

## A man went from the House of Levi and took a daughter of Levi. (2:1)

The Torah presents the lineage of Moshe *Rabbeinu* in a very clandestine manner, almost as if it is attempting to hide the names of his parents. It is only later, in *Parashas Vaeira*, that we are finally introduced to his parents. Clearly, the Torah must have a reason for concealing their identities.

**Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl**, explains this, providing us with a practical application for parents. *Nachas*, satisfaction, is something we all seek from our children. Because parents are naturally biased, we take pride in our children's achievements, especially when they demonstrate talent and outstanding character traits. Undoubtedly, Amram and Yocheved were quite proud of their young son, Moshe. When he was born, the house lit up; he was already circumcised, and he manifested other signs which indicated that he was an unusual child. As an infant, he showed exceptional maturity: for example, choosing gold coins instead of burning coals. It was only by Heavenly intervention that he was spared from Pharaoh's paranoia. Having brought such a special person into the world can go to one's head.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* observes that, at this point, since Moshe was yet an infant, the Torah could not yet credit his parents for the wonderful job they did in raising him, despite his incredible potential. Every child has potential – some more – some less – but the accolades for parents should be reserved for later, when a child develops to his capacity. It is only when the parents have encouraged, cajoled and inspired their child to maximize his G-d-given talents, so that he achieves his capability that credit is due and accolades should be declared. Thus, at this point, they were no more than, "A man from the House of Levi, who took a daughter of Levi."

As Moshe aged, he demonstrated the inherent qualities of a Jewish leader. First, he empathized with his brothers' pain. Then, he went out to share in their tribulation, lending his assistance in an effort to ease their plight somewhat. While one person can do very little to help a multitude of oppressed slaves, at least he can convey a crucial message: You are not alone; someone cares about you. Moshe risked his life when he killed an Egyptian taskmaster who was beating a Jew. I think what made this act of *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, that much more significant was the fact that he received no pat on the back for his actions, no accolades from his people – only scorn and derision, with threats of publicizing his act of treachery against the state. One would think that, at this point in Moshe's life, it would be appropriate to mention his parents' names. The Torah obviously did not think so. Even this achievement did not render Moshe's parents worthy of acknowledgment. Why?

*Rav Moshe* explains that it is all based upon one's potential for achievement. If Moshe's potential had been for nothing greater than empathizing with his brethren and risking his life on their behalf, then his pedigree would have been mentioned. His parents would now be able to take credit for raising their son in a manner in which he would be able to realize his potential. Our quintessential leader, however, had much more within him. He had the potential to become Moshe *Rabbeinu*. He

was still a long way off from that moment. Within the inner depths of Moshe's personality lay dormant the capacity to speak to Pharaoh without fear, to demand that he send out the Jews, and the uncanny ability to shepherd an entire nation for forty years of constant challenges from within and without. He was worthy of receiving the Torah and teaching it to his nascent nation. Indeed, his potential, which took forty years to maximize, had not yet been reached.

If Moshe were to have halted his upward rise with his act of *mesiras nefesh*, if his empathy for a fellow Jew would have remained his crowning achievement, it would have shown us that his parents had failed to recognize his immense potential. They had fallen short of raising Moshe to become Moshe *Rabbeinu*. It was not evident that Moshe would assume the role for which he was created, the position he was to fulfill with strength and dignity.

**Horav Yisrael Belsky, Shlita**, expounds upon this idea. Often, parents are content with their child's existing achievements. They judge their child by their personal standards, their own small-minded grasp of the meaning of success, or by comparing their child to someone of lesser capability. They fail to recognize that for their particular child, the talent that has thus far been demonstrated is only a drop in the bucket, a hint of much more to come.

While the parent is satisfied with mediocrity, what about the child? His parents' satisfaction with his current level of achievement conveys a harmful message: You have worked hard enough. You do not have to work harder. If, as a result of his parents' lackadaisical attitude, he tapers off his effort, he will, in terms of his potential, be a failure. His parents may not take credit for his present success, because, in effect, he is really a failure. He could have achieved so much more. Thus, his parents remain an *ish* and *ishah*, man and woman – no names that require recognition. They did not succeed in enabling him to realize his inherent potential.

Moshe *Rabbeinu* had within him a capacity for leadership. Anything less than becoming the quintessential leader and *Rebbe* of *Klal Yisrael* would be considered a deficiency. He could do better, achieve more. Only when Moshe had embarked upon the path by which he achieved all that he was to accomplish does the Torah reveal the names of his parents. Now – they could take credit for properly guiding, inspiring and encouraging their son's spiritual development.

Rav Belsky adds that many parents have successful children who have become accomplished Torah scholars, and they can continue to scale the heights of Torah achievement, plumbing the depths of Torah profundity, but, at some point, the parents say: "Enough. He has learned enough. As long as he remains as sufficiently committed as we are, he will be fine. Why should we continue supporting him? Does he have to become a *gadol*, Torah giant? As long as he is a deeply committed, knowledgeable *ben Torah*, we will be pleased." This is an all-too-common situation where parents settled for less, when, in fact, their son is destined for *gadlus*, greatness. Instead of nurturing his potential, they stifle it, thus making themselves responsible for his failure to realize his potential. Such parents lose the credit they would otherwise have achieved, for they have prevented their child from climbing the ladder of success.

Why would a parent do this? Perhaps it is due to insecurity. A parent feels inadequate, inconsequential in the presence of his son. He almost regrets his own past failed attempt at achieving success in Torah erudition. A parent may feel inferior to his son, the *talmid chacham*. This is a problem with which the parent must deal, but not at his son's expense.