

SH'MOT

13th of 54 sedras;
1st of 11 in Sh'mot



Written on 215.2 lines in a Torah (18th)

7 parshiot; 6 open, 1 closed

124 p'sukim - 15th (tied with Emor)

1763 words - 14th (Emor: 22nd)

6762 letters - 16th (Emor: 23rd)

2nd in Sh'mot in those 3 categories

Its p'sukim are above average in
length (number of words and letters).

Emor was put in for comparison
- look at the differences in rank

MITZVOT

No mitzvot are counted from Sh'mot
One of 17 sedras without mitzvot.

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start
of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is
Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the
parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in
the parsha.

The Book of Sh'mot is the closest to
average of the Five Chumashim. Its
11 sedras are 20.4% of the Torah's
54. It is written on 2130 lines in a
Sefer Torah. That's 20.7% of the
Torah's total of 10,274 lines.

More at the end of Sh'lishi



Review: We do not write the name of
the sedra in English as SHMOT,
because in Hebrew, we don't blend
the SH sound with the M sound, as we
do in some English words taken from
Yiddish - shmooze, shmaltz, shmo.
The SHIN has a SH'VA NA under it
and gets a very tiny vowel-sound,
which I use an apostrophe to repre-
sent. SH'MOT. That's one syllable
because a letter with a SH'VA NA
under it does not stand as its own
syllable, but rather it is prefixed to
the syllable to come. SHEMOT is also
not a good way to transliterate the
sedra's name, because then the
SH'VA NA gets too much of a vowel
sound - as if it had a SEGOL under the
SHIN.

Does this change the meaning of the
word? No. But we should pronounce
the words of our davening and Torah
reading with care.

In thinking of an analogy to English,
the words pronounce and pronun-
ciation come to mind. Many people
say the word as if it were spelled
'pronOUnciation'. It's not spelled that
way and it isn't pronounced that way.
Does it change the meaning of the
word? No. But it is off. I went to the
liberry in Febuary on a Wed-nez-day.
It's just off.

Kohen - First Aliya - 17 p'sukim - 1:1-17

[P> 1:1 (7)] Sh'mot begins with the conjunctive VAV to link the birth of the Jewish Nation to the foundation laid by the Patriarchs and the Sh'vatim in the Book of B'reishit. The sons of Yaakov are lovingly enumerated, again. The starting number of "70" is repeated to impress upon us the tremendous growth of the people under Egyptian oppression, as described in the p'sukim.

SDT: The opening words of the sedra and Book of Sh'mot - V'EILEH SH'MOT - form the initial letters of V'CHAYAV ADAM LILMOD SH'NAYIM MIKRA V'ECHAD TARGUM - And a person is obligated to review the Torah text twice and another time in translation. Baal HaTurim rewords and extends this acronym to the next two words - B'NEI YISRAEL. His whole statement is: "One who learns the sedra 2+1, singing it pleasantly, shall merit long life."

B'NEI YISRAEL reads B'KOL NA'IM YASHIR, YICHYEH SHANIM RABOT ARUCHIM L'OLAM.

SDT: The final letters (sofei teivot) of the opening words of the sedra (and book) rearrange to spell the word T'HILIM. When the People of Israel are in trouble (a play-on-words on Egypt - MITZRAYIM - MEITZARIM), they shall use T'hilim to help them

focus their prayers to G-d, thereby meriting redemption.

SDT: Our first exile (into Egypt) is associated with the number 70, the number of counted members of Yaakov's family who went down to Egypt (including Yosef and sons who were already there). The exile following the destruction of the first Beit HaMikdash lasted 70 years. The termination of the final exile will be associated with our dominance over, or the recognition and respect by the "70 nations" of the world.

[P> 1:8 (15)] A new king "who does not know Yosef" considers the Jewish people a threat and takes measures to enslave and demoralize them/us.

☞ Ironically, he is the first one to refer to us as a nation - AM B'NEI YISRAEL. Sometimes it is our enemies who recognize who and what we really are. Par'o called us the Jewish Nation even before we felt that and knew that ourselves.

☞ The Gemara tells us of a dispute between Rav and Shmuel as to whether this is really a new king or the same one with new attitudes and decrees. This dispute impacts on a practical halachic issue. If a person sells something as "new" and it was old but renewed (refurbished, renovated, reconditioned), can the buyer claim "false pretenses". Depends on the definition of NEW.

He instructs the midwives - Shifra and Puah, possibly Yocheved and Miriam, and maybe just two midwives (of the Israelites or maybe even Egyptians) - to kill the baby boys at birth to prevent the development of his "potential enemies" (and to kill off the potential redeemer of the People). They refuse to do his bidding and save the lives of the boys.

SDT: VA-T'CHAYENA ET HAY'LADIM "and they gave life to the boys". The Midrash says that not only did the midwives defy Par'o by not killing the boys, they also were responsible for saving those that might have died during childbirth. It is natural that some babies do not survive birth. The midwives were concerned that if they happened to deliver a stillborn, it might appear as if they had carried out Par'o's orders. Their prayers were answered and miraculously none of the babies died. Thus they are credited, not just with assisting in the births, but also with giving life to the babies.

There is a parallel idea concerning the night of the Exodus. It is said that even the normal deaths that might be expected in a large population did not occur on the night of the Exodus, lest it detract from the miraculous nature of The Night. (This is the meaning of G-d's not allowing the Mashchit to do his thing. What was the Angel of Death doing there, when G-d Himself was smiting the Egyptian Firstborns.

The answer is that there are expected 'regular' deaths.) Thus, we have similar miracles at either end of the Mitzrayim experience.

SDT: AND THEY EMBITTERED THEIR LIVES... The trop (Torah notes, specifically, KADMA V'AZLA) on these words seem unduly happy for such sad words. The GR"A points out the "happy" result of the unusually harsh oppression - namely, that G-d reacted to Egypt's excess by cutting down our time in Mitzrayim to 210 years from the original prophecy of 400, by counting from the birth of Yitzchak, rather than from Yaakov's descent into Egypt.

Understand that this is not just an exchange of 210 years of extra harsh conditions for 400 years of regular slavery. Commentaries say that if we did not get out when we did, we would not have made it to Nationhood.

Levi - Second Aliya - 15 p'sukim - 1:18-2:10

When Par'o sees that his goal is not being accomplished, he orders that all male babies (Jew & non-Jew alike, say our sources) be drowned. The People of Israel miraculously flourish under these adverse conditions.

[P> 2:1 (22)] Amram reunites with Yocheved and a baby boy is born. When he is no longer able to be hidden

(some say that Moshe was three months pre-mature; that the Egyptians knew when Yocheved was due; therefore she was able to hide him only for those three months), Yocheved prepares a water-proof basket and sets him on the river under the watchful eye of his sister, Miriam.

Bat-Par'o finds Moshe and sends Miriam to bring a wetnurse for the crying infant who apparently will not nurse from an Egyptian breast. Miriam brings Yocheved, Moshe's mother, who takes Moshe until he is weaned. From that point on, Moshe is raised in the royal palace by Bat Par'o (Bitya). She names him Moshe.

SDT: Egyptian astrologers read in the stars that Israel's redeemer was soon to be born. They recommended the systematic drowning of all baby boys (including non-Jews, since they were not sure from what nation this redeemer would come). When Moshe was floated on the Nile, the astrologers reported to Par'o that Israel's redeemer was indeed "cast into the river". As a result of this true but not quite accurate reading of the stars, Par'o withdrew the decree to drown the boys. [This points to the notion that there is something to astrology, but it is a "power" granted and limited by G-d to some individuals.]

SDT: On the phrase: VAYEILECH ISH... And a man (from the house of Levi) went... the Baal HaTurim points

out the only other occurrence of that phrase, in Megilat Ruth: VAYEILECH ISH MI'BEIT LECHEM YEHUDA... In both cases, a redeemer of Israel results. In our case, Moshe Rabeinu. In Ruth, the progenitor of David HaMelech, his line, to Mashiach ben David. (This is another link between Geulat Mitzrayim and the Geula Sh'leima.)

"And she called his name Moshe, for from the water he was drawn."

SDT: In the above description of the first 10 p'sukim of perek 2, we used the names Amram, Yocheved, and Miriam. The Torah does not use those names, but rather uses a descriptive term for each. Amram is ISH MIBEIT LEVI. Yocheved is BAT LEVI, and then HA-ISHA. Then EIM HAYELED, the boy's mother. Miriam is referred to as the baby's sister and also as HA-ALMA, the young maiden. Bat Par'o is also un-named. She is BITYA, mentioned in Divrei HaYamim, but here she is Par'o's daughter. Baby Moshe himself is called BEN (son), YELED (boy), NA'AR (usually, an older boy). Finally, at the end of the 10 p'sukim, Bat Par'o gives the baby a name - she calls him Moshe. One can here the exciting and anticipatory drum roll as the Torah uses the name for the first time - the first of 647 times his name occurs in the Torah, another 58 times in the Book of Yehoshua and 62 more times in the

rest of NACH, for a total of 767 times.

The point? For this portion of the Torah, the only name that is important for us to read is MOSHE. The other four people, as important as they were in bringing the future Moshe Rabeinu into this world safe and sound, are auxiliary to Moshe. It is what they were - for now, not who they were, that is significant - father, mother, sister, and the one who saved him from Par'o's decree.

Perhaps this is similar to Eliezer's name not occurring in Parshat Chayei Sara. He was instrumental in finding Rivka for Yitzchak, but as EVED AVRAHAM, HA-EVED, and HA-ISH, rather than Eliezer by name.

Shlishi - Third Aliya - 15 p'sukim - 2:11-25

It is amazing how many significant events are packed into the 15 p'sukim of this aliya. Moshe grows up and goes out to see what is happening with the Jewish People. He kills an Egyptian who was beating a Jew. He breaks up a fight between two Jews (Datan & Aviram). They had seen him kill the Egyptian and report him to Par'o. Moshe flees to Midyan where he saves Yitro's daughters from danger. Yitro welcomes him to his home (and family). Moshe takes Tzipora as a wife. She gives birth to son Gershom - Deep breath.

SDT: Yosef was identified by the Wine Steward as a NAAR IVRI, a Jewish lad. Moshe was identified by Yitro's daughters as ISH MITZRI, an Egyptian man. Yosef was privileged to have his remains buried in the Land of Israel. Moshe did not have that same z'chut, although it was mainly Moshe who brought Yosef's remains from Egypt to the threshold of Eretz Yisrael. Gives you pause for thought. No criticism is intended.

[P> 2:23 (3)] Meanwhile, after much time passes, the king of Egypt dies (or maybe got so sick that it was like he died) and the oppression in Egypt is greatly intensified. The People react by calling out to G-d. He too, "reacts"...

SDT: When Moshe realized that Datan and Aviram informed on him to Par'o, the Torah tells us that Moshe was afraid. Rashi says that we can understand that literally, but also on a deeper level. With Jews like Datan and Aviram, Moshe feared that the people of Israel might not merit redemption. (Note that Rashi includes the p'shat (plain) meaning as well as the additional meaning. Both apply in this case. It isn't always so that the plain meaning is retained when there is a drash that is the preferred way of understanding the text.)

P'sukim, 20.7%. Compare: B'reishit 26.2%; Vayikra, 14.7%; Bamidbar, 22.0%; D'varim, 16.4%.

More at the end of Chamishi

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 15 p'sukim - 3:1-15

[S> 3:1 (39)] Moshe is tending Yitro's sheep. An angel appears to him from a "burning bush that is not consumed". Moshe turns aside; G-d calls to him. He tells Moshe that He has heard the people's screams and that he is going to take them out of Egypt and bring them to a Land of Milk and Honey.

Moshe asks "why me?" G-d assures Moshe that He will be with him and that as proof of the Divine nature of his mission, Moshe will be bringing the people back to "this spot" (Sinai) to "serve G-d" (and receive the Torah).

Furthermore, Moshe is to "re-introduce" G-d to the People. Moshe asks G-d what he should tell the People when he comes to them at G-d's command. G-d's answer spans nine p'sukim (3:14-22). G-d identifies Himself as EH-YEH ASHER EH-YEH (ALEF-HEI-YUD-HEI is one of the 7 names of G-d that may not be erased. It is probably the least known of the list of seven.)

This name of G-d's has the meaning: I will be with you (Bnei Yisrael) in your time of trouble (in Egypt) as I will be with you in future situations of enslavement and oppression.

SDT: Baal HaTurim points out that the letters of this unusual name of G-d add up to 21. The initial letters of the first three names of G-d in the

Thirteen Divine Attributes are YUD, YUD, ALEF = 21 (HaShem, HaShem, Keil...). The initials of the Patriarchs are ALEF, YUD, YUD = 21. The initials of the Five Books of the Torah are BET, VAV, VAV, VAV, and ALEF = 21.

At Moshe's suggestion, so to speak, G-d agreed to be identified to the people as "just" EH-YEH, with the more comforting connotation of "I will be with you", without the implication that there will be other periods of oppression in the future - no need to tell the down-trodden people of future troubles, at this time (based on Rashi).

G-d gives Moshe detailed instructions as to what to say to the people. He tells Moshe how the people will react and how Par'o will react. He tells him about the plagues and about the "friendly" reaction of the Egyptian people at the end.

Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 24 p'sukim - 3:16-4:17

The prophecy at the Bush continues...
G-d tells Moshe:

(a) to gather the elders of Israel and tell them that G-d will be taking them out of Egypt and bringing them to the Land of Israel,

(b) the elders will accompany Moshe to present the demand for release before Par'o,

(c) Par'o will not acquiesce,

(d) I will smite Egypt and then they will send you out,

(e) the Egyptians will "lend" the People of Israel many belongings.

Moshe asks "on what basis will they believe me?" G-d gives Moshe three signs to perform for Par'o and the People.

The three signs are the staff becoming a snake and then turning back into a staff. His hand inserted into his cloak and emerging stricken with Tzoraat and then being restored. Taking water from the river and spilling it on the ground and it turns to blood.

SDT: Rashi says that the first two signs were also reprimands to Moshe for speaking against the people and doubting in advance their potential to believe what he would tell them. This is Lashon HaRa, and both the snake and the Tzoraat are associated with Lashon HaRa. The third sign seems to have been specifically selected by G-d (perhaps) to be a bridge and introduction to the MAKOT (plagues), the first of which was an extension, let's say, of this third sign.

Moshe still questions G-d as to "why me"; G-d gets angry (so to speak) at Moshe for doubting His choice of leader. G-d informs Moshe that Aharon will assist in these matters. Moshe is instructed to have his special staff with him when he presents himself to the People and Par'o.

SDT: The Staff, HAMATEH. Baal HaTurim says that there is/was a scribal custom to put Torah crowns on the TET in the word HAMATEH - THE STAFF. This, to hint to the fact that Moshe was the ninth (TET=9) righteous individual who had this miraculous staff in hand. (Pirkei Avot tells us that the Staff was one of the items created in the instant between the Six Days of Creation and the first Shabbat B'reishit.) The previous eight are: Adam, Chanoch, No'ach, Shem, Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Yosef.

☞ The Midrash says that Moshe had many names: Yered, Chever, Y'kutiel, Avigdor, Avi-Socho, Avi-Zanu'ach, Tovia, Heiman, Sh'maya. The Midrash further tells us that of all his names, he is only called Moshe - even by G-d - to give honor to the acts of kindness of the one who found him and saved him from the water - Bat Par'o, the future Bitya (her name was not Batya).

☞ Rashi says that Moshe's experience at the Burning Bush and his communication with G-d there lasted for SEVEN DAYS! All during that time, G-d is trying (so to speak) to convince Moshe to undertake his mission. It seems that Moshe's reluctance is a sign of his great humility.

Sh'mot has 20.9% of the Torah's words. And it has 20.8% of the Torah's letters. Closest to average Mitzvot: 18.1% - closest to average

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 14 p'sukim - 4:18-31

[P> 4:18 (9)] Moshe returns to Yitro and tells him that he (Moshe) must go to his brethren. Yitro sends Moshe on his way. G-d tells Moshe that it is safe for him to do so. Moshe takes his wife and sons and returns to Egypt. G-d reminds Moshe about the signs he is to use before Par'o, that Par'o will not listen, and that he (Moshe) is to say to Par'o that if he does not release the People, G-d will kill his firstborn. (Thus the last Plague was really the first warning to Par'o. All the other Plagues served their purposes, but all pointed to Makat B'chorot.)

On the way, Tzipora circumcises her son. Commentaries explain that Moshe had not circumcised his son Eliezer because of the danger in traveling soon after circumcision, nor did he postpone his return to Egypt, which would have been in defiance of G-d's command. It seems that he was in error in not having circumcised him, hence his life was in jeopardy until Tzipora did the circumcision.

A question that arises from this episode concerns the acceptability of a female's circumcising. Commentaries solve this problem in different ways (including that the incident happened before Matan Torah - and other ways).

[P> 4:27 (29)] G-d tells Aharon to greet Moshe. Moshe tells Aharon all that has

happened. They gather the elders and Aharon tells them what will occur. The People believe what they hear and bow to G-d.

SDT: Rashi says that the donkey that Moshe used to bring his family to Mitzrayim was the same one that Avraham took to the Akeida and the one that the Mashiach will ride upon. Why not a regular donkey? To tell us that these monumental events were not haphazard, but rather specially prepared parts of G-d's master plan for the world.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 24 p'sukim - 5:1-6:1

"And then, Moshe & Aharon go" to Par'o and say to him "Thus says G-d: Let my People go..."

SDT: Notice that the elders are not mentioned. Rashi tells us that one by one, the elders "dropped out" (in fear of Par'o) as the entourage was going to Par'o, until only Moshe and Aharon were left. Because of this, it was to be this way at Sinai also. The elders were left at the foot of the mountain and Aharon and Moshe ascended. (Then Aharon stopped and Moshe proceeded to the top his own.)

Par'o refuses, questioning who this G-d of Israel is. He then increases the burden on the People (who obviously have too much free time because they ask for a 3-day release) by requiring

them to also collect the straw for the bricks they have to make. The leaders of the People bear the brunt of the new edicts and complain to Par'o. Par'o blames Moshe; the People react with anger and disappointment (excusable under their circumstances?). Moshe tells G-d that his efforts were counter-productive. G-d says that NOW you (Moshe) will see what G-d will do to Par'o...

The last three p'sukim are repeated for the Maftir.

Haftara - 23 p'sukim - Yeshayahu 27:6-28:13 and ends with 29:22-23

As the sedra tells of the family of Yaakov in exile, so does the prophet tell of the exiles of the People of Israel. The sedra contains G-d's prophecy to Moshe Rabeinu at the Burning Bush, of the redemption of Israel, the subsequent Standing at Sinai, and the entrance into the Land flowing with Milk and Honey. The Haftara contains the prophecy that there will come a day when the Great Shofar will sound, and the exiles will come from their places of dispersion, and they will come to serve HaShem and bow to Him in Jerusalem. The sedra speaks of the First Redemption; the haftara of the Complete Redemption.

INTERESTING... EIDOT MIZRACH read a different haftara for Parshat Sh'mot - the first perek of Yirmiyahu,

which is also the first of the three Haftarot of Calamities which are read between Shiv'a Asar b'Tamuz and Tish'a b'Av. Notice how the S'fardim went in the direction of matching the enslavement in Egypt with the prophecies of destruction, whereas the Ashkenazim went in the direction of Geula to Geula.

On the other hand, Ashkenazim have a minhag not to eat roast meat at the Pesach Seder - ZEICHER LACHURBAN, commemorative of the DESTRUCTION of the Mikdash. The custom of Eidot Mizrach is to eat roast meat at the Seder - ZEICHER LAMIKDASH, commemorative of the Beit HaMikdash (rather than of its destruction).

In general, we have certain practices that commemorate the Churban and others that commemorate the Mikdash. We need them both.