

A Daily Bread

Date: 18 Tevet 5786 (January 7, 2026)

Torah Portion: Shemot

Topic: The Stone Rejected

Exodus presents redemption as a process that requires time, concealment, and inner alignment. Moshe is born under a decree of death, yet the Torah emphasizes preservation before action. On the surface, this appears as delay. On a deeper level, it is preparation of vessels. Ramban explains that Elohim allows suffering to intensify so redemption will be unmistakably divine rather than political. This delay creates tension: Yisrael suffers, and Moshe himself cries out, “Why have You done evil to this people?” (Exod. 5:22). Yet the Torah insists on divine attentiveness—Elohim hears, remembers, sees, and knows (Exod. 2:24–25). The Netziv stresses that this sequence signals purposeful silence: divine restraint that allows history to ripen.

The Zohar reframes this delay metaphysically. Exile is not merely punishment but a state of *constriction* (*din*), necessary for the later revelation of expanded divine light. Premature revelation would shatter the vessels of reality. Thus Moshe must be hidden, Yisrael must groan, and Pharaoh must harden himself until the system of oppression exposes its own instability. Redemption, in Zoharic terms, is the moment when concealed light can finally be revealed without destruction.

Yishayahu provides the architectural metaphor for this process through the image of the tested cornerstone laid in Zion (Isa. 28:16). Rashi interprets the stone as leadership grounded in covenantal trust. Malbim contrasts this with political spectacle, which collapses under pressure. The Zohar deepens this image: the cornerstone corresponds to *Yesod*, the stabilizing channel through which divine flow enters the world. Without proper alignment at this point, blessing disperses chaotically. Mockery and scoffing, Yishayahu warns, sever this channel and strengthen bondage (Isa. 28:22).

Chassidic thought, especially as articulated in the *Tanya*, translates this cosmic structure into inner spiritual psychology. The *Tanya* teaches that true freedom requires the refinement of the inner self; otherwise liberation becomes another form of enslavement. The struggle between Pharaoh and Moshe thus mirrors the struggle between constricting consciousness (*mochin de-katnut*) and expanded awareness (*mochin de-gadlut*). Redemption cannot occur until the inner Pharaoh—the ego that claims ultimate authority—is subdued. Moshe’ years in Midian therefore function as inner purification, not leadership training. He learns *bittul* (self-nullification), which alone can channel divine purpose.

This explains why redemption advances through preservation rather than confrontation. Moshe is formed in obscurity, learning shepherding instead of domination. Midrash Rabbah emphasizes that Elohim chooses the lowly so that arrogance cannot claim authorship of redemption. The Zohar frames this concealment as *tzimtzum*—a withdrawal that makes space for genuine freedom. Liberation without such inner preparation would reproduce Mitzrayim in another form.

Matthew 2 reflects this structure symbolically. The child is preserved outside the palace while the king consumes himself with fear and violence. From a biblical mystical perspective, this is not a new theology but a familiar pattern: false sovereignty collapses under its own rigidity, while authentic authority grows quietly until revelation becomes inevitable.

Exodus 6:1 marks the decisive shift. “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh” signals a transition from containment to disclosure. Rashi reads “now” as a change in divine mode. Chassidic masters interpret this moment as the readiness of vessels—only now can the light of redemption enter history without shattering it. What appears as delay is alignment. Redemption arrives not as human revolution, but as divine revelation, when both the outer world and the inner soul are prepared to receive freedom.

Shalom.