

## **And Amram took his aunt Yocheved as a wife. (6:20)**

As a rule, the Torah does not mention the names of women unless they play an integral role in the narrative. It is, therefore, out of context that the Torah mentions Yocheved – despite the fact that she was the progenitress of the three great leaders of *Klal Yisrael*: Moshe *Rabbeinu*, Aharon *HaKohen* and Miriam *HaNeviah*. *Horav Aryeh Leib Heyman, zl*, delves into Yocheved's background, her name, her personal achievements and her distinction vis-à-vis *Klal Yisrael's* destiny. He suggests that her father, Levi, gave her the name Yocheved because he felt greater personal guilt for selling Yosef than the other brothers. He took the onus of guilt personally. As a result, he named his children relative to the tragedy.

Yaakov *Avinu* had designated Levi as the son who would be responsible for disseminating Torah to his descendants. Levi was the *maaser*, tithe, to Hashem from his sons (other than Yosef and Binyamin born to Rachel *Imeinu*). Instead of serving as the paradigm of spirituality to the family, his involvement in the Yosef debacle was enormous. The names he gave his children were a constant reminder of his grave error. Gershon from *geirus*, sojourn, unsettled; Kehas, blemished, blunt – his teeth, Merari, bitterness. The name of Yocheved, his daughter, begins with *yud*, *vav*, which are two (the first) letters of Hashem's Name, to underscore the hope that Hashem's Name will rest upon this child. He concluded the name with *kavod*, praying that his daughter would be worthy of giving honor to Hashem's Name. Yocheved succeeded incredibly! By her actions and demeanor, she personally gave honor to Hashem, and her three children, each in his/her own right became one of *Klal Yisrael's* quintessential leaders.

Let us see how this life of *kavod*, honor to Hashem, played itself out. As a *meyaledes*, midwife, she stood up to Pharaoh. She, as well as her daughter Miriam, refused to murder the Jewish male infants. Their fear of Heaven superseded their fear of Pharaoh. She brought two sons into the world, who not only achieved the apex of leadership, but they also served as the paradigm of the love and honor one should accord his brother. Moshe refused to ascend to the helm of leadership, because he felt it would slight his older brother. Aharon, however, demonstrated extraordinary character, in not only deferring to his younger brother, but also in manifesting outstanding love for him. These two brothers were happy for one another – each one reveling in the other's success.

In his inimitable manner, *Rav Heyman* delves deeper into Yocheved's background to see how it affected her character and life's work. We know that she was born *bein ha'chomos*, between the walls, as Yaakov *Avinu* and his family entered Egypt – their first step into the Egyptian exile. The *Rav* posits that Yocheved was born there by design, to allude to the eventual *yetziah*, exodus, from Egypt, which would, in some manner, herald back to her. Her first rebellion against Pharaoh occurred when, as a *meyaledes*, she defied his order to murder the babies. She concluded with her noble work at *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the Egyptian exodus, directed by Hashem, with her three children at the helm of leadership. Yocheved was born between the walls, underscoring the fact that Egypt with its spiritual defilement did not affect her. As a result, she was able to raise three children who were not subject to Pharaoh and the Egyptian morally bankrupt and spiritually contaminated

culture.

Yocheved gave birth to Moshe *Rabbeinu* at the not-so-young age of 130. We find another woman who gave birth at that age: Chavah, who gave birth to Sheis. Rav Heyman draws five parallels between the two sons born to these women: A) Moshe and Sheis both were the third child; B) Both were conceived after their mothers were reunited with their husbands after a separation. Amram had divorced Yocheved. This was his response to Pharaoh's decree to kill the Jewish male infants. Chavah had separated from Adam for 130 years after they sinned with the *Eitz HaDaas*. C) Both Amram and Adam returned to their wives after accepting *mussar*, rebuke, from a woman. Adam listened to Adah and Tzilah, the wives of Lemech, who told him that life must go on, and he had a responsibility to propagate the world. Amram accepted *mussar* from his daughter, Miriam, who argued that his decree to divorce was affecting the births of females – making it worse than Pharaoh's decree. D) Both Sheis and Moshe had the same facial appearance as Adam *HaRishon*. E) Both Sheis and Moshe symbolized hope for the regeneration of the world. Sheis was born after both Kayin and Hevel were long gone. Moshe took *Klal Yisrael* out of Egypt, and, through him, Hashem gave the Torah. This established anew the Jewish People's bond with Hashem. Perhaps this might be what had been said earlier, that Moshe and Sheis had the *d'mus d'yukno*, image, of Adam. Just as he was imbued with the extraordinary attributes to begin and build the world, so were they given those attributes to rebuild and enhance the world.

In conclusion, we see how Yocheved's strong personality was transmitted to Moshe and Miriam. What about Aharon? On the surface, he comes across as a pacifist, seeking a diplomatic and amicable ending to every dispute. Even when the people created a golden calf, he sought a means of diffusing issues that would otherwise boil over into major disputes. Apparently, Aharon was a testament to his father, Amram, who, as *gadol hador*, preeminent leader of the generation, viewed issues through a different, more global, lens. Indeed, when Pharaoh issued his decree to kill the Jewish male infants, he instructed the men to divorce their wives. His daughter, Miriam, took umbrage with this decision, and he listened to her. As the leader, he dealt with a large range of people on varied levels. Likewise, Aharon *HaKohen*, the *rodef shalom*, went around the entire Jewish camp making peace between man and wife, as well as man and his fellow man. At the end of the day, Amram and Yocheved raised three children who set the tone for the leadership of *Klal Yisrael* until the end of time.