

The name of the first one was Shifrah, and the name of the second was Puah. (1:15)

Shifrah and Puah, the Egyptian midwives who saved the lives of the Jewish boys whose birth they facilitated, were none other than Yocheved and her daughter, Miriam. (Alternatively, it was Yocheved and her daughter-in-law, Elisheva *bas* Aminadav, wife of *Aharon HaKohen*.) In any event, Shifrah/Yocheved merited to give birth to our quintessential leader, Moshe *Rabbeinu*. Clearly, she must have had an extraordinary *z'chus* to merit being the progenitress (the computer says this isn't a word...) of Moshe. It must be her unwavering fear of Hashem which sparked within her the courage to stand up to Pharaoh and save the Jewish infants. Another woman who played a pivotal role in Moshe's earlier days was Bisyah, Pharaoh's daughter, who saved Moshe and raised him in Pharaoh's palace. *Horav Aryeh Leib Heyman, zl*, explains that this is all due to the Talmudic maxim, *B'midah she'adam moded, moded lo*; "A person will be subject to the same standard of judgment that he uses in judging others." If a person is compassionate to others, if he is always seeking virtue and merit in the actions of others, Hashem will do the same for him." This reciprocity goes further to the point that Yocheved, who risked her life for Jewish children, was reimbursed with a child who would lead the Jews out of Egypt.

Rav Heyman expounds on this idea, describing how it plays itself out in other areas and with other people. He wonders why Yocheved, who was so deeply committed to Hashem and His people, was unable to raise Moshe as his mother in her own home. Why should Moshe grow up with the notion that Bisyah was his mother? True, Bisyah played a critical role in saving him by bringing him to the palace, but Yocheved was, after all, his biological mother. On the other hand, while Yocheved did not actually raise Moshe, she did nurse him, allowing her to nurture him and spend considerable time with him. Nonetheless, it is just not the same.

Rav Heyman posits that everything has a ripple effect. He asserts that "what goes around comes around," reflecting the idea of Divine Justice and implying that one's actions – both good and bad – will eventually return to him in some form. Let us attempt to give some form of rationalization to the following complexities. Yocheved nursed Moshe, but did not participate even in his *bar mitzvah* and eventual *chupah*, marriage, to Tziporah. (According to *Seder Olam Rabbah*, Yocheved was among the *yotzei Mitzrayim*, Jews who left Egypt. Thus, she met Moshe when he returned to Egypt from Midyan at the age of eighty years old to lead the Jewish people's exodus from Egypt. This would make Yocheved two hundred and ten years old at the time.) Why did this happen to the woman who risked her life to save the Jewish children?

We should not forget, explains *Rav Heyman*, that Levi, Yocheved's father, played a role in the *mechiras*, sale, of Yosef. As the "*Rosh Yeshivah*," spiritual leader of the brothers, he should have put a stop to their plans. As the progenitor of the spiritual elite of *Klal Yisrael*, his descendants were obligated to answer for his indifference in some manner. Thus, Yocheved, whose father caused pain to Yosef, the *leibling*, darling/favorite of Yaakov *Avinu*, would suffer that

her *leibling* was taken from her to be raised by Bisyah. One might ask: What wrong did Yocheved commit? Why should she make any form of reparation for what Levi did? Rav Heyman notes that Yocheved's marriage to Amram, her nephew, was later included among the Torah's prohibited unions. While on the surface this may appear to be far-fetched, we must realize that the sin of *mechiras Yosef* retains ramifications until this very day. Indeed, the murder of the *Asarah Harugei Malchus*, Ten Martyrs, that we recall on *Yom Kippur* (and *Tisha B'Av*) was the result of *Mechiras Yosef*.

Moshe *Rabbeinu* spent most of his life (as an escapee) in Midyan, away from his brethren. This, too, may be calculated into the overall reparation for Levi's part in *mechiras Yosef*. The greater one's spiritual level the greater the stringency in response to his action – or inaction.

Rav Heyman expounds further on this topic. Chur was a *Navi*, prophet, and son of Calev and Miriam. He was a saintly leader, comparable to Aharon *HaKohen*. (They were of equal status. They were the two who supported Moshe during the war with Amalek.) When the Jews were about to construct the Golden Calf, Chur stood up to them, and he was murdered for his trouble. Why? What reason can justify his death under such circumstances, while he risked his life to prevent a pagan incursion?

The Rav suggests that his mother, Miriam, was a descendant of Levi; his father was a descendant of Yehudah. Both Levi and Yehudah were leaders of the *shevatim*, thus, they had greater culpability concerning *mechiras Yosef*. On the other hand, because Chur sacrificed his life in *Kiddush Hashem*, he merited that his grandson, Betzalel to be the architect of the *Mishkan*.

In conclusion, we must believe that, *Keil emunah v'ein avel, Tzadik v'yashar Hu*; "G-d of faith without inequity; righteous and fair is He" (*Devarim* 32:4). A reason exists for everything that occurs. Our not being privy to that reason does not diminish its veracity and rationale. This is the meaning of faith – belief in Hashem under all circumstances.