

# Kehillat Ma'arav's Anthology of Passover Reflections





# Hidden Figures in the Passover Story

Source Sheet created on Sefaria by Melanie Fine

Pesach Haggadah, Magid, First Fruits

## Declaration 19

"And I will pass through the land of Egypt" - I and not an angel. "And I will smite every firstborn" - I and not a seraph. "And with all the gods of Egypt, I will make judgements" - I and not a messenger. "I am the Lord" - I am He and there is no other.

Gemara Sotah 11b

*By the merit of the righteous women that generation was worthy to be redeemed from Egypt*

Exodus 1:15-19

(15) The king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shifrah and the other Puah, (16) saying, "When you deliver the Hebrew women, look at the birthstool: if it is a boy, kill him; if it

הגדה של פסח, מגיד, ארמי אבד

אבי י"ט

ועברתי בארץ מצרים בלילה הזה -  
אני ולא מלאך; והפיתי כל בכור  
בארץ-מצרים. אני ולא שרף;  
ובכל-אלהי מצרים אעשה שפטים.  
אני ולא השליח; אני ה'. אני הוא  
ולא אחר.

כשכר נשים צדקניות שהיו באותו

הדור נגאלו ישראל ממצרים

שמות א':ט"ו-י"ט

(טו) ויאמר מלך מצרים למיִלֶדֶת  
העִבְרִית אֲשֶׁר שֵׁם הָאִחָת שִׁפְרָה  
וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית פּוּעָה. (טז) ויאמר  
בִּלְדָּכֹן אֶת־הָעִבְרִיּוֹת וְרָאִיתָ  
עַל־הָאֲבָנִים אִם־בֵּן הוּא וְהַמָּתָן אֹתוֹ



Melanie Fine



is a girl, let her live.” (17) The midwives, fearing God, did not do as the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live. (18) So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, letting the boys live?” (19) The midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women: they are vigorous. Before the midwife can come to them, they have given birth.”

ואם־בַּת הוּא וַחֲיָהּ: (יז) וַתִּירָאן  
הַמִּילְדוֹת אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים וְלֹא עָשׂוּ  
כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵי מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם  
וַתַּחֲיִין אֶת־הַיִּלָּדִים: (יח) וַיִּקְרָא  
מֶלֶךְ־מִצְרַיִם לַמִּילְדוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶן  
מַדּוּעַ עָשִׂיתֶן הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וַתַּחֲיִין  
אֶת־הַיִּלָּדִים: (יט) וַתֹּאמְרֶינן הַמִּילְדוֹת  
אֶל־פַּרְעֹה כִּי לֹא כְנָשִׁים הַמִּצְרַיִת  
הָעֶבְרִית כִּי־חַיֹּת הִנֵּה בְטָרֶם תָּבוֹא  
אֱלֹהֵי הַמִּילְדוֹת וַיִּלְדוּ:

Who are Shifrah and Puah? Are they Egyptians or Hebrews?

And... how would the story have unfolded without their intervention?

#### Sotah 11b:11-13

And the king of Egypt said to the Jewish midwives... Rav and Shmuel - one said it was a woman and her daughter and the other said that it was a mother and her daughter in law. The one who said woman and her daughter it is referring to Yocheved and Miriam the one who said woman and her daughter in law is referring to Yocheved and Elisheva. There is a baraita that supports this perspective because there is a baraita that says Shifra is Yocheved. And why is she called

#### סוטה יא: 23-35

(שמות א, טו) ויאמר מלך מצרים  
למילדות העבריות וגו' רב ושמואל  
חד אמר אשה ובתה וחד אמר  
כלה וחמותה מ"ד אשה ובתה  
יוכבד ומרים ומ"ד כלה וחמותה  
יוכבד ואלישבע תניא כמ"ד אשה  
ובתה דתניא שפרה זו יוכבד ולמה  
נקרא שמה שפרה שמשפרת את  
הולד ד"א שפרה שפרו ורבו  
ישראל בימיה פועה זו מרים ולמה  
נקרא שמה פועה שהיתה פועה



Bernie Bronstein



## Three More "Hidden Figures"

Shifra - because she beautified the newborn infant. Another reason, is that Bnei Yisrael were fruitful and multiplied in her time. Puah is Miriam and why is she called Puah because she cried and talked and cooed to the newborn infant in the manner of women who soothe a crying infant. Another reason, Puah because she spoke with Ruach Hakodesh and she said in the future my mother will give birth to a son that will save the Jewish people.

(ומוציאה את הולד) ד"א פועה  
שהיתה פועה ברוח הקודש ואומרת  
עתידה אמי שתלד בן שמושיע את  
ישראל

How would the story have unfolded differently without one or all of them?

### Exodus 2:1-3

(1) A certain man of the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. (2) The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was good, she hid him for three months. (3) When she could hide him no longer, she got a wicker basket for him and caulked it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child into it and placed it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile.

### שמות ב':א'-ג'

(א) ויִלֶּךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֵוִי וַיִּקַּח  
אֶת־בַּת־לֵוִי. (ב) וַתַּהַר הָאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד  
בֶּן וַתֵּרָא אֹתוֹ כִּי־טוֹב הוּא וַתַּצְפְּנֵהוּ  
שְׁלֹשָׁה יָרֵחִים. (ג) וְלֹא־יָכְלָה עוֹד־  
הַצִּפְיָנוּ וַתִּקַּח־לּוֹ תֵּבַת גִּמָּא  
וַתַּמְרָהּ בַּחֲמֹר וּבְגֹפֶת וַתִּשֶׂם בָּהּ  
אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד וַתִּשֶׂם בְּסוּף עַל־שִׁפְת  
הַיָּאֵר.



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Exodus 2:4-9

## שמות ב':ד-ט

(4) And his sister stationed herself at a distance, to learn what would befall him. (5) The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe in the Nile, while her maidens walked along the Nile. She spied the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to fetch it. (6) When she opened it, she saw that it was a child, a boy crying. She took pity on it and said, "This must be a Hebrew child." (7) Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a Hebrew nurse to suckle the child for you?" (8) And Pharaoh's daughter answered, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. (9) And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will pay your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it.

(ד) וַתַּעֲבֹד אַחֲתָן מִרְחֹק לְדַעֵלָה  
מִהַיְעָשָׂה לּוֹ. (ה) וַתֵּרֶד בַּת־פַּרְעֹה  
לְרַחֵץ עַל־הַיָּאֵר וַנַּעֲרֹתֶיהָ הִלְכֹת  
עַל־יַד הַיָּאֵר וַתִּרְאֶה אֶת־הַתִּבְיָה בַּתְּנוֹף  
הַסּוּף וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת־אִמָּתָהּ וַתִּקְחָהּ (ו)  
וַתִּפְתַּח וַתִּרְאֶהוּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד  
וְהִנֵּה־נֹעֵר בֶּכֶה וַתַּחֲמַל עָלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר  
מִי־לִדִּי הָעִבְרִים זֶה. (ז) וַתֹּאמֶר  
אַחֲתוֹ אֶל־בַּת־פַּרְעֹה הֲאֵלֶּה וְקִרְאתִי  
לָהּ אִשָּׁה מִיִּנְקֹת מִן הָעִבְרִית וַתִּינַק  
לָהּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד. (ח) וַתֹּאמֶר־לָהּ  
בַּת־פַּרְעֹה לָכִי וַתִּלְךְ הָעֹלָמָה  
וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־אִם הַיֶּלֶד. (ט) וַתֹּאמֶר  
לָהּ בַת־פַּרְעֹה הֲיִלְכִי אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד הַזֶּה  
וְהִינֵקְהוּ לִי וְאֲנִי אֶתֵּן אֶת־שֹׂכְרָהּ  
וַתִּקַּח הָאִשָּׁה הַיֶּלֶד וַתְּנִיקְהוּ.

The infant Moses is found in the Nile by the Pharaoh's daughter, who takes a number of actions in a few short verses. Of the seven verbs here in quick succession, the only one that was within her usual routine was the coming down, the bathing. She goes out of her way in every other sense—she notices the basket, sends for it, opens it, identifies the child and takes pity. She could have made the choice to not notice, to not see—to stay comfortable and ignore pain, as is so easy to do when one is on the lucky side of oppression. But she not only keeps her eyes open, she chooses to get involved—to get the basket, to open it, to connect what she's seeing in front of her with the horrors she knows to be taking place elsewhere, hidden from view. And, most crucially, to let herself feel for this infant—to feel mercy, the opposite of what was happening in her own father's hardening heart. Then, she not only connects the need happening in front of her to the larger systemic atrocities happening around her, but she names that connection—she brings in those around her into the need in the moment.

Then she makes another decision—to take action. She decides to keep the baby—to save a life,



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directly violating her own father's violent decree.

Moses's sister, Miriam—the fifth woman to show us courage in these two short chapters—has been watching from a distance; when she sees Pharaoh's daughter look compassionately at her brother and say—presumably, with a tone matching the feeling of pity, that “this must be a Hebrew child,” she bravely steps forward and asks Pharaoh's daughter if she should fetch a Hebrew wet-nurse to feed the baby.

It's easy to portray Miriam as a sweet, plucky girl in this exchange, but what was demanded of her was more than just high spirits. The power dynamics here are real. She initiates conversation with a woman who could get her and her whole family killed. She risks the possibility of outing herself as connected to this infant, as part of a plan to defy Pharaoh's official edict—to a member of his own family. And yet, the stakes were insurmountably high—her brother's life—so she does what must be done.

None of these women were able to implement comprehensive systemic change. None of them were able to end Pharaoh's oppression of the Israelites. But each did what she could, using her power and capabilities to try to outmaneuver the system to the best of her ability. The women of Exodus show us that, even when we can't change everything, we're still obligated to do what we can, within our sphere of power and influence, to try to protect and preserve life — even at great personal risk, and sometimes in ways that are even subversive.

### And what becomes of the woman who adopted Moses?

#### Vayikra Rabbah 1:3

The Holy One said to Batya, the daughter of Pharaoh: "Moses was not your son, and yet you called him your son. So too, you are not my daughter, but I call you my daughter."

#### ויקרא רבה א'ג'

אמר לה הקדוש ברוך הוא לבתיה  
בת פרעה: משה לא היה בנך  
וקראתו בנך אף את, לא את בתי  
ואני קורא אותך בתי



# Batya's Reward

Zohar 3:167a:3

In one chamber, Batya, Pharaoh's daughter, comes, and so many thousands and thousands of women who merit to be with her. Every single one of them deserves the supernal lights and pleasures [of that place], nothing at all is withheld from any of them. Three times each day, the announcement is made: The likeness of Moshe, the faithful prophet, is coming! And Batya goes out, to that curtained area which is dedicated to her, and observes the likeness of Moshe, and bows before it, saying, "Happy is my portion, that I raised such a light!" This is her delight, above all others.

Zohar 3:167a:4

Batya returns to the women, and they delve into precepts of Torah. All of them have the likenesses they had in this world, and were clothed in light, just as the clothing of the men, except not quite as much light. The precepts of Torah that they did not merit to fulfill in this world, they [now] delve into, along with their meanings, in that world. And all these women that dwell together with Batya, Pharaoh's daughter, are called serene women, and they are not troubled by the pains of gehenna at all.

זוהר ג'קס"ז א:ג'

בְּהִיכָלָא חָדָא, אִית בְּתִיָּה בֵּת  
פֶּרְעָה, וְכַמָּה רַבּוּא וְאַלְפֵי נָשִׁין,  
זָכִיין בְּהֵדָה, וְכָל חָדָא וְחָדָא מְנִיָּהוּ,  
דְּוִכְתִּין דְּנִהוּרִין וְעִדּוּנִין, בְּלֹא דִחְקָא  
כָּלֵל אִית לָהּ. תָּלַת זְמָנִין בְּכָל יוֹמָא,  
כְּרוּזֵי אַכְרִיזוּ, הָא דְיוֹקְנָא דְמֹשֶׁה  
נִבְיָאָה מְהִימָנָא אֲתִי, וּבְתִיָּה נִפְקֵת,  
לְאַתֵּר דְּפֶרְגוּדָא חָדָא דְאִית לָהּ,  
וְחֻמָּא דְיוֹקְנָא דְמֹשֶׁה, וְסִגִּידַת  
לְגַבִּיָּה, וְאַמְרָה, זִפְאָה חוּלְקֵי  
דְרַבִּיתִי נִהִירוּ דָא. וְדָא אִיהוּ עֲנוּגִין  
דִּילָהּ, יְתִיר מִכְּלָהּ.

זוהר ג'קס"ז א:ד'

אֶהְדֵּרֵת לְגַבִּי נָשִׁין, וְאַשְׁתַּדְּלֵן  
בְּפִקּוּדֵי אוּרִיָּתָא. כְּלָהּ בְּאֵינּוֹן  
דְיוֹקְנִין דִּהּוּ בְּהָא עֲלָמָא, בְּלִבּוּשָׁא  
דְנִהוּרָא, (ס"א כִּלְבוּשָׁא) בְּלִבּוּשָׁא  
דְדְּכוּרִין, בֵּר דְלֹא נִהְרִי הָכִי, פִּקּוּדִין  
דְאוּרִיָּתָא דְלֹא זָכוּ לְקִיָּמָא לוֹן  
בְּהָא עֲלָמָא, מִשְׁתַּדְּלֵי בְּהוּ,  
וּבְטַעֲמִיָּהוּ, בְּהֵהוּא עֲלָמָא. וְכָל הַגִּי  
נָשִׁין, דִּיתְבִּין בְּהֵדִי בְתִיָּה בֵּת פֶּרְעָה,  
אֶקְרוּן נָשִׁים שְׁאַנְנוֹת, דְלֹא אֶצְטַעְרוּ  
בְצַעֲרָא דְגִיָּהֶנּוּ כָלֵל.



Alla Feldman



# Leadership and the Passover Story

Source Sheet created on Sefaria by Melanie Fine

Based on a sheet by Steven Conn

## The Leadership Styles of Moses, Aaron and Miriam

Taanit 9a:9

Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Yehuda, says: Three good leaders rose up for the Jewish people during the exodus from Egypt, and **they are: Moses, Aaron and Miriam. And three good gifts were given from Heaven through their agency, and these are they:** The well of water, the pillar of cloud, and the manna. He elaborates: The **well** was given to the Jewish people **in the merit of Miriam**; the **pillar of cloud** was **in the merit of Aaron**; and the **manna** **in the merit of Moses**. When **Miriam died the well disappeared**, as it is stated: **“And Miriam died there”** (Numbers 20:1), and it says **thereafter** in the next verse: **“And there was no water for the congregation”** (Numbers 20:2). But the well **returned in the merit of both Moses and Aaron**.

תענית ט' א"ט

מיתבי, רבי יוסי ברבי יהודה אומר:  
שְׁלֹשָׁה פְּרָנְסִים טוֹבִים עָמְדוּ  
לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, אֵלֶּיָּהֶם: מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן  
וּמִרְיָם. וְשְׁלֹשׁ מַתָּנוֹת טוֹבוֹת נִתְּנוּ  
עַל יָדָם, וְאֵלֶּיָּהֶם: בָּאָר, וְעַנָּן, וּמָן.  
בָּאָר — בְּזִכּוֹת מִרְיָם, עֲמוּד עַנָּן —  
בְּזִכּוֹת אַהֲרֹן, מָן — בְּזִכּוֹת מֹשֶׁה.  
מִתָּה מִרְיָם — נִסְתַּלַּק הַבָּאָר,  
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “וַתָּמָת שָׁם מִרְיָם”, וְכֵתִיב  
בְּתַרְיָה: “וְלֹא הָיָה מַיִם לָעֵדָה”,  
וְחֻזְרָה בְּזִכּוֹת שְׁנֵיהֶם.







## Moses vs Aaron

Sanhedrin 6b:3

**Rather**, the judge must assure that the true **judgment will** prevail at all costs and metaphorically **pierce the mountain**, as it is stated: **“For the judgment is God’s”** (Deuteronomy 1:17). **And similarly, Moses would say: Let the judgment pierce the mountain. But** by contrast, **Aaron**, whose role was not that of a judge, was **a lover of peace and a pursuer of peace**, and he would apply **peace between one person and the other**, as it is stated: **“The law of truth was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found in his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and turned many away from iniquity”** (Malachi 2:6).

סנהדרין ו' ב:ג'

אלא יקוב הדין את ההר שנאמר (דברים א, יז) כי המשפט לאלהים הוא וכן משה היה אומר יקוב הדין את ההר אבל אהרן אוהב שלום ורודף שלום ומשים שלום בין אדם לחבירו שנאמר (מלאכי ב, ו) תורת אמת היתה בפיהו ועולה לא נמצא בשפתיו בשלום ובמישור הלך אתי ורבים השיב מעון





Bernie Bronstein

The story of the Golden Calf provides an illustration of the leadership styles of both Moses and Aaron in action. How do Moses and Aaron's leadership styles differ in the story and which one does the Torah prefer?

# Exodus 32:1-6

(1) When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, the people gathered against Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us a god who shall go before us, for that man Moses, who brought us from the land of Egypt—we do not know what has happened to him." (2) Aaron said to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." (3) And all the people took off the gold rings that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. (4) This he took from them and cast in a mold,<sup>a</sup> and made it into a molten calf. And they exclaimed, "This is your god,<sup>b</sup> O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt!" (5) When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron announced: "Tomorrow shall be a festival of the LORD!" (6) Early next day, the people offered up burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; they sat down to eat and drink, and then rose to dance.

# Exodus 32:19-29

(19) As soon as Moses came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, he became enraged; and he hurled the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain. (20) He took the calf that they had made and burned it; he ground it to powder and strewed it upon the water and so made the Israelites drink it. (21) Moses said to

## שמות ל"ב:א-ו

(א) וירא העם כי־בִשְׁשׁ מִשָּׁה לָרֶדֶת מִן־הָהָר וַיִּקְהָל הָעָם עַל־אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו קוּמֹס עֲשֵׂה־לָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר יֵלְכוּ לִפְנֵינוּ כִּי־זָהוּ מִשָּׁה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הֵעֵלָנוּ מֵמִצְרָיִם מִצְרַיִם לֹא יָדָעְנוּ מַה־הָיָה לוֹ. (ב) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אַהֲרֹן פָּרְקוּ נְזֻמֵּי הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּאָזְנֵי נְשֵׁיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם וּבְנֹתֵיכֶם וְהָבִיאוּ אֵלָי. (ג) וַיִּתְּפְרוּ כָל־הָעָם אֶת־נְזֻמֵּי הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶל־אַהֲרֹן. (ד) וַיִּקַּח מִיָּדָם וַיִּצַּר אוֹתוֹ בַּחֶרֶט וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ עֵגֶל מִסִּכָּה וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הֵעֵלָנוּ מִצְרָיִם מִצְרַיִם. (ה) וַיֹּרֶא אַהֲרֹן וַיִּבֶן מִזְבֵּחַ לִפְנָיו וַיִּקְרָא אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר תֵּן לַיהוָה מִחֶרֶת. (ו) וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ מִמִּחֲרַת וַיַּעֲלוּ עֹלֹת וַיִּגִּשּׁוּ שְׁלָמִים וַיִּשָּׁב הָעָם לֵאמֹר וְשָׂתוּ וַיִּקְמוּ לְצַחֲקִי. {פ}

## שמות ל"ב:י"ט-כ"ט

(יט) וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר קָרַב אֶל־הַמִּחֲנֶה וַיֹּרֶא אוֹת־הָעֵגֶל וּמַחֲלֵת וַיַּחֲרִי־אֵף מִשָּׁה וַיִּשְׁלֶךְ מִיָּדוֹ אֶת־הַלְּחָת וַיִּשְׁבֵּר אֹתָם תַּחַת הָהָר. (כ) וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הָעֵגֶל אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ וַיִּשְׂרֹף בָּאֵשׁ וַיִּטְחֵן עַד אֲשֶׁר־דָּק וַיִּזֹּר עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם וַיִּשָּׂק אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. (כא) וַיֹּאמֶר מִשָּׁה אֶל־אַהֲרֹן מַה־עָשִׂיתָ לָּהּ



Aaron, "What did this people do to you that you have brought such great sin upon them?" (22) Aaron said, "Let not my lord be enraged. You know that this people is bent on evil. (23) They said to me, 'Make us a god to lead us; for that man Moses, who brought us from the land of Egypt—we do not know what has happened to him.' (24) So I said to them, 'Whoever has gold, take it off!' They gave it to me and I hurled it into the fire and out came this calf!" (25) Moses saw that the people were out of control—since Aaron had let them get out of control—so that they were a menace to any who might oppose them. (26) Moses stood up in the gate of the camp and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, come here!" And all the Levites rallied to him. (27) He said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Each of you put sword on thigh, go back and forth from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay brother, neighbor, and kin." (28) The Levites did as Moses had bidden; and some three thousand of the people fell that day. (29) And Moses said, "Dedicate yourselves to the LORD this day—for each of you has been against son and brother—that He may bestow a blessing upon you today."

הָעָם הָזֶה כִּי־הִבֵּאתָ עָלֶיךָ חַטָּאת  
גְּדֹלָה. (כב) וַיֹּאמֶר אֶהְרֹן אֶל־יְיָ  
אֵף אֲדֹנָי אַתָּה יֹדַעַת אֶת־הָעָם כִּי  
בָרַע הוּא. (כג) וַיֹּאמְרוּ לִי עֲשֵׂה־לָּנוּ  
אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר יֵלְכוּ לִפְנֵינוּ כִּי־זָהוּ  
מִשֵּׁה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הֵעֵלָנוּ מִמִּצְרָיִם  
מִצְרַיִם לֹא יָדָעְנוּ מַה־הָיָה לוֹ. (כד)  
וַאֲמַר לָהֶם לְמִי זָהָב הִתְפַּרְקוּ  
וַיִּתְּנוּ־לִי וְאֶשְׁלָכֶהוּ בָאֵשׁ וַיֵּצֵא הָעֵגֶל  
הַזֶּה. (כה) וַיֵּרָא מִשֵּׁה אֶת־הָעָם כִּי  
פָרַע הוּא כִּי־פָרַעַה אֶהְרֹן לְשִׁמְצָה  
בְּקִמְיָהֶם. (כו) וַיַּעֲמֵד מִשֵּׁה בַשַּׁעַר  
הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיֹּאמֶר מִי לַיהוָה אֵלָי  
וַיֹּאסְפוּ אֵלָיו כָּל־בְּנֵי לֵוִי. (כז)  
וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמֹו אִישׁ־חַרְבּוֹ עַל־יָרֵכּוֹ  
עֲבְרוּ וְשֹׂבוּ מַשְׁעַר לַשַּׁעַר בַּמַּחֲנֶה  
וְהָרְגוּ אִישׁ־אֶת־אָחִיו וְאִישׁ  
אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ וְאִישׁ אֶת־קָרְבּוֹ. (כח)  
וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי־לֵוִי כַּדְבָר מִשֵּׁה וַיַּפֵּל  
מִן־הָעָם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כֶּשֶׁלֶשֶׁת אֲלָפֵי  
אִישׁ. (כט) וַיֹּאמֶר מִשֵּׁה מֵלֹאזֹר יָדְכֶם  
הַיּוֹם לַיהוָה כִּי אִישׁ בָּבֶנּוּ וּבָאָחִיו  
וְלִתֵּת עַל־יְכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה.







Teri Lewis

## Pirkei Avot 1:12

(12) Hillel and Shammai received [the oral tradition] from them. Hillel used to say: be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving mankind and drawing them close to the Torah.

## משנה אבות א':י"ב

(יב) הלל ושמאי קבלו מהם. הלל אומר, הוי מתלמידי של אהרן, אוהב שלום ורודף שלום, אוהב את הבריות ומקרנן לתורה:

Given the Torah's condemnation of Aaron, we might think that our tradition would regard Aaron's leadership as weak and ineffectual. But that it not the case. Let's look at these two well-known sources below. How do they portray Aaron as a leader? How does this portrayal relate, if at all, to the Golden Calf story?

The commentaries below may help bridge the gap.

### Avot D'Rabbi Natan 12:1-3

*Hillel and Shammai received from them. Hillel would say: Be like the students of Aaron: Love peace, and pursue peace, and bring peace between one person and another, and between husband and wife, [love all people,] and bring them closer to Torah.*

*Love peace.* How so? This is to teach you to be a person who loves peace among all the people of Israel, just as Aaron loved peace between everyone, as it says (Malachi 2:6), "A Torah of Truth was on his mouth, and no crooked thing was on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and righteousness, and he pulled back many from sin."

(Rabbi Meir would say: What do we learn from "he pulled back many from sin"? When Aaron was walking down the road, and he came upon a wicked person, he would wish him *Shalom*. The next day, when that man wanted to sin, he would say: Alas! How will I be able to look Aaron in the face; I will be so embarrassed when he wishes me *Shalom*. And so this man would stop himself from sinning. Similarly, when two people were fighting with one another, Aaron would go and sit next to one of them and say: My son, look at the anguish your friend is going through! His

### אבות דרבי נתן י"ב:א-ג

הלל ושמאי קבלו מהם הלל אומר הוי מתלמידי של אהרן אוהב שלום ורודף שלום ומשים שלום בין איש לאשתו [אוהב את הבריות] ומקרנן לתורה. הוא היה אומר נגד שמא אבד שמיה ודלא מוסיף יסיף ודלא יליף קטלא חייב ודאישתמש בתגא חלף: י: אוהב שלום כיצד מלמד שיהא אדם אוהב שלום בישראל בין כל אחד ואחד כדרך שהיה אהרן אוהב שלום בין כל אחד ואחד שנא' (מלאכי ב) תורת אמת היתה בפיהו ועולה לא נמצא בשפתיו בשלום ובמישור הלך אתי ורבים השיב מעון (ר"מ אומר מה ת"ל ורבים השיב מעון) כשהיה אהרן מהלך בדרך פגע בו באדם רשע ונתן לו שלום למחר בקש אותו האיש לעבור עבירה אמר אוי לי היאך אשא עיני אחר כך ואראה את אהרן כושתי הימנו שנתן לי שלום נמצא אותו האיש מונע עצמו מן העבירה. וכן שני בני אדם שעשו מריבה זה עם זה הלך אהרן וישב אצל אחד מהם אמר לו בני ראה חברך מהו אומר מטרף את לבו וקורע את בגדיו אומר אוי לי היאך אשא את עיני ואראה את חברי כושתי הימנו שאני הוא שסרחתי



heart is ripped apart and he is tearing at his clothes. He is saying, How can I face my old friend? I am so ashamed, I betrayed his trust. Aaron would sit with him until his rage subsided. Then Aaron would go to the other person in the fight and say: My son, look at the anguish your friend is going through! His heart is ripped apart and he is tearing at his clothes. He is saying, How can I face my old friend? I am so ashamed, I betrayed his trust. Aaron would sit with him until his rage subsided. When the two people saw each other, they would embrace and kiss one another. And that is why it says (Numbers 20:20), "And the entire House of Israel wept for Aaron for thirty days" [after his death].

#### Rashi on Exodus 32:2

(1) [BREAK OFF THE GOLDEN PENDANTS], WHICH ARE IN THE EARS OF YOUR WIVES — Aaron said to himself: women and children have a love for their ornaments; perhaps the matter will be delayed because they will hesitate to give their ornaments, and in the meantime Moses may arrive. They (the men), however, did not wait until the women and children made up their minds but they took the ornaments off themselves.

עליו הוא יושב אצלו עד שמסיר קנאה מלבו. והולך אהרן ויושב אצל האחר וא"ל בני ראה חברך מהו אומר מטרף את לבו וקורע את בגדיו ואומר אוי לי היאך אשא את עיניו ואראה את חברי בושתי הימנו שאני הוא שסרחתי עליו הוא יושב אצלו עד שמסיר קנאה מלבו. וכשנפגשו זה בזה גפפו ונשקו זה לזה לכך נאמר (במדבר כ) ויבכו את אהרן שלשים יום כל בית ישראל:

#### רש"י על שמות ל"ב:

(א) באזני נשיכם. אָמַר אֶהְרֹן בְּלִבּוֹ: הַנָּשִׁים וְהַיְלָדִים חֲסִים עַל תְּכֵישִׁיתָן, שֶׁמָּא יִתְעַכֵּב הַדָּבָר וּבְתוֹךְ כֵּךְ יָבֹא מֹשֶׁה, וְהֵם לֹא הִמְתִּינוּ וּפָרְקוּ מֵעַל עֲצָמָן: (ב)







Melanie Fine



Alla Feldman



## What about Miriam?

Exodus 2:1-10

(1) A certain member of the house of Levi went and took [into his household as his wife] a woman of Levi. (2) The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw how beautiful he was, she hid him for three months. (3) When she could

hide him no longer, she got a wicker basket for him and caulked it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child into it and placed it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. (4) And his sister stationed herself at a distance, to learn what would befall him. (5) The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe in the Nile, while her maidens walked along the Nile. She spied the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to fetch it. (6) When she opened it, she saw that it was a child, a boy crying. She took pity on it and said, "This must be a Hebrew child." (7) Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a Hebrew nurse to suckle the child for you?" (8) And Pharaoh's daughter answered, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. (9) And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will pay your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. (10) When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, who made him her son. She named him Moses, explaining, "I drew him out of the water."

Sotah 12a:10

A Sage teaches: Amram, the father

of Moses, was the great man of his generation. Once he saw that the wicked Pharaoh said: "Every son that is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive" (Exodus 1:22), he said: We are laboring for nothing by bringing children into the world to be killed. Therefore, he arose and divorced his wife. All others who saw this followed his example and arose and divorced their wives.

שמות ב:א-י

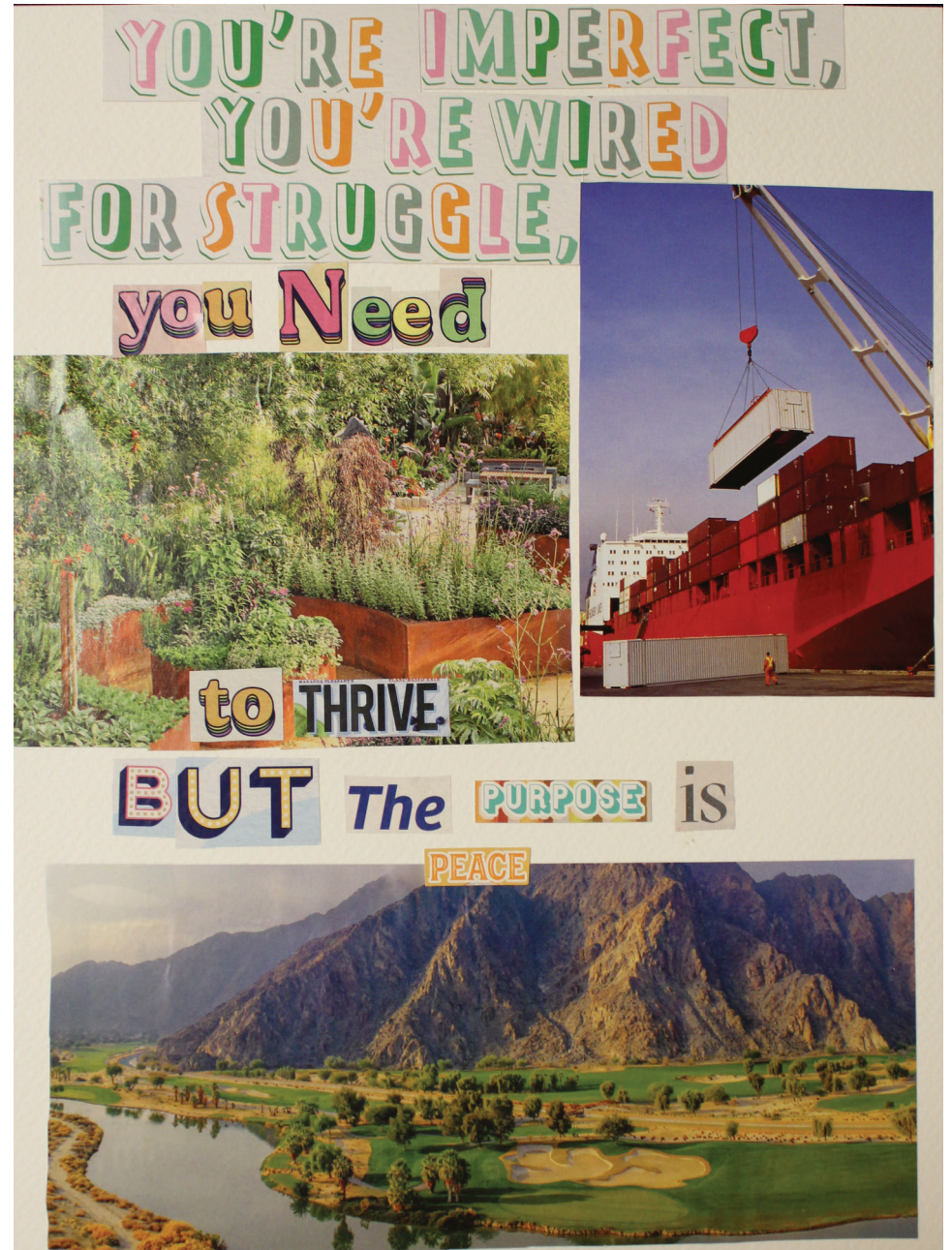
(א) וילד איש מבית לוי ויקח את-בת-לוי. (ב) ותהר האשה ותלד בן ותרא אותו כי-טוב הוא ותצננהו שלשה ירחים. (ג) ולא-יכלה עוד הצפינו ותקח-לו תבת גמא ותחמרה בחמר ובנפת ותשם בה

את-הילד ותשם בסוף עלי-שפת היארי. (ד) ותמצב אחתו מרחק לדעה מה-יעשה לו. (ה) ותרג בת-פרעה לרחץ עלי-היאר ונצרתיה הלכת עלי-יד היאר ותרא את-התבה בתוך הסוף ותשלח את-אמתה ותקחה. (ו) ותפתח ותראהו את-הילד והנה-נער בכה ותחמל עליו ותאמר מילדי העברים זה. (ז) ותאמר אחתו אל-בת-פרעה האלד וקראתי לך אשה מינקת מן העברית ומינק לך את-הילד. (ח) ותאמר לה בת-פרעה לבי ותלד העלמה ותקרא את-אם הילד. (ט) ותאמר לה בת-פרעה הילכי את-הילד הזה והיננקהו לי ואני אתן את-שכרה ותקח האשה הילד ותניקהו. (י) וילד הילד ותבאנהו לבת-פרעה ויהי-לה לבן ותקרא שמו משה ותאמר כי מו-הפגם משיתיהו.

סוטה י"ב א'

תנא עמרם גדול הדור הזה כיון

שראה שאמר פרעה הרשע כל הבן הילוד היארה תשליכהו אמר לשון אנו צמלין צמד וגירש את אשתו צמדו כולן וגירשו את נשותיהן



Menachem



Sotah 12a:11

**His daughter, Miriam, said to him: Father, your decree is more harsh for the Jewish people than that of Pharaoh, as Pharaoh decreed only with regard to the males, but you decreed both on the males and on the females.** And now no children will be born. Additionally, **Pharaoh decreed to kill them only in this world, but you decreed in this world and in the World-to-Come,** as those not born will not enter the World-to-Come.

Sotah 12b:21-13a:1

The next verse states: **“And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her: Go.** And the maiden [*ha'alma*] went

and called the child’s mother” (Exodus 2:8). **Rabbi Elazar says:** This teaches that she went quickly like a maiden, i.e., with the strength of one of marriageable age, and not as the young child that she was. **Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani says:** The word *ha'alma* is related to the word meaning to hide [*le'alem*], for she hid her words and didn't tell Pharaoh's daughter that she was bringing the baby's mother. The next verse states what Pharaoh's daughter said to Jochebed: **“And Pharaoh's daughter said to her: Take this [*heilikhi*] child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give**

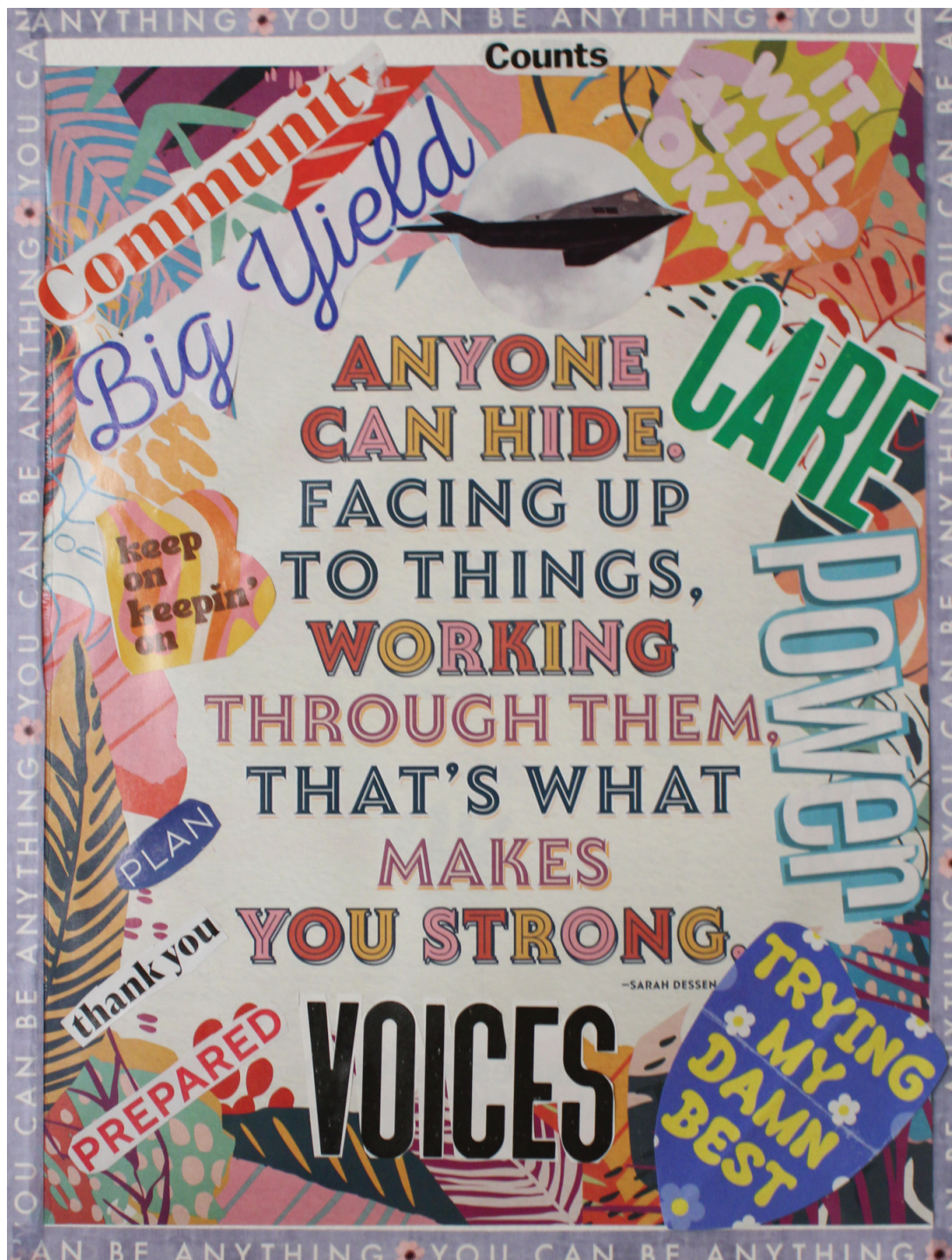
סוטה י"ב א:י"א

אמרה לו בתו אבא קשה גזירתך יותר משל פרעה שפרעה לא גזר אלא על הזכרים ואמה גזרת על הזכרים ועל הנקיבות פרעה לא גזר אלא בעולם הזה ואמה בעולם הזה ולעולם הבא

סוטה י"ב ב:כ"א-י"ג א:א'

ותאמר לה בת פרעה לכי וגוי אמר רבי אלעזר מלמד שהלכה בזריזות כעלמה רבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר

העלמה שהעלימה את דבריה ותאמר לה בת פרעה היליכי את הילד הזה אמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא מתנבאה ואינה יודעת מה מתנבאה היליכי הא שליכי ואני אתן את שכרה אמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא לא דיין לצדיקים שמחזירין להן אבידתן אלא שנותנין להן שכרן ותקח מרזם הנביאה אחות אהרן וגוי אחות אהרן ולא אחות משה אמר רב עמרם אמר רב ואמרי לה אמר רב נחמן אמר רב מלמד שהיתה מתנבאה כשהיא אחות אהרן ואמרת צתידה אמי



Susan Bronstein



you your wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it” (Exodus 2:9). **Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina, says:** Pharaoh’s daughter is prophesying and she does not know what she is prophesying, as the word *heilikhi* means: **This is yours** [*ha shellikhi*], i.e., this is your child. The next part of the verse states: **“And I will give you your wages.”** **Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina, says:** This teaches that **with regard to righteous people, not only** is it so **that** God arranges **that their lost items are returned to them, but** He **also** arranges **that they get their wages,** as the son of Jochebed was returned to her and she also received

שֶׁתֵּלֵד בֶּן שְׁמוּשִׁיעַ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכִיּוֹן  
שְׁנוֹלֵד מִשָּׁה נִתְמַלֵּא כָּל הַבֵּית כּוֹלֵוֹ  
אוֹר עָמַד אָבִיהָ וּנְשָׁקָה עַל רֹאשָׁהּ  
אָמַר לָהּ בְּתִי נִתְקַיְמָה נְבוֹאָתֶיךָ  
וְכִיּוֹן שֶׁהִטִּילוּהוּ לִיְאֹר עָמַד אָבִיהָ  
וּטְפָחָה עַל רֹאשָׁהּ אָמַר לָהּ בְּתִי  
הֵיכֵן נְבוֹאָתֶיךָ וְהֵינִי דִכְתִּיב וַתִּתְּצֵב  
אֲחֹתוֹ מֵרְחוֹק לִידָעָה מָה יַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ  
לִידָע מָה יִהְיֶה בְּסוּף נְבוֹאָתָהּ

payment for nursing him. Elsewhere, the verse states with regard to Miriam: **“And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took** a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances” (Exodus 15:20). The Gemara asks: Why is Miriam referred to as **“the sister of Aaron,”** and not the sister of Moses? Rav Amram says that Rav Nahman says that Rav says: This teaches that Miriam already prophesied when she was still the sister of only Aaron, i.e., before Moses was born. And as a child Miriam would say: In the future, my mother will give birth to a son

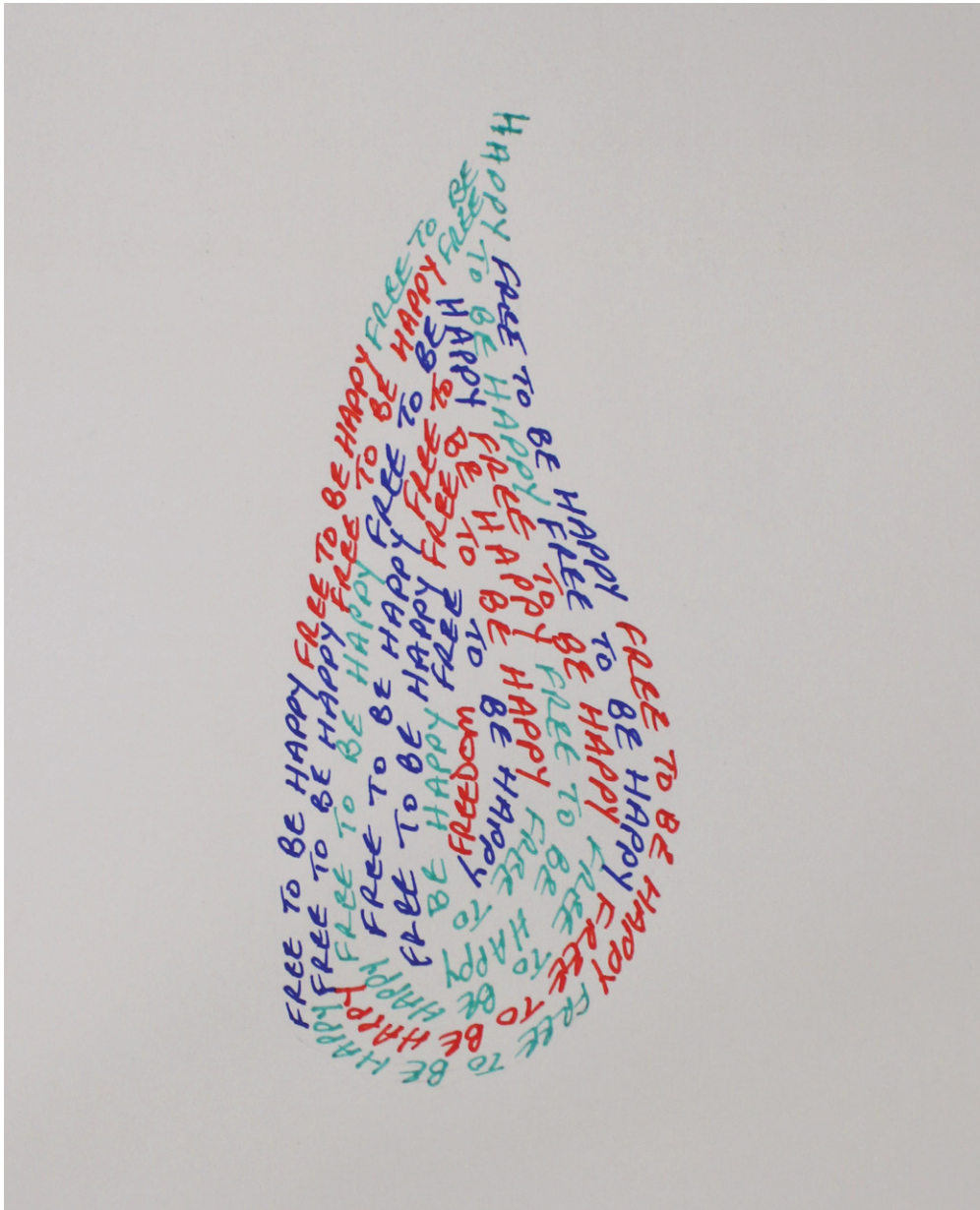
who will save the Jewish people. And once Moses was born, the entire house was filled with light. Her father arose and kissed her on her head. He said to her: My daughter, your prophecy has been fulfilled. And once they put him into the river, her father arose and hit her on her head. He said to her: My daughter, where is your prophecy? And this is as it is written: **“And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him”** (Exodus 2:4), i.e., to know what will be the ultimate resolution of her prophecy.



# What Does it Mean to be Free?

Source Sheet created on Sefaria by Melanie Fine

Based on a sheet by Ami Silver



Joanne Klein

## Mishnah Pesachim 10:5

משנה פסחים י"ה'

In each and every generation, a  
person is obligated to see  
themselves as if they have left Egypt

בְּכֹל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיִּיב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת  
עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם

The Sages state that each and every one of us needs to view ourselves as if we have left Egypt. This statement poses a deep spiritual challenge: It is not enough to tell a story, eat some bitter herbs, some matzah and brisket, and go through the motions of a well-trodden ritual. Passover night is asking each one of us to embark on a process of transformation. To touch something that changes the way we look at our very lives, and helps us emerge on the other side with the perspective that we have been redeemed.

But the question remains — what does it mean to be free, and how does one become a free person?

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook (1865-1935) - also known as Rav Kook - was a modern day mystic and visionary. The essay below is the introduction to his commentary on the Passover Haggadah. In these words, Rav Kook gives voice to the deeper elements of freedom which touch on the essential identity of the human soul as well as the innate human right to freedom.

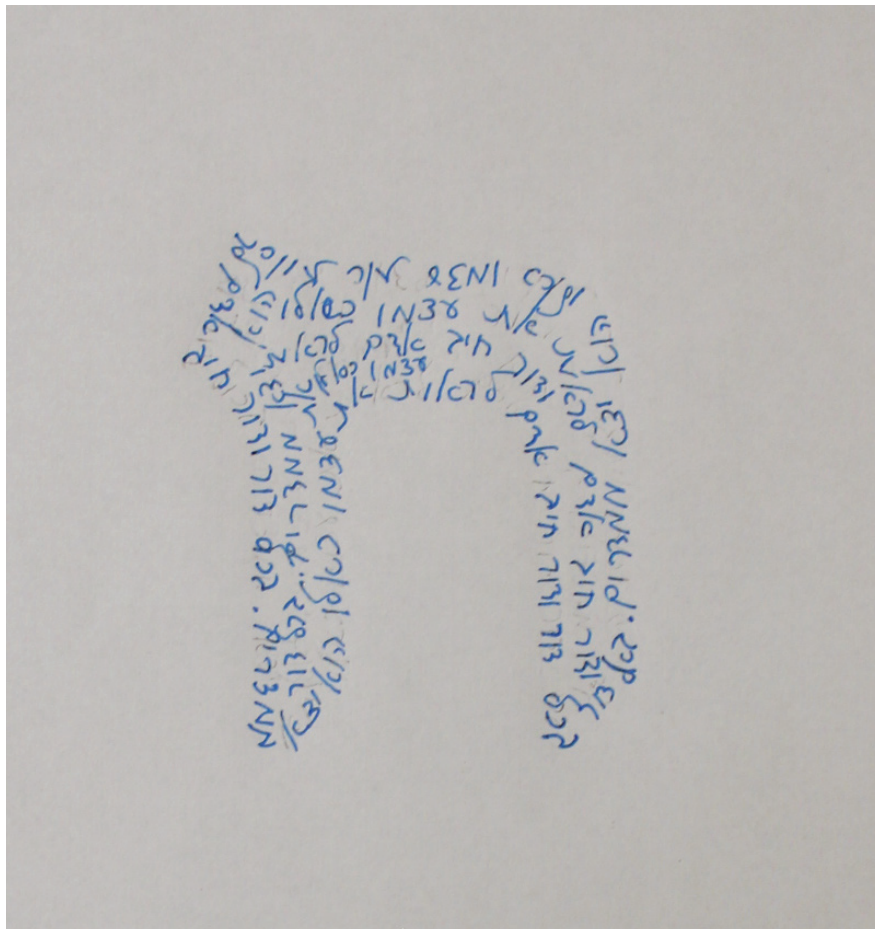
## Olat Reiyah, Pesach

**Our freedom and burning chametz.** These are the two primary symbols for the holiday of redemption. What is the lasting lesson for all generations that we can learn from these two, interdependent themes? The everlasting answer is that there are two components of redemption: 1) Freedom of the self - the body's freedom from all foreign enslavement, from any enslavement that

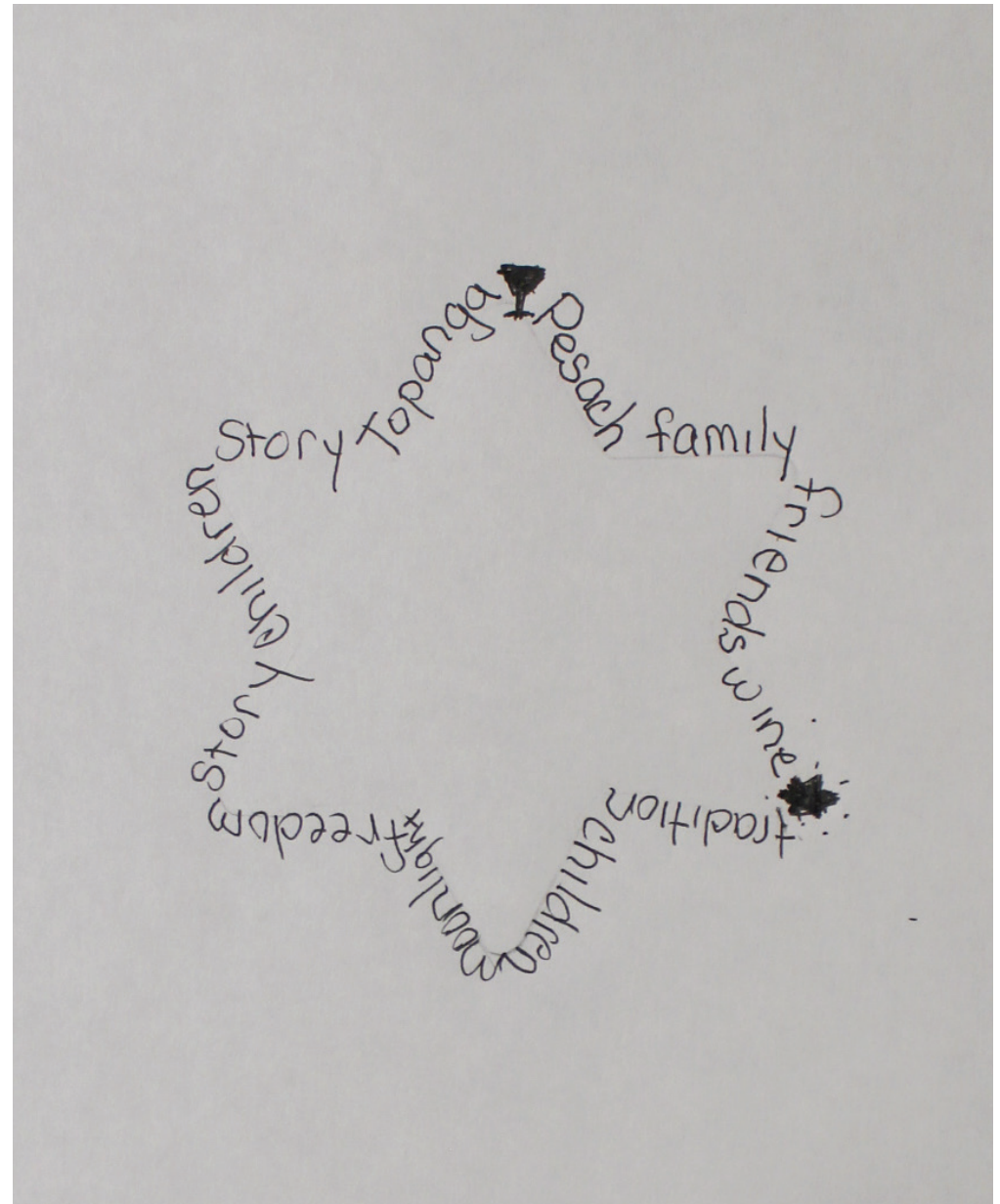


forces the Divine Image within a person to be subjugated to any power that diminishes their value, the glory of their greatness, and the beauty of their sanctity. 2) Freedom of one's soul, the freedom of one's spirit from anything that causes it to divert from the upright and powerful path that is embedded in its essential nature. However, these two types of freedom can only come about, by burning from all of its boundaries, all that prevents against its freedom. This is its chametz - "the leavening agent in the dough" - whose damage is most apparent at a time when the light of redemption is sparking upon it.

Rav Kook takes the idea of "burning" or "destroying *chametz*" on Passover and describes it as a spiritual force and a necessary component on the path to freedom. Anything that withholds freedom - from within an individual or an entire people - is a uniquely characterized form of "*chametz*" that needs to be uprooted in order to set a person free. Freedom, in Rav Kook's articulation, is ability of the soul to reach its full and natural expression. He continues:



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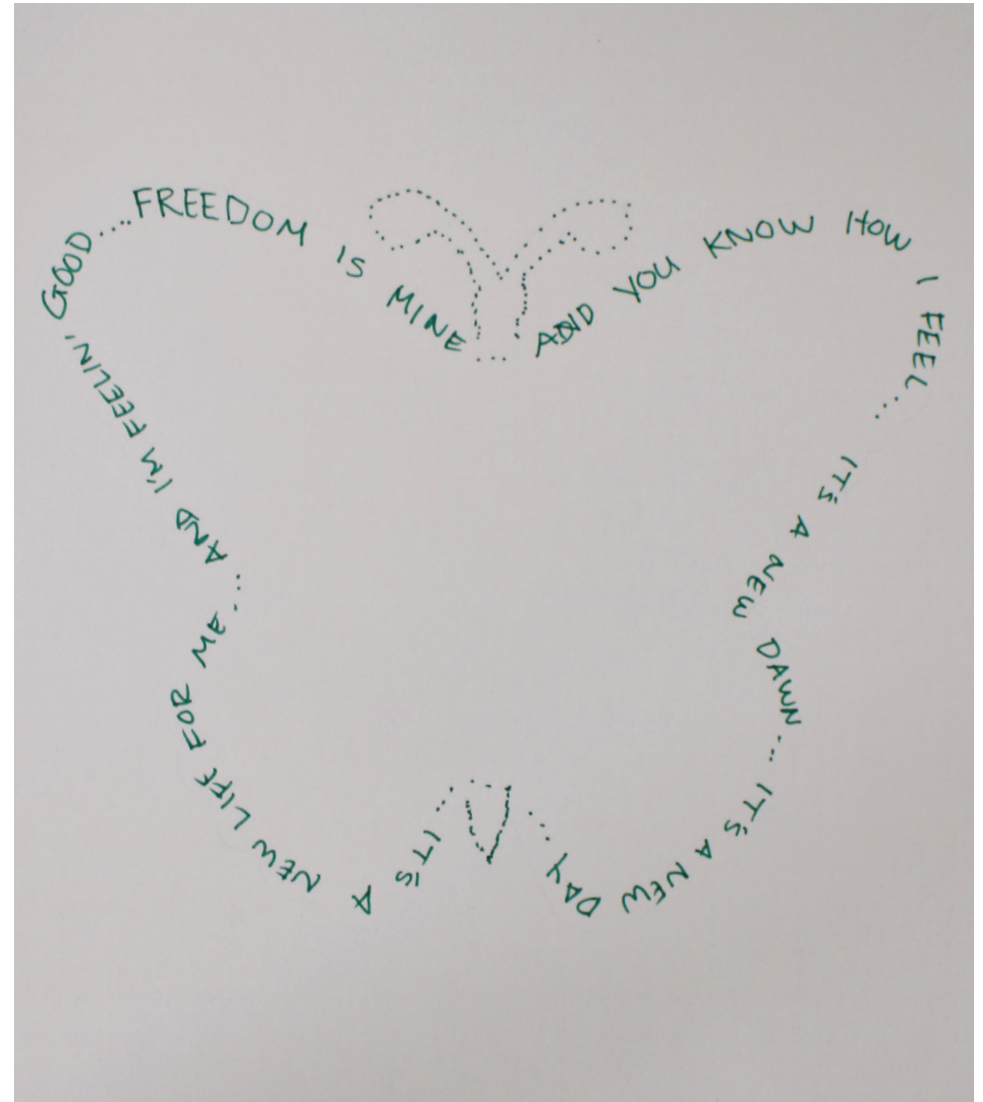


The difference between a slave and a free person is not merely one of status - that one happens to be enslaved to another, and one is not enslaved. It's possible to find an enlightened slave whose spirit is filled with freedom; and on the contrary, a free person whose spirit is that of a slave. The fundamental character of freedom is the elevated spirit that raises up an individual and the entire nation to be

ההבדל שבין העבד לבן-החורין איננו רק הבדל מעמדי, מה שבמקרה זה הוא משועבד לאחר וזה הוא בלתי-משועבד. אנו יכולים למצא עבד משכיל שרוחו הוא מלא חירות, ולהיפך בן-חורין שרוחו הוא רוח של עבד. החירות הצביונית היא אותו הרוח הנשאה, שהאדם וכן העם בכלל מתרומם

loyal to their inner essence, to the soul's quality of the Divine image within. And it is through this quality that one is able to feel that their life is purposeful, and is worth its value. This is not the case when one possesses the spirit of servitude. The content of their life and feelings will never shine in their essential, soulful quality, but rather according to what is deemed good and proper by another who rules over them through any form of control - be it formally, or morally - according to what the other deems proper and

על ידה להיות נאמן להעצמיות הפנימית שלו, להתכונה הנפשית של צלם אלהים אשר בקרבו, ובתכונה כזאת אפשר לו להרגיש את חייו בתור חיים מגמתיים, שהם שווים את ערכם. מה שאין כן בבעל הרוח של העבדות, שלעולם אין תכן חייו והרגשתו מאירים בתכונתו הנפשית העצמית, כ-י-א-ם במה שהוא טוב ויפה אצל האחר השולט עליו איזה שליטה שהיא,



Kate Flanagan





Larry Israel

to what the other deems proper and good. And we, by the light of the inner light of this essential freedom - "etched upon the tablets, do not read this 'etched' [חרות/charut] but rather freedom [cheirut / חירות] (Avot 6:2) - we shall journey forward, to pronounce more and more our inner replenishing independence. That which we acquired through the revelation of the Shechina [Divine Presence], which we acquired through the single most wondrous event in the universe that was performed for us at the moment that the Blessed God redeemed us, and redeemed our ancestors from Egypt into eternal liberation.

השולט עליו איזה שליטה שהיא, בין שהיא רשמית בין שהיא מוסרית, – במה שהאחר מוצא שהוא יפה וטוב. ואנחנו לאורה הפנימי של החירות העצמית הזאת, "חרות על הלוחות, אל תקרא חרות אלא חירות", נסע ונלך להבליט יותר ויותר את עצמאותנו הרעננה הפנימית, שקנינו ע"י גילוי שכינה, אותה החירות שקנינו ע"י הפלא הגדול היחיד בעולם, שנעשה עמנו בעת שגאלנו ה' יתברך וגאל את אבותינו ממצרים לחירות עולם.



The pursuit of freedom, the removal of what blocks us from the fullest expression of our identity, from unleashing the Divine spirit within each of us... the holiday of Passover is inviting us on a journey toward experiencing our own freedom.

