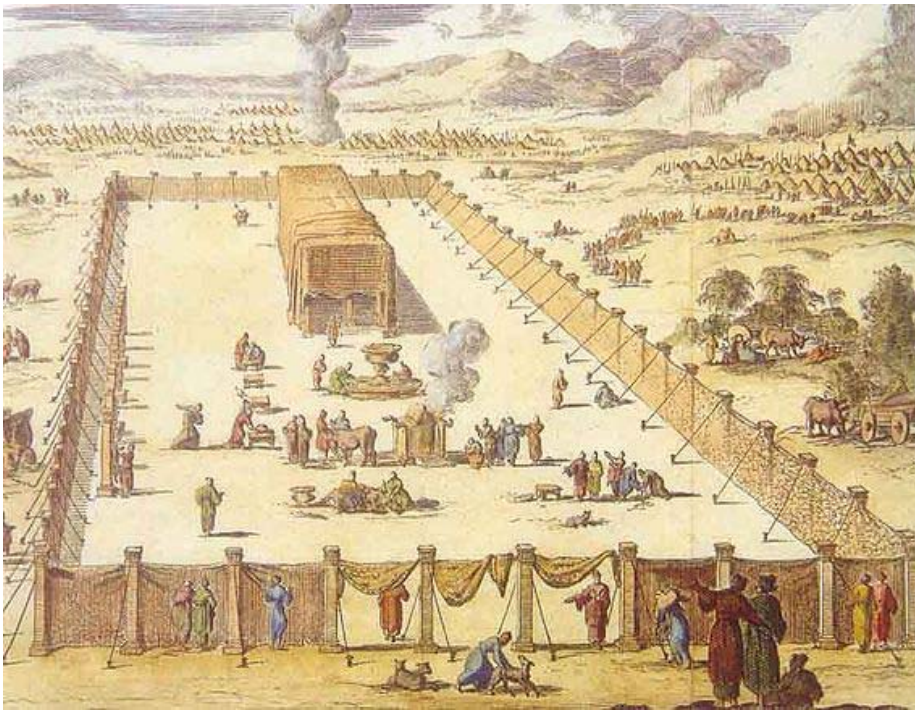
The Golden Lamp or Menorah (from the 1901 *A Brief Sketch of the Jewish Tabernacle*)

God instructed them to make a six-branched, seven-lamped lampstand — [menorah](#) — of pure gold. ([Exodus 25:31–40.](#)) God instructed them to make the Tabernacle of ten strips of fine twisted linen, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, with a design of cherubim worked into them. ([Exodus 26:1–6.](#)) God instructed them to make 11 cloths of goats' hair for a tent over the Tabernacle ([Exodus 26:7–13](#)), and coverings of tanned ram skins and *tachash* skins (ח' שֶׁחִיָּה). ([Exodus 26:14.](#)) God instructed them to make planks of acacia wood for the Tabernacle. ([Exodus 26:15–25.](#)) God instructed them to make a curtain of blue, purple,

and crimson yarns, and fine twisted linen, with a design of cherubim, to serve as a partition obscuring the [Holy of Holies](#). ([Exodus 26:31–33](#).) God instructed them to place the Ark, the table, and the lampstand in the Tabernacle. ([Exodus 26:34–35](#).) God instructed them to make a screen for the entrance of the Tent, of colored yarns, and fine twisted linen, done in embroidery and supported by five posts of acacia wood overlaid with gold. ([Exodus 26:36–37](#).) God instructed them to make the altar of acacia wood overlaid with copper. ([Exodus 27:1–2](#).) And God instructed them to make the enclosure of the Tabernacle from fine twisted linen. ([Exodus 27:9–16](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Inner-biblical interpretation

This is the pattern of instruction and construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings:



The Tabernacle

Item	Instruction		Construction	
	Order	Verses	Order	Verses
Contribution	1	Exodus 25:1–9	2	Exodus 35:4–29
Ark	2	Exodus 25:10–22	5	Exodus 37:1–9
Table	3	Exodus 25:23–30	6	Exodus 37:10–16
Menorah	4	Exodus 25:31–40	7	Exodus 37:17–24

Tabernacle	5	Exodus 26:1–37	4	Exodus 36:8–38
Altar of Sacrifice	6	Exodus 27:1–8	11	Exodus 38:1–7
Tabernacle Court	7	Exodus 27:9–19	13	Exodus 38:9–20
Lamp	8	Exodus 27:20–21	16	Numbers 8:1–4
Priestly Garments	9	Exodus 28:1–43	14	Exodus 39:1–31
Ordination Ritual	10	Exodus 29:1–46	15	Leviticus 8:1–9:24
Altar of Incense	11	Exodus 30:1–10	8	Exodus 37:25–28
Laver	12	Exodus 30:17–21	12	Exodus 38:8
Anointing Oil	13	Exodus 30:22–33	9	Exodus 37:29
Incense	14	Exodus 30:34–38	10	Exodus 37:29
Craftspeople	15	Exodus 31:1–11	3	Exodus 35:30–36:7
The Sabbath	16	Exodus 31:12–17	1	Exodus 35:1–3

The Priestly story of the Tabernacle in [Exodus 25–27](#) echoes the Priestly story of creation in [Genesis 1:1–2:3](#). As the creation story unfolds in seven days ((1) [Genesis 1:1–5](#); (2) [1:6–8](#); (3) [1:9–13](#); (4) [1:14–19](#); (5) [1:20–23](#); (6) [1:24–31](#); (7) [Genesis 2:1–3](#)), the instructions about the Tabernacle unfold in seven speeches. ((1) [Exodus 25:1–30:10](#); (2) [30:11–16](#); (3) [30:17–21](#); (4) [30:22–33](#); (5)

[30:34–37](#); (6) [31:1–11](#); (7) [31:12–17](#).) In both creation and Tabernacle accounts, the text notes the completion of the task. ([Genesis 2:1](#); [Exodus 39:32](#).) In both creation and Tabernacle, the work done is seen to be good. ([Genesis 1:31](#); [Exodus 39:43](#).) In both creation and Tabernacle, when the work is finished, God takes an action in acknowledgement. ([Genesis 2:2](#); [Exodus 40:33–34](#).) In both creation and Tabernacle, when the work is finished, a blessing is invoked. ([Genesis 2:3](#); [Exodus 39:43](#).) And in both creation and Tabernacle, God declares something “holy.” ([Genesis 2:3](#); [Exodus 40:9–11](#).) (See generally [Jon D. Levenson](#). “Cosmos and Microcosm.” In *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence*, 78–99. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. [ISBN 0-06-254845-X](#).)



Moses Receives the Law (illustration by a [Carolingian](#) book illuminator circa 840)

The Tabernacle exhibited similarities with Mount Sinai. Both Mount Sinai and the Tabernacle had three separate areas with

increasing levels of exclusivity — one for the people generally, one for the anointed class, and one for only the single representative of the people (Sinai: [Exodus 19:12, 21–23](#); Tabernacle: [Exodus 27:21; 28:43; Leviticus 16:2; Numbers 1:51](#)); the tablets of the law (Sinai: [Exodus 24:12; 31:18; 32:15; 32:15; 34:1–4, 28–29; Deuteronomy 4:13; 5:22; 9:9–11, 15; 10:1–4](#); Tabernacle: {[Exodus 25:16; Deuteronomy 10:5](#)}; a cloud (Sinai: [Exodus 19:9; 16; 24:15–18; Deuteronomy 4:11; 5:22](#); Tabernacle: [Exodus 33:9–10; 34:5; 40:34–38; Leviticus 16:2; Numbers 9:15–22; 12:5; 16:42; Deuteronomy 31:15](#).); and God's presence (Sinai: [Exodus 19:20](#); Tabernacle: [29:43; 40:34; Leviticus 16:2](#).) And God spoke to Moses at both Mount Sinai and the Tabernacle. (Sinai: [Exodus 19:3, 9, 16](#); Tabernacle: [Exodus 33:9–10](#).)

But in contrast to Mount Sinai, with the Tabernacle God's presence was constant; God's presence was in their midst, no longer distant; and God's presence was no longer rooted to a fixed place. (See generally [Terence E. Fretheim](#), *Exodus: Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 264. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991. [ISBN 0-8042-3102-8](#).)

[[edit](#)] Early nonrabbinic interpretation

[Josephus](#) interpreted the Tabernacle and its furnishings to represent the universe. He saw the Tabernacle's two parts accessible to the priests (the Holy and the Courtyard) to denote the land and the sea, the third division set aside for God (the Holy of Holies) to represent heaven, inaccessible to people. He saw the 12 loaves to denote the year divided into months. He saw

the Menorah divided into 70 parts, representing the 70 divisions of the planets, and the seven lamps on the Menorah to refer to the course of the seven planets (then known). He saw the veils, composed of four things, to declare the four elements: the fine linen signified the earth, because the flax grows out of the earth; the purple signified the sea, because purple was dyed by the blood of shellfish from the sea; the blue signified the air; and the scarlet signified fire. ([*Antiquities of the Jews* 3:7:7.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic interpretation



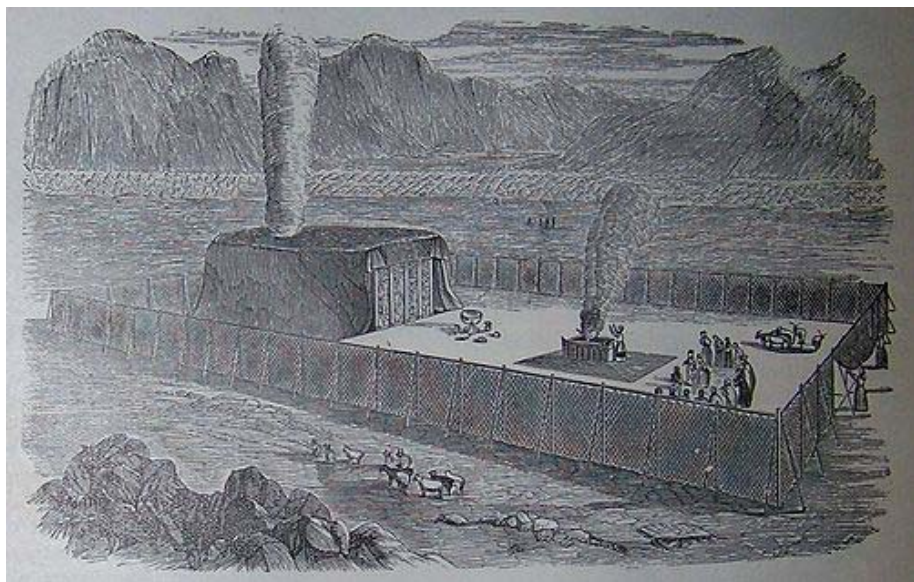
[Daniel](#) interpreting [Nebuchadnezzar's](#) dream in [Daniel 2:32](#)
(illustration from the 1917 book *Our Day in the Light of Prophecy*)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 25

A [midrash](#) read [Exodus 25:2](#) to say “that they take Me as an offering” and thus to tell how God gave the Torah to Israel and said to them: “You are taking Me.” ([Exodus Rabbah](#) 33:6.)

A midrash taught that [Exodus 25:3](#) calls for offerings of gold, silver, and brass for the construction of the Tabernacle, because gold symbolizes [Babylon](#), of which [Daniel 2:32](#) says, “As for that image, its head was of fine gold”; silver symbolizes the [Medes](#), of which [Daniel 2:32](#) says, “Its breast and its arms were of silver”; and brass refers to [Greece](#), of which [Daniel 2:32](#) says, “Its belly and thighs were of brass.” But the Bible makes no mention of iron in the construction either of the Tabernacle or of the [Temple in Jerusalem](#), because iron symbolizes [Rome](#), which destroyed the Temple. (Exodus Rabbah 35:5.)

The Rabbis taught in a [Baraita](#) that the turquoise wool (*techeilet*, תִּכְלִית) listed in [Exodus 25:4](#) came from an animal called a *chilazon* that resembled the sea in color and a fish in shape, that appeared once every 70 years, and whose blood was used to dye the expensive blue thread. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 26a](#); [Menachot 42b](#).)



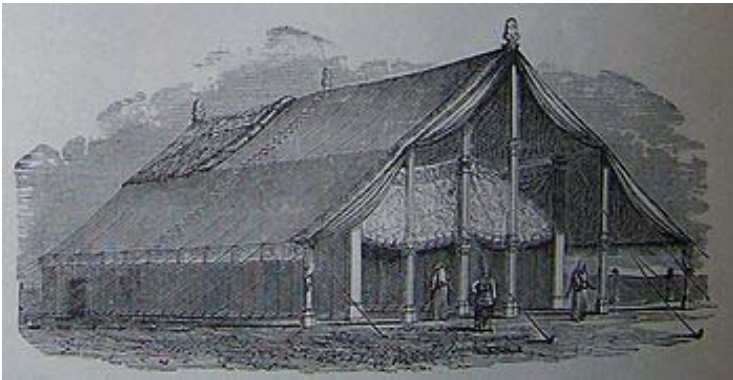
The Tabernacle (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

The [Tosefta](#) deduced from [Exodus 25:5](#) (and the principle that the law prohibits doing on the Sabbath all that was done to build the Tabernacle) that one who tans hides on the Sabbath violates the commandment to keep the Sabbath. (Tosefta Shabbat 8:23.)

The Tosefta taught that invalidity of either the onyx stones or the stones to be set described in [Exodus 25:7](#) invalidated the other, and invalidity of any of the cups, knobs, or flowers of the candlestick described in [Exodus 25:31](#) invalidated the others. (Tosefta Menachot 6:11.)

The Tosefta taught that [Exodus 25:8](#) provided the commandment that [Exodus 39:43](#) said that Moses fulfilled. (Tosefta Menachot 7:7.)

A midrash explained with a parable God's instruction to build a Tabernacle. A king had only one daughter, who married another king. When the son-in-law king wished to return to his country and take his wife with him, the father king told him that he could neither part with his daughter nor tell her husband not to take her, as she was now his wife. The father king thus asked the son-in-law king the favor that wherever the son-in-law king would go to live, he would have a chamber ready for the father king to dwell with them, for he could not bear to leave his daughter. Thus, God told Israel that God had given Israel a Torah from which God could not part, and yet God also could not tell Israel not to take the Torah. Thus, God asked the Israelites to make for God a house wherein God might sojourn wherever the Israelites went, and thus [Exodus 25:8](#) says, "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." (Exodus Rabbah 33:1.)



The Southeast View of the Tabernacle (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

Rabbi Simeon son of Rabbi Ishmael interpreted the term “the Tabernacle of the testimony” in [Exodus 38:21](#) to mean that the Tabernacle was God’s testimony to the whole world that God had forgiven Israel for having made the [Golden Calf](#). Rabbi Isaac explained with a parable. A king took a wife whom he dearly loved. He became angry with her and left her, and her neighbors taunted her, saying that he would not return. Then the king sent her a message asking her to prepare the king’s palace and make the beds therein, for he was coming back to her on such-and-such a day. On that day, the king returned to her and became reconciled to her, entering her chamber and eating and drinking with her. Her neighbors at first did not believe it, but when they smelled the fragrant spices, they knew that the king had returned. Similarly, God loved Israel, bringing the Israelites to Mount Sinai, and giving them the Torah, but after only 40 days, they sinned with the Golden Calf. The heathen nations then said that God would not be reconciled with the Israelites. But when Moses pleaded for mercy on their behalf, God forgave them, as [Numbers 14:20](#) reports, “And the Lord said: ‘I have pardoned according to your word.’” Moses then told God that even though he personally was quite satisfied that God had forgiven Israel, he asked that God might announce that fact to the nations. God replied that God would cause God’s [Shechinah](#) to dwell in their midst, and thus [Exodus 25:8](#) says, “And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.” And by that sign, God intended that all nations might know that God had forgiven the Israelites. And thus [Exodus 38:21](#) calls it “the Tabernacle of the

testimony,” because the Tabernacle was a testimony that God had pardoned the Israelites’ sins. (Exodus Rabbah 51:4.)



The Shekinah Glory Enters the Tabernacle (illustration from the 1908 *Bible and Its Story Taught by One Thousand Picture Lessons*)

A midrash told that when God told Moses to make a tabernacle for God (in [Exodus 25:8](#)), Moses questioned how God could command Moses make a tabernacle for God, if God’s Glory fills heaven and earth. And Moses saw prophetically that [Solomon](#) would one day build a Temple, much larger than the Tabernacle, and yet (in [1 Kings 8:27](#)) Solomon would say to God, “But will God in truth dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house that I have built!” God replied that God does not think as humans think. Twenty boards on the north, twenty on the south, and eight in the west can suffice. God could even confine God’s Shechinah within one square cubit. (Exodus Rabbah 34:1.)

Rav Assi of Hozna'ah deduced from the words, “And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month,” in [Exodus 40:17](#) that the Tabernacle was erected on the first of [Nisan](#). With reference to this, a [Tanna](#) taught that the first of Nisan took ten crowns of distinction by virtue of the ten momentous events that occurred on that day. The first of Nisan was: (1) the first day of the Creation (as reported in [Genesis 1:1–5](#)), (2) the first day of the princes’ offerings (as reported in [Numbers 7:10–17](#)), (3) the first day for the priesthood to make the sacrificial offerings (as reported in [Leviticus 9:1–21](#)), (4) the first day for public sacrifice, (5) the first day for the descent of fire from Heaven (as reported in [Leviticus 9:24](#)), (6) the first for the priests’ eating of sacred food in the sacred area, (7) the first for the dwelling of the Shechinah in Israel (as implied by [Exodus 25:8](#)), (8) the first for the [Priestly Blessing](#) of Israel (as reported in [Leviticus 9:22](#), employing the blessing prescribed by [Numbers 6:22–27](#)), (9) the first for the prohibition of the [high places](#) (as stated in [Leviticus 17:3–4](#)), and (10) the first of the months of the year (as instructed in [Exodus 12:2](#)). ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 87b.](#))





The Ark of the Covenant (2010 digital image by BRBurton)

Interpreting the words, “And *they* shall make an Ark,” in [Exodus 25:10](#), Rabbi Judah ben Rabbi Shalom taught that God said that all should come and occupy themselves with the Ark so that they all might merit the Torah. Rabbi [Simeon bar Yohai](#) taught that there are three crowns: (1) the crown of kingship, (2) the crown of priesthood, and (3) the crown of Torah. The table is the crown of kingship, of which [Exodus 25:24](#) says, “And make thereto a crown of gold round about.” The altar is the crown of priesthood, of which [Exodus 30:3](#) says, “And you shall make unto it a crown of gold round about.” And the Ark is the crown of the Torah, of which [Exodus 25:11](#) says, “And you shall make upon it a crown of gold round about.” The word for “crown” (*zer*, זֶר) can also be read as *zar* (stranger), to teach that if a person has merit, it becomes like a crown, but if a person does not have merit, then it becomes alien to that person. Of the other furnishings, Scripture says, “And *you* shall make,” whereas of the Ark, [Exodus 25:10](#) says, “And *they* shall make,” to teach that the crown of the Torah stands above all; when a person acquires the Torah, it is as though that person has acquired all the rest. (Exodus Rabbah 34:2.)



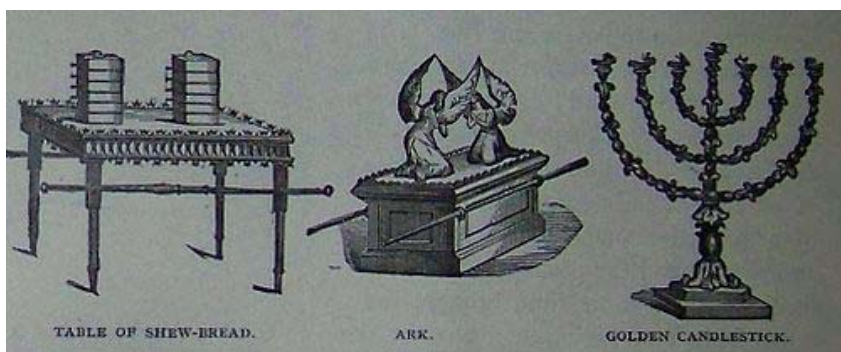


The Ark of the Covenant (drawing circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

Noting that [Exodus 25:11](#) says, “You shall overlay it with pure gold, within and without,” [Rava](#) interpreted that any scholar whose inside is not like the outside is no scholar. (A scholar thus should have the same golden character inside and out.)
([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 72b.](#))

The [Mishnah](#) described how on [Yom Kippur](#) the High Priest ([Kohen Gadol](#)) would place a fire pan between the two bars of the Ark of the Covenant described in [Exodus 25:12](#). ([Mishnah Yoma 5:1](#); [Babylonian Talmud Yoma 52b.](#))

Rabbi [Abbahu](#) taught that a cherub (as in [Exodus 25:18](#)) had a face like a child (*keravya*), for in Babylonia they called a child *ravya*. [Rav Papa](#) asked [Abaye](#) that if this is so, then there is a difficulty interpreting [Ezekiel 10:14](#), which says of [Ezekiel](#)’s vision, “the first face was the face of the cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.” Would not the face of the cherub and the face of a man be the same? The [Gemara](#) answered that one was a big face, and the other was a small face. ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 13b.](#))



The Table of Shew-Bread, Ark, and Golden Candlestick
(illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

The Mishnah described details of the table envisioned in [Exodus 25:23](#). ([Mishnah Menachot 11:5–7](#); [Babylonian Talmud Menachot 96a, 99b](#).) [Rabbi Jose](#) differed with the Mishnah to teach that the handbreadth-high frame described in [Exodus 25:25](#), not props, held the showbread in place, but they interpreted the table's rim to exist only at the feet of the table, not at its surface. (Tosefta Menachot 11:6.)

The Mishnah taught that one who stole one of the sacred vessels (*keisvoṭ*) described in [Exodus 25:29](#) and [Numbers 4:7](#) was struck down by zealots on the spot. ([Mishnah Sanhedrin 9:6](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 81b](#).)



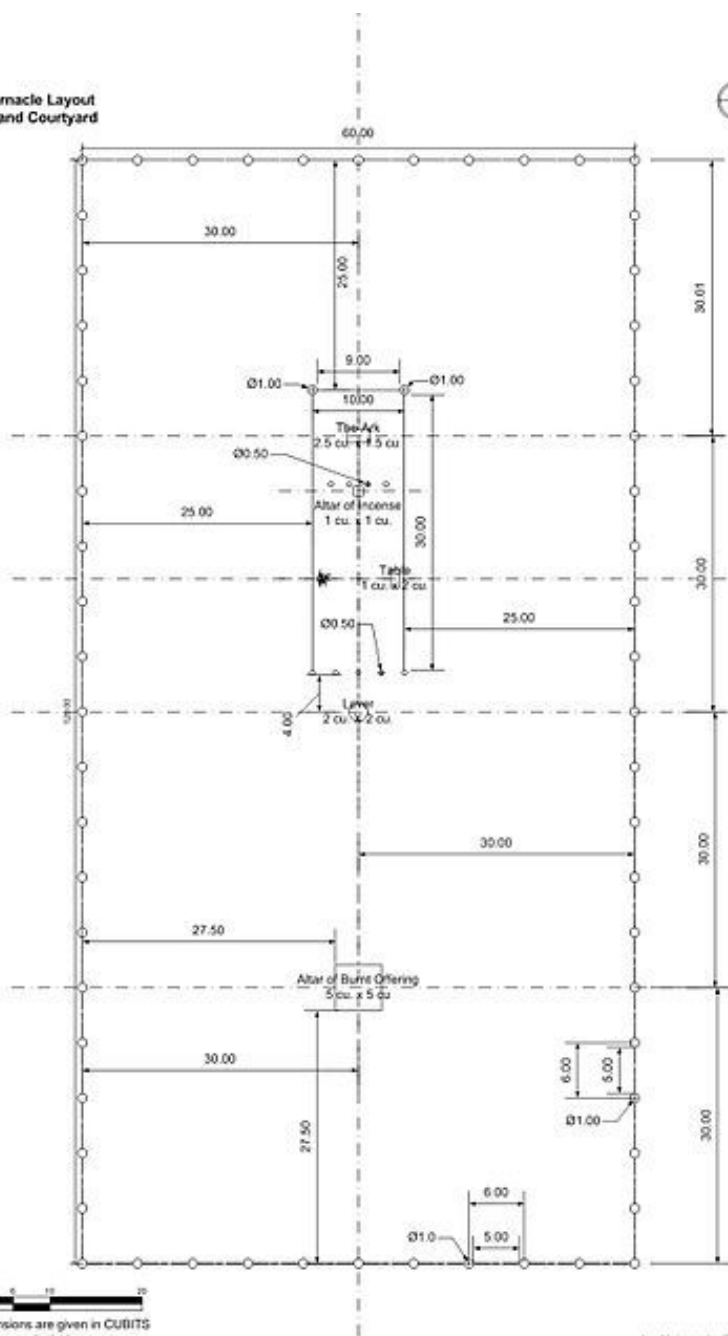
a seraph (illustration from a medieval manuscript)

[Ben Zoma](#) interpreted [Exodus 25:30](#) to teach that the showbread had to have faces. ([Mishnah Menachot 11:4](#); [Babylonian Talmud Menachot 96a.](#)) And the Tosefta interpreted [Exodus 25:30](#) to teach that the table did not remain overnight without bread. (Tosefta Menachot 11:12.)

Rabbi Abin compared the instruction of [Exodus 25:40](#) to a handsome king who instructed a servant to fashion a bust exactly like him. The servant exclaimed that he could not possibly make a likeness exactly like the king. But the king replied that the servant would paint it with his materials, but the king would appear in his own glory. Thus, when in [Exodus 25:40](#) God told Moses “see that you make them after their pattern,” Moses complained that he was not God that he should be able to make one exactly like the pattern. God replied that Moses should follow the pattern of blue, purple, and scarlet that he saw above. The “acacia-wood, standing up” of [Exodus 26:15](#) would reflect the [Seraphim](#) who stand above, and [Rabbi Hiyya](#) ben Abba said that the gold clasps

of [Exodus 26:6](#) would reflect the glittering stars in heaven. Thus God told Moses that if he would make below a replica of that which was above, God would cause God's Shechinah to dwell among the people. (Exodus Rabbah 35:5.)

Tabernacle Layout
Tent and Courtyard



All Dimensions are given in CUBITS
page 9 of 10

by Aleksandr S. 2009



Tabernacle Tent and Courtyard Dimensions (2009 drawing by Aleksig6) (Note that the Rabbis differed over the dimensions of the courtyard, as recorded below.)

[[edit](#)] Exodus chapter 26

Rabban [Johanan ben Zakai](#) interpreted the word “[Lebanon](#)” in [Deuteronomy 3:25](#) to refer to the Temple in Jerusalem and “that goodly mountain” to refer to the Temple Mount. ([Babylonian Talmud Gittin 56b.](#)) A midrash employed this understanding of “Lebanon” as the Temple to explain the role of gold in the world. Rabbi [Simeon ben Lakish](#) taught that the world did not deserve to have the use of gold. But God created gold for the sake of the Tabernacle (for example, in [Exodus 26:6](#)) and the Temple. The midrash deduced this from the use of the word “good” in both [Genesis 2:12](#), where it says, “the gold of that land is good,” and [Deuteronomy 3:25](#), where it says, “that goodly hill-country, and Lebanon,” concluding that the gold of the land was created for that which is good, the Temple. ([Genesis Rabbah 16:2](#); see also [Exodus Rabbah 35:1](#).)

[Rav Ashi](#) taught that one could derive from the term שְׁעֵי־אֶשְׁתֵּי *ashtei-esreih*, or “eleven,” in [Exodus 26:7](#) that one who adds to God’s word actually subtracts from it. Were one to subtract the first letter of the term, it would yield שְׁעֵי־יְעֹשֶׂה *shtei-esreih*, or “twelve,” so adding that letter reduces its meaning. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 29a.](#))

The Rabbis taught in a Baraita that the Tabernacle's lower curtains were made of blue wool, purple wool, crimson wool, and fine linen, while the upper curtains that made the tent spread were made of goats' hair. And they taught that the upper curtains required greater skill than the lower, for [Exodus 35:25](#) says of the lower ones, "And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands," while [Exodus 35:26](#) says of the upper ones, "And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun the goats." It was taught in Rabbi Nehemiah's name that the hair was washed on the goats and spun while still on the goats.

[\(Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 99a.\)](#)

Rav [Adda bar Ahavah](#) said that the *tachash* skins mentioned in [Exodus 26:14](#) came from an animal that lived in the days of Moses. The Gemara interpreted [Rabbi Nehemiah](#) to say that its skin had many colors. [\(Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 28a.\)](#)

Rabbi [Haninah](#) taught that the world was unworthy to have [cedar](#) trees, but God created them for the sake of the Tabernacle (for example, in the acacia-wood of [Exodus 26:15](#)) and the Temple, as [Psalm 104:16](#) says, "The trees of the Lord have their fill, the cedars of Lebanon, which He has planted," once again interpreting Lebanon to mean the Temple. Rabbi [Samuel ben Nahman](#) in the name of [Rabbi Jonathan](#) taught that there are 24 kinds of cedars, of which seven are especially fine, as [Isaiah 41:19](#) says, "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia-tree, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree; I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane-tree, and the larch together." God foresaw that the Tabernacle would be made of these trees, as [Psalm 104:17](#) says,

“Wherein the birds make their nests,” and “birds” refers to those birds that the priests offered. And when [Psalm 104:17](#) says, “As for the stork (הַיָּסִיד, *hasidah*), the fir-trees are her house,” the הַיָּסִיד, *hasidah* (stork) refers to the High Priest, of whom [Deuteronomy 33:8](#) says, “Your Thummim and Your Urim be with Your holy one (הַיָּסִיד, *hasidekha*).” (Exodus Rabbah 35:1.)

Another midrash explained that in [Exodus 26:15](#), God chose acacia-wood — the wood of a tree that does not bear fruit — to build the Tabernacle to set an example for all time that people should not build houses with the wood of fruit-producing trees. (Exodus Rabbah 35:2.)

The Gemara deduced from the report in [Exodus 26:16](#) of the length of the boards that both the Tabernacle and the altar were ten [cubits](#) (about 15 feet) high. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 92a](#).)

In [Deuteronomy 18:15](#), Moses foretold that “A prophet will the Lord your God raise up for you . . . *like me*,” and [Rabbi Johanan](#) thus taught that prophets would have to be, like Moses, strong, wealthy, wise, and meek. Strong, for [Exodus 40:19](#) says of Moses, “he spread the tent over the tabernacle,” and a Master taught that Moses himself spread it, and [Exodus 26:16](#) reports, “Ten [cubits](#) shall be the length of a board.” Similarly, the strength of Moses can be derived from [Deuteronomy 9:17](#), in which Moses reports, “And I took the two tablets, and cast them out of my two hands, and broke them,” and it was taught that the tablets were six handbreadths in length, six in breadth, and three in thickness. Wealthy, as [Exodus 34:1](#) reports God’s instruction to Moses, “Carve yourself two tablets of stone,” and the Rabbis interpreted

the verse to teach that the chips would belong to Moses. Wise, for [Rav](#) and Samuel both said that 50 gates of understanding were created in the world, and all but one were given to Moses, for [Psalm 8:6](#) said of Moses, “You have made him a little lower than God.” Meek, for [Numbers 12:3](#) reports, “Now the man Moses was very meek.” ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 38a.](#))

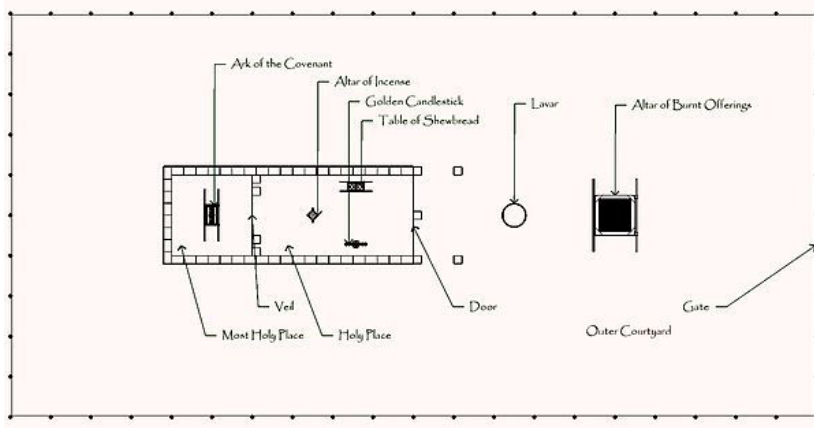


The Creation of Eve (1825 drawing by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#))

Rabbi Samuel ben Nahman used the description of the side (צֶלַע, *ẓela*) of the tabernacle in [Exodus 26:20](#) to help interpret the creation of woman. Rabbi Jeremiah ben Leazar taught that when God created Adam, God created him a hermaphrodite — two bodies, male and female, joined together — for [Genesis 5:2](#) says, “male and female created He them . . . and called their name Adam.” Rabbi Samuel ben Nahman taught that when God created Adam, God created Adam double-faced. Then God split

Adam and made Adam of two backs, one back on this side and one back on the other side. An objection was raised that [Genesis 2:21](#) says, “And He took one of his ribs” (implying that God created Eve separately from Adam). Rabbi Samuel ben Nahman replied that the word read as “rib” — מִצָּלָהּ, *mi-zalotav* — actually means one of Adam’s sides, just as one reads in [Exodus 26:20](#), “And for the second side (צֵלָה, *zela*) of the tabernacle.” ([Genesis Rabbah 8:1.](#))

Rabbi Levi read [Exodus 26:28](#), regarding “the middle bar in the midst of the boards, which shall pass through from end to end,” calculated that the beam must have been 32 cubits in length, and asked where the Israelites would find such a beam in the desert. Rabbi Levi deduced that the Israelites had stored up the cedar to construct the Tabernacle since the days of [Jacob](#). Thus [Exodus 35:24](#) reports, “And every man, with whom *was found* acacia-wood,” not “with whom *would be found* acacia-wood.” Rabbi Levi taught that the Israelites cut the trees down in [Magdala](#) of the Dyers near [Tiberias](#) and brought them with them to [Egypt](#), and no knot or crack was found in them. ([Genesis Rabbah 94:4.](#))



Schematic of the Tabernacle (2009 drawing by Gabriel Fink)

The Mishnah described two veils that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place in the [Second Temple](#), but Rabbi Jose said that there was only a single veil, as described in [Exodus 26:33](#) in connection with the Tabernacle. ([Mishnah Yoma 5:1](#); Tosefta Kippurim (Yoma) 2:12; [Babylonian Talmud Yoma 51b.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 27

Rabbi Jose noted that even though [Exodus 27:18](#) reported that the Tabernacle's courtyard was just 100 cubits by 50 cubits (about 150 feet by 75 feet), a little space held a lot, as [Leviticus 8:3](#) implied that the space miraculously held the entire Israelite people. ([Genesis Rabbah 5:7](#); [Leviticus Rabbah 10:9.](#))

A midrash taught that the length of the courtyard reported in [Exodus 27:18](#) at 100 cubits added to the length of the Tabernacle

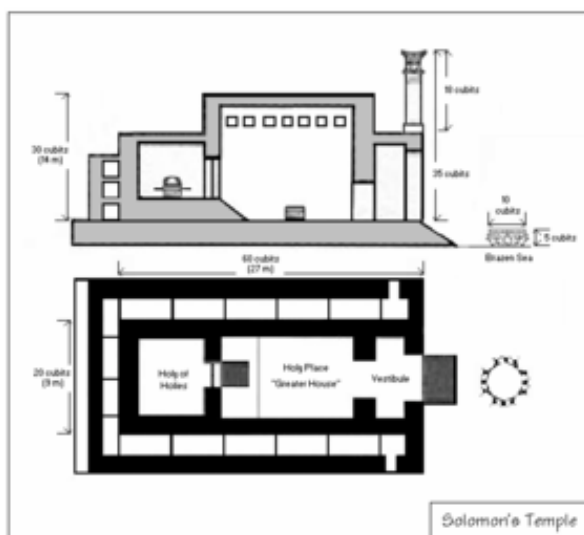
— 30 cubits — to total 130 cubits. And the midrash taught that this number was alluded to when (as [Numbers 7:37](#) reports) the prince of the [Tribe of Simeon](#) brought an offering of “one silver dish, the weight of which was 130 shekels.” The midrash taught that the dish was in allusion to the court that encompassed the Tabernacle as the sea encompasses the world. (Numbers Rabbah 13:19.)

The Gemara, however, cited Abaye’s as the plain meaning of the words, “The length of the court shall be 100 cubits, and the breadth 50 everywhere,” in [Exodus 27:18](#). Abaye taught that the Israelites erected the Tabernacle 50 cubits from the entrance to the courtyard, so that there might be a space of 50 cubits in front of the Tabernacle and a space of 20 cubits on every other side of the Tabernacle. ([Babylonian Talmud Eruvin 23b](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are 2 positive and 1 negative [commandments](#) in the parshah:

- To build a Sanctuary ([Exodus 25:8](#).)
- Not to remove the staves from the Ark of the Covenant ([Exodus 25:15](#).)
- To make the showbread ([Exodus 25:30](#).)



Solomon's Temple (2005 drawing by Mattes)

(See, e.g., Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 1:27–29, 36–37; 2:84–85. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:355–77. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [1 Kings 5:26–6:13](#).



Solomon and the Plan for the Temple (illustration from a Bible card published 1896 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

[\[edit\]](#) Summary

God gave King Solomon wisdom, and Solomon made a peace treaty with [King Hiram I](#) of [Tyre](#). ([1 Kings 5:26](#).) Solomon directed his tax collector [Adoniram](#) to draft 30,000 men and send them to Lebanon in shifts of 10,000, with one month in Lebanon and two months at home. ([1 Kings 5:27–28](#).) Solomon also had 70,000 men who bore burdens, 80,000 men who hewed stone in the mountains, and 3,300 chief officers who supervised the work. ([1 Kings 5:29–30](#).) Solomon ordered great and costly stones cut to lay the foundation of the Temple in Jerusalem, and Solomon's builders, Hiram's builders, and the [Gebalites](#) fashioned them and

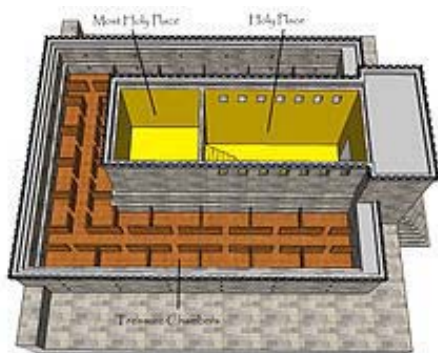
prepared the timber and the stones to build the Temple. ([1 Kings 5:31–32.](#))



Solomon Builds the Temple (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

Solomon began to build the Temple in the 480th year after the Israelites came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of his reign, in the month [Ziv](#). ([1 Kings 6:1.](#)) The Temple measured 60 cubits long, 20 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high, and had a portico 20 cubits long and 10 cubits deep. ([1 Kings 6:2–3.](#)) Its windows were broad within and narrow without. ([1 Kings 6:4.](#)) Along the Temple's wall all around were side-structures and side-chambers, with the lowest story of the side-structure 5 cubits broad, the middle 6 cubits broad, and the third story 7 cubits broad, and recesses ringed the outside wall. ([1 Kings 6:5–6.](#)) The Temple was built

from stone made ready at the quarry, and no hammer, ax, or other iron tool was heard at the building site. ([1 Kings 6:7.](#)) The door for the lowest story of side-chambers was on the right side of the Temple, and winding stairs went into the middle story and out into the third. ([1 Kings 6:8.](#)) So Solomon built the Temple and finished it with planks of cedar over beams, with all the Temple resting on cedar timbers. ([1 Kings 6:9–10.](#))



Solomon's Temple (2009 computer-generated drawing by Gabriel Fink)

And the word of the Lord came to Solomon, saying: “As for this house that you are building, if you will walk in My statutes, and execute My ordinances, and keep all My commandments, then I will establish My word with you that I spoke to David your father and I will dwell therein among the children of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel.” ([1 Kings 6:11–13.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Connection to the Parshah

Both the parshah and the haftarah describe a great Jewish leader's marshalling of resources to build a dwelling place for God, the parshah in Moses' collection of gifts to build the Tabernacle ([Exodus 25:1–8](#)), and the haftarah in Solomon's conscription of labor and collection of timber and stone to build the [Temple in Jerusalem](#). ([1 Kings 5:26–31](#).) Both the parshah and the haftarah describe conditions for a structure where God could dwell (*ve-shakbanti*) among (*be-tokeb*) the Israelites. ([Exodus 25:8](#); [1 Kings 5:13](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Liturgy



Hanukkah menorah

God's Presence in a throne between cherubim in [Exodus 25:17–22](#) is reflected in [Psalm 99:1](#), which is in turn one of the six Psalms recited at the beginning of the Kabbalat Shabbat [prayer service](#). ([Reuven Hammer](#). *Or Hadasb: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 19. New York: The [Rabbinical](#)

[Assembly](#), 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#). Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals with an Interlinear Translation*, 66. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-697-3](#).)

The kindled lights of the Menorah of [Exodus 25:31–40](#) played a key role in [Hanukkah](#) and are thus in turn noted in the Hanukkah insertion to the *Modim* section of the [Amidah](#) prayer in each of the three prayer services. (Hammer, at 8.)

[\[edit\]](#) Weekly maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), [Sephardi Jews](#) each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parshah. For Parshah Terumah, Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Hoseni, the maqam that expresses beauty. This is especially appropriate for this parshah because it is the parshah where the beauty of the Tabernacle and its utensils are elaborated.

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [2 Samuel 22:2–15](#) (cherubim).
- [Ezekiel 1:5–14](#) (cherubim); [HE](#) (cherubim).



Philo

- [Psalm 18:11](#) (cherubim); [80:2](#) (cherubim); [84:2–3, 11](#) (Tabernacle, courts); [90:1](#) (dwelling); [92:14](#) (courts); [100:4](#) (court); [132:8](#) (ark).

[[edit](#)] Early nonrabbinic

- [1 Maccabees 4:47–59](#) (rededication of the Temple).
- [Philo. *Allegorical Interpretation* 3:33:102; *Who Is the Heir of Divine Things?* 23:113; 34:166; 46:218; *On Mating with the Preliminary Studies* 2:8; 17:89; 21:114; 30:168; *On Flight and Finding* 19:101; *On the Change of Names* 35:190. *Alexandria*, Egypt, early 1st Century C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by \[Charles Duke Yonge\]\(#\), 62, 285, 290, 294, 304, 312, 314, 319, 330, 357. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1993. \[ISBN 0-943575-93-1\]\(#\).](#)



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[\[edit\]](#) External links

[\[edit\]](#) Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, California](#)
- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
- [Aish.com](#)
- [American Jewish University](#)
- [Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles](#)

- [Bar-Ilan University](#)
- [Chabad.org](#)
- [eparsha.com](#)
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- [Jewish Agency for Israel](#)
- [Jewish Theological Seminary](#)
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- [Ohr Sameach](#)
- [Orthodox Union](#)
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- [RabbiShimon.com](#)
- [Rabbi Shlomo Riskin](#)
- [Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld](#)
- [Reconstructionist Judaism](#)
- [Sephardic Institute](#)

- [613.org Jewish Torah Audio](http://613.org)
- [Tanach Study Center](http://TanachStudyCenter.com)
- [Teach613.org, Torah Education at Cherry Hill](http://Teach613.org)
- [Torah from Dixie](http://TorahfromDixie.com)
- Torah.org
- [Union for Reform Judaism](http://URJ.org)
- [United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth](http://UHC.org)
- [United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism](http://USCJ.org)
- [What's Bothering Rashi?](http://WhatsBotheringRashi.com)

Tetzaveh

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Tetzaveh, **Tetsaveh**, **T'tzaveh**, or **T'tzavveh** (תִּצַּוְהַ —

[Hebrew](#) for "you command," the second word and first distinctive word in the parshah) is the 20th [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the eighth in the [book of Exodus](#). It constitutes [Exodus 27:20–30:10](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it the 20th [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in February or March.



The High Priest (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



The High Priest (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

[God](#) instructed the [Israelites](#) to bring [Moses](#) clear [olive oil](#), so that [Aaron](#) and his descendants as [High Priest](#) could kindle lamps regularly in the [Tabernacle](#). ([Exodus 27:20–21](#).)



The High Priest's Breast Plate (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

God instructed Moses to make sacral vestments for Aaron: a breastpiece (the [Hoshen](#)), an [ephod](#), a robe, a [gold](#) frontlet inscribed “Holy to the Lord,” a fringed tunic, a headdress, a sash, and linen breeches. ([Exodus 28.](#)) God instructed Moses to place [Urim and Thummim](#) inside the breastpiece of decision. ([Exodus 28:30.](#)) God instructed Moses to place [pomegranates](#) and gold bells around the robe's hem, to make a sound when the High Priest entered and exited the sanctuary, so that he not die. ([Exodus 33–35.](#))

God laid out an ordination ceremony for priests involving the sacrifice of a young [bull](#), two [rams](#), unleavened bread, unleavened cakes with oil mixed in, and unleavened wafers spread with oil. ([Exodus 29.](#)) God instructed Moses to lead the bull to the front of the Tabernacle, let Aaron and his sons lay their hands upon the bull's head, slaughter the bull at the entrance of the Tent, and put some of the bull's blood on the horns of the altar. ([Exodus 29:10–12.](#)) God instructed Moses to take one of the rams, let

Aaron and his sons lay their hands upon the ram's head, slaughter the ram, and put some of its blood and put on the ridge of Aaron's right ear and on the ridges of his sons' right ears, and on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet. ([Exodus 29:19–20](#).)

God promised to meet and speak with Moses and the Israelites there, to abide among the Israelites, and be their God. ([Exodus 29:42–45](#).)

God instructed Moses to make an [incense](#) altar of acacia wood overlaid with gold — sometimes called the Golden Altar. ([Exodus 30](#).)

[[edit](#)] In inner-Biblical interpretation

[[edit](#)] Exodus chapters 25–39

This is the pattern of instruction and construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings:



The Tabernacle

Item	Instruction		Construction	
	Order	Verses	Order	Verses
Contributions	1	Exodus 25:1–9	2	Exodus 35:4–29
Ark	2	Exodus 25:10–22	5	Exodus 37:1–9
Table	3	Exodus 25:23–30	6	Exodus 37:10–16
Menorah	4	Exodus 25:31–40	7	Exodus 37:17–24
Tabernacle	5	Exodus 26:1–37	4	Exodus 36:8–38
Altar of Sacrifice	6	Exodus 27:1–8	11	Exodus 38:1–7

Tabernacle Court	7	Exodus 27:9–19	13	Exodus 38:9–20
Lamp	8	Exodus 27:20–21	16	Numbers 8:1–4
Priestly Garments	9	Exodus 28:1–43	14	Exodus 39:1–31
Ordination Ritual	10	Exodus 29:1–46	15	Leviticus 8:1–9:24
Altar of Incense	11	Exodus 30:1–10	8	Exodus 37:25–28
Laver	12	Exodus 30:17–21	12	Exodus 38:8
Anointing Oil	13	Exodus 30:22–33	9	Exodus 37:29
Incense	14	Exodus 30:34–38	10	Exodus 37:29
Craftspeople	15	Exodus 31:1–11	3	Exodus 35:30–36:7
The Sabbath	16	Exodus 31:12–17	1	Exodus 35:1–3





The High Priest wearing his breastplate (illustration circa 1861–1880 from *The History of Costume* by Braun and Schneider)

[\[edit\]](#) In early nonrabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 28

[Josephus](#) interpreted the linen vestment of [Exodus 28:5](#) to signify the earth, as flax grows out of the earth. Josephus interpreted the ephod of the four colors gold, blue, purple, and scarlet ([Exodus 28:6](#)) to signify that God made the universe of four elements, with the gold interwoven to show the splendor by which all things are enlightened. Josephus saw the stones on the High Priest's shoulders in [Exodus 28:9–12](#) to declare the sun and the moon. He interpreted the breastplate of [Exodus 28:15–22](#) to resemble the earth, having the middle place of the world, and the girdle that encompassed the High Priest to signify the ocean, which went about the world. He interpreted the 12 stones of the ephod in [Exodus 28:17–21](#) to represent the months or the signs of the [Zodiac](#). He interpreted the golden bells and pomegranates that [Exodus 28:33–35](#) says hung on the fringes of the High Priest's garments to signify thunder and lightning, respectively. And Josephus saw the blue on the headdress of [Exodus 28:37](#) to represent heaven, “for how otherwise could the name of God be inscribed upon it?” (*Antiquities of the Jews* 3:7:7.)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 29

[Philo](#) taught that the command of [Exodus 29:20](#) to apply ram's blood to the priests' right ear, right thumb, and right great toe signified that the perfect person must be pure in every word, every action, and the entirety of life. For the ear symbolized the hearing with which people judge one's words, the hand symbolized action, and the foot symbolized the way in which a person walks in life. And since each of these is an extremity of the right side of the body, Philo imagined that [Exodus 29:20](#) teaches that one should labor to attain improvement in everything with dexterity and felicity, as an archer aims at a target. (*On the Life of Moses* 2:29:150–51.)



Menorah from the Arch of Titus (illustration from the 1906 [Jewish Encyclopedia](#))

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 27

The [Mishnah](#) posited that one could have inferred that meal-offerings would require the purest olive oil, for if the menorah, whose oil was not eaten, required pure olive oil, how much more so should meal-offerings, whose oil was eaten. But [Exodus 27:20](#) states, “pure olive oil beaten for the light,” but not “pure olive oil beaten for meal-offerings,” to make clear that such purity was required only for the menorah and not for meal-offerings.

([Mishnah Menachot 8:5](#); [Babylonian Talmud Menachot 86a](#).) The Mishnah taught that there were three harvests of olives, and each crop gave three kinds of oil (for a total of nine types of oil). The first crop of olives were picked from the top of the tree; they were pounded and put into a basket ([Rabbi Judah](#) said around the inside of the basket) to yield the first oil. The olives were then pressed beneath a beam ([Rabbi Judah](#) said with stones) to yield the second oil. The olives were then ground and pressed again to yield the third oil. Only the first oil was fit for the menorah, while the second and third were for meal-offerings. The second crop is when the olives at roof-level were picked from the tree; they were pounded and put into the basket ([Rabbi Judah](#) said around the inside of the basket) to yield the first oil (of the second crop). The olives were then pressed with the beam ([Rabbi Judah](#) said with stones) to yield the second oil (of the second crop). The olives were then ground and pressed again to yield the third oil. Once again, with the second crop, only the first oil was fit for the

menorah, while the second and third were for meal-offerings. The third crop was when the last olives of the tree were packed in a vat until they become overripe. These olives were then taken up and dried on the roof and then pounded and put into the basket (Rabbi Judah said around the inside of the basket) to yield the first oil. The olives were next pressed with the beam (Rabbi Judah said with stones) to yield the second oil. And then they were ground and pressed again to yield the third oil. Once again, with the third crop, only the first oil was fit for the menorah, while the second and third were for meal-offerings. ([Mishnah Menachot 8:4](#); [Babylonian Talmud Menachot 86a.](#))



The Golden Lamp-Bearer (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

A [midrash](#) taught that the lights of the Tabernacle menorah were replicas of the heavenly lights. The midrash taught that everything God created in heaven has a replica on earth. Thus [Daniel 2:22](#) reports, “And the light dwells with [God]” in heaven. While below on earth, [Exodus 27:20](#) directs, “That they bring to you pure olive-oil beaten for the light.” (Thus, since all that is above is also below, God dwells on earth just as God dwells in heaven.) What is more, the midrash taught that God holds the things below dearer than those above, for God left the things in heaven to descend to dwell among those below, as [Exodus 25:8](#) reports, “And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.” ([Exodus Rabbah](#) 33:4)

A midrash expounded on [Exodus 27:20](#) to explain why [Israel](#) was, in the words of [Jeremiah 11:16](#), like “a leafy olive tree.” The midrash taught that just as the olive is beaten, ground, tied up with ropes, and then at last it yields its oil, so the nations have come and beaten, imprisoned, bound, and surrounded Israel, and when at last Israel repents of its sins, God answers it. The midrash offered a second explanation: Just as all liquids commingle one with the other, but oil refuses to do so, so Israel keeps itself distinct, as it is commanded in [Deuteronomy 7:3](#). The midrash offered a third explanation: Just as oil floats to the top even after it has been mixed with every kind of liquid, so Israel, as long as it performs the will of God, will be set on high by God, as it says in [Deuteronomy 28:1](#). The midrash offered a fourth explanation: Just as oil gives forth light, so did the [Temple in](#)

[Jerusalem](#) give light to the whole world, as it says in [Isaiah 60:3](#).
(Exodus Rabbah 36:1)

A [Baraita](#) taught that they used the High Priest's worn-out trousers to make the wicks of the Temple menorah and the worn-out trousers of ordinary priests for candelabra outside the Temple. Reading the words "to cause a lamp to burn continually" in [Exodus 27:20](#), Rabbi Samuel bar Isaac deduced that the unusual word [לְהַעֲלֹת](#), *lehaalot*, literally "to cause to ascend," meant that the wick had to allow the flame to ascend by itself. And thus the Rabbis concluded that no material other than flax — as in the fine linen of the High Priest's clothing — would allow the flame to ascend by itself. ([Jerusalem Talmud](#) Sukkah 29b.) Similarly, [Rami bar Hama](#) deduced from the use of word [לְהַעֲלֹת](#), *lehaalot*, in [Exodus 27:20](#) that the menorah flame had to ascend by itself, and not through other means (such as adjustment by the priests). Thus Rami bar Hama taught that the wicks and oil that the Sages taught one could not light on the Sabbath, one could also not light in the Temple. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 21a](#).) The [Gemara](#) challenged Rami bar Hama, however, citing a Mishnah ([Mishnah Sukkah 5:3](#); Jerusalem Talmud Sukkah 29a; [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 51a](#)) that taught that the worn-out breeches and girdles of priests were torn and used to kindle the lights for the celebration of the Water-Drawing. The Gemara posited that perhaps that celebration was different. The Gemara countered with the teaching of Rabbah bar Masnah, who taught that worn-out priestly garments were torn and made into wicks for the Temple. And the Gemara

clarified that the linen garments were meant. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 21a.](#))



High Priest in Robes and Breastplate (the chain [censer](#) is anachronistic)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 28

The Mishnah summarized the priestly garments described in [Exodus 28](#), saying that “the High Priest performs the service in eight garments, and the common priest in four: in tunic, drawers, miter, and girdle. The High Priest adds to those the breastplate, the apron, the robe, and the frontlet. And the High Priest wore

these eight garments when he inquired of the Urim and Thummim. ([Mishnah Yoma 7:5](#); [Babylonian Talmud Yoma 71b.](#))



Priests of the Tabernacle (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)

Rabbi Hama bar Hanina interpreted the words “the plaited (שֵׁרָד, *serad*) garments for ministering in the holy place” in [Exodus 35:19](#) to teach that but for the priestly garments described in [Exodus 28](#) (and the atonement achieved by the garments or the priests who wore them), no remnant (שְׂרִיד, *sarid*) of the Jews would have survived. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 72a–b.](#)) Similarly, citing [Mishnah Yoma 7:5](#), Rabbi Simon taught that even as the sacrifices had an atoning power, so too did the priestly garments. Rabbi Simon explained that the priests’ tunic atoned for those who wore a mixture of wool and linen

(שַׂאטְנֵץ, *shaatnez*, prohibited by [Deuteronomy 22:11](#)), as [Genesis 37:3](#) says, “And he made him a coat (tunic) of many colors” (and the Jerusalem Talmud explained that [Joseph’s](#) coat was similar to one made of the forbidden mixture). The breeches atoned for unchastity, as [Exodus 28:42](#) says, “And you shall make them linen breeches to cover the flesh of their nakedness.” The miter atoned for arrogance, as [Exodus 29:6](#) says, “And you shall set the miter on his head.” Some said that the girdle atoned for the crooked in heart, and others said for thieves. Rabbi Levi said that the girdle was 32 [cubits](#) long (about 48 feet), and that the priest wound it towards the front and towards the back, and this was the ground for saying that it was to atone for the crooked in heart (as the numerical value of the Hebrew word for heart is 32). The one who said that the girdle atoned for thieves argued that since the girdle was hollow, it resembled thieves, who do their work in secret, hiding their stolen goods in hollows and caves. The breastplate atoned for those who pervert justice, as [Exodus 28:30](#) says, “And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment.” The ephod atoned for idol-worshippers, as [Hosea 3:4](#) says, “and without Ephod or [teraphim](#).” Rabbi Simon taught in the name of Rabbi Nathan that the robe atoned for two sins, unintentional manslaughter (for which the Torah provided [cities of refuge](#)) and evil speech. ([Leviticus Rabbah](#) 10:6.)



[David](#) with the Head of Goliath (painting circa 1606–1607 by [Caravaggio](#))

The robe atoned for evil speech by the bells on its fringe, as [Exodus 28:34–35](#) says, “A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the skirts of the robe round about. And it shall be upon Aaron to minister, and the sound thereof shall be heard.” [Exodus 28:34–35](#) thus implies that this sound made atonement for the sound of evil speech. There is not strictly atonement for one who unintentionally slays a human being, but the Torah provides a means of atonement by the death of the High Priest, as [Numbers 35:28](#) says, “after the death of the High Priest the manslayer may return to the land of his possession.” Some said that the forehead-plate atoned for the shameless, while others said for blasphemers. Those who said that it atoned for the shameless deduced it from the similar use of the word “forehead” in [Exodus 28:38](#), which says of the forehead-plate, “And it shall be upon Aaron’s forehead,” and

[Jeremiah 3:3](#), which says, “You had a harlot's forehead, you refused to be ashamed.” Those who said that the forehead-plate atoned for blasphemers deduced it from the similar use of the word “forehead” in [Exodus 28:38](#) and [1 Samuel 17:48](#), which says of [Goliath](#), “And the stone sank into his forehead.” (Leviticus Rabbah 10:6.)



The Breastplate of the High Priest (illustration from the 1905–1906 Jewish Encyclopedia)

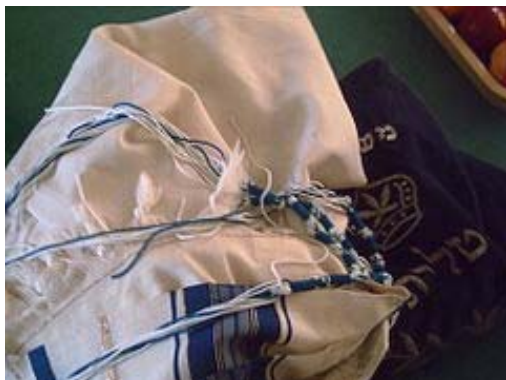
A Baraita interpreted the term “his fitted linen garment” (מִדְּבָר) in [Leviticus 6:3](#) to teach that the each priestly garment in [Exodus 28](#) had to be fitted to the particular priest, and had to be neither too short nor too long. ([Babylonian Talmud Zevachim 35a](#).)

Rabbi Eleazar deduced from the words “that the breastplate not be loosed from the ephod” in [Exodus 28:28](#) that one who removed the breast-plate from the apron received the punishment of lashes. Rav Aha bar Jacob objected that perhaps [Exodus 28:28](#) meant merely to instruct the Israelites to fasten the breast-plate securely so that it would “not be loosed.” But the Gemara noted that [Exodus 28:28](#) does not say merely, “so that it not be loosed.” ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 72a.](#))

The Mishnah taught that the High Priest inquired of the Urim and Thummim noted in [Exodus 28:30](#) only for the king, for the court, or for one whom the community needed. ([Mishnah Yoma 7:5; Babylonian Talmud Yoma 71b.](#))

A Baraita explained why the Urim and Thummim noted in [Exodus 28:30](#) were called by those names: The term “Urim” is like the Hebrew word for “lights,” and thus it was called “Urim” because it enlightened. The term “Thummim” is like the Hebrew word *tam* meaning “to be complete,” and thus it was called “Thummim” because its predictions were fulfilled. The Gemara discussed how they used the Urim and Thummim: [Rabbi Johanan](#) said that the letters of the stones in the breastplate stood out to spell out the answer. [Resh Lakish](#) said that the letters joined each other to spell words. But the Gemara noted that the Hebrew letter [Tsade](#) was missing from the list of the 12 tribes of Israel. Rabbi Samuel bar Isaac said that the stones of the breastplate also contained the names of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But the Gemara noted that the Hebrew letter [Teth](#) was also missing. Rav

Aha bar Jacob said that they also contained the words: “The tribes of Jeshurun.” ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 73b.](#))



blue *tekbelet* thread on a set of *tzitzit*

Rabbi Hanina ben Gamaliel interpreted the words “completely blue (תְּכֵלֶת, *tekbelet*)” in [Exodus 28:31](#) to teach that blue dye used to test the dye is unfit for further use to dye the blue, *tekbelet* strand of a *tzitzit*, interpreting the word “completely” to mean “full strength.” But Rabbi Johanan ben Dahabai taught that even the second dyeing using the same dye is valid, reading the words “and scarlet” (וְשֵׁנִי תוֹלַעַת, *ushni tolalat*) in [Leviticus 14:4](#) to mean “a second [dying] of red wool.” ([Babylonian Talmud Menachot 42b.](#))

The Gemara reported that some interpreted the words “woven work” in [Exodus 28:32](#) to teach that all priestly garments were made entirely by weaving, without needlework. But [Abaye](#) interpreted a saying of Resh Lakish and a Baraita to teach that the sleeves of the priestly garments were woven separately and then attached to the garment using needlework, and the sleeves

reached down to the priest's wrist. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 72b.](#))

Rehaba said in the name of [Rav Judah](#) that one who tore a priestly garment was liable to punishment with lashes, for [Exodus 28:32](#) says “that it be not rent.” Rav Aha bar Jacob objected that perhaps [Exodus 28:32](#) meant to instruct that the Israelites make a hem so that the garment would not tear. But the Gemara noted that [Exodus 28:32](#) does not say merely, “lest it be torn.” ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 72a.](#))

[edit] Exodus chapter 29

A Baraita taught that a priest who performed sacrifices without the proper priestly garments was liable to death at the hands of Heaven. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 83a.](#)) Rabbi [Abbahu](#) said in the name of [Rabbi Johanan's](#) (or some say Rabbi Eleazar son of Rabbi Simeon) that the Baraita's teaching was derived from [Exodus 29:9](#), which says: “And you shall gird them with girdles, Aaron and his sons, and bind turbans on them; and they shall have the priesthood by a perpetual statute.” Thus, the Gemara reasoned, when wearing their proper priestly garments, priests were invested with their priesthood; but when they were not wearing their proper priestly garments, they lacked their priesthood and were considered like non-priests, who were liable to death if they performed the priestly service. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 83b.](#))

The Mishnah explained how the priests carried out the rites of the wave-offering described in [Exodus 29:27](#): On the east side of

the altar, the priest placed the two loaves on the two lambs and put his two hands beneath them and waved them forward and backward and upward and downward. ([Mishnah Menachot 5:6](#); [Babylonian Talmud Menachot 61a.](#))



The Two Priests Are Destroyed (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

[Rabbi Eliezer](#) interpreted the words, “And there I will meet with the children of Israel; and [the Tabernacle] shall be sanctified by My glory,” in [Exodus 29:43](#) to mean that God would in the future meet the Israelites and be sanctified among them. The midrash reports that this occurred on the eighth day of the consecration of the Tabernacle, as reported in [Leviticus 9:1](#). And as [Leviticus 9:24](#) reports, “when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.” ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 14:21.)

The Gemara interpreted the report in [Exodus 29:43](#) that the Tabernacle “shall be sanctified by My glory” to refer to the death of [Nadab and Abihu](#). The Gemara taught that one should read

not “My glory” (*bi-kehevodi*) but “My honored ones” (*bi-kebevuday*). The Gemara thus taught that God told Moses in [Exodus 29:43](#) that God would sanctify the Tabernacle through the death of Nadab and Abihu, but Moses did not comprehend God’s meaning until Nadab and Abihu died in [Leviticus 10:2](#). When Aaron’s sons died, Moses told Aaron in [Leviticus 10:3](#) that Aaron’s sons died only that God’s glory might be sanctified through them. When Aaron thus perceived that his sons were God’s honored ones, Aaron was silent, as [Leviticus 10:3](#) reports, “And Aaron held his peace,” and Aaron was rewarded for his silence. ([Babylonian Talmud Zevachim 115b.](#))

[Joshua ben Levi](#) interpreted the words of [Exodus 29:46](#), “And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, Who brought them out of the land of Egypt in order that I may dwell among them,” to teach that the Israelites came out of Egypt only because God foresaw that they would later build God a Tabernacle. (Numbers Rabbah 3:6.)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 30

The Mishnah taught that the incense offering of [Exodus 30:7](#) was not subject to the penalty associated with eating invalidated offerings. ([Mishnah Zevachim 4:3](#); [Babylonian Talmud Zevachim 42b.](#))



a *ner tamid* (נֵר תָּמִיד), or [sanctuary lamp](#), hanging over the [ark](#) in a [synagogue](#), in remembrance of the command in [Exodus 27:20–21](#)

[[edit](#)] Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are 4 positive and 3 negative [commandments](#) in the parshah:

- To light the [Menorah](#) every day ([Exodus 27:21.](#))
- The [Kohanim](#) must wear their priestly garments during service. ([Exodus 28:2.](#))
- The breastpiece must not be loosened from the ephod. ([Exodus 28:28.](#))
- Not to tear the priestly garments ([Exodus 28:32.](#))
- The Kohanim must eat the sacrificial meat. ([Exodus 29:33.](#))

- To burn incense every day ([Exodus 30:7.](#))
- Not to burn anything on the incense altar besides incense ([Exodus 30:9.](#))

(See, e.g., Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 1:34–35, 37, 42–43, 101–02; 2:81, 85–86. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:377–95. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9.](#))



Ezekiel (1510 fresco by [Michelangelo](#) in the [Sistine Chapel](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

[\[edit\]](#) Generally

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Ezekiel 43:10–27](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Connection to the Parshah

Both the parshah and the haftarah in Ezekiel describe God's holy sacrificial altar and its consecration, the parshah in the Tabernacle

in the wilderness ([Exodus 27:1–8; 29:36–37](#)), and the haftarah in Ezekiel’s conception of a future Temple. ([Ezekiel 43:13–17](#).) Both the parshah and the haftarah describe plans conveyed by a mighty prophet, Moses in the parshah and Ezekiel in the haftarah.



The Death of Agag (illustration by [Gustave Doré](#) from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) On Shabbat Zachor

When Parshah Tetzaveh coincides with Shabbat Zachor (the [special Sabbath](#) immediately preceding [Purim](#) — as it does in 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2018), the haftarah is:

- for [Ashkenazi Jews](#): [1 Samuel 15:2–34](#);
- for [Sephardi Jews](#): [1 Samuel 15:1–34](#).

[[edit](#)] Connection to the Special Sabbath

On Shabbat Zachor, the Sabbath just before Purim, Jews read [Deuteronomy 25:17–19](#), which instructs Jews: “Remember (*zachor*) what [Amalek](#) did” in attacking the Israelites. ([Deuteronomy 25:17](#).) The haftarah for Shabbat Zachor, [1 Samuel 15:2–34](#) or [1–34](#), describes Saul’s encounter with Amalek and Saul’s and Samuel’s treatment of the Amalekite king [Agag](#). Purim, in turn, commemorates the story of [Esther](#) and the Jewish people’s victory over [Haman’s](#) plan to kill the Jews, told in the [book of Esther](#). ([Esther 1:1–10:3](#).) [Esther 3:1](#) identifies Haman as an Agagite, and thus a descendant of Amalek. [Numbers 24:7](#) identifies the Agagites with the Amalekites. Alternatively, a [Midrash](#) tells the story that between King Agag’s capture by Saul and his killing by Samuel, Agag fathered a child, from whom Haman in turn descended. ([Seder Eliyahu Rabbah](#) ch. 20; Targum Sheni to Esther 4:13.)

[[edit](#)] In the liturgy

The *tamid* sacrifice that [Exodus 29:38–39](#) called for the priests to offer at twilight presaged the afternoon prayer service, called “[Mincha](#)” or “offering” in Hebrew. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 26b](#); [Reuven Hammer](#), *Or Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 1. New York: The [Rabbinical Assembly](#), 2003. [ISBN 0916219208](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Exodus 39:1–31](#) (making the priests' vestments).
- [Leviticus 6:3](#) (priest wearing linen); [16:4–33](#) (high priest wearing linen).
- [Deuteronomy 22:11](#) (combining wool and linen).
- [1 Samuel 2:18](#) (priest wearing linen); [22:18](#) (priests wearing linen).
- [2 Samuel 6:14](#) (David wearing linen in worship).
- [Ezekiel 10:76](#) (holy man clad in linen); [44:17–18](#) (priests wearing linen).
- [Daniel 10:5](#) (holy man clad in linen); [12:6–7](#) (holy man clad in linen).
- [Psalms 29:2](#) (holiness of God); [77:21](#) (Moses and Aaron); [93:5](#) (holiness of God); [99:6](#) (Moses and Aaron); [106:16](#) (Moses and Aaron); [115:10,12](#) (house of Aaron); [118:3](#) (house of Aaron); [133:2](#) (anointing Aaron).





Philo

- [1 Chronicles 15:27](#) (David and Levites wearing linen in worship).
- [2 Chronicles 5:12](#) (Levites wearing linen in worship).

[[edit](#)] Early nonrabbinic

- [Philo](#). [Allegorical Interpretation 1](#): 26:81; [3](#): 40:118; [On the Migration of Abraham](#) 18:103; [On the Life of Moses](#) 2:29:150–51; [The Special Laws](#) 1:51:276. [Alexandria](#), Egypt, early 1st Century C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [Charles Duke Yonge](#), 34, 63, 263, 504, 560. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1993. [ISBN 0-943575-93-1](#).



Josephus

- [Josephus](#). [The Wars of the Jews](#), [5:5:7](#). Circa 75 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 708. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).

- Josephus, [*Antiquities of the Jews* 3:6:1–3:10:1](#). Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by William Whiston, 85–95. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).

[edit] Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): [Yoma 7:5](#); [Zevachim 4:3](#); [Menachot 5:6](#), [8:5](#); Keritot 1:1; Tamid 7:1; Kinnim 3:6. Land of Israel, circa 200 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 705, 743, 750, 871, 889. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Tosefta](#): Sotah 7:17; Menachot 6:11, 7:6, 9:16. Land of Israel, circa 300 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, vol. 1: 865; vol. 2: 1430–31, 1435, 1448. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).
- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Challah 20a; Sukkah 29b. Land of Israel, circa 400 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 11, 22. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2008.



Talmud

- Babylonian Talmud: [Shabbat 12a, 21a, 31a, 63b](#); [Eruvin 4a](#); [Pesachim 16b, 24a, 59a–b, 72b, 77a, 92a](#); [Yoma 5a–b, 7a–b, 14a–b, 15a, 31b, 33a–b, 45b, 52b, 57b, 58b, 61a, 68b, 71b–72b](#); [Sukkah 5a, 37b, 49b](#); [Taanit 11b](#); [Megillah 12a–b, 29b](#); [Chagigah 26b](#); [Yevamot 40a, 60b, 68b, 87a, 90a](#); [Nedarim 10b](#); [Nazir 47b](#); [Sotah 9b, 36a, 38a, 48a–b](#); [Gittin 20a–b](#); [Bava Batra 8b, 106b](#); [Sanhedrin 12b, 34b, 61b, 83a–b, 106a](#); [Makkot 13a, 17a, 18a–b](#); [Shevuot 8b, 9b–10b, 14a](#); [Avodah Zarah 10b, 23b, 39a](#); [Zevachim 12b, 17b, 19a, 22b–23a, 24b, 26a, 28b, 44b, 45b, 59b, 83b, 87a, 88a–b, 95a, 97b, 112b, 115b, 119b](#); [Menachot 6a, 11a, 12b, 14b, 25a, 29a, 36b, 42b, 49a, 50a–51a, 61a, 73a, 83a, 86a–b, 89a, 98b](#); [Chullin 7a, 138a](#); [Arakhin 3b–4a, 16a](#); [Keritot 5a](#); [Meilah 11b, 17b](#); [Niddah 13b](#).

Babylonia, 6th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*.

Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

[\[edit\]](#) Medieval

- [Exodus Rabbah](#) 36:1–38:9. 10th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Exodus*. Translated by S. M. Lehrman, 3:436–57. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).



Rashi

- [Saadia Gaon](#). *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, 2:11; 3:10. Baghdad, Babylonia, 933. Translated by Samuel Rosenblatt, 125, 177. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1948. [ISBN 0-300-04490-9](#).
- [Rashi](#). *Commentary. Exodus 27–30*. [Troyes](#), France, late 11th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 2:375–421. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1994. [ISBN 0-89906-027-7](#).
- [Maimonides](#). *Guide for the Perplexed*, [1:25](#); [3:4](#), [32](#), [45](#), [46](#), [47](#). [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1190. Reprinted in, e.g., Moses Maimonides. *The Guide for the Perplexed*. Translated by

[Michael Friedländer](#), 34, 257, 323, 357, 362, 369. New York: Dover Publications, 1956. [ISBN 0-486-20351-4](#).

- [Zohar 2:179b–187b](#). Spain, late 13th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Zohar*. Translated by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon. 5 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1934.



Hobbes

[\[edit\]](#) Modern

- [Thomas Hobbes](#). *Leviathan*, [3:34](#), [40](#), [42](#). England, 1651. Reprint edited by [C. B. Macpherson](#), 431, 503–04, 572, 585. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1982. [ISBN 0140431950](#).
- [Edward Taylor](#). “18. Meditation. Heb. 13.10. Wee Have an Altar.” In *Preliminary Meditations: First Series*. Cambridge, Mass.: Early 18th Century. In [Harold Bloom](#). *American Religious Poems*, 21–22. New York: Library of America, 2006. [ISBN 978-1-931082-74-7](#).
- [Thomas Mann](#). *Joseph and His Brothers*. Translated by [John E. Woods](#), 382. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. [ISBN 1-4000-4001-9](#). Originally published as *Joseph und seine Brüder*. Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer Verlag, 1943.



Steinsaltz

- [Adin Steinsaltz](#). *Simple Words: Thinking About What Really Matters in Life*, 156. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999. [ISBN 068484642X](#).
- Alan Lew. *This Is Real and You Are Completely Unprepared: The Days of Awe as a Journey of Transformation*, 53–55. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 2003. [ISBN 0-316-73908-1](#).
- William H.C. Propp. *Exodus 19–40*, 2A:310–538. New York: [Anchor Bible](#), 2006. [ISBN 0-385-24693-5](#).
- Suzanne A. Brody. “Aaron’s Adornments.” In *Dancing in the White Spaces: The Yearly Torah Cycle and More Poems*, 82. Shelbyville, Kentucky: Wasteland Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-60047-112-9](#).
- [The Mishkan: The Tabernacle: Its Structure, Its Vessels, and the Kohen’s Vestments](#). Brooklyn: Artscroll, 2008. (multimedia representation).
- Avrohom Biderman. [The Mishkan: The Tabernacle: Its Structure and its Sacred Vessels](#). Brooklyn: Artscroll, 2011. [ISBN 1422610748](#).

[\[edit\]](#) External links

[\[edit\]](#) Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Summaries

- [Summary of the Tetzaveh parasha and video of the parasha on Patheos](#)
- [Parasha in a Nutshell: Parasha Tetzaveh](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, California](#)
- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
- [Aish.com](#)
- [American Jewish University](#)
- [Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles](#)
- [Bar-Ilan University](#)

- Chabad.org
- eparsha.com
- G-dcast
- Department for Jewish Agency for Israel
- Jewish Theological Seminary
- MyJewishLearning.com
- Ohr Sameach
- Orthodox Union
- OzTorah, Torah from Australia
- Oz Ve Shalom — Netivot Shalom
- Pardes from Jerusalem
- Rabbi Shimon.com
- Rabbi Shlomo Riskin
- Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld
- Reconstructionist Judaism
- Sephardic Institute
- Shiur.com
- 613.org Jewish Torah Audio

- [Tanach Study Center](#)
- [Teach613.org, Torah Education at Cherry Hill](#)
- [Torah from Dixie](#)
- [Torah.org](#)
- [Torahvort.com](#)
- [Union for Reform Judaism](#)
- [United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth](#)
- [United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism](#)
- [What's Bothering Rashi?](#)

Ki Tisa

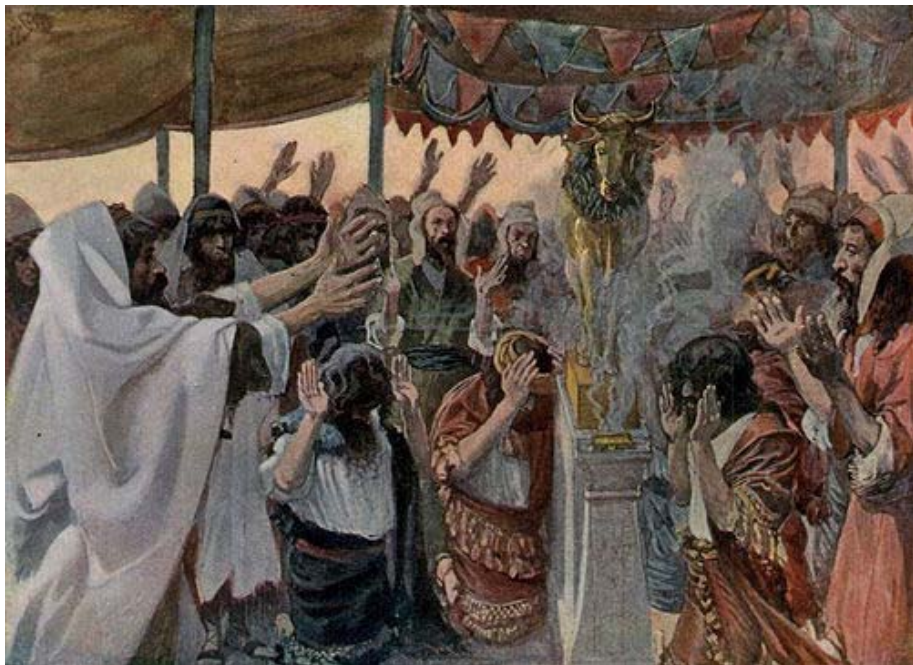
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Ki Tisa, **Ki Tissa**, **Ki Thissa**, or **Ki Sisa** (כִּי טִּסָּא — [Hebrew](#) for “when you take,” the sixth and seventh words, and first distinctive words in the parshah) is the 21st [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the ninth in the [book of Exodus](#). It constitutes [Exodus 30:11–34:35](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it the 21st [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in late February or March.

Jews also read the first part of the parshah, [Exodus 30:11–16](#), regarding the half-[shekel](#) head tax, as the [maftir](#) Torah reading on the [special Sabbath](#) Shabbat Shekalim (March 4, 2011 (read with parshah [Pekudei](#)); February 17, 2012 (read with parshah [Mishpatim](#)); February 9, 2013 (read with parshah [Mishpatim](#)); and March 1, 2014 (read with parshah [Pekudei](#)). Jews also read parts of the parshah addressing the intercession of [Moses](#) and [God's](#) mercy, [Exodus 32:11–14](#) and [34:1–10](#), as the Torah readings on the fast days of the [Tenth of Tevet](#), the [Fast of Esther](#), the [Seventeenth of Tammuz](#), and the [Fast of Gedaliah](#), and for the afternoon (*Mincha*) [prayer service](#) on [Tisha B'Av](#). Jews read another part of the parshah, [Exodus 34:1–26](#), which addresses the [Three Pilgrim Festivals](#) (*Shalosh Regalim*), as the initial Torah reading on the third intermediate day ([Chol HaMoed](#)) of [Passover](#). And Jews read a larger selection from the same part of the

parshah, [Exodus 33:12–34:26](#), as the initial Torah reading on a Sabbath that falls on one of the intermediate days of Passover or [Sukkot](#).



The Golden Calf (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



Bezalel (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[\[edit\]](#) Building the Holy Place

God instructed Moses that when he took a [census](#) of the [Israelites](#), each person 20 years old or older, regardless of wealth, should give a half-shekel offering. ([Exodus 30:11–15](#).) God told Moses to assign the proceeds to the service of the Tent of Meeting. ([Exodus 30:16](#).)

God told Moses to place a [copper](#) laver between the Tent of Meeting and the [altar](#), so that [Aaron](#) and the [priests](#) could wash their [hands](#) and [feet](#) in [water](#) when they entered the Tent of Meeting or approached the altar to burn a [sacrifice](#), so that they would not die. ([Exodus 30:17–22](#).)



Moses Receives the Tablets of the Law (1868 painting by [João Zeferino da Costa](#))

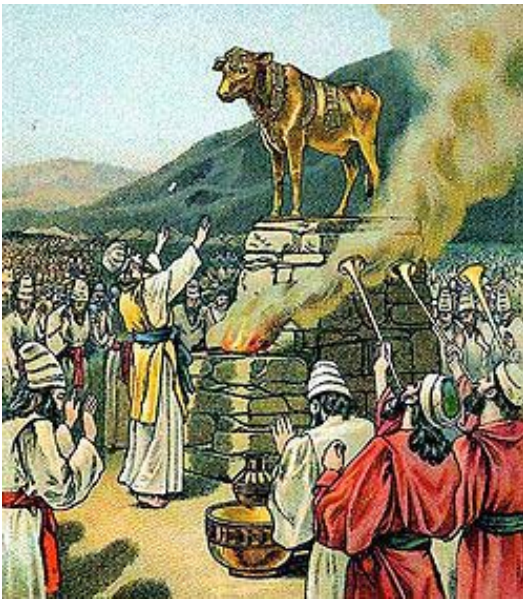
God directed Moses to make a sacred anointing oil from choice [spices](#) — [myrrh](#), [cinnamon](#), [cassia](#) — and [olive oil](#). ([Exodus 30:22–25](#).) God told Moses to use it to anoint the Tent of Meeting, the furnishings of the [Tabernacle](#), and the priests. ([Exodus 30:26–30](#).) God told Moses to warn the Israelites not to copy the sacred anointing oil’s recipe for lay purposes, at pain of [exile](#). ([Exodus 30:31–33](#).)

God directed Moses make sacred [incense](#) from [herbs](#) — stacte, onycha, [galbanum](#), and [frankincense](#) — to burn in the Tent of Meeting. ([Exodus 30:34–36](#).) As with the anointing oil, God

warned against making incense from the same recipe for lay purposes. ([Exodus 30:37.](#))

God informed Moses that God had endowed [Bezalel](#) of the [Tribe of Judah](#) with divine skill in every kind of craft. ([Exodus 31:1–5.](#))

God assigned to him [Oholiab](#) of the [Tribe of Dan](#) and granted skill to all who are skillful, that they might make the furnishings of the Tabernacle, the priests' vestments, the anointing oil, and the incense. ([Exodus 31:6–11.](#)) God told Moses to admonish the Israelites nevertheless to keep the Sabbath, on pain of death. ([Exodus 31:12–17.](#)) Then God gave Moses two stone tablets inscribed by the finger of God. ([Exodus 31:18.](#))



Worshiping the Golden Calf (illustration from a Bible card published 1901 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

[\[edit\]](#) The Golden Calf

Meanwhile, the people became impatient for the return of Moses, and implored Aaron to make them a god. ([Exodus 32:1.](#)) Aaron told them to bring him their [gold earrings](#), and he cast them in a mold and made a molten [golden calf](#). ([Exodus 32:2–4.](#)) They exclaimed, “This is your god, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of [Egypt](#)!” ([Exodus 32:4.](#)) Aaron built an altar before the calf, and announced a festival of the Lord. ([Exodus 32:5.](#)) The people offered sacrifices, ate, drank, and danced. ([Exodus 32:6.](#))

God told Moses what the people had done, saying “let Me be, that My anger may blaze forth against them and that I may destroy them, and make of you a great nation.” ([Exodus 32:7–10.](#)) But Moses implored God not to do so, lest the Egyptians say that God delivered the people only to kill them off in the mountains. ([Exodus 32:11–12.](#)) Moses called on God to remember [Abraham](#), [Isaac](#), and [Jacob](#), and God’s oath to make their offspring as numerous as the [stars](#), and God renounced the planned punishment. ([Exodus 32:13–14.](#))



Moses Destroys the Tables of the Ten Commandments

(watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Moses went down the mountain bearing the two tablets. ([Exodus 32:15–16.](#)) Joshua told Moses, “There is a cry of war in the camp,” but Moses answered, “It is the sound of song that I hear!” ([Exodus 32:17–18.](#))

When Moses saw the calf and the dancing, he became enraged and shattered the tablets at the foot of the mountain. ([Exodus 32:19.](#)) He burned the calf, ground it to powder, strewed it upon the water, and made the Israelites drink it. ([Exodus 32:20.](#)) When

Moses asked Aaron how he committed such a great sin, Aaron replied that the people asked him to make a god, so he hurled their gold into the fire, “and out came this calf!” ([Exodus 32:21–24](#).) Seeing that Aaron had let the people get out of control, Moses stood in the camp gate and called, “Whoever is for the Lord, come here!” ([Exodus 32:25–26](#).) All the [Levites](#) rallied to Moses, and at his instruction killed 3,000 people, including brother, neighbor, and kin. ([Exodus 32:27–29](#).)

Moses went back to God and asked for God either to forgive the Israelites or kill Moses too, but God insisted on punishing only the sinners, which God did by means of a plague. ([Exodus 32:31–35](#).)

[edit] God’s Nature Revealed

Then God dispatched Moses and the people to the [Promised Land](#), but God decided not to go in their midst, for fear of destroying them on the way. ([Exodus 33:1–3](#).) Upon hearing this, the Israelites went into mourning. ([Exodus 33:4](#).) Now Moses would pitch the Tent of Meeting outside the camp, and Moses would enter to speak to God, face to face. ([Exodus 33:7–11](#).) Moses asked God whom God would send with Moses to lead the people. ([Exodus 33:12](#).) Moses further asked God to let him know God’s ways, that Moses might know God and continue in God’s favor. ([Exodus 33:13](#).) And God agreed to lead the Israelites. ([Exodus 33:14](#).) Moses asked God not to make the Israelites move unless God were to go in the lead, and God agreed. ([Exodus 33:15–17](#).) Moses asked God to let him behold

God's Presence. ([Exodus 33:18.](#)) God agreed to make all God's goodness pass before Moses and to proclaim God's name and nature, but God explained that no human could see God's face and live. ([Exodus 33:19–20.](#)) God instructed Moses to station himself on a rock, where God would cover him with God's hand until God had passed, at which point Moses could see God's back. ([Exodus 33:21–23.](#))



Moses with Radiant Face (1638 painting by [José de Ribera](#))

God directed Moses to carve two stone tablets like the ones that Moses shattered, so that God might inscribe upon them the words that were on the first tablets, and Moses did so. ([Exodus 34:1–4.](#)) God came down in a [cloud](#) and proclaimed: “The Lord! The Lord! A God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness, extending kindness to the

thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He does not remit all punishment, but visits the iniquity of parents upon children and children's children, upon the third and fourth generations.” ([Exodus 34:5–7](#).)

Moses bowed low and asked God to accompany the people in their midst, to pardon the people's iniquity, and to take them for God's own. ([Exodus 34:8–9](#).) God replied by making a covenant to work unprecedented wonders and to drive out the peoples of the Promised Land. ([Exodus 34:10–11](#).) God warned Moses against making a covenant with them, lest they become a snare and induce the Israelites' children to lust after their gods. ([Exodus 34:12–16](#).)

God commanded that the Israelites not make molten gods, that they consecrate or redeem every first-born, that they observe the Sabbath, that they observe the Three Pilgrim Festivals, that they not offer sacrifices with anything [leavened](#), that they not leave the Passover [lamb](#) lying until morning, that they bring choice first fruits to the house of the Lord, and that they not boil a kid in its mother's [milk](#). ([Exodus 34:17–26](#).)

[[edit](#)] Moses Became Radiant

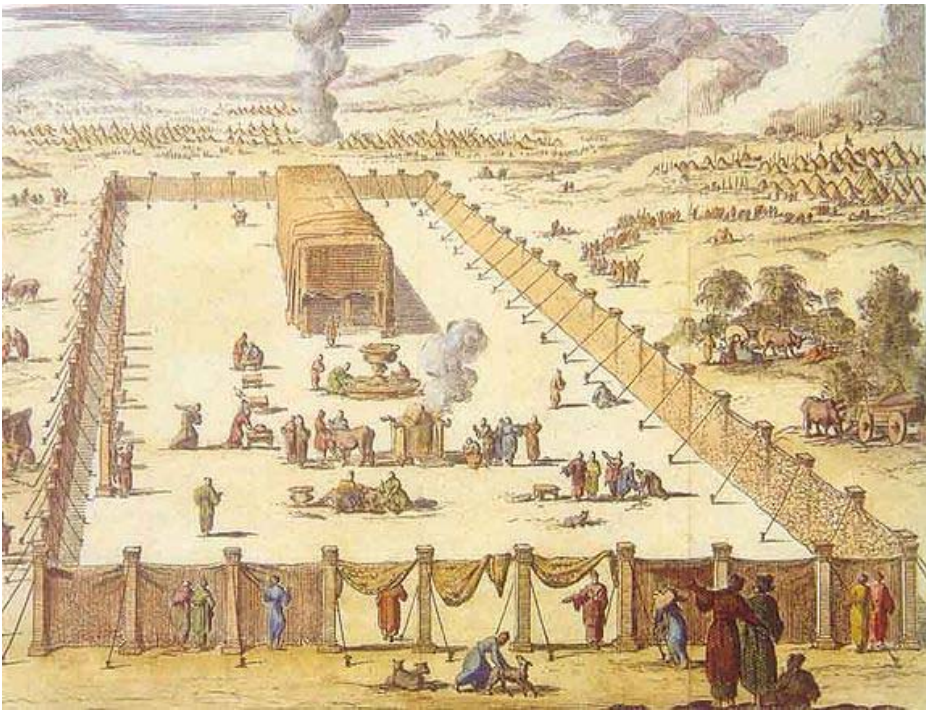
Moses stayed with God 40 days and 40 nights, ate no [bread](#), drank no water, and wrote down on the tablets the terms of the covenant. ([Exodus 34:28](#).) As Moses came down from the mountain bearing the two tablets, the skin of his face was radiant, and the Israelites shrank from him. ([Exodus 34:29–30](#).) Moses called them near and instructed them concerning all that God had

commanded. ([Exodus 34:31–32.](#)) When Moses finished speaking, he put a [veil](#) over his face. ([Exodus 34:33.](#)) Whenever Moses spoke with God, Moses would take his veil off. ([Exodus 34:34.](#)) And when he came out, he would tell the Israelites what he had been commanded, and then Moses would then put the veil back over his face again. ([Exodus 34:34–35.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-Biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapters 25–39

This is the pattern of instruction and construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings:

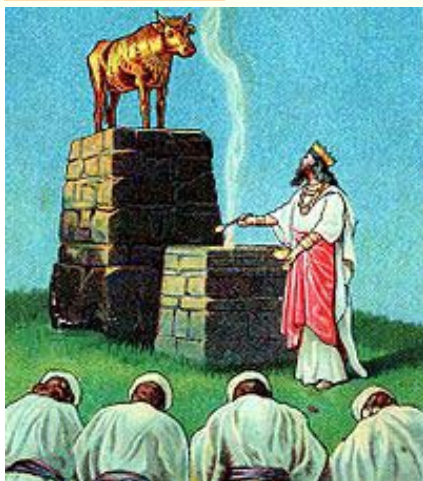




The Tabernacle

Item	Instruction		Construction	
	Order	Verses	Order	Verses
Contributions	1	Exodus 25:1–9	2	Exodus 35:4–29
Ark	2	Exodus 25:10–22	5	Exodus 37:1–9
Table	3	Exodus 25:23–30	6	Exodus 37:10–16
Menorah	4	Exodus 25:31–40	7	Exodus 37:17–24
Tabernacle	5	Exodus 26:1–37	4	Exodus 36:8–38
Altar of Sacrifice	6	Exodus 27:1–8	11	Exodus 38:1–7
Tabernacle Court	7	Exodus 27:9–19	13	Exodus 38:9–20
Lamp	8	Exodus 27:20–21	16	Numbers 8:1–4
Priestly Garments	9	Exodus 28:1–43	14	Exodus 39:1–31
Ordination Ritual	10	Exodus 29:1–46	15	Leviticus 8:1–9:24
Altar of Insense	11	Exodus 30:1–10	8	Exodus 37:25–28
Laver	12	Exodus 30:17–21	12	Exodus 38:8
Anointing Oil	13	Exodus 30:22–33	9	Exodus 37:29

Incense	14	Exodus 30:34–38	10	Exodus 37:29
Craftspeople	15	Exodus 31:1–11	3	Exodus 35:30–36:7
The Sabbath	16	Exodus 31:12–17	1	Exodus 35:1–3



Jeroboam's Idolatry (illustration from a Bible card published 1904 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 32

[1 Kings 12:25–33](#) reports a parallel story of golden calves. King [Jeroboam](#) of the northern [Kingdom of Israel](#) made two calves of gold out of a desire to prevent the kingdom from returning to allegiance to the house of David and the southern [Kingdom of Judah](#). ([1 Kings 12:26–28](#).) In [Exodus 32:4](#), the people said of the Golden Calf, “This is your god, O Israel, that brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” Similarly, in [1 Kings 12:28](#), Jeroboam told

the people of his golden calves, “You have gone up long enough to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” Jeroboam set up one of the calves in [Bethel](#), and the other in [Dan](#), and the people went to worship before the calf in Dan. ([1 Kings 12:29–30](#).) Jeroboam made houses of [high places](#), and made priests from people who were not [Levites](#). ([1 Kings 12:31](#).) He ordained a feast like Sukkot on the fifteenth day of the eighth month (a month after the real Sukkot), and he went up to the altar at Bethel to sacrifice to the golden calves that he had made, and he installed his priests there. ([1 Kings 12:32–33](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 34

[\[edit\]](#) Passover

[Exodus 34:18](#) refers to the [Festival](#) of Passover, calling it “the Feast of Unleavened Bread.” In the [Hebrew Bible](#), Passover is called:

- “Passover” (*Pesach*, פֶּסַח) ([Exodus 12:11, 21, 27, 43, 48; 34:25; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 9:2, 4–6, 10, 12–14; 28:16; 33:3; Deuteronomy 16:1–2, 5–6; Joshua 5:10–11; 2 Kings 23:21–23; Ezekiel 45:21; Ezra 6:19–20; 2 Chronicles 30:1–2, 5, 15, 17–18; 35:1, 6–9, 11, 13, 16–19](#));
- “The Feast of Unleavened Bread” (*Chag haMatzot*, חַג הַמַּצּוֹת) ([Exodus 12:17; 23:15; 34:18; Leviticus 23:6;](#)

[Deuteronomy 16:16](#); [Ezekiel 45:21](#); [Ezra 6:22](#);
[2 Chronicles 8:13](#); [30:13](#), [21](#); [35:17](#)); and

- “A holy convocation” or “a solemn assembly” (*mikrah kodesh*, מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ) ([Exodus 12:16](#); [Leviticus 23:7–8](#); [Numbers 28:18](#), [25](#)).



The Search for Leaven (illustration circa 1733–1739 by [Bernard Picart](#))

Some explain the double nomenclature of “Passover” and “Feast of Unleavened Bread” as referring to two separate feasts that the Israelites combined sometime between [the Exodus](#) and when the Biblical text became settled. (See, e.g., [W. Gunther Plaut](#), *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, 456. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981. [ISBN 0-8074-0055-6](#).) [Exodus 34:18–20](#) and [Deuteronomy 15:19–16:8](#) indicate that the dedication of the firstborn also became associated with the festival.

Some believe that the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” was an agricultural festival at which the Israelites celebrated the beginning of the grain harvest. Moses may have had this festival in mind when in [Exodus 5:1](#) and [10:9](#) he petitioned Pharaoh to let the Israelites go to celebrate a feast in the wilderness. (Plaut, at 464.)

“Passover,” on the other hand, was associated with a thanksgiving sacrifice of a lamb, also called “the Passover,” “the Passover lamb,” or “the Passover offering.” ([Exodus 12:11, 21, 27, 43, 48](#); [Deuteronomy 16:2, 5–6](#); [Ezra 6:20](#); [2 Chronicles 30:15, 17–18](#); [35:1, 6–9, 11, 13](#).)



The Passover Seder of the Portuguese Jews (illustration circa 1733–1739 by Bernard Picart)

[Exodus 12:5–6](#), [Leviticus 23:5](#), and [Numbers 9:3](#) and [5](#), and [28:16](#) direct “Passover” to take place on the evening of the fourteenth of [Aviv](#) ([Nisan](#) in the [Hebrew calendar](#) after the [Babylonian](#)

[captivity](#)). [Joshua 5:10](#), [Ezekiel 45:21](#), [Ezra 6:19](#), and [2 Chronicles 35:1](#) confirm that practice. [Exodus 12:18–19](#), [23:15](#), and [34:18](#), [Leviticus 23:6](#), and [Ezekiel 45:21](#) direct the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” to take place over seven days and [Leviticus 23:6](#) and [Ezekiel 45:21](#) direct that it begin on the fifteenth of the month. Some believe that the propinquity of the dates of the two festivals led to their confusion and merger. (Plaut, at 464.)

[Exodus 12:23](#) and [27](#) link the word “Passover” (*Pesach*, פֶּסַח) to God’s act to “pass over” (*pasach*, פָּסַח) the Israelites’ houses in the [plague](#) of the firstborn. In the Torah, the consolidated Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread thus commemorate the Israelites’ liberation from [Egypt](#). ([Exodus 12:42](#); [23:15](#); [34:18](#); [Numbers 33:3](#); [Deuteronomy 16:1](#), [3](#), [6](#).)

The Hebrew Bible frequently notes the Israelites’ observance of Passover at turning points in their history. [Numbers 9:1–5](#) reports God’s direction to the Israelites to observe Passover in the wilderness of [Sinai](#) on the anniversary of their liberation from Egypt. [Joshua 5:10–11](#) reports that upon entering the [Promised Land](#), the Israelites kept the Passover on the plains of [Jericho](#) and ate unleavened cakes and parched corn, produce of the land, the next day. [2 Kings 23:21–23](#) reports that King [Josiah](#) commanded the Israelites to keep the Passover in [Jerusalem](#) as part of Josiah’s reforms, but also notes that the Israelites had not kept such a Passover from the days of the [Biblical judges](#) nor in all the days of the [kings of Israel](#) or the [kings of Judah](#), calling into question the observance of even Kings [David](#) and [Solomon](#). The more reverent [2 Chronicles 8:12–13](#), however, reports that Solomon

offered sacrifices on the festivals, including the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And [2 Chronicles 30:1–27](#) reports King [Hezekiah](#)'s observance of a second Passover anew, as sufficient numbers of neither the priests nor the people were prepared to do so before then. And [Ezra 6:19–22](#) reports that the Israelites returned from the Babylonian captivity observed Passover, ate the Passover lamb, and kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy.

[[edit](#)] Shavuot

[Exodus 34:22](#) refers to the Festival of [Shavuot](#). In the Hebrew Bible, Shavuot is called:

- The Feast of Weeks (חַג שָׁבֻעֹת, *Chag Shavuot*) ([Exodus 34:22](#); [Deuteronomy 16:10](#); see also [2 Chronicles 8:13](#) (חַג הַשָּׁבֻעֹת, *Chag haShavuot*));
- The Day of the First-fruits (יוֹם הַבִּכּוּרִים, *Yom baBikurim*) ([Numbers 28:26](#));
- The Feast of Harvest (חַג הַקָּצִיר, *Chag haKatzir*) ([Exodus 23:16](#)); and
- A holy convocation (מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ, *mikrah kodesh*) ([Leviticus 23:21](#); [Numbers 28:26](#))

[Exodus 34:22](#) associates Shavuot with the first-fruits (בִּכּוּרֵי, *bikurei*) of the wheat harvest. (See also [Exodus 23:16](#); [Leviticus 23:17](#); [Numbers 28:26](#).) In turn, [Deuteronomy 26:1–11](#) set out the ceremony for the bringing of the first fruits.

To arrive at the correct date, [Leviticus 23:15](#) instructs counting seven weeks from the day after the day of rest of Passover, the day that they brought the sheaf of barley for waving. Similarly, [Deuteronomy 16:9](#) directs counting seven weeks from when they first put the sickle to the standing barley.

[Leviticus 23:16–19](#) sets out a course of offerings for the fiftieth day, including a meal-offering of two loaves made from fine flour from the first-fruits of the harvest; burnt-offerings of seven lambs, one bullock, and two rams; a sin-offering of a goat; and a peace-offering of two lambs. Similarly, [Numbers 28:26–30](#) sets out a course of offerings including a meal-offering; burnt-offerings of two bullocks, one ram, and seven lambs; and one goat to make atonement. [Deuteronomy 16:10](#) directs a freewill-offering in relation to God's blessing.

[Leviticus 23:21](#) and [Numbers 28:26](#) ordain a holy convocation in which the Israelites were not to work.

[2 Chronicles 8:13](#) reports that Solomon offered burnt-offerings on the Feast of Weeks.



Eating in a [Sukkah](#) (1723 engraving by Bernard Picart)

[\[edit\]](#) Sukkot

And [Exodus 34:22](#) refers to the Festival of Sukkot, calling it “the Feast of Ingathering.” In the Hebrew Bible, Sukkot is called:

- “The Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths)” ([Leviticus 23:34](#); [Deuteronomy 16:13](#), [16](#); [31:10](#); [Zechariah 14:16](#), [18](#), [19](#); [Ezra 3:4](#); [2 Chronicles 8:13](#));
- “The Feast of Ingathering” ([Exodus 23:16](#), [34:22](#));
- “The Feast” or “the festival” ([1 Kings 8:2](#), [65](#); [12:32](#); [2 Chronicles 5:3](#); [7:8](#));
- “The Feast of the Lord” ([Leviticus 23:39](#); [Judges 21:19](#));

- “The festival of the seventh month” ([Ezekiel 45:25](#); [Nehemiah 8:14](#)); and
- “A holy convocation” or “a sacred occasion” ([Numbers 29:12](#)).



Celebrating Sukkot with the Four Species (painting circa 1894–1895 by Leopold Pilichowski)

Sukkot’s agricultural origin is evident from the name "The Feast of Ingathering," from the ceremonies accompanying it, and from the season and occasion of its celebration: "At the end of the year when you gather in your labors out of the field" ([Exodus 23:16](#)); "after you have gathered in from your threshing-floor and from your winepress." ([Deuteronomy 16:13](#).) It was a thanksgiving for the fruit harvest. (Compare [Judges 9:27](#).) And in what may explain the festival’s name, [Isaiah](#) reports that grape harvesters kept booths in their [vineyards](#). ([Isaiah 1:8](#).) Coming as it did at the completion of the harvest, Sukkot was regarded as a general thanksgiving for the bounty of nature in the year that had passed.

Sukkot became one of the most important feasts in Judaism, as indicated by its designation as “the Feast of the Lord” ([Leviticus 23:39; Judges 21:19](#)) or simply “the Feast.” ([1 Kings 8:2, 65; 12:32; 2 Chronicles 5:3; 7:8.](#)) Perhaps because of its wide attendance, Sukkot became the appropriate time for important state ceremonies. Moses instructed the children of Israel to gather for a reading of the Law during Sukkot every seventh year. ([Deuteronomy 31:10–11.](#)) King Solomon dedicated the [Temple in Jerusalem](#) on Sukkot. ([1 Kings 8; 2 Chronicles 7.](#)) And Sukkot was the first sacred occasion observed after the resumption of sacrifices in Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. ([Ezra 3:2–4.](#))



Sephardic Jews Observe Hoshanah Rabbah (engraving circa 1723–1743 by Bernard Picart)

In the time of [Nehemiah](#), after the Babylonian captivity, the Israelites celebrated Sukkot by making and dwelling in booths, a

practice of which Nehemiah reports: “the Israelites had not done so from the days of Joshua.” ([Nehemiah 8:13–17.](#)) In a practice related to that of the [Four Species](#), Nehemiah also reports that the Israelites found in the Law the commandment that they “go out to the mountains and bring leafy branches of [olive](#) trees, [pine](#) trees, [myrtles](#), [palms](#) and [other] leafy trees to make booths.” ([Nehemiah 8:14–15.](#)) In [Leviticus 23:40](#), God told Moses to command the people: “On the first day you shall take the product of *badar* trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and [willows](#) of the brook,” and “You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths, in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.” ([Leviticus 23:42–43.](#)) The book of Numbers, however, indicates that while in the wilderness, the Israelites dwelt in tents. ([Numbers 11:10; 16:27.](#)) Some secular scholars consider [Leviticus 23:39–43](#) (the commandments regarding booths and the four species) to be an insertion by a later [redactor](#). (E.g., [Richard Elliott Friedman](#). *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 228–29. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003.)

King Jeroboam of the northern Kingdom of Israel, whom [1 Kings 13:33](#) describes as practicing “his evil way,” celebrated a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, one month after Sukkot, “in imitation of the festival in Judah.” ([1 Kings 12:32–33.](#)) “While Jeroboam was standing on the [altar](#) to present the offering, the man of God, at the command of the Lord, cried out against the altar” in disapproval. ([1 Kings 13:1.](#))

According to the prophet [Zechariah](#), in the messianic era, Sukkot will become a universal festival, and all nations will make pilgrimages annually to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast there. ([Zechariah 14:16–19](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

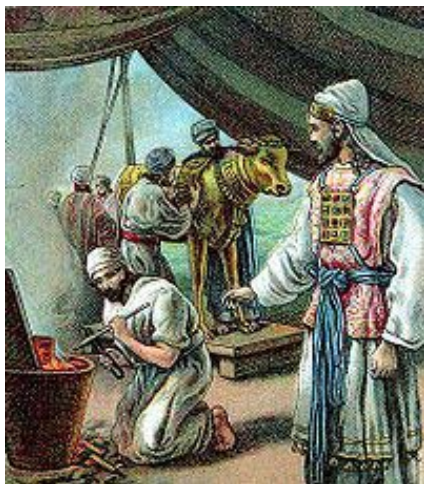
[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 30

[Rabbi Abbahu](#) taught that Moses asked God how Israel would be exalted, and God replied in the words of [Exodus 30:12](#) (about collecting the half-shekel tax), “When you raise them up,” teaching that collecting contributions from the people elevates them. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 10b](#).) The first four chapters of Tractate Shekalim in the [Mishnah](#), [Tosefta](#), and Talmud interpreted the law of the half-shekel head tax commanded by [Exodus 30:13–16](#). (Mishnah Shekalim 1:1–4:9; Tosefta Shekalim 1:1–3:1; [Babylonian Talmud Shekalim 2a–13a](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 31

Reading the words “everyone who profanes [the Sabbath] shall surely be put to death” in [Exodus 31:14](#) (in which the verb for death is doubled), [Samuel](#) deduced that the Torah decreed many deaths for desecrating the Sabbath. The [Gemara](#) posited that perhaps [Exodus 31:14](#) refers to willful desecration. The Gemara answered that [Exodus 31:14](#) is not needed to teach that willful transgression of the Sabbath is a capital crime, for [Exodus 35:2](#) says, “Whoever does any work therein shall be put to death.” The

Gemara concluded that [Exodus 31:14](#) thus must apply to an unwitting offender, and in that context, the words “shall surely be put to death” mean that the inadvertent Sabbath violator will “die” monetarily because of the violator’s need to bring costly sacrifices. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 70a.](#))



The Golden Calf (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

[[edit](#)] Exodus chapter 32

A [Baraita](#) taught that because of God’s displeasure with the Israelites, the north wind did not blow on them in any of the 40 years during which they wandered in the wilderness. [Rashi](#) attributed God’s displeasure to the golden calf, although the [Tosafot](#) attributed it to the incident of the spies in [Numbers 13](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 72a.](#))



The Adoration of the Golden Calf (painting circa 1633–1634 by [Nicolas Poussin](#))

Did the prayer of Moses in [Exodus 32:11–14](#) change God’s harsh decree? On this subject, Rabbi [Abbahu](#) interpreted [David](#)’s last words, as reported in [2 Samuel 23:2–3](#), where David reported that God told him, “Ruler over man shall be the righteous, even he that rules through the fear of God.” Rabbi Abbahu read [2 Samuel 23:2–3](#) to teach that God rules humankind, but the righteous rule God, for God makes a decree, and the righteous may through their prayer annul it. ([Babylonian Talmud Moed Katan 16b.](#))

[Raba](#) employed [Numbers 30:3](#) to interpret [Exodus 32:11](#), which says: “And Moses besought (*va-yechal*) the Lord his God” in

connection with the incident of the golden calf. Raba noted that [Exodus 32:11](#) uses the term “besought” (*va-yechal*), while [Numbers 30:3](#) uses the similar term “break” (*yachel*) in connection with vows. Transferring the use of [Numbers 30:3](#) to [Exodus 32:11](#), Raba reasoned that [Exodus 32:11](#) meant that Moses stood in prayer before God until Moses annulled for God God’s vow to destroy Israel, for a master had taught that while people cannot break their vows, others may annul their vows for them. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 32a](#).) Similarly, Rabbi Berekiah taught in the name of [Rabbi Helbo](#) in the name of Rabbi Isaac that Moses absolved God of God’s vow. When the Israelites made the golden calf, Moses began to persuade God to forgive them, but God explained to Moses that God had already taken an oath in [Exodus 22:19](#) that “he who sacrifices to the gods . . . shall be utterly destroyed,” and God could not retract an oath. Moses responded by asking whether God had not granted Moses the power to annul oaths in [Numbers 30:3](#) by saying, “When a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind his soul with a bond, *he* shall not break his word,” implying that while he himself could not break his word, a scholar could absolve his vow. So Moses wrapped himself in his cloak and adopted the posture of a sage, and God stood before Moses as one asking for the annulment of a vow. ([Exodus Rabbah](#) 43:4.)



The Golden Calf (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

The Gemara deduced from the example of Moses in [Exodus 32:11](#), that one should seek an interceding frame of mind before praying. [Rav Huna](#) and [Rav Hisda](#) were discussing how long to wait between recitations of the [Amidah](#) prayer if one erred in the first reciting and needed to repeat the prayer. One said: long enough for the person praying to fall into a suppliant frame of mind, citing the words “And I supplicated the Lord” in [Deuteronomy 3:23](#). The other said: long enough to fall into an interceding frame of mind, citing the words “And Moses interceded” in [Exodus 32:11](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 30b.](#))



The Idolatry of the Golden Calf (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

Interpreting [Exodus 32:15](#) on the “tablets that were written on both their sides,” [Rav Chisda](#) said that the writing of the tablets was cut completely through the tablets, so that it could be read from either side. Thus the letters *mem* and *samekh*, which each form a complete polygon, left some of the stone tablets in the middle of those letters standing in the air where they were held stable only by a miracle. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 104a.](#))

A [midrash](#) explained why Moses broke the stone tablets. When the Israelites committed the sin of the Golden Calf, God sat in judgment to condemn them, as [Deuteronomy 9:14](#) says, “Let Me alone, that I may destroy them,” but God had not yet condemned them. So Moses took the tablets from God to appease God’s wrath. The midrash compared the act of Moses to that of a king’s

marriage-broker. The king sent the broker to secure a wife for the king, but while the broker was on the road, the woman corrupted herself with another man. The broker (who was entirely innocent) took the marriage document that the king had given the broker to seal the marriage and tore it, reasoning that it would be better for the woman to be judged as an unmarried woman than as a wife. (Exodus Rabbah 43:1.)



Moses Smashing the Tables of the Law (illustration by [Gustave Doré](#))

A Baraita taught that when Moses broke the tablets in [Exodus 32:19](#), it was one of three actions that Moses took based on his own understanding with which God then agreed. The Gemara

explained that Moses reasoned that if the Passover lamb, which was just one of the 613 commandments, was prohibited by [Exodus 12:43](#) to aliens, then certainly the whole Torah should be prohibited to the Israelites, who had acted as apostates with the golden calf. The Gemara deduced God's approval from God's mention of Moses' breaking the tablets in [Exodus 34:1](#). [Resh Lakish](#) interpreted this to mean that God gave Moses strength because he broke the tablets. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 87a.](#))



Destruction of the Golden Calf (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

Reading the report of [Exodus 32:20](#) that Moses “took the calf . . . ground it to powder, and sprinkled it on the water, and made the children of Israel drink it,” the Sages interpreted that Moses meant to test the Israelites much as the procedure of [Numbers](#)

[5:11–31](#) tested a wife accused of adultery (*sotah*). ([Babylonian Talmud Avodah Zarah 44a.](#))

The Rabbis taught that through the word “this,” Aaron became degraded, as it is said in [Exodus 32:22–24](#), “And Aaron said: ‘. . . I cast it into the fire, and there came out *this* calf,’” and through the word “this,” Aaron was also elevated, as it is said in [Leviticus 6:13](#), “*This* is the offering of Aaron and of his sons, which they shall offer to the Lord on the day when he is anointed” to become High Priest. ([Leviticus Rabbah](#) 8:1.)

[Rav Nahman bar Isaac](#) derived from the words “if not, blot me, I pray, out of Your book that You have written” in [Exodus 32:32](#) that three books are opened in heaven on [Rosh Hashanah](#). Rav Kruspedai said in the name of Rabbi Johanan that on Rosh Hashanah, three books are opened in heaven — one for the thoroughly wicked, one for the thoroughly righteous, and one for those in between. The thoroughly righteous are forthwith inscribed definitively in the book of life. The thoroughly wicked are forthwith inscribed definitively in the book of death. And the fate of those in between is suspended from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur. If they deserve well, then they are inscribed in the book of life; if they do not deserve well, then they are inscribed in the book of death. Rabbi Abin said that [Psalm 69:29](#) tells us this when it says, “Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.” “Let them be blotted out from the book” refers to the book of the wicked. “Of the living” refers to the book of the righteous. “And not be written with the righteous” refers to the book of those in between. Rav Nahman

bar Isaac derived this from [Exodus 32:32](#), where Moses told God, “if not, blot me, I pray, out of Your book that You have written.” “Blot me, I pray” refers to the book of the wicked. “Out of Your book” refers to the book of the righteous. “That you have written” refers to the book of those in between. ([Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 16b.](#))

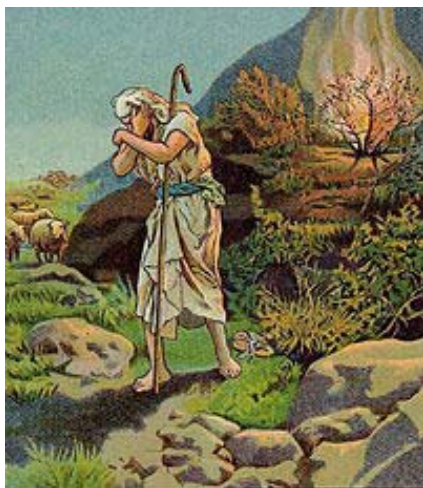
[[edit](#)] Exodus chapter 33

Reading [Exodus 24:3](#), Rabbi [Simlai](#) taught that when the Israelites gave precedence to “we will do” over “we will hear,” 600,000 ministering angels came and set two crowns on each Israelite man, one as a reward for “we will do” and the other as a reward for “we will hearken.” But as soon as the Israelites committed the sin of the golden calf, 1.2 million destroying angels descended and removed the crowns, as it is said in [Exodus 33:6](#), “And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments from mount Horeb.” ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 88a.](#))

The Gemara reported a number of Rabbis’ reports of how the Land of Israel did indeed flow with “milk and honey,” as described in [Exodus 3:8](#) and [17, 13:5](#), and [33:3, Leviticus 20:24, Numbers 13:27](#) and [14:8](#), and [Deuteronomy 6:3, 11:9, 26:9](#) and [15, 27:3](#), and [31:20](#). Once when Rami bar Ezekiel visited [Bnei Brak](#), he saw goats grazing under fig trees while honey was flowing from the figs, and milk dripped from the goats mingling with the fig honey, causing him to remark that it was indeed a land flowing with milk and honey. Rabbi Jacob ben Dostai said that it is about three miles from [Lod](#) to [Ono](#), and once he rose up

early in the morning and waded all that way up to his ankles in fig honey. Resh Lakish said that he saw the flow of the milk and honey of [Sepphoris](#) extend over an area of sixteen miles by sixteen miles. Rabbah bar Bar Hana said that he saw the flow of the milk and honey in all the Land of Israel and the total area was equal to an area of twenty-two [parasangs](#) by six parasangs.

([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 111b–12a.](#))



The Burning Bush (illustration from a Bible card published 1900 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

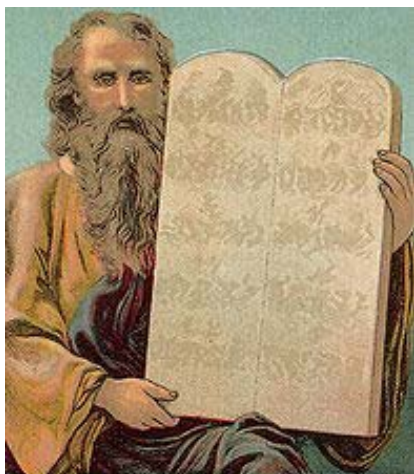
[Rav Nachman](#) taught that the [angel](#) of whom God spoke in [Exodus 23:20](#) was [Metatron](#) (מטטרון). Rav Nahman warned that one who is as skilled in refuting heretics as Rav Idit should do so, but others should not. Once a heretic asked Rav Idit why [Exodus 24:1](#) says, “And to Moses He said, ‘Come up to the Lord,’” when surely God should have said, “Come up to Me.” Rav Idit replied that it was the angel Metatron who said that, and that Metatron’s

name is similar to that of his Master (and indeed the [gematria](#) (numerical value of the Hebrew letters) of Metatron (מטטרוֹן) equals that of Shadai (שׁדַּי), God's name in [Genesis 17:1](#) and elsewhere) for [Exodus 23:21](#) says, “for my name is in him.” But if so, the heretic retorted, we should worship Metatron. Rav Idit replied that [Exodus 23:21](#) also says, “Be not rebellious against him,” by which God meant, “Do not exchange Me for him” (as the word for “rebel,” (*tamer*; תִּמְּרָה) derives from the same root as the word “exchange”). The heretic then asked why then [Exodus 23:21](#) says, “he will not pardon your transgression.” Rav Idit answered that indeed Metatron has no authority to forgive sins, and the Israelites would not accept him even as a messenger, for [Exodus 33:15](#) reports that Moses told God, “If Your Presence does not go with me, do not carry us up from here.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 38b.](#))

A Baraita taught in the name of Rabbi Joshua ben Korhah that God told Moses that when God wanted to be seen at the [burning bush](#), Moses did not want to see God's face; Moses hid his face in [Exodus 3:6](#), for he was afraid to look upon God. And then in [Exodus 33:18](#), when Moses wanted to see God, God did not want to be seen; in [Exodus 33:20](#), God said, “You cannot see My face.” But Rabbi [Samuel bar Nahmani](#) said in the name of [Rabbi Jonathan](#) that in compensation for three pious acts that Moses did at the burning bush, he was privileged to obtain three rewards. In reward for hiding his face in [Exodus 3:6](#), his face shone in [Exodus 34:29](#). In reward his fear of God in [Exodus 3:6](#), the Israelites were afraid to come near him in [Exodus 34:30](#). In

reward for his reticence “to look upon God,” he beheld the similitude of God in [Numbers 12:8](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 7a](#).)

Rabbi [Jose ben Halafta](#) employed [Exodus 33:21](#) to help explain how God can be called “the Place.” Reading the words, “And he lighted upon the place,” in [Genesis 28:11](#) to mean, “And he met the Divine Presence ([Shechinah](#)),” Rav Huna asked in [Rabbi Ammi](#)’s name why [Genesis 28:11](#) assigns to God the name “the Place.” Rav Huna explained that it is because God is the Place of the world (the world is contained in God, and not God in the world). Rabbi Jose ben Halafta taught that we do not know whether God is the place of God’s world or whether God’s world is God’s place, but from [Exodus 33:21](#), which says, “Behold, there is a place with Me,” it follows that God is the place of God’s world, but God’s world is not God’s place. Rabbi Isaac taught that reading [Deuteronomy 33:27](#), “The eternal God is a dwelling place,” one cannot know whether God is the dwelling-place of God’s world or whether God’s world is God’s dwelling-place. But reading [Psalm 90:1](#), “Lord, You have been our dwelling-place,” it follows that God is the dwelling-place of God’s world, but God’s world is not God’s dwelling-place. And Rabbi Abba ben Judan taught that God is like a warrior riding a horse with the warrior’s robes flowing over on both sides of the horse. The horse is subsidiary to the rider, but the rider is not subsidiary to the horse. Thus [Habakkuk 3:8](#) says, “You ride upon Your horses, upon Your chariots of victory.” ([Genesis Rabbah 68:9](#).)



The Tablets of the Ten Commandments (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 34

Rabban [Johanan ben Zakkai](#) explained why God carved the first two tablets but Moses carved the second two, as God instructed in [Exodus 34:1](#). Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai compared it to the case of a king who took a wife and paid for the paper for the marriage contract, the scribe, and the wedding dress. But when he saw her cavorting with one of his servants, he became angry with her and sent her away. Her agent came to the king and argued that she had been raised among servants and was thus familiar with them. The king told the agent that if he wished that the king should become reconciled with her, the agent should pay for the paper and the scribe for a new wedding contract and the king would sign it. Similarly, Moses spoke to God after the Israelites had committed the sin of the golden calf. Moses argued that God

knew that God had brought the Israelites out of Egypt, a house of idolatry. Then God answered that if Moses desired that God should become reconciled with the Israelites, then Moses would have to bring the tablets at his own expense and God would append God's signature, as God says in [Exodus 34:1](#): "And I will write upon the tables." (Deuteronomy Rabbah 3:17.)

In [Deuteronomy 18:15](#), Moses foretold that "A prophet will the Lord your God raise up for you . . . *like me*," and [Rabbi Johanan](#) thus taught that prophets would have to be, like Moses, strong, wealthy, wise, and meek. Strong, for [Exodus 40:19](#) says of Moses, "he spread the tent over the tabernacle," and a Master taught that Moses himself spread it, and [Exodus 26:16](#) reports, "Ten [cubits](#) shall be the length of a board." Similarly, the strength of Moses can be derived from [Deuteronomy 9:17](#), in which Moses reports, "And I took the two tablets, and cast them out of my two hands, and broke them," and it was taught that the tablets were six handbreadths in length, six in breadth, and three in thickness. Wealthy, as [Exodus 34:1](#) reports God's instruction to Moses, "Carve yourself two tablets of stone," and the Rabbis interpreted the verse to teach that the chips would belong to Moses. Wise, for [Rav](#) and Samuel both said that 50 gates of understanding were created in the world, and all but one were given to Moses, for [Psalm 8:6](#) said of Moses, "You have made him a little lower than God." Meek, for [Numbers 12:3](#) reports, "Now the man Moses was very meek." ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 38a](#).)

The [Sifre](#) taught that [Exodus 34:6](#) demonstrates one of God's attributes that humans should emulate. (Sifre to Deuteronomy

49:1.) Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina asked what [Deuteronomy 13:5](#) means in the text, “You shall walk after the Lord your God.” How can a human being walk after God, when [Deuteronomy 4:24](#) says, “[T]he Lord your God is a devouring fire”? Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina explained that the command to walk after God means to walk after the attributes of God. As God clothes the naked — for [Genesis 3:21](#) says, “And the Lord God made for [Adam](#) and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them” — so should we also clothe the naked. God visited the sick — for [Genesis 18:1](#) says, “And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of [Mamre](#)” (after Abraham was circumcised in [Genesis 17:26](#)) — so should we also visit the sick. God comforted mourners — for [Genesis 25:11](#) says, “And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac his son” — so should we also comfort mourners. God buried the dead — for [Deuteronomy 34:6](#) says, “And He buried him in the valley” — so should we also bury the dead. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 14a](#).) Similarly, the Sifre on [Deuteronomy 11:22](#) taught that to walk in God’s ways means to be (in the words of [Exodus 34:6](#)) “merciful and gracious.” (Sifre to Deuteronomy 49:1.)



The Two Reports of the Spies (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

[Rabbi Jose](#) interpreted the words “forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty” in [Exodus 34:7](#) to teach that a person who sins once, twice, or even three times is forgiven, but one who sins four times is not forgiven. Rabbi Jose cited for support [Amos 2:6](#), where God says, “for three transgressions of Israel,” God would not reverse God’s forgiveness, and [Job 33:29](#), which says, “God does these things twice, yea thrice, with a man.” (Tosefta Kippurim (Yoma) 4:13.)



Moses and the Ten Commandments (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

A Baraita taught that when Moses ascended to receive the Torah from God, Moses found God writing “longsuffering” among the words with which [Exodus 34:8](#) describes God. Moses asked God whether God meant longsuffering with the righteous, to which God replied that God is longsuffering even with the wicked. Moses exclaimed that God could let the wicked perish, but God cautioned Moses that Moses would come to desire God’s longsuffering for the wicked. Later, when the Israelites sinned at

the incident of the spies, God reminded Moses that he had suggested that God be long-suffering only with the righteous, to which Moses recounted that God had promised to be long-suffering even with the wicked. And that is why Moses in [Numbers 14:17–18](#) cited to God that God is “slow to anger.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 111a–b.](#))

Tractate [Beitzah](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, [Jerusalem Talmud](#), and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws common to all of the [Festivals](#) in [Exodus 12:3–27, 43–49; 13:6–10; 23:16; 34:18–23; Leviticus 16; 23:4–43; Numbers 9:1–14; 28:16–30:1; and Deuteronomy 16:1–17; 31:10–13.](#) (Mishnah Beitzah 1:1–5:7; Tosefta Yom Tov (Beitzah) 1:1–4:11; Jerusalem Talmud Beitzah 1a–49b; [Babylonian Talmud Beitzah 2a–40b.](#))

The Mishnah interpreted [Exodus 34:20](#) to allow money in exchange for redemption of a first-born son to be given to any [priest](#) (*kohen*). (Mishnah Challah 4:9.)

[Rabbi Akiva](#) interpreted [Exodus 34:21](#) to prohibit plowing prior to the [Sabbatical year](#) (*Shmita*) that would reap benefits in the Sabbatical year and to prohibit reaping in the year after the Sabbatical year produce that grew in the Sabbatical year. [Rabbi Ishamel](#) argued, however, that [Exodus 34:21](#) applied to the Sabbath, and limited its prohibition to plowing and reaping not elsewhere required by commandment. (Mishnah Sheviit 1:4.)

Tractate [Sukkah](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of Sukkot in [Exodus 23:16; and 34:22; Leviticus 23:33–43; Numbers 29:12–34; and](#)

[Deuteronomy 16:13–17](#); and [31:10–13](#). ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:1–5:8](#); Tosefta Sukkah 1:1–4:28; Jerusalem Talmud Sukkah 1a–33b; [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 2a–56b](#).)

Tractate [Pesachim](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the Passover in [Exodus 12:3–27](#), [43–49](#); [13:6–10](#); and [34:25](#); [Leviticus 23:4–8](#); [Numbers 9:1–14](#); and [28:16–25](#); and [Deuteronomy 16:1–8](#). ([Mishnah Pesachim 1:1–10:9](#); Tosefta Pisha 1:1–10:13; Jerusalem Talmud Pesachim 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 2a–121b](#).)

Rabbi [Simeon ben Yohai](#) taught that because the generation of the Flood transgressed the Torah that God gave humanity after Moses had stayed on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights (as reported in [Exodus 24:18](#) and [34:28](#) and [Deuteronomy 9:9–11](#), [18](#), [25](#), and [10:10](#)), God announced in [Genesis 7:4](#) that God would “cause it to rain upon the earth 40 days and 40 nights.” ([Genesis Rabbah 32:5](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are 4 positive and 5 negative [commandments](#) in the parshah:



Collecting the Tax for the Temple (illustration from a Bible card published by the Providence Lithograph Company)

- To give a half shekel annually ([Exodus 30:13.](#))
- A Kohen must wash his hands and feet before service. ([Exodus 30:19.](#))
- To prepare the anointing oil ([Exodus 30:31.](#))
- Not to anoint with anointing oil ([Exodus 30:32.](#))
- Not to reproduce the anointing oil ([Exodus 30:32.](#))
- Not to reproduce the incense formula ([Exodus 30:37.](#))
- Not to eat or drink anything from an offering to an idol ([Exodus 34:12–15.](#))

- To let the land lie fallow in the Sabbatical year ([Exodus 34:21.](#))
- Not to cook meat and milk together ([Exodus 34:26.](#))

(See *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:397–431. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9.](#))

[Maimonides](#), however, attributed to this parshah only the following 4 positive and 3 negative commandments:

- To give a half shekel annually ([Exodus 30:13.](#))
- A Kohen must wash his hands and feet before service. ([Exodus 30:19.](#))
- To prepare the anointing oil ([Exodus 30:31.](#))
- Not to reproduce the anointing oil ([Exodus 30:32.](#))
- Not to anoint with anointing oil ([Exodus 30:32.](#))
- Not to reproduce the incense formula ([Exodus 30:37.](#))
- To let the land lie fallow in the Sabbatical year ([Exodus 34:21.](#))

(See Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 1:33–34, 45, 143, 180–81; 2:82–84, 182–83. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4.](#))



[Elijah](#) (statue in the [Mafra National Palace](#), [Mafra](#), [Portugal](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

[\[edit\]](#) Generally

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is:

- for [Ashkenazi Jews](#): [1 Kings 18:1–39](#)
- for [Sephardi Jews](#): [1 Kings 18:20–39](#)



Ezekiel (1510 fresco by [Michelangelo](#))

[[edit](#)] Connection to the Parshah

Both the parshah and the haftarah in First Kings describe God's prophet confronting idolatry to restore worship of God, the parshah in Moses' anger at the golden calf ([Exodus 32:1–35](#)), and the haftarah in the prophet [Elijah](#)'s confrontation with the prophets of [Baal](#). ([1 Kings 18:20–39](#).) In both the parshah and the haftarah, the prophet was on a mountain ([Exodus 32:1,15; 1 Kings 18:19–20](#)); the prophet invoked the names of Abraham and Isaac in prayer to God ([Exodus 32:13; 1 Kings 18:36](#)); sound (*kol*) is observed ([Exodus 32:18; 1 Kings 18:26](#)); the prophet called on the Israelites to choose between God and the false god ([Exodus 32:26; 1 Kings 18:21](#)); and God manifested God's choice ([Exodus 32:35; 1 Kings 18:38](#)).

[\[edit\]](#) On Shabbat Parah

When the parshah coincides with Shabbat Parah (the [special Sabbath](#) prior to Passover — as it does in 2009, 2010, 2013, and 2017), the haftarah is [Ezekiel 36:16–38](#). On Shabbat Parah, the Sabbath of the [red heifer](#), Jews read [Numbers 19:1–22](#), which describes the rites of purification using the red heifer (*parah adumah*). Similarly, the haftarah in Ezekiel also describes purification. In both the special reading and the haftarah in Ezekiel, sprinkled water cleansed the Israelites. ([Numbers 19:18](#); [Ezekiel 36:25](#).)



High Priest Offering Incense on the Altar (illustration from the 1894 *Treasures of the Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy

Some Jews read the descriptions of the laver in [Exodus 30:17–21](#) and Aaron's incense offerings in [Exodus 30:7–8](#) and [30:34–36](#) after the Sabbath morning blessings. (Menachem Davis. *The*

Schottenstein Edition Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals with an Interlinear Translation, 216–17, 223–24. Brooklyn: [Mesorah Publications](#), 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-697-3](#).)

Some Jews sing of the Sabbath’s holiness, reflecting [Exodus 31:14](#), as part of the *Baruch El Elyon* song (*ẓemer*) sung in connection with the Sabbath day meal. (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 466.)

Jews recite the account of the Sabbath’s significance in [Exodus 31:16–17](#) as the final reading concluding the blessings of the *Shema* before the punctuating half-*Kaddish* and the *Amidah* prayer in the Friday Sabbath evening (*Maariv*) prayer service. (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 104.) The exhortation to “observe” (*V’shamru*, וישמרו) the Sabbath that this reading concludes reflects God’s command in [Exodus 31:13](#) to “keep My Sabbaths,” even to the exclusion of other apparently worthy causes. (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 103.) Again, Jews recite the account of the Sabbath’s significance in [Exodus 31:16–17](#) as part of the *V’shamru* paragraph of the *Amidah* prayer in the Sabbath morning (*Shacharit*) prayer service. (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 345.) And once again, Jews recite the account of the Sabbath’s significance in [Exodus 31:16–17](#) as part of the *V’shamru* paragraph of the *Kiddusha Rabba* blessing for the Sabbath day meal. (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 458.)



Moses with the Tablets of the Law (1659 painting by [Rembrandt](#))

The second blessing before the *Shema* addresses God about “your people” Israel, as Moses does in [Exodus 32:11–12](#). ([Reuven Hammer](#), *Or Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 29. New York: [Rabbinical Assembly](#), 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#).)

Jews recite the account of how Moses brought down two tablets of stone reported in [Exodus 32:15](#) as part of the *Amidah* prayer in the Sabbath morning (*Shacharit*) prayer service. (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 344–45.)

Some Jews refer to the inscription on the two tablets of stone reported in [Exodus 32:15](#) as they study [Pirkei Avot chapter 5](#) on a Sabbath between Passover and [Rosh Hashanah](#). (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 571.) And thereafter, some quote [Exodus 32:16](#) as they study *Pirkei Avot* [chapter 6](#) on a succeeding

Sabbath between Passover and Rosh Hashanah. (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 584.)

God's characteristics of graciousness and compassion in [Exodus 34:6](#) are reflected in [Psalm 145:8](#) and in turn in the *Ashrei* prayer in the morning (*Shacharit*) and afternoon (*Mincha*) prayer services. Similarly, Jews call on God's characteristic of forgiveness in [Exodus 34:6](#) with the words "forgive us, our Guide" in the weekday *Amidah* prayer in each of the three prayer services. And again, Jews cite God's characteristic of "steadfast lovingkindness (*rav chesed*)" in [Exodus 34:6](#) in the *Kedushah D'Sidra* section of the *Minchah* service for Shabbat. (Hammer, at 1, 4, 228.)

Jews recite three times the 13 attributes of mercy in [Exodus 34:6–7](#) after removing the Torah from the [Ark](#) on Passover, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, [Yom Kippur](#), Sukkot, and [Hoshana Rabbah](#). (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 359.)

During the *Amidah* prayer in the Sabbath morning (*Shacharit*) prayer service, Jews refer to the "crown of splendor" that God placed on Moses in [Exodus 34:29](#). (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 344.)

[\[edit\]](#) The weekly maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), Sephardi Jews each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parshah. For Parshah Ki Tisa, Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Hijaz, the maqam that expresses mourning and sorrow. This is appropriate, because

it is the parshah that contains the episode of the golden calf, a sad and embarrassing episode in the history of the Israelite people.

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Exodus 20:4](#) (20:5 in NJPS) (punishing children for fathers' sin); [12:3–27](#), [43–49](#) (Passover); [13:6–10](#) (Passover); [23:14–19](#) (three pilgrim festivals).
- [Leviticus 23:4–43](#) (three pilgrim festivals).
- [Numbers 5:11–31](#) (drinking the accursed thing); [9:1–14](#) (Passover); [14:18](#) (attributes of God; punishing children for fathers' sin); [25:1–18](#) (sacrifices to another god; zealots kill apostates; zealots rewarded with priestly standing; plague as punishment; leader makes atonement); [28:16–31](#) (Passover, Shavuot); [29:12–34](#) (Sukkot).
- [Deuteronomy 5:8](#) (5:9 in NJPS) (punishing children for fathers' sin); [9:8–21](#), [25–29](#) (golden calf); [10:1](#) (second set of tablets); [16:1–17](#) (three pilgrim festivals); [24:16](#) (*no* capital punishment of children for fathers' sin); [31:10–13](#) (Sukkot).
- [Judges 8:24–27](#) (cult object from molten jewelry); [21:19](#) (Sukkot).

- [1 Kings 8:1–66](#) (Sukkot); [1 Kings 12:26–30](#) (golden calves); [1 Kings 12:32](#) (northern feast like Sukkot).
- [Jeremiah 31:28–29](#) (31:29–30 in NJPS) (*not* punishing children for fathers' sin).
- [Ezekiel 16:17](#) (idols from molten jewelry); [18:1–4](#) (*not* punishing children for fathers' sin); [45:25](#) (Sukkot).
- [Nahum 1:2–3](#) (God's attributes).
- [Zechariah 14:16–19](#) (Sukkot).
- [Psalm 25:4](#) ("Show me Your ways"); [27:11](#) ("Teach me Your way"); [45:9](#) (cassia); [49:8](#) (ransom to God); [56:9](#) (God's book); [69:29](#) (blot out of the book of the living); [78:55](#) (God drove out the nations before them); [80:9](#) (God drove out the nations before them); [86:11](#) ("Teach me . . . Your way"); [89:21](#) (holy anointing oil); [91:1,4](#) (God's covert; God covering with God's limb); [94:14](#) (Israel as God's inheritance); [95:11](#) (God's rest); [99:7](#) (God spoke to Moses from a cloud); [103:8](#) ("The Lord is full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy"); [108:5](#) (God's truth); [119:33](#) ("Teach me . . . the way"); [133:2](#) (anointing oil); [139:16](#) (God's book); [145:8–9](#) (God's attributes); [147:20](#) (God's separate treatment of Israel).
- [Ezra 3:4](#) (Sukkot).
- [Nehemiah 8:14–18](#) (Sukkot).

- [2 Chronicles 5:3–14](#) (Sukkot); [7:8](#) (Sukkot); [8:12–13](#) (three Pilgrim festivals).



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[[edit](#)] Early nonrabbinic

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- [Mark 14:12–26](#) (Passover). Circa 70 C.E.
- [Matthew 26:17–30](#) (Passover). Circa 70–100 C.E.
- [Luke 22:14–20](#) (Passover). Circa 80–150 C.E.
- [John 7:1–53](#) (Sukkot).

[[edit](#)] Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): Sheviit 1:1–4; Challah 4:9; [Pesachim 1:1–10:9](#); Shekalim 1:1–4:9; [Sukkah 1:1–5:8](#); [Megillah 3:4, 4:10](#); [Avot 5:6](#); [Zevachim 9:7](#); [Menachot 9:2](#); [Chullin 8:4](#); [Bekhorot 1:1–7](#); Keritot 1:1–2. Land of Israel, circa 200 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 69, 157, 229–58, 279–91, 321, 324, 686, 721, 751, 781, 788–89, 836. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
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[121b](#); [Shekalim 2a–22b](#); [Yoma 3b, 22a, 28a, 32b, 36b–37a, 43b, 45a, 66b, 85b–86b](#); [Sukkah 2a–56b](#); [Beitzah 2a–40b](#); [Rosh Hashanah 9a, 16b, 17b](#); [Ta'anit 8a, 21b, 27b, 28b](#); [Megillah 6b, 10b, 15a–b, 19b, 25a–b, 29b–30a, 31a](#); [Moed Katan 3b–4a, 9a, 15a, 16b, 18b](#); [Chagigah 6b, 11b, 12b, 16a](#); [Yevamot 6b–7a, 49b, 62a, 72a](#); [Ketubot 30a, 31a, 34a, 106a](#); [Nedarim 10b, 32a, 33a, 38a](#); [Nazir 47a](#); [Sotah 13b–14a](#); [Gittin 60b](#); [Kiddushin 17a, 29a–b, 33b](#); [Bava Kamma 34b, 50a, 55a, 71a, 92a, 112a, 119a](#); [Bava Batra 10b, 15a–b, 75a](#); [Sanhedrin 7a, 13a, 27b, 35b, 38b, 56b, 60b, 63a, 74a, 78b, 83b, 102a, 108a, 110a, 111a](#); [Makkot 8b, 11a, 12a, 13a, 14b, 23a–24a](#); [Shevuot 10b, 15a, 39a](#); [Avodah Zarah 8a, 10b, 44a, 53b](#); [Horayot 4a–b, 6b, 11b](#); [Zevachim 15b, 18a, 19b, 21a, 112b](#); [Menachot 5b–6a, 21b, 35b, 36b, 53b, 72a, 84b, 87b–88a, 89a, 99b, 101b](#); [Chullin 62b, 106b, 114a, 115a, 139b](#); [Bekhorot 3a, 6a, 50a, 51b](#); [Arakhin 4a, 15b, 16b](#); [Temurah 14b, 16a](#); [Keritot 2a, 3a, 5a–6b](#); [Meilah 19a](#); [Niddah 40a, 41a](#).

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- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

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- [Academy for Jewish Religion, California](#)
- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
- [Aish.com](#)
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- [Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles](#)
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- eparsha.com
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- [Jewish Agency for Israel](http://JewishAgencyforIsrael)
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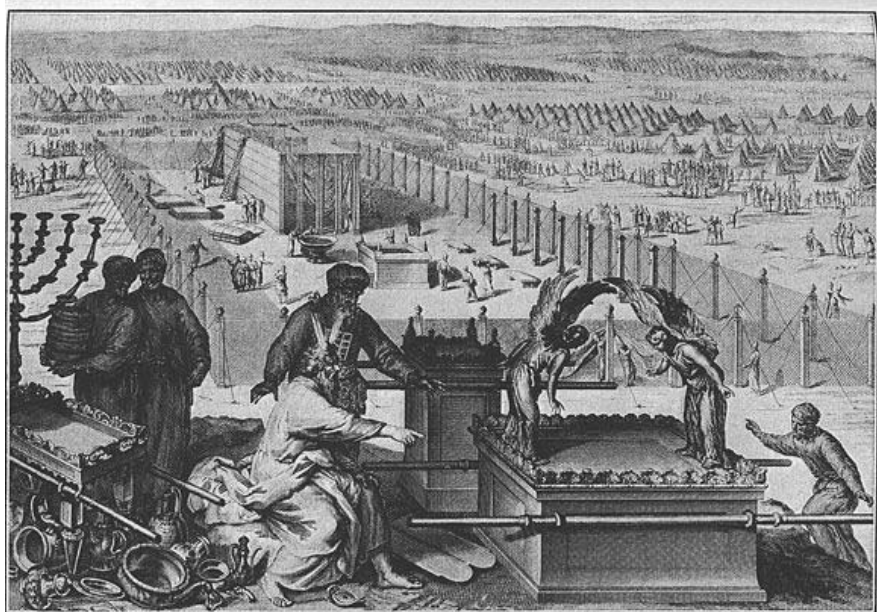
Vayakhel

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Vayakhel, **Wayyaqhel**, **VaYakhel**, **Va-Yakhel**, **Vayak’hel**, **Vayak’heil**, or **Vayaqhel** (וַיַּאֲחֵל – [Hebrew](#) for "and he assembled," the [first word](#) in the parshah) is the 22nd [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the 10th in the [book of Exodus](#). It constitutes [Exodus 35:1–38:20](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it the 22nd [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in March.

The [lunisolar Hebrew calendar](#) contains up to 55 [weeks](#), the exact number varying between 50 in common years and 54 or 55 in leap years. In leap years (for example, 2011, 2014, 2016, and 2019), parshah Vayakhel is read separately. In common years (for example, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2018), parshah Vayakhel is combined with the next parshah, [Pekudei](#), to help achieve the number of weekly readings needed.



The Erection of the Tabernacle and the Sacred Vessels
(illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



Lapis lazuli





Acacia tree

[Moses](#) convoked the [Israelites](#) to build the [Tabernacle](#). Moses started by reminding them of [God's](#) commandment to keep the Sabbath of complete rest. ([Exodus 35:1–3.](#)) Then Moses told them to collect gifts of materials from those whose heart so moved them — gifts of [gold](#), [silver](#), [copper](#), colored [yarns](#), fine [linen](#), [goats](#) hair, tanned ram skins, [acacia](#) wood, [olive oil](#), [spices](#), [lapis lazuli](#), and other stones. ([Exodus 35:4–9.](#)) Moses invited all who were skilled to make the Tabernacle, its furnishings, and the [priests'](#) vestments. ([Exodus 35:10–19.](#)) The Israelites brought the gifts that Moses requested. ([Exodus 35:20–29.](#)) Moses announced that God had singled out [Bezalel](#) and [Oholiab](#) to endow them with the skills needed to construct the Tabernacle. ([Exodus 35:30–35.](#)) And Moses called on them and all skilled persons to undertake the task. ([Exodus 36:1–2.](#)) The Israelites brought more than was needed, so Moses proclaimed an end to the collection. ([Exodus 36:3–7.](#)) The skilled workers fashioned the Tabernacle. ([Exodus 36:8–38.](#)) Bezalel made the ark, cover, table, [menorah](#), [incense altar](#), altar for [sacrifices](#), laver, and enclosure for the Tabernacle. ([Exodus 37:1–38:20.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Inner-biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapters 25–39

This is the pattern of instruction and construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings:



The Tabernacle

Item	Instruction		Construction	
	Order	Verses	Order	Verses
The Sabbath	16	Exodus 31:12–17	1	Exodus 35:1–3
Contributions	1	Exodus 25:1–9	2	Exodus 35:4–29
Craftspeople	15	Exodus 31:1–11	3	Exodus 35:30–36:7
Tabernacle	5	Exodus 26:1–37	4	Exodus 36:8–38
Ark	2	Exodus	5	Exodus 37:1–9

		25:10–22		
Table	3	Exodus 25:23–30	6	Exodus 37:10–16
Menorah	4	Exodus 25:31–40	7	Exodus 37:17–24
Altar of Incense	11	Exodus 30:1–10	8	Exodus 37:25–28
Anointing Oil	13	Exodus 30:22–33	9	Exodus 37:29
Incense	14	Exodus 30:34–38	10	Exodus 37:29
Altar of Sacrifice	6	Exodus 27:1–8	11	Exodus 38:1–7
Laver	12	Exodus 30:17–21	12	Exodus 38:8
Tabernacle Court	7	Exodus 27:9–19	13	Exodus 38:9–20
Priestly Garments	9	Exodus 28:1–43	14	Exodus 39:1–31
Ordination Ritual	10	Exodus 29:1–46	15	Leviticus 8:1–9:24
Lamp	8	Exodus 27:20–21	16	Numbers 8:1–4

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapters 35

[Exodus 35:1](#) opens, “And Moses assembled” (וַיִּקְהֵל מֹשֶׁה), *vayakbel Mosheh*), in an echo of [Exodus 32:1](#), which says, “the people assembled” (וַיִּקְהֵל הָעָם, *vayikabel ha’am*).

[Exodus 35:3](#) prohibits kindling fire on the Sabbath. [Numbers 15:32–33](#) reports that when the Israelites came upon a man gathering [wood](#) on the Sabbath (apparently with the intent to fuel a fire), they brought him before Moses, Aaron, and the community and placed him in custody, “because it had not been declared what should be done to him.” ([Numbers 15:34](#).) Clearing up any uncertainty about whether the man had violated the law, God told Moses that the whole community was to [pelt him with stones](#) outside the camp, and they did. ([Numbers 15:35–36](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapters 38

[Exodus 38:8](#) reports that Bezalel made the brass laver and its base from “the mirrors of the serving women who did service at the door of the tent of meeting.” [1 Samuel 2:22](#) reports that [Eli’s](#) sons “lay with the women who did service at the door of the tent of meeting.”





The High Priest wearing his breastplate (illustration circa 1861–1880 from *The History of Costume* by Braun and Schneider)

[\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 35

The [Mekhilta](#) taught that [Exodus 35:1–3](#) sets forth laws of Sabbath observance here because in [Exodus 25:8](#) God directed, “And let them make Me a sanctuary,” and one might have understood that they could build the sanctuary both on weekdays and the Sabbath. The Mekhilta taught that God’s direction in [Exodus 25:8](#) to “make Me a sanctuary” applied on all days other than the Sabbath. The Mekhilta posited that one might argue that since the [Temple](#) service occurs even on the Sabbath, then perhaps the preparation for the service, without which the priests could not perform the service, could occur even on the Sabbath. One might conclude that if the horn of the altar broke off or a knife became defective, one might repair them on the Sabbath. [Exodus 35:1–3](#) teaches, however, that even such work must be done only on weekdays, and not on the Sabbath. (Mekhilta 82:1:1.)

Rabbi [Judah haNasi](#) taught that the words “These are the words” in [Exodus 35:1](#) referred to the 39 labors that God taught Moses at [Sinai](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 97b](#).) Similarly, Rabbi [Hanina bar Hama](#) said that the labors forbidden on the Sabbath

in [Exodus 35:2](#) correspond to the 39 labors necessary to construct the Tabernacle. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 49b.](#))

Reading the words “everyone who profanes [the Sabbath] shall surely be put to death” in [Exodus 31:14](#) (in which the verb for death is doubled), [Samuel](#) deduced that the Torah decreed many deaths for desecrating the Sabbath. The [Gemara](#) posited that perhaps [Exodus 31:14](#) refers to willful desecration. The Gemara answered that [Exodus 31:14](#) is not needed to teach that willful transgression of the Sabbath is a capital crime, for [Exodus 35:2](#) says, “Whoever does any work therein shall be put to death.” The Gemara concluded that [Exodus 31:14](#) thus must apply to an unwitting offender, and in that context, the words “shall surely be put to death” mean that the inadvertent Sabbath violator will “die” monetarily because of the violator’s need to bring costly sacrifices. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 70a.](#))

A [Baraita](#) read the words “You shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the Sabbath day” in [Exodus 35:3](#) to teach that only on the Sabbath is kindling fire prohibited, and one may kindle fire on a [Festival day](#), including for purposes other than food preparation. ([Jerusalem Talmud](#) Beitzah 47a; see also Mekhilta 82:1:9.)

[Rav Huna](#) and [Rav Chisda](#) reconciled the prohibition of kindling fire on the Sabbath in [Exodus 35:3](#) with the priests’ sacrificial duties. The [Mishnah](#) taught that the priests could lower the [Passover sacrifice](#) into the oven just before nightfall (and leave it to roast on the Sabbath), and the priests could light the fire with chips in the pile in the Temple chamber of the hearth (just before

nightfall). ([Mishnah Shabbat 1:11](#); [Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 19b](#).) Interpreting this Mishnah, Rav Huna cited the prohibition of [Exodus 35:3](#): “You shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations.” Rav Huna argued that since [Exodus 35:3](#) says only “throughout your habitations,” the priests could kindle the pile in the Temple chamber of the hearth (even on the Sabbath). Rav Chisda demurred from Rav Huna’s argument, as it would allow kindling even on the Sabbath. Rather, Rav Chisda taught that [Exodus 35:3](#) permits only the burning of the limbs and the fat (of animals sacrificed on Friday before nightfall). Rav Chisda explained that this burning was allowed because the priests were very particular (in their observance of the Sabbath and would not stoke the fire after nightfall). ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 20a](#).)

The Gemara told that [Rav Joseph’s](#) wife used to kindle the Sabbath lights late (just before nightfall). Rav Joseph told her that it was taught in a Baraita that the words of [Exodus 13:22](#), “the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, departed not,” teach that the pillar of cloud overlapped the pillar of fire, and the pillar of fire overlapped the pillar of cloud. So she thought of lighting the Sabbath lights very early. But an elder told her that one may kindle when one chooses, provided that one does not light too early (as it would not evidently honor the Sabbath) or too late (later than just before nightfall). ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 23b](#).)

A Baraita taught that a disciple in the name of [Rabbi Ishmael](#) noted that the words “in all your dwellings” (בְּכָל מְשֻׁבֵּי תֵיכֶם) (*b’chol moshvotechem*) appear both in the phrase, “You shall kindle

no fire throughout your habitations upon the Sabbath day,” in [Exodus 35:3](#) and in the phrase, “these things shall be for a statute of judgment unto you throughout your generations in all your dwellings,” in [Numbers 35:29](#). The Baraita reasoned from this similar usage that just as the law prohibits kindling fire at home, so the law also prohibits kindling fire in the furtherance of criminal justice. And thus, since some executions require kindling a fire, the Baraita taught that the law prohibits executions on the Sabbath. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 6b–7a.](#))

Rabbi Hama bar Hanina interpreted the words “the plaited (סָרִיד, *serad*) garments for ministering in the holy place” in [Exodus 35:19](#) to teach that but for the priestly garments described in [Exodus 28](#) (and the atonement achieved by the garments or the priests who wore them), no remnant (סָרִיד, *sarid*) of the Jews would have survived. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 72a–b.](#))



Things that Were Made To Go into the Tabernacle (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)

Rabbi Levi read [Exodus 26:28](#), regarding “the middle bar in the midst of the boards, which shall pass through from end to end,” calculated that the beam must have been 32 cubits in length, and asked where the Israelites would find such a beam in the desert. Rabbi Levi deduced that the Israelites had stored up the cedar to construct the Tabernacle since the days of [Jacob](#). Thus [Exodus 35:24](#) reports, “And every man, with whom *was found* acacia-wood,” not “with whom *would be found* acacia-wood.” Rabbi Levi taught that the Israelites cut the trees down in [Magdala](#) of the Dyers near [Tiberias](#) and brought them with them to [Egypt](#), and no knot or crack was found in them. (Genesis Rabbah 94:4.)

The Rabbis taught in a Baraita that the Tabernacle’s lower curtains were made of blue wool, purple wool, crimson wool, and fine linen, while the upper curtains that made the tent spread were made of goats’ hair. And they taught that the upper curtains required greater skill than the lower, for [Exodus 35:25](#) says of the lower ones, “And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands,” while [Exodus 35:26](#) says of the upper ones, “And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun the goats.” It was taught in Rabbi Nehemiah’s name that the hair was washed on the goats and spun while still on the goats. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 99a.](#))

Reading the words, “see, the Lord has called by name Bezalel,” in [Exodus 35:30](#), a midrash explained that Israel sinned with fire in making the [Golden Calf](#), as [Exodus 32:24](#) says, “And I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.” And then Bezalel came and healed the wound (and the construction of the Tabernacle made

atonement for the sins of the people in making the Golden Calf). The midrash likened it to the words of [Isaiah 54:16](#), “Behold, I have created the smith who blows the fire of coals.” The midrash taught that Bezalel was the smith whom God had created to address the fire. And the midrash likened it to the case of a doctor's disciple who applied a plaster to a wound and healed it. When people began to praise him, his teacher, the doctor, said that they should praise the doctor, for he taught the disciple. Similarly, when everybody said that Bezalel had constructed the Tabernacle through his knowledge and understanding, God said that it was God who created him and taught him, as [Isaiah 54:16](#) says, “Behold, I have created the smith.” Thus Moses said in [Exodus 35:30](#), “see, the Lord has called by name Bezalel.” ([Exodus Rabbah](#) 48:5.)



Bezalel (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[Exodus 35:30](#) identifies Bezalel’s grandfather as Hur, whom either [Rav](#) or Samuel deduced was the son of [Miriam](#) and [Caleb](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11b.](#)) A midrash explained that [Exodus 35:30](#) mentions Hur because when the Israelites were about to serve the Golden Calf, Hur risked his life on God's behalf to prevent them from doing so, and they killed him. Whereupon God assured Hur that God would repay him for his sacrifice. The midrash likened it to the case of a king whose legions rebelled against him, and his field marshal fought against the rebels, questioning how they could dare rebel against the king. In the end, the rebels killed the field marshal. The king reasoned that if the field marshal had given the king money, the king would have had to repay him. So even more so the king had an obligation to repay the field marshal when he gave his life on the king’s behalf. The king rewarded the field marshal by ordaining that all his male offspring would become generals and officers. Similarly, when Israel made the Golden Calf, Hur gave his life for the glory of God. Thus God assured Hur that God would give all Hur’s descendants a great name in the world. And thus [Exodus 35:30](#) says, “see, the Lord has called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur.” (Exodus Rabbah 48:3.)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 36

Doing the math implied by [Exodus 36:4](#), [Exodus 38:22](#), [Joshua 14:7](#), and [1 Chronicles 2:19–20](#), the Gemara deduced that in earlier generations, a boy of eight could father children. [Exodus](#)

[38:22](#) reports that “Bezalel, son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that the Lord had commanded Moses,” when they built the Tabernacle. And [1 Chronicles 2:19–20](#) reports that Caleb fathered the Hur who fathered Uri who fathered Bezalel. [Exodus 36:4](#) reports that “wise men . . . wrought all the work of the Sanctuary,” so Bezalel must have been at least 13 years old to have been a man when he worked on the Tabernacle. A Baraita taught that Moses made the Tabernacle in the first year after the Exodus, and in the second, he erected it and sent out the spies, so the Gemara deduced that Bezalel must have been at least 14 years old when Moses sent out the spies, the year after Bezalel worked on the Tabernacle. And [Joshua 14:7](#) reports that Caleb said that he was 40 years old when Moses sent him to spy out the land. Thus, the Gemara deduced that Caleb was only 26 years older than his great-grandson Bezalel. Deducting two years for the three pregnancies needed to create the three intervening generations, the Gemara concluded that each of Caleb, Hur, and Uri must have conceived his son at the age of eight. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 69b.](#))



[\[edit\]](#) **Exodus chapter 37**

A midrash taught that the righteous learn from God's example in creating the world that in beginning any work they should start with light. Thus when God told Moses to build the Tabernacle, Bezalel pondered with what thing he should begin. He concluded that he had better start with the Ark (in which the Israelites would deposit the Torah, the light of the world). And thus [Exodus 37:1](#) commences the report of the construction of the Tabernacle's furnishings, "And Bezalel made the Ark." (Exodus Rabbah 50:1.)

Similarly, a midrash taught that when God told Moses to make the Tabernacle, he came to Bezalel and conveyed the command, and Bezalel asked what the purpose of the Tabernacle was. Moses replied that it was so that God might make God's [Shechinah](#) to dwell there and teach the Torah to Israel. Bezalel then asked where the Israelites would keep the Torah. Moses replied that when they had made the Tabernacle, they would then make the Ark. Then Bezalel said that since it would not be fitting for the Torah to be without a home, they should first make the Ark and then the Tabernacle. On that account, [Exodus 37:1](#) associates Bezalel's name with the Ark, saying, "And Bezalel made the Ark." (Exodus Rabbah 50:2.)

Reading the words, "Bezalel made the Ark of acacia-wood," in [Exodus 37:1](#), a midrash taught that God heals with the very thing with which God wounds. Thus, Israel sinned in [Shittim](#) (so called

because of its many acacia trees), as [Numbers 25:1](#) says, “And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moab” (and also worshipped the [Baal of Peor](#)). But it was also through Shittim wood, or acacia-wood, that God healed the Israelites, for as [Exodus 37:1](#) reports, “Bezalel made the Ark of acacia-wood.” (Exodus Rabbah 50:3.)

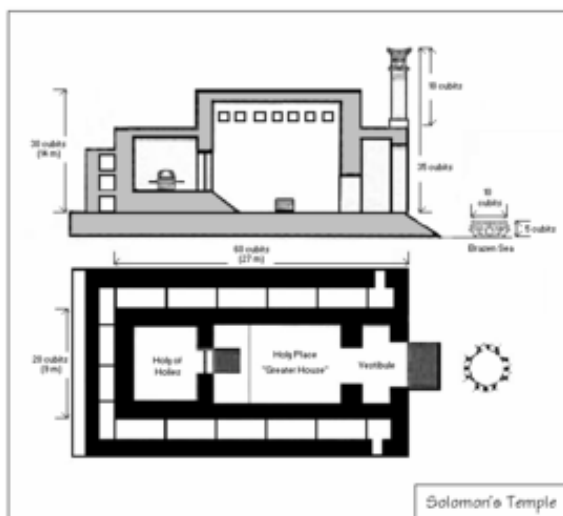
[\[edit\]](#) **Commandments**

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there is one negative [commandment](#) in the parshah:

- The court must not inflict punishment on the Sabbath.
([Exodus 35:3](#).)

(See, e.g., Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 2:297. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:431–33. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah



Solomon's Temple (2005 drawing by Mattes)

[\[edit\]](#) Parshah Vayakhel

When parshah Vayakhel is read alone (as it is in 2011 and 2014), the [haftarah](#) is:

- for [Ashkenazi Jews](#): [1 Kings 7:40–50](#)
- for [Sephardi Jews](#): [1 Kings 7:13–26](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Ashkenazi – 1 Kings 7:40–50

Both the parshah and the haftarah in [1 Kings 7](#) report the leader's erection of the holy place, Moses' building of the Tabernacle in the parshah ([Exodus 35:4–38:20](#)), and [Solomon](#)'s building of the [Temple in Jerusalem](#) in the haftarah. ([1 Kings 7:40–50](#).) Both the

parshah and the haftarah note particular metals for the holy space. ([Exodus 35:5](#); [1 Kings 7:45, 47–50.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Sephardi – 1 Kings 7:13–26

Both the parshah and the haftarah note the skill (*chokhmah*), ability (*tevnah*), and knowledge (*da'at*), of the artisan (Bezalel in the parshah, Hiram in the haftarah) in every craft (*kol mela'khab*). ([Exodus 35:30–31](#); [1 Kings 7:14.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Shabbat Shekalim

When Parshah Vayakhel coincides with the [special Sabbath](#) Shabbat Shekalim, (as it does in 2016 and 2019), the haftarah is [2 Kings 12:1–17.](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Parshah Vayakhel–Pekudei

When parshah Vayakhel is combined with parshah Pekudei, the haftarah is:

- for Ashkenazi Jews: [1 Kings 7:51–8:21](#)
- for Sephardi Jews: [1 Kings 7:40–50](#)



Ezekiel (1510 fresco by [Michelangelo](#) at the [Sistine Chapel](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Shabbat HaChodesh

When the parshah coincides with Shabbat HaChodesh ("Sabbath [of] the month," the special Sabbath preceding the Hebrew month of [Nissan](#) – as it does in 2013 and 2017), the haftarah is:

- for Ashkenazi Jews: [Ezekiel 45:16–46:18](#)
- for Sephardi Jews: [Ezekiel 45:18–46:15](#)

On Shabbat HaChodesh, Jews read [Exodus 12:1–20](#), in which God commands that “This month [Nissan] shall be the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year” ([Exodus 12:2](#)), and in which God issued the commandments of Passover. ([Exodus 12:3–20](#).) Similarly, the haftarah in [Ezekiel 45:21–25](#) discusses Passover. In both the special reading and the haftarah,

God instructs the Israelites to apply blood to doorposts. ([Exodus 12:7](#); [Ezekiel 45:19](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Shabbat Parah

When the parshah coincides with Shabbat Parah (the special Sabbath prior to Passover – as it does in 2012, 2015, and 2018), the haftarah is:

- for Ashkenazi Jews: [Ezekiel 36:16–38](#)
- for Sephardi Jews: [Ezekiel 36:16–36](#)

On Shabbat Parah, the Sabbath of the [red heifer](#), Jews read [Numbers 19:1–22](#), which describes the rites of purification using the red heifer (*parah adumah*). Similarly, the haftarah in Ezekiel 36 also describes purification. In both the special reading and the haftarah in Ezekiel 36, sprinkled water cleansed the Israelites. ([Numbers 19:18](#); [Ezekiel 36:25](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Liturgy

Following the Kabbalat Shabbat [prayer service](#) and prior to the Friday evening (*Ma'ariv*) service, Jews traditionally read rabbinic sources on the observance of the Sabbath, starting with Mishnah Shabbat 2:5. Mishnah Shabbat 2:5, in turn, interprets the laws of kindling lights in [Exodus 35:3](#). ([Reuven Hammer](#). *Or Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 25. New York: The [Rabbinical Assembly](#), 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Ancient

- The [Ba'lu](#) Myth. [Ugarit](#), 2nd millennium BCE. In *The Context of Scripture, Volume I: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, 260–61. Edited by [William W. Hallo](#). Pilgrim Press, 1997. [ISBN 9004106189](#). (building of a palace for [Ba'al](#)).



Philo

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Psalms 26:6](#) (washing, altar); [51:16–19](#) (sacrifices); [80:2](#) (cherubim); [84:2–3](#), [11](#) (Tabernacle, courts); [92:14](#) (courts); [96:6](#) (God's sanctuary); [100:4](#) (court of the Tabernacle); [134:2](#) (God's sanctuary); [141:2](#) (incense); [150:1](#) (God's sanctuary).

[\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic

- [Philo](#). *Allegorical Interpretation* 3:33:101; *On the Migration of Abraham* 17:97–98. [Alexandria](#), Egypt, early 1st century

CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [Charles Duke Yonge](#), 61, 262. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1993. [ISBN 0-943575-93-1](#).



Josephus

- [Josephus](#), [Antiquities of the Jews 3:6:1–10:1](#). Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 85–95. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic

- [Mekhilta According to Rabbi Ishmael](#) 82:1. Land of Israel, late 4th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Mekhilta According to Rabbi Ishmael*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 2:258–62. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988. [ISBN 1-55540-237-2](#).
- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Terumot 31b; Beitzah 47a. Land of Israel, circa 400 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and

Mordechai Marcus, vols. 7, 23. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2010.

- [Genesis Rabbah](#) 94:4. Land of Israel, 5th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, 2:871. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).



Talmud

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Shabbat 20a, 49b, 70a, 74b, 96b](#); [Eruvin 2b](#); [Yoma 66b, 72b, 75a](#); [Beitzah 4b](#); [Rosh Hashanah 34a](#); [Chagigah 10a–b](#); [Yevamot 6b–7a, 33b](#); [Sotah 3a](#); [Kiddushin 37a](#); [Bava Kamma 2a, 54a, 71a](#); [Sanhedrin 35b, 69b](#); [Makkot 21b](#); [Shevuot 26b](#); [Avodah Zarah 12b, 24a](#); [Zevachim 59b](#); [Bekhorot 41a](#). Babylonia, 6th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

[\[edit\]](#) Medieval

- [Exodus Rabbah](#) 48:1–50:5. 10th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Exodus*. Translated by S. M.

Lehrman, 3:546–61. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).

- [Solomon ibn Gabirol](#). *A Crown for the King*, [9:105–06](#). Spain, 11th century. Translated by David R. Slavitt, 14–15. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. [ISBN 0-19-511962-2](#).



Rashi

- [Rashi](#). *Commentary*. [Exodus 35–38](#). [Troyes](#), France, late 11th century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 2:487–505. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1994. [ISBN 0-89906-027-7](#).
- [Zohar 2:194b–220a](#). Spain, late 13th century.

[[edit](#)] Modern

- [Thomas Hobbes](#). *Leviathan*, [3:34](#). England, 1651. Reprint edited by [C. B. Macpherson](#), 431. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1982. [ISBN 0140431950](#).

- [Edward Taylor](#). “18. Meditation. Heb. 13.10. Wee Have an Altar.” In *Preliminary Meditations: First Series*. Cambridge, Mass.: Early 18th century. In [Harold Bloom](#). *American Religious Poems*, 21–22. New York: Library of America, 2006. [ISBN 978-1-931082-74-7](#).
- [Abraham Joshua Heschel](#). *The Sabbath*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1951. Reprinted 2005. [ISBN 0-374-52975-2](#).
- Morris Adler. *The World of the Talmud*, 28–29. B’nai B’rith Hillel Foundations, 1958. Reprinted Kessinger Publishing, 2007. [ISBN 0548080003](#).
- Craig R. Koester. *Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature, and the New Testament*. Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1989. [ISBN 0-915170-21-3](#).
- Alan Lew. *This Is Real and You Are Completely Unprepared: The Days of Awe as a Journey of Transformation*, 53–55. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 2003. [ISBN 0-316-73908-1](#).
- Suzanne A. Brody. “Successful Campaign.” In *Dancing in the White Spaces: The Yearly Torah Cycle and More Poems*, 84. Shelbyville, Kentucky: Wasteland Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-60047-112-9](#).

[\[edit\]](#) External links

[\[edit\]](#) Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, California](#)
- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
- [Aish.com](#)
- [American Jewish University](#)
- [Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles](#)
- [Bar-Ilan University](#)
- [Chabad.org](#)
- [eparsha.com](#)
- [G-dcast](#)
- [Jewish Agency for Israel](#)

- [Jewish Theological Seminary](#)
- [MyJewishLearning.com](#)
- [Ohr Sameach](#)
- [Orthodox Union](#)
- [OzTorah, Torah from Australia](#)
- [Oz Ve Shalom — Netivot Shalom](#)
- [Pardes from Jerusalem](#)
- [Rabbi Shlomo Riskin](#)
- [Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld](#)
- [Reconstructionist Judaism](#)
- [Sephardic Institute](#)
- [Shiur.com](#)
- [613.org Jewish Torah Audio](#)
- [Talia Davis](#)
- [Tanach Study Center](#)
- [Teach613.org, Torah Education at Cherry Hill](#)
- [Torah from Dixie](#)
- [Torah.org](#)

- TorahVort.com
- [Union for Reform Judaism](http://UnionforReformJudaism.org)
- [United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth](http://UnitedHebrewCongregations.org)
- [United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism](http://UnitedSynagogue.org)
- [What's Bothering Rashi?](http://WhatsBotheringRashi.com)

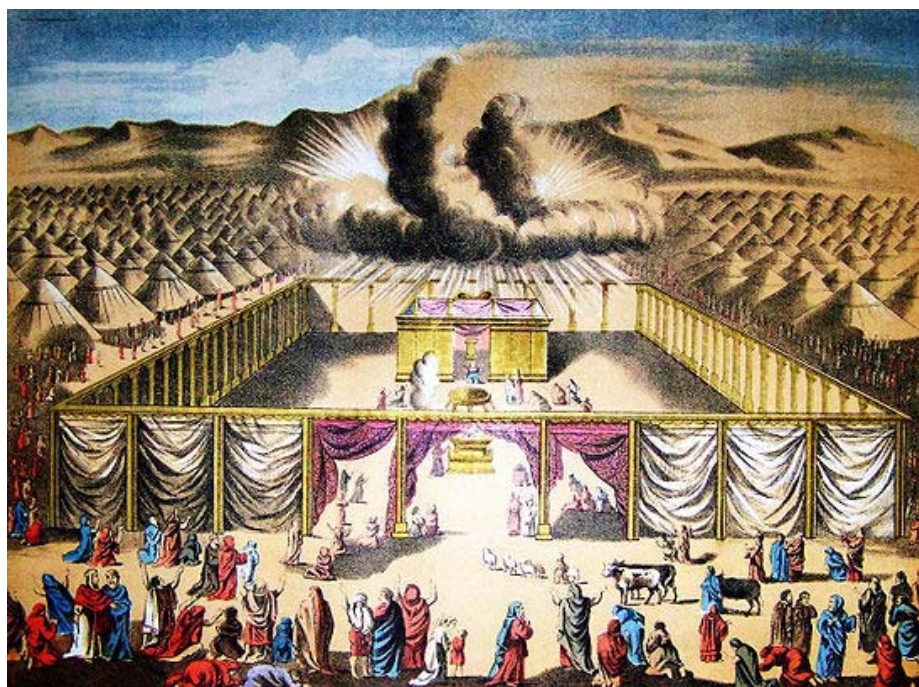
Pekudei

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Pekudei, **Pekude**, **Pekudey**, **P'kude**, or **P'qude** (פקודי — [Hebrew](#) for "amounts of," the second word, and the first distinctive word, in the parshah) is the 23rd [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the 11th and last in the [book of Exodus](#). It constitutes [Exodus 38:21–40:38](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it the 22nd or 23rd [Sabbath](#) after [Simchat Torah](#), generally in March.

The [lunisolar Hebrew calendar](#) contains up to 55 [weeks](#), the exact number varying between 50 in common years and 54 or 55 in leap years. In leap years (for example, 2011, 2014, and 2016), parshah Pekudei is read separately. In common years (for example, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2018), parshah Pekudei is combined with the previous parshah, [Vayakhel](#), to help achieve the needed number of weekly readings.



The Tabernacle in the Wilderness (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



The Tailor (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

At [Moses](#)' direction, [Aaron](#)'s son [Ithamar](#) oversaw the [accounts](#) of the [Tabernacle](#), and the text sets forth the amounts of [gold](#), [silver](#), and [copper](#) that [Bezalel](#), [Oholiab](#), and their coworkers used. ([Exodus 38:21–31.](#)) The silver came from the half-[shekel](#) a head for each man 20 years old and older who was counted in the [census](#). ([Exodus 38:25–26.](#)) Bezalel, Oholiab, and their coworkers made the [priests](#)' vestments, the [ephod](#), the breastpiece, the robe,

the tunics of fine [linen](#), and the frontlet inscribed “Holy to the Lord” — just as God had commanded Moses. ([Exodus 39:1–32.](#)) Then they brought the Tabernacle and all its furnishings to Moses, and he blessed them. ([Exodus 39:33–43.](#))

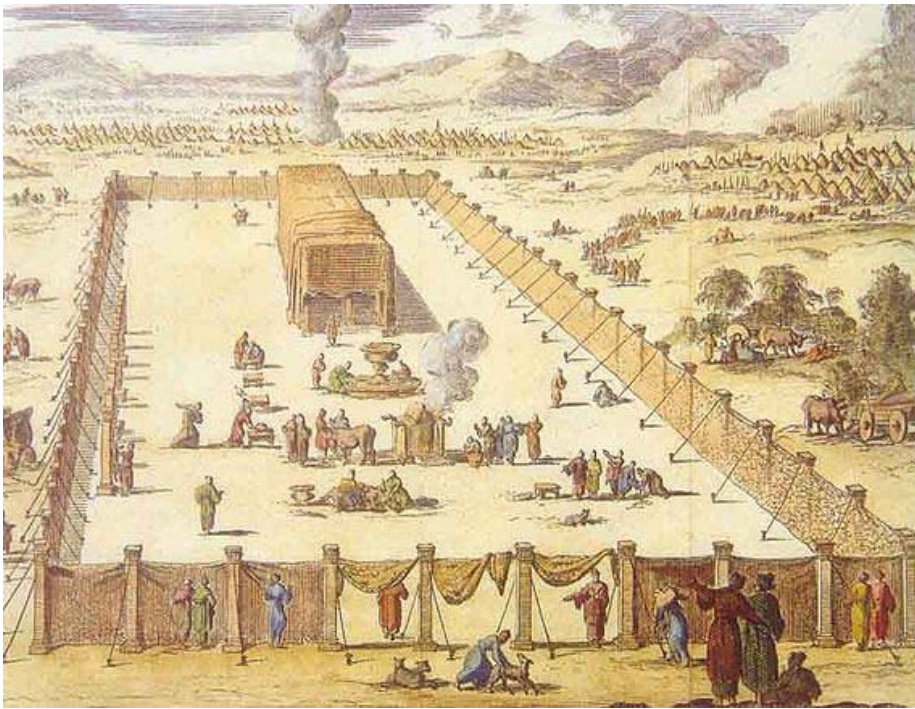
[God](#) told Moses to set up the Tabernacle, and Moses did just as God had commanded him, on the first day of the second year of [the Exodus](#). ([Exodus 40:1–33.](#))

When Moses finished the work, the [cloud](#) covered the Tent of Meeting, and God’s Presence filled the Tabernacle. ([Exodus 40:33–34.](#)) When the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle, the [Israelites](#) would set out, and when the cloud did not lift, they would not set out. ([Exodus 40:35–37.](#)) And God’s cloud rested over the Tabernacle by day, and [fire](#) would appear in it by night, throughout the Israelites’ journeys. ([Exodus 40:38.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-Biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapters 25–39

This is the pattern of instruction and construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings:



The Tabernacle

Item	Instruction		Construction	
	Order	Verses	Order	Verses
The Sabbath	16	Exodus 31:12–17	1	Exodus 35:1–3
Contributions	1	Exodus 25:1–9	2	Exodus 35:4–29
Craftspeople	15	Exodus 31:1–11	3	Exodus 35:30–36:7
Tabernacle	5	Exodus 26:1–37	4	Exodus 36:8–38

Ark	2	Exodus 25:10–22	5	Exodus 37:1–9
Table	3	Exodus 25:23–30	6	Exodus 37:10–16
Menorah	4	Exodus 25:31–40	7	Exodus 37:17–24
Altar of Incense	11	Exodus 30:1–10	8	Exodus 37:25–28
Anointing Oil	13	Exodus 30:22–33	9	Exodus 37:29
Incense	14	Exodus 30:34–38	10	Exodus 37:29
Altar of Sacrifice	6	Exodus 27:1–8	11	Exodus 38:1–7
Laver	12	Exodus 30:17–21	12	Exodus 38:8
Tabernacle Court	7	Exodus 27:9–19	13	Exodus 38:9–20
Priestly Garments	9	Exodus 28:1–43	14	Exodus 39:1–31
Ordination Ritual	10	Exodus 29:1–46	15	Leviticus 8:1–9:24
Lamp	8	Exodus 27:20–21	16	Numbers 8:1–4



Worshipping the Golden Calf (illustration from a Bible card published 1901 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 38

Rabbi Simeon son of Rabbi Ishmael interpreted the term “the Tabernacle of the testimony” in [Exodus 38:21](#) to mean that the Tabernacle was God’s testimony to the whole world that God had forgiven Israel for having made the [Golden Calf](#). Rabbi Isaac explained with a parable. A king took a wife whom he dearly loved. He became angry with her and left her, and her neighbors taunted her, saying that he would not return. Then the king sent her a message asking her to prepare the king’s palace and make the beds therein, for he was coming back to her on such-and-such a day. On that day, the king returned to her and became

reconciled to her, entering her chamber and eating and drinking with her. Her neighbors at first did not believe it, but when they smelled the fragrant spices, they knew that the king had returned. Similarly, God loved Israel, bringing the Israelites to [Mount Sinai](#), and giving them the Torah, but after only 40 days, they sinned with the Golden Calf. The heathen nations then said that God would not be reconciled with the Israelites. But when Moses pleaded for mercy on their behalf, God forgave them, as [Numbers 14:20](#) reports, “And the Lord said: ‘I have pardoned according to your word.’” Moses then told God that even though he personally was quite satisfied that God had forgiven Israel, he asked that God might announce that fact to the nations. God replied that God would cause God’s [Shechinah](#) to dwell in their midst, and thus [Exodus 25:8](#) says, “And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.” And by that sign, God intended that all nations might know that God had forgiven the Israelites. And thus [Exodus 38:21](#) calls it “the Tabernacle of the testimony,” because the Tabernacle was a testimony that God had pardoned the Israelites’ sins. ([Exodus Rabbah](#) 51:4.)





Bezalel (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

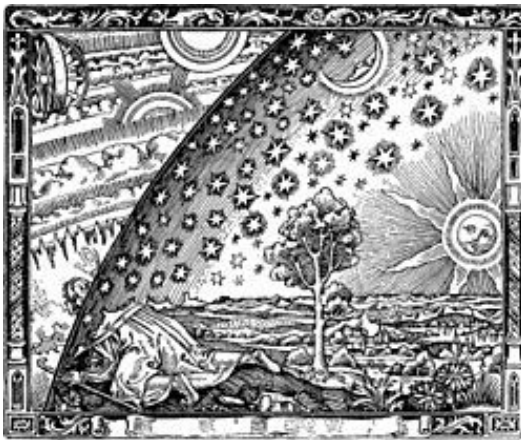
[Rabbi Tanhuma](#) said in the name of [Rav Huna](#) that when [Exodus 38:22](#) reported that “Bezalel . . . made all that the Lord commanded Moses,” the verse did not say “that Moses commanded Bezalel,” and thus the verse taught that Bezalel was able to conceive on his own exactly what God told Moses at Sinai, even though Bezalel did not hear it from Moses. ([Jerusalem Talmud](#) Peah 5a.) Similarly, Rabbi [Samuel bar Nahmani](#) said in the name of [Rabbi Johanan](#) that Bezalel (whose name can be read *betzel El*, “in the shadow of God”) was so called because of his wisdom. When God told Moses (in [Exodus 31:7](#)) to tell Bezalel to make a tabernacle, an ark, and vessels, Moses reversed the order and told Bezalel to make an ark, vessels, and a tabernacle. Bezalel replied to Moses that as a rule, one first builds a house and then brings vessels into it, but Moses directed to make an ark, vessels, and a tabernacle. Bezalel asked where he would put the vessels. And Bezalel asked whether God had told Moses to make a tabernacle, an ark, and vessels. Moses replied that perhaps Bezalel had been in the shadow of God (*betzel El*) and had thus come to know this. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 55a.](#))



Joseph Sold by His Brothers (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

Doing the math implied by [Exodus 36:4](#), [Exodus 38:22](#), [Joshua 14:7](#), and [1 Chronicles 2:19–20](#), the [Gemara](#) deduced that in earlier generations, a boy of eight could father children. [Exodus 38:22](#) reports that “Bezalel, son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that the Lord had commanded Moses,” when they built the Tabernacle. And [1 Chronicles 2:19–20](#) reports that [Caleb](#) fathered the Hur who fathered Uri who fathered Bezalel. [Exodus 36:4](#) reports that “wise men . . . wrought all the work of the Sanctuary,” so Bezalel must have been at least 13 years old to have been a man when he worked on the Tabernacle. A [Baraita](#) taught that Moses made the Tabernacle in the first year after the Exodus, and in the second, he erected it and sent out the spies, so the Gemara deduced that Bezalel must have been at least 14 years old when Moses sent out the spies, the year after Bezalel worked

on the Tabernacle. And [Joshua 14:7](#) reports that Caleb said that he was 40 years old when Moses sent him to spy out the land. Thus, the Gemara deduced that Caleb was only 26 years older than his great-grandson Bezalel. Deducting two years for the three pregnancies needed to create the three intervening generations, the Gemara concluded that each of Caleb, Hur, and Uri must have conceived his son at the age of eight. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 69b.](#))



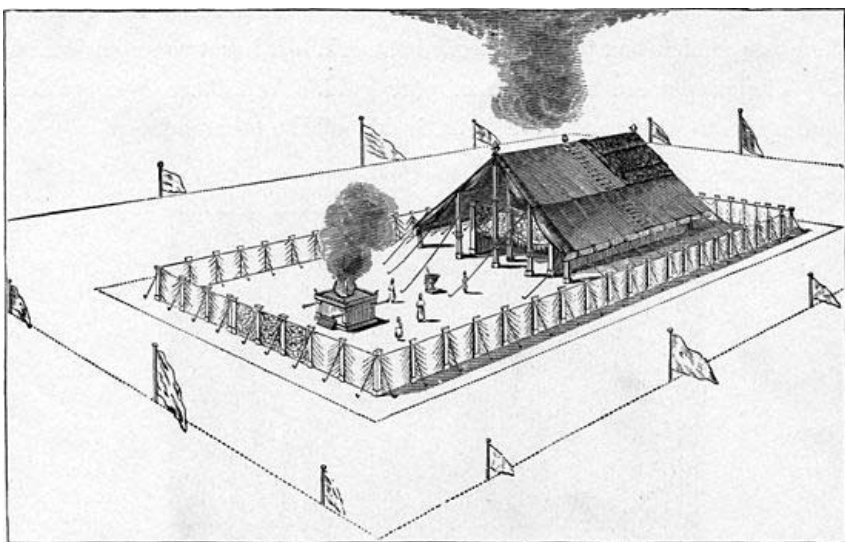
The Firmament (illustration from [Camille Flammarion](#)'s 1888 *L'atmosphère: météorologie populaire*)

Rabbi Judah ben Simon taught that God required each of the Israelites to give a half-shekel (as reported in [Exodus 38:26](#)) because (as reported in [Genesis 37:28](#)) their ancestors had sold Joseph to the [Ishmaelites](#) for 20 shekels. ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 84:18.)

[[edit](#)] Exodus chapter 39

Rabbi Judah ben Pazi noted that a similar word appears in both [Genesis 1:6](#) — where *rakya* is translated as “firmament” — and [Exodus 39:3](#) — where *vayraku* is translated as “and they flattened.” He thus deduced from the usage in [Exodus 39:3](#) that [Genesis 1:6](#) taught that on the second day of creation, God spread the heavens flat like a cloth. (Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 6a.) Or Rabbi Judah ben Simon deduced from [Exodus 39:3](#) that [Genesis 1:6](#) meant “let a lining be made for the firmament.” ([Genesis Rabbah 4:2](#).)

A Baraita taught that the High Priest’s wore his mitre so that hair was visible between the headplate and the mitre described in [Exodus 39:30–31](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Zevachim 19a](#).)



The Tabernacle that the Israelites Built (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)

Reading [Exodus 39:33](#), “and they brought the Tabernacle,” a midrash taught that on the day that the Tabernacle was set up, the Israelites rejoiced greatly because God then dwelt in their midst. And the people sang the words of [Song of Songs 3:11](#), “Go forth, O you daughters of Zion, and gaze upon King [Solomon](#), even upon the crown wherewith his mother has crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.” “O you daughters of Zion” were the children who are distinguished as God’s from among the peoples. “And gaze upon King Solomon” meant “gaze upon a King to whom all peace belongs” (reading the name Solomon as a play on the word “His peace”) — that is, upon the King of kings, God. “Even upon the crown wherewith his mother has crowned him” referred to the Tabernacle, which was called a crown because just as a crown has beautiful designs, so was the Tabernacle beautifully designed. “In the day of his espousals” referred to Sinai (at the Revelation). “And in the day of the gladness of his heart” referred to [Jerusalem](#) (when God caused God’s presence to dwell in the [Temple in Jerusalem](#)). According to another explanation, “in the day of his espousals” was the day when God was with Israel at the [Red Sea](#), and “in the day of the gladness of his heart” was when God’s presence dwelt in the Tent of Meeting. And according to yet another explanation, “in the day of his espousals” was in the Tabernacle, and “in the day of the

gladness of his heart” was in the Temple (when they were erected). (Exodus Rabbah 52:5.)

[\[edit\]](#) Exodus chapter 40

Noting that [Exodus 40:17](#) reports that “the tabernacle was reared up” — using the passive voice — a midrash told that when in [Exodus 40:1–2](#) God told Moses to set up the Tabernacle, Moses protested that he did not know how to set it up. So God told Moses to begin working with his hands and make a show of setting it up, and the Tabernacle would stand up on its own. But God reassured Moses that God would record that Moses set it up, as [Exodus 40:18](#) reports, “Moses reared up the tabernacle.” (Midrash [Tanhuma](#) Pekudei 11.)



Moses Destroys the Tables of the Ten Commandments

(watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Rav Assi of Hozna'ah deduced from the words, “And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month,” in [Exodus 40:17](#) that the Tabernacle was erected on the first of [Nisan](#). With reference to this, a [Tanna](#) taught that the first of Nisan took ten crowns of distinction by virtue of the ten momentous events that occurred on that day. The first of Nisan was: (1) the first day of the Creation (as reported in [Genesis 1:1–5](#)), (2) the first day of the princes’ offerings (as reported in [Numbers 7:10–17](#)), (3) the first day for the priesthood to make the sacrificial offerings (as reported in [Leviticus 9:1–21](#)), (4) the first day for public sacrifice, (5) the first day for the descent of fire from Heaven (as reported in [Leviticus 9:24](#)), (6) the first for the priests’ eating of sacred food in the sacred area, (7) the first for the dwelling of the Shechinah in Israel (as implied by [Exodus 25:8](#)), (8) the first for the [Priestly Blessing](#) of Israel (as reported in [Leviticus 9:22](#), employing the blessing prescribed by [Numbers 6:22–27](#)), (9) the first for the prohibition of the [high places](#) (as stated in [Leviticus 17:3–4](#)), and (10) the first of the months of the year (as instructed in [Exodus 12:2](#)). ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 87b.](#))

In [Deuteronomy 18:15](#), Moses foretold that “A prophet will the Lord your God raise up for you . . . *like me*,” and Rabbi Johanan thus taught that prophets would have to be, like Moses, strong, wealthy, wise, and meek. Strong, for [Exodus 40:19](#) says of Moses, “he spread the tent over the Tabernacle,” and a Master taught

that Moses himself spread it, and [Exodus 26:16](#) reports, “Ten [cubits](#) shall be the length of a board.” Similarly, the strength of Moses can be derived from [Deuteronomy 9:17](#), in which Moses reports, “And I took the two tablets, and cast them out of my two hands, and broke them,” and it was taught that the tablets were six handbreadths in length, six in breadth, and three in thickness. Wealthy, as [Exodus 34:1](#) reports God’s instruction to Moses, “Carve yourself two tablets of stone,” and the Rabbis interpreted the verse to teach that the chips would belong to Moses. Wise, for [Rav](#) and Samuel both said that 50 gates of understanding were created in the world, and all but one were given to Moses, for [Psalm 8:6](#) said of Moses, “You have made him a little lower than God.” Meek, for [Numbers 12:3](#) reports, “Now the man Moses was very meek.” ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 38a](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are no [commandments](#) in the parshah. (Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 2 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 1:433. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1991. [ISBN 0-87306-179-9](#).)



Solomon Dedicates the Temple at Jerusalem (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

[\[edit\]](#) Generally

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is:

- for [Sephardi Jews](#): [1 Kings 7:40–50](#)
- for [Ashkenazi Jews](#): [1 Kings 7:51–8:21](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Sephardi — 1 Kings 7:40–50

Both the parshah and the haftarah in [1 Kings 7:40–50](#) report the leader's erection of the holy place — Moses' setting up the Tabernacle in the parshah ([Exodus 40:18](#)), and Solomon's building of the Temple in Jerusalem in the haftarah. ([1 Kings 7:40–50](#).) Both the parshah and the haftarah report that the builders finished the work: “Moses finished the work” (וַיִּכַּל הָאֱתֹנֶיֶת־הַמִּשְׁכָּה, מֹשֶׁה *vayechal Mosheh et ha-melachah*) in [Exodus 40:33](#), and “so Hiram made an end of doing all the work” (וַיִּכַּל חִירָם לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־הַמִּשְׁכָּה, חִירָם, *vayechal Chiram la'asot et kol ha-melachah*) in [1 Kings 7:40](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Ashkenazi — 1 Kings 7:51–8:21

Similarly, both the parshah and the haftarah in [1 Kings 7:51–8:21](#) report the finishing of the leaders' work: “Moses finished the work” (וַיִּכַּל מֹשֶׁה, הָאֱתֹנֶיֶת־הַמִּשְׁכָּה, *vayechal Mosheh et ha-melachah*) in [Exodus 40:33](#), and “all the work that king Solomon wrought . . . was finished” (וְכָל־הַמִּשְׁכָּה, אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ, *vatisblam kol ha-melachah asher asah ha-melech Shlomoh*) in [1 Kings 7:51](#). And in both the parshah and the haftarah, a cloud and the Presence of the Lord fill the Sanctuary, indicating God's approval. ([Exodus 40:34–35](#); [1 Kings 8:10–11](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) On Shabbat Shekalim

When the parshah coincides with the [special Sabbath](#) Shabbat Shekalim (as it does in 2011 and 2014), the haftarah is [2 Kings 12:1–17](#).

[\[edit\]](#) On Shabbat Rosh Chodesh

When the parshah coincides with Shabbat Rosh Chodesh (as it did in 2008), the haftarah is [Isaiah 66:1–24](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Parshah Vayakhel–Pekudei

When parshah Vayakhel is combined with parshah Pekudei, the haftarah is:

- for Ashkenazi Jews: [1 Kings 7:51–8:21](#)
- for Sephardi Jews: [1 Kings 7:40–50](#)



Ezekiel (1510 fresco by [Michelangelo](#) at the [Sistine Chapel](#))

[\[edit\]](#) On Shabbat HaChodesh

When the parshah coincides with Shabbat HaChodesh ("Sabbath [of] the month," the [special Sabbath](#) preceding the Hebrew month of [Nissan](#) — as it does in 2013 and 2017), the haftarah is:

- for Ashkenazi Jews: [Ezekiel 45:16–46:18](#).
- for Sephardi Jews: [Ezekiel 45:18–46:15](#).

On Shabbat HaChodesh, Jews read [Exodus 12:1–20](#), in which God commands that “This month [Nissan] shall be the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year” ([Exodus 12:2](#)), and in which God issued the commandments of Passover. ([Exodus 12:3–20](#).) Similarly, the haftarah in [Ezekiel 45:21–25](#) discusses Passover. In both the parshah and the haftarah, God instructs the Israelites to apply blood to doorposts. ([Exodus 12:7](#); [Ezekiel 45:19](#).)

[edit] On Shabbat Parah

When the parshah coincides with Shabbat Parah (the special Sabbath prior to Passover — as it does in 2012, 2015, 2018), the haftarah is:

- for Ashkenazi Jews: [Ezekiel 36:16–38](#).
- for Sephardi Jews: [Ezekiel 36:16–36](#).

On Shabbat Parah, the Sabbath of the [red heifer](#), Jews read [Numbers 19:1–22](#), which describes the rites of purification using the red heifer (פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה, *parah adumah*). Similarly, the haftarah in Ezekiel 36 also describes purification. In both the special reading and the haftarah in Ezekiel 36, sprinkled water cleansed the Israelites. ([Numbers 19:18](#); [Ezekiel 36:25](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy

A [midrash](#) taught that on the day that Moses completed construction of the Tabernacle (as reported in [Exodus 40:33](#)), he composed [Psalm 91](#), which Jews read in the [Pesukei D'Zimrah](#) section of the morning [Shacharit](#) prayer service. (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals with an Interlinear Translation*, 272. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-697-3](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:



Philo

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Psalm 78:5](#) (testimony); [93:5](#) (God's holy place); [133:2](#) (anointing Aaron).

[\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic

- [Philo](#). *Who Is the Heir of Divine Things?* 26:131. [Alexandria](#), Egypt, early 1st Century C.E.. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated*

Edition. Translated by [Charles Duke Yonge](#), 287.
Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1993. [ISBN 0-943575-93-1](#).



Josephus

- [Josephus](#), [Antiquities of the Jews 3:6:1–10:1](#). Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 85–95. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).

[edit] Classical rabbinic

- [Tosefta](#): Zevachim 1:8; Menachot 7:7–8. Land of Israel, circa 300 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 2:1310, 1434–35. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).
- [Genesis Rabbah 3:9; 4:2](#); 84:18. Land of Israel, 5th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, 1:25, 27; 2:783. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).



Talmud

- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Berakhot 6a; Peah 5a; Kilayim 76a; Sukkah 8a, 27a. Land of Israel, circa 400 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 1, 3, 5, 22. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2005–2009.
- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Shabbat 28a, 87b](#); [Yoma 4b, 6a, 12a–b, 32a, 71b](#); [Sukkah 7b, 21a](#); [Rosh Hashanah 3a](#); [Ta'anit 29a](#); [Megillah 29b](#); [Yevamot 4b](#); [Nedarim 38a](#); [Sotah 37a, 38a](#); [Sanhedrin 69b](#); [Zevachim 19b, 22a, 58b, 119a–b](#); [Menachot 62a, 98a, 99a](#); [Chullin 138a](#); [Bekhorot 5a, 44a](#); [Arakhin 3b](#). Babylonia, 6th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

[[edit](#)] Medieval

- [Exodus Rabbah](#) 51:1–52:5. 10th Century. 10th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Exodus*. Translated by S. M. Lehrman, 3:562–81. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).



Rashi

- [Rashi](#). *Commentary*. [Exodus 38–40](#). [Troyes](#), France, late 11th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 2:507–24. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1994. [ISBN 0-89906-027-7](#).
- [Judah Halevi](#). [Kuzari](#). [3:23](#). [Toledo](#), Spain, 1130–1140. Reprinted in, e.g., Jehuda Halevi. *Kuzari: An Argument for the Faith of Israel*. Intro. by Henry Slonimsky, 162. New York: Schocken, 1964. [ISBN 0-8052-0075-4](#).
- [Zohar](#) [2:220a–269a](#). Spain, late 13th Century.

[\[edit\]](#) Modern



Hobbes

- [Thomas Hobbes](#). *Leviathan*, 4:44. England, 1651. Reprint edited by [C. B. Macpherson](#), 643. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1982. [ISBN 0140431950](#).
- [Richard Elliott Friedman](#). “A Brilliant Mistake” and “The Sacred Tent.” In *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 161–87. New York: Summit Books, 1987. [ISBN 0-671-63191-6](#).
- [Gabriel Josipovici](#). “Building the Tabernacle.” In *The Book of God: A Response to the Bible*, 90–107. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0300043201](#).
- [Jon D. Levenson](#). “Cosmos and Microcosm.” In *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence*, 78–99. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. [ISBN 0-06-254845-X](#).
- Craig R. Koester. *Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature, and the New Testament*. Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1989. [ISBN 0-915170-21-3](#).
- Alan Lew. *This Is Real and You Are Completely Unprepared: The Days of Awe as a Journey of Transformation*, 53–55. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 2003. [ISBN 0-316-73908-1](#).

[\[edit\]](#) External links

[\[edit\]](#) Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, California](#)
- [Aish.com](#)
- [American Jewish University](#)
- [Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles](#)
- [Bar-Ilan University](#)
- [Chabad.org](#)
- [eparsha.com](#)
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- MyJewishLearning.com
- [Ohr Sameach](http://OhrSameach.com)
- [Orthodox Union](http://OrthodoxUnion.org)
- [OzTorah, Torah from Australia](http://OzTorah.com)
- [Oz Ve Shalom — Netivot Shalom](http://OzVeShalom.com)
- RabbiShimon.com
- [Rabbi Shlomo Riskin](http://RabbiShlomoRiskin.com)
- [Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld](http://RabbiShmuelHerzfeld.com)
- [Reconstructionist Judaism](http://ReconstructionistJudaism.org)
- [Sephardic Institute](http://SephardicInstitute.org)
- Shiur.com
- [613.org Jewish Torah Audio](http://613.org)
- [Tanach Study Center](http://TanachStudyCenter.com)
- [Torah from Dixie](http://TorahFromDixie.com)
- Torah.org
- TorahVort.com
- [Union for Reform Judaism](http://UnionforReformJudaism.org)
- [United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth](http://UnitedHebrewCongregations.org)

- [United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism](#)
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