

"And unto Yosef (were) born two sons ... which Asnas, the daughter of Potifera, the priest of On, bore unto him." (41:50)

The *Torah's* manner of describing the birth of Yosef's two sons is somewhat peculiar. The *Torah* states that two sons were born to him, by Asnas. In addition the word *skh*, born, is in the singular instead of *uskuh*. It would seem that the birth is viewed from two aspects -- that of the mother and that of the child.

Horav S.R. Hirsch z.l., explains that a mother can physically bear a child to its father, but it does not necessarily mean that the child will remain connected to the father. We must first determine if the child will maintain the spiritual and moral influence of its father.

Under normal circumstances, the birth of a child is experienced equally by both parents. Hence, we would write *uk sk,u*, "and she bore to him". The child that the wife bears to her husband grows up inspired by the combined moral and spiritual influence of both father and mother. There is no reason to emphasize that the child is born unto his father. Regarding Yosef's sons, however, it is especially significant that the *Torah* stresses this thought. The children's mother was the daughter of a famous pagan priest, raised in the decadence that characterized Egyptian culture. She was initiated in the philosophy of this immoral and paganistic environment. The father was, after all, only a Hebrew slave who was saved from extinction by the grace of the king. A person can be a powerful and feared ruler in the public sector, while simultaneously be the cringing slave of a demanding and arrogant wife. In order for Asnas to have been Yosef's wife, in the truest sense, and bear children to Yosef as well as to herself, she would have had to divorce herself from her past and wholeheartedly accept her husband's moral and spiritual outlook.

Horav Hirsch notes that the word *skh* is a word construct which implies an action, or that an effect has taken place by itself, distinguished from the doer or the one who effects it. Therefore, the birth is viewed as occurring by itself under some special influence and Divine blessing. Hence, *skh* is translated, "there were born;" the bearing was accomplished. This was indeed the case with the births of Yosef's two sons. It is a remarkable *zechus* to be the only Jew in Egypt who is married to the daughter of a pagan priest and still have children who are raised to serve as the paradigm of blessing. Consequently, the *Torah* sees it fit to emphasize that these children were born to Yosef.