

From the Rabbi's Desk  
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**Insights into the Bible**  
**[3]**

**Moses, the Leader, Moses, the Husband, Moses,  
the Father**

**Insights into Exodus 2:11-22, 3:1-4, Exodus 2:21-22, Exodus  
4:19-26, Numbers 12:1, and Exodus 18:1-12**



**Moses, the Leader (See: A Portrait of the Hero as a Young Man,  
and Moses, the Reluctant Leader)**

**Exodus 2:11-22**

<sup>11</sup> Some time after that, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his kinsfolk and witnessed their labors. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsmen. <sup>12</sup> He turned this way and that and, seeing no one about, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand

<sup>13</sup> When he went out the next day, he found two Hebrews fighting; so he said to the offender, "Why do you strike your fellow?" <sup>14</sup> He retorted, "Who made you chief and ruler over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Moses was frightened, and thought: Then the matter is known! <sup>15</sup> When Pharaoh learned of the matter, he sought to kill Moses; but Moses fled from Pharaoh. He arrived in the land of Midian, and sat down beside a well.

<sup>16</sup> Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. They came to draw water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock; <sup>17</sup> but shepherds came and drove them off. Moses rose to their defense, and he watered their flock. <sup>18</sup> When they returned to their father Reuel, he said, "How is it that you have come back so soon today?" <sup>19</sup> They answered, "An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds; he even drew water for us and watered the flock." <sup>20</sup> He said to his daughters, "Where is he then? Why did you leave the man? Ask him in to break bread." <sup>21</sup> Moses consented to stay with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah as wife. <sup>22</sup> She bore a son whom he named Gershom, for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land."

### Chapter 3: 1-4

<sup>1</sup> Now Moses, tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, drove the flock into the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire out of a bush. He gazed, and there was a bush all aflame, yet the bush was not consumed. <sup>3</sup> Moses said, "I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight; why doesn't the bush burn up?" <sup>4</sup> When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him out of the bush: "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am."

### Chapter 3: 9-12

<sup>9</sup> Now the cry of the Israelites has reached Me; moreover, I have seen how the Egyptians oppress them.<sup>10</sup> Come, therefore, I will send you to Pharaoh, and you shall free My people, the Israelites, from Egypt."

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

### Chapter 4:13

<sup>13</sup> But he [Moses] said, "Please, O Lord, make someone else Your agent."

**?** Why did God choose Moses as the leader of the Children of Israel? Justify your answer based on Exodus 2:11-22, Exodus 3:1-4, Exodus 3:9-12 and Exodus 4:13.

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 4 \_\_\_\_\_

## Moses, the Husband

### Exodus 2:21-22

<sup>21</sup> Moses consented to stay with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah as wife. <sup>22</sup> She bore a son whom he named Gershom, for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land."

### Exodus 4: 19-26

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

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

said to you, "Let My son go, that he may worship Me," yet you refuse to let him go. Now I will slay your first-born son."

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

**?** How is Moses being portrayed in the above story? How is Zipporah being portrayed? How would you describe the relationship between Moses and Zipporah?

### **Numbers 12:1**

<sup>1</sup> When they were in Hazeroth, Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman he had married: "He married a Cushite woman!"

### **Rashi on Numbers 12:1**

She began the talking, so Scripture mentions her first. And from where did Miriam know that Moses had separated from his wife? Rabbi Natan says: Miriam was at Zipporah's side when Moses was told: "Eldad and Meidad are prophesying in the camp!" When Zipporah heard this, she said, "Woe to the wives of these men if they are to be occupied with prophecy, for they will separate themselves from their wives just as my husband has separated from me." From this, Miriam knew, and she told it to Aaron....

**?** What does Rashi add to the picture we already know about the relationship between Moses and Zipporah?

### **Moses, the Father**

#### **Exodus 18:1-12**

<sup>1</sup> Jethro priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people, how the Lord had brought Israel out from Egypt. <sup>2</sup> So Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after she had been sent home, <sup>3</sup> and her two sons — of whom one was named Gershom, that is to say, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land"; <sup>4</sup> and the other was named Eliezer, meaning, "The God of my father was my help, and He delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh." <sup>5</sup> Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought Moses' sons and wife to him in the wilderness, where he was encamped at the mountain of God. <sup>6</sup> He sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you, with your wife and her two sons." <sup>7</sup> Moses went out to meet his father-in-law; he bowed low and kissed him; each asked after the other's welfare, and they went into the tent.

<sup>8</sup> Moses then recounted to his father-in-law everything that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardships that had befallen them on the way, and how the Lord had delivered them. <sup>9</sup> And Jethro rejoiced over all the kindness that the Lord had shown Israel when He delivered them from the Egyptians. <sup>10</sup> "Blessed be the Lord," Jethro said, "who delivered you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh, and who delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. <sup>11</sup> Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods, yes, by the result of their very schemes against [the people]." <sup>12</sup> And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices for God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to partake of the meal before God with Moses' father-in-law.

**?** How would you describe the relationship of Moses with his father-in-law, based on the verses above?

**?** Jethro comes to meet Moses and brings Zipporah, Gershom and Eliezer with him. How did Moses' encounter with Zipporah, Gershom and Eliezer go?

**The Call of the Torah, by Rabbi Elie Munk (On Exodus 18:3). Artscroll. 1994.**

When Moses heard the Divine words at the Burning Bush, he immediately separated from his wife. Moses felt that as a prophet of God he was obligated to separate himself from earthly concerns and elevate himself to such a level of holiness that he would be ready to receive the Holy Spirit at any time. This austere attitude, which suited his nature, became more pronounced as Moses ascended to God (Exodus 19:3) and received Divine revelations more frequently.

Ultimately, he was reproached by his own brother and sister for neglecting his conjugal duties. Yet, Moses' actions were vindicated, for HaShem's Divine presence appeared to him continually and without any prior notice (Rashi to Numbers 12:4).

However, this separation left Zipporah with the task of raising her children. That is why the Torah calls them *her* two sons.

...

Others comment that the reason these children were ultimately unworthy of replacing their father as leader is because Moses was so involved with the near-crushing burdens of leading and teaching the Children of Israel that he could not spend the needed time in the upbringing of his own children (Chatam Sofer)

**!** The high price of leadership and public service: a lesson Moses taught, unknowingly!