



GEULAS YISRAEL

RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN

RAM YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

MAGGID SHIUR ALL PARSHA AND ALL DAF, OU.ORG

Silent Heroism

Parshat Shemot marks the beginning of Moshe Rabbeinu's life and mission—the arrival of a figure who altered the landscape of human history. He ascended Sinai and delivered Torah. He confronted the might of Egypt and secured the freedom of an entire nation. His life remains one of the most dramatic stories ever lived, and his image towers over Yetziat Mitzrayim and the long desert journey.

Moshe's story begins far from the center stage. His first encounter with Hashem occurs on a quiet mountain, beside a bush that burns but is not consumed — a quiet, almost hidden moment of selection.

FIVE WOMEN

But even before that moment, Moshe's survival depended on others. His life would never have unfolded — he would not have

escaped Egypt's brutal decree — without five women who ensured that he lived. Their heroism was not marked by spectacle or public triumph. It was woven through courage, resolve, and quiet acts that shaped Moshe's future. Their bravery reminds us that redemption often begins in places no one is watching — through quiet, unseen heroism.

At each turn, the Torah draws our eyes to the margins, where history is quietly shaped.

IN THE DELIVERY ROOM

The first silent heroes are Shifrah and Pu'ah, the Jewish midwives who quietly defy Pharaoh's brutal decree, safeguarding newborn children. Their resistance is fraught with danger. Inevitably, Egyptian officials would notice that babies continued to live. Birth is never entirely hidden; it unfolds in full view, known and witnessed. Yet with steady resolve, they shield Jewish life.

Unable to control what unfolded in the birthing rooms, Pharaoh broadens his decree and commands that every male child — Jewish and Egyptian — be cast into the Nile. Ironically, the expanded order creates a narrow opening that allows Moshe to survive. He can be born quietly and hidden at home. Had Pharaoh's order continued to target newborns directly in the delivery rooms, Moshe would likely have been seized the moment he was born.

MARITAL COURAGE

Yocheved — Moshe's mother — is the next silent hero. Confronted by the grim likelihood

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that any child she bore would be doomed under Pharaoh's murderous decree, she separates from her husband, Amram. Yocheved finds the courage to reunite with Amram — and through that decision, Moshe is born. In this simple but profound decision — to build a family despite crushing circumstances — she shapes Jewish destiny. Without her moral resolve, Moshe would never have entered the world.

STAYS THE COURSE

The next silent hero is Miriam, Moshe's sister. Chazal describe her as the one who intervened after her parents separated, convincing them to reunite and continue building a family. She urged her parents not to surrender the future before it had even begun. Eventually Moshe is born, and hidden for three months. But the moment soon arrives when concealment is no longer possible. With no remaining options, he is placed in a basket and set upon the Nile.

Miriam does not walk away in resignation. She stands along the riverbank, watching the basket drift, refusing to abandon her brother to the currents. When he is discovered by an Egyptian princess, Miriam reacts with remarkable composure and ingenuity, offering to find a Jewish woman to nurse the child. In doing so, she reunites Moshe with his biological mother and ensures that the future redeemer of Israel is nursed by a Jewish woman.

We are responsible to act, to fulfill our duty, and to trust that HaKadosh Baruch Hu will determine the larger calculus.

LIFTED FROM WATER

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rescue him from certain death. However, no figure is more instrumental to Moshe's survival and future than his adoptive mother, Batya — the daughter of Pharaoh. She sees a helpless infant floating along the Nile, and she recognizes that he is a Jewish child. Despite her father's decree, she chooses to act. She takes Moshe from the water and brings him into the palace, raising him within the corridors of power and exposing him to leadership, politics, and diplomacy.

It is Batya who gives him his name — "Moshe," for she drew him from the water. Her act is not only the physical rescue that saves his life; it becomes a defining symbol. Moshe is lifted from waters that could have drowned him — the literal river beneath him and the sweeping forces around him that sought to erase Jewish life. At every stage, heroic women quietly pushed back against



the system, intervening at the edge of danger and refusing to stand aside. Batya's rescue is simply the final link in a chain of women who preserved the child who would one day redeem a nation.

More often than not, the dramatic achievements of history are attributed to visible heroes — those who display courage on the open stage. Yet behind them stand quiet figures, acting with conviction in hidden corners, whose steadfast bravery is no less vital to the final triumph.

This pattern — dramatic figures supported by silent, unseen courage — is not only ancient. It has unfolded again in our own generation.

SILENT BRAVERY ON EVERY FRONT

The past two years have revealed uncommon reservoirs of bravery. Our soldiers positioned themselves on the frontlines of our people and our Land, across seven fronts, facing those who sought our annihilation. A generation often accused of comfort and distraction demonstrated instead a fierce readiness to sacrifice for the future of our nation. With the help of Hashem, we broke an axis of evil meticulously assembled along

our borders — forces whose singular purpose was our destruction. Their designs were shattered not only through strategy and might, but through the mesirut nefesh of young men and women who stood between danger and Am Yisrael, preserving Jewish history and protecting our homeland.

However, just as we celebrate the obvious heroes, we must not overlook the silent heroes who stood behind them throughout these long two years.

The families of the hostages, who endured an unrelenting nightmare — months and years of uncertainty, fear, and waiting, living every day suspended between hope and heartbreak. The families of those who fell — on October 7th and in the battles that followed — who continue to live with loss even as the country moves forward. Their ongoing strength, carried quietly and without fanfare, has been the strongest form of silent heroism. The families of the injured, who continue to shoulder the burden of recovery — physical and emotional — long after the headlines fade and the front recedes. And the thousands of women who held the country together, spending long weeks, lonely nights, and quiet Shabbatot without their husbands — serving through multiple rounds of reserve duty. Their quiet resolve steadied countless homes and kept our society functioning while others stood at the front.

Our success of the past two years is the result of Hashem's care, the courage of our armed forces, and the steadfast strength of these silent heroes — so often, silent women — who sustained our people and held our collective lives intact through a war that has tested every layer of Am Yisrael.



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QUIET BATTLEFIELDS

Having seen silent heroism up close — alongside the visible, dramatic heroism of our soldiers — we should also appreciate the long arc of silent courage throughout Jewish history. Jewish survival was secured not by armies or parades, but by generations who lived quietly and faithfully, carrying our story when the world offered no support.

There was the heroism of Jews who possessed no land to defend and no army to protect themselves — yet refused to surrender their identity or their future.

There was the silent heroism of believing in ancient nevuot (prophecies), even when history appeared to veer wildly from its promised direction.

There was the heroism of maintaining halachic fidelity under pressure, often in societies that resisted or ridiculed Jewish practice, and in conditions that made observance costly and complex.

There was the quiet strength required to build Jewish families and communities under immense social, political, and economic strain — brick by brick, generation after generation.

Our generation has merited the opportunity to display courage on the battlefield and in the broad struggle of Jewish history. Previous generations displayed their courage on far quieter battlefields, but their victories were no less decisive for the survival of our people. ■



OU Press is honored to partner with Rabbi Moshe Taragin on his new volume in Hebrew regarding the recent war ('Emunah B'toch Hahastara). This remarkable book is also available in English, "Dark Clouds Above, Faith Below"

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