*Shemot*

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Moshe Grows into His Leadership Role

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Chapter 2

Page 1: Structure and Parallel Texts

1. This chapter relates the birth of Moshe (Moses), Israel’s savior; his rescue from the river; his education in Pharaoh’s house, his venture to observe his brethren and his killing of the Egyptian; and finally his escape to Midian, where he settled. Moshe’s childhood and his youthful experiences helped shape his personality and nurture the leadership qualities he required so that he could later take his people out of Egypt and bring them to the edge of their land. The end of the chapter can be considered a kind of appendix which we will call ***Elohim***, as explained below

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1. The structure of the chapter illustrates Moshe’s preparation for his role. The first part of the chapter (verses 1-10) describes Moshe **the child who was saved**. The second part (verses 12-22) depicts **Moshe the man** who pursues justice, hurries to aid the weak, and who **saves** others. The middle verse (v. 11) is a central axis, which serves to stress Moshe’s maturation and his internalization of the traits of mercy and compassion which he already displayed at the beginning of his life and which became absorbed into his soul: “*…when Moses had grown up, he went out to his kinsfolk and witnessed their labors*.”

**Child Moshe rescued**

**v. 11 –chap. central axis**

**Adult Moshe rescues**

1. Verses 23-25, which is the section labeled the appendix above, present some of the results of Moshe’s actions and God’s reaction to them.
2. Each half of the section can be further divided into two smaller halves, with every other half describing a transition from danger to salvation. In the first half of the first section (up to verse 6), Moshe the baby is placed situations of continuously increasing danger. Salvation is provided by a gentile, Pharaoh's daughter, and Moshe is rescued from the water. The second story (the first half of the second part of the section) provides another depiction of a danger that reaches a climax: “*When Pharaoh learned of the matter, he sought to kill Moses; but Moses fled from Pharaoh.*” This is again followed by a temporary respite, also by means of a gentile, Jethro. Here too, salvation arrives through the agency of water, the well in Midian.

**Rescues Jethro's daughters**

**Verse dividing 2nd part**

**Danger**

1. As indicated in paragraph 2 above, certain qualities were absorbed by Moshe’s soul when he was rescued and by imbibing his mother’s milk. These attributes are later expressed through Moshe’s own actions, when he extends his assistance to others. One can discern five different narrative stages in the first 10 verses alone. These parallel five similar stages in the second part of the story, with the corresponding expressions and content signalling the different stages. For example the wordוַתִּצְפְּנֵהוּ – *she hid him*, parallels וַיִּטְמְנֵהוּ – *and [he] hid him*, in the second story. The verse, *When she could hide him no longer* corresponds to, *Then the matter is known*, and so forth. In summary, the events that Moshe experienced passively in his childhood return in an active form, either with him acting upon others or them acting upon him, in a different set of circumstances.
2. The analysis of the previous paragraph can be further sharpened: These three stories involving Moshe are presented in discrete stages, but only together do they offer a complete picture of Moshe's essential characteristics: **The pursuit of justice and compassion for the weak**. The first is demonstrated by his enlistment on behalf of his Hebrew brother who was being persecuted by a cruel gentile. His second quality, compassion, is illustrated by his efforts to save one of his brethren from a beating. The third story shows that his compassion extends even to a simple financial matter, the place in the queue for drawing water from the well. Likewise, the rescue operations in the first part of the story, that is, the compassion and pity expressed by people for the baby Moshe, are also presented in stages: First, his Hebrew mother decides to hide him. The second time it is a gentile, Pharaoh’s daughter, who draws him out of the water. The third instance of compassion can be attributed to several characters, the gentile daughter of Pharaoh, the (Hebrew) mother, and his sister, who refrain from handing him over to the authorities, and instead nurse him and care for his development. This threefold compassion bestowed upon him is returned to others by Moshe in the three subsequent rescue stories.