

Amram took his aunt, Yocheved, as a wife. (6:20)

As a general rule, we do not find many women's names mentioned in the Torah. Mentioning Yocheved's name is, therefore, unanticipated and gives us food for thought. Yocheved gave birth to three pillars of Judaism, leaders who nurtured our nation during its forty-year sojourn in the wilderness, but is this the primary source of her distinction? **Horav Arye Leib Heyman, zl**, posits that Levi *ben* Yaakov *Avinu* named his daughter – as well as his sons – with names that correlated to the *mechiras* Yosef, the sale of Yosef. He felt a greater sense of guilt and responsibility, since his father had distinguished him from the rest of the family as the one who would strive for spiritual ascendance. Apparently, the sale of Yosef was a far cry from spiritually commendable. He was not proud of his role in that debacle.

The name of Levi's first son, Gershon, is derived from *geirus*, being a stranger; Kehas is derived from *hakheh es shinav* (blunt his teeth), referring to an inability to speak, having nothing to say/no excuses; Merari is derived from *mar*, bitterness. Levi neither wanted to ignore nor to forget the role he played in the sale of Yosef. Yocheved is a name which begins with *yud* and *vav*, two of the letters which comprise Hashem's Name. This implies the hope that Hashem's Name would rest upon this child. The last letters of her name spell *kavod*, honor. Levi was acutely aware of the secret of his daughter's *neshamah*. He knew that her delicate soul was destined to glorify and give reverence to the Almighty via her personal actions on behalf of the Jewish nation and through the actions of her two sons and daughter.

By her actions, Yocheved indicated that Hashem's command to sustain the Jewish infants carried more weight (*kaveid*) than Pharaoh's decree. Additionally, Yocheved brought two sons who personified love and honor for Hashem into this world. The admiration and respect one manifested in the other was truly unique. They understood the meaning of *kavod*.

Yocheved was born as Yaakov *Avinu*, together with his family, passed within the walls of Egypt. *Rav* Heyman posits that this was certainly no coincidence. He suggests that Yocheved was born "between the walls" to allude to the idea that, within her lay hidden the key to the redemption of *Klal Yisrael* from Egypt. She rebelled against Pharaoh when she refused to kill the Jewish babies. Her sons stood at the helm of the nation as their redeemers from Egyptian bondage. *Ibn Ezra* explains why, when the Jewish People stood at the banks of the Red Sea with the Egyptians swiftly approaching on their flanks, they expressed such fear of their tormentors. They were overcome with a slave mentality. This was indicated by the fact that only one fifth of the nation left the country. The other four-fifths did not want to leave. Indeed, even this one-fifth did not enter *Eretz Yisrael*, because these people were simply just not ready to eliminate Egyptian servitude from their consciousnesses. Had Yocheved been born in Egypt, she, too, would have fared a similar mindset; thus, she would have been unable to produce sons who could serve as *Klal Yisrael's* redeemers.

Rav Heyman continues with his perspective on the profound personality of Yocheved. *Rashi*

teaches (ibid 2:1) that Yocheved was one hundred and thirty years old when she gave birth to Moshe *Rabbeinu*. One other woman, Chavah, gave birth to her third son, Shes, at the age of one hundred and thirty. We can identify five similarities between Moshe and Shes. They were both their parents' third child. They were both born after their father had separated from their mother. Adam separated from Chavah following the sin of eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*. Amram separated from Yocheved as a result of Pharaoh's decree to kill the Jewish male infants. Both Amram and his predecessor Adam returned to their wives following an admonishment they had received from a woman. Amram acquiesced to the compelling argument of his daughter Miriam. In his commentary to *Bereishis* 4:25, *Rashi* writes that it was Adah and Tzilah, the wives of Lemech, who convinced Adam to return to Chavah. Both Shes and Moshe had the same physical countenance, coinciding with that of Adam *HaRishon*. This attests to their unique greatness. Last, both Shes and Moshe represented a renewed hope for the world following a painful experience. Shes was born after Hevel was killed by Kayin, and Kayin was banished from Hashem. With Hevel gone and Kayin sent away, Shes presented the new hope for the future. Moshe led *Klal Yisrael* out of Egypt, brought them to Har Sinai and gave them the Torah. The ensuing covenant cemented a new relationship between Hashem and *Klal Yisrael*.

In closing, *Rav Heyman* writes that he found support for the relationship between Yocheved and Chavah, Shes and Moshe, in the *Sefer HaLekutim* from the **Arizal**. The *Arizal* posits that Moshe was a *gilgul*, reincarnation, of the *neshamah* of Shes. Yocheved was a *gilgul* of Chavah. *Rabbeinu Bachya* adds that Shes was a *gilgul* of Hevel. In other words, Moshe *Rabbeinu* represented Shes and Hevel. This is to be found in his name, Moshe: *Mem* – Moshe; *Shin* – Shes; *Hay* – Hevel.