

Parsha Shemot
January 10, 2026
Fabrangen
Drash by Bracha Laster

1. Parshat Shemot marks our 35th Anniversary. Rabbis Max Ticktin and Carol Glass officiated at our wedding in Fairfax, Virginia. Rabbi Glass referred to the importance of names in this parsha. She noted that our names are Aleph+Bet (Elimelech oo'Bracha); thus, they cover all the alphabetic letters as they are combined just as our marriage was a combination of two households, professions, etc. She was more correct than she knew because we, as a couple, combine stark differences. For example, we embody pacing differences (I am fast. John is slower---so I am aware that I may be going too fast on this drash!) We have had to navigate differences and learn to create out of those differences a good team.

One metaphor that works for us is [de Bono's Six Thinking Hats](#) created in the field of Business by Edward de Bono. In education, I have used DeBono's Hats to help students understand themselves and others better; and to consider multiple points-of-view. For an illustration of how this works: I (Bracha) am most naturally a YELLOW Hat; that is, I tend to notice sunny, positive side of things first. John is typically a BLACK hat; he is cautious, critical (usually in a good way), and notices possible downsides to a situation. An example of how we are a good team is the process of buying a car. I will excitedly remark on the durability, the color, the high gas mileage. John will slow me down as he researches the cost, the maintenance record, and (perhaps) the nasty attitude of the salesperson. Together we make a good buying team. See the attached template to learn about all six of de Bono's Colored Hats.

Question for Discussion: Which colored Hat are YOU and how does that affect your lifestyle or outlook? Think of a specific illustration of how you represent one of de Bono's Colored Hats.

2. *A new king arose who did not know Yosef.* History was forgotten. The debt that Egypt's survival owed to Yosef was misplaced. When it is inconvenient to remember, they...we lose the wisdom of knowing our past and the lessons taught by our experience. In this

week when warmongering in our country, by our country, and by other countries moved to center stage, we clearly have forgotten so many norms, so many useful lessons. Maybe you want to comment on the phenomenon of forgetting collective history.

3. Thirdly, we observe in this parsha the nascent development of leadership. In this narrative Moses grows from infancy to boyhood to young adulthood... and into being a leader. In subsequent chapters of the Book of Shemot, we will see and discuss many aspects of the leadership of Moses. In today's parsha we are at the beginning. How does an ordinary person grow into a significant leader? In this parsha, also, we learn of the very important leadership of Shifra and Puah. Their leadership and advocacy is quieter than Moses, but absolutely significant.

Two leaders emerged in our country this week by their actions. One on January 6 and one on January 7: Renee Good on January 7 was murdered by ICE agents as she tried just to be a witness for justice. She is reminiscent of two important women spoken of in this parsha, Shifra and Puah. A quiet, but very significant, advocacy for good. Renee Good will not be forgotten.

Pamela Hemphill from Idaho testified to Congress on January 6 this week. She spoke about realizing that the Capitol police officers were protecting her from the crowd that was trampling her. While she was in prison for participating in the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, she had an "Ah há! Moment or series of moments"....a major change in her thinking. Pamela's "Ah há" was analogous to Moshe's Ah há at the Burning Bush. And Moshe's earlier "Ah há" seeing the Egyptian beating the enslaved Hebrew. These moments seem to be the beginning of Moshe's leadership development, as he noted that those in power should not abuse powerless persons. David Tripp, an Australian education scholar, described CRITICAL INCIDENTS. Tripp uses the term to apply to actions in teaching. I have broadened the use of the term to mean awareness of key incidents/pivotal moments that are transformational. Moshe's critical incidents were the Egyptian beating the Hebrew slave and the Burning Bush. One was very tangible and human; the other was spiritual. They changed the

course of his thinking and his life. I was wondering: What transformative events/persons/ideas have influenced your lives? What have been Burning Bush events in your life? (My critical incident/pivotal moment of changed thinking was when my 4th grade teacher asked, "Does it make any sense that the kids who live closest to our elementary school are not allowed to attend it [because of the color of their skin]?")

Questions for Discussion:

1. Think of a specific illustration of how you represent one of deBono's Colored Hats. Which deBono's colored Hat are you and how does that affect your lifestyle or outlook? Do you have any stories--they can be humorous--about interacting with someone who is a different Colored Hat than you? Or, how you learned to take points-of-view that are not your "natural" one?
2. Do you have a comment on the phenomenon of forgetting collective history in Egypt ...or now?
3. What critical incidents, pivotal situations, or transformative events/persons/ideas are for you parallel to beating the Egyptian or encountering the Burning Bush--something very human OR something spiritual?

deBono's Thinking Hats

