

Parshas Shemos

“Rosh Hashana in Mitzrayim?”

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**Li'zechus refu'ah shleimah Aryeh Menachem Moshe ben Dinah Tova  
(A yareh shamayim who was severely injured in Gaza)**

**Video: “The Moral Compass of Shifra & Pu'ah”**

<https://www.torahanytime.com/#/lectures?v=274549>

Pharaoh's stargazers revealed that a child was destined to be born. He would grow up to save the Jewish nation from enslavement.<sup>1</sup>

Pharaoh ordered the two Jewish midwives, Shifrah and Pu'ah, to determine the gender of the child to be born. If the child was a female, she would be spared. If the child would be a male, he would be killed at birth. This would prevent the vision of his stargazers from coming true.

The midwives feared Hashem. They did not do as commanded by Pharaoh.

In reward for their fear of heaven, the midwives were blessed with houses of *kehuna*, *leviya*, and monarchy.<sup>2</sup>

Shifra's real name was Yocheved, the wife of Amram and mother of Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam. She was called “Shifra” because in her role as a mid-wife she beautified the newly born child. The *levi'im* came from Yocheved through her son Moshe Rabeinu. The *kohanim* were descended from her son Aharon.

Pu'ah was Yocheved's daughter Miriam. She was called “Pu'ah” because she calmed the child with her voice. She was also known as Efrat, the wife of Kalev ben Yefuneh. The monarchy emerged from their offspring. Dovid HaMelech was a direct descendant of Kalev and Miriam.<sup>3</sup>

## Questions

Why aren't Yocheved and Miriam identified by their own names? Why are they named for their occupations?

Why isn't it sufficient to identify them in general, as mid-wives? Why does the Torah reveal their unique roles?

## Analysis

The gemara tells us that the *shufreh* (beauty) of Yaakov is similar to the *shufreh* of Adam Harishon.<sup>4</sup>

The name Shifrah is related to the word *meshaperes*, which means “to beautify”. When a child is born, due to the trauma of birth, its head is misshapen. A skilled midwife realigns the plates that form the skull and undoes the effects of the birth. By doing so, she brings out the true inner beauty of the child that was hidden from sight.

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<sup>1</sup> Rashi, Shemos 1:16

<sup>2</sup> Rashi, Shemos 1:21

<sup>3</sup> Sotah 11b

<sup>4</sup> Bava Basra 58a

Thus, Yocheved possessed the skill of bringing out hidden inner beauty.

The name Pu'ah is related to the word *po'eh*, which means "to call out".<sup>5</sup> When a child is born, they cry out. Miriam was skilled in calming the child with her voice.<sup>6</sup>

The period spent in slavery in Egypt is comparable to the period of pregnancy. The redemption is compared to a birth. The pains of the enslavement were the birth pains of the birth of our nation.<sup>7</sup> It is in Egypt that the nation of Israel is referred to a "*B'ni bechori Yisroel*" – My son, my first born, Israel.<sup>8</sup>

The birth process was completed with the emergence of the Bnei Yisroel from Mitzrayim and the acceptance of the Torah on Har Sinai.<sup>9</sup>

### **Answers**

Rav Moshe Shapiro explained, the culmination of Hashem's creation was Adam.

There are two aspects of man. Man is a "revealer".

Man is a combination of body and soul. Through this connection man is a bridge between the spiritual world and the physical world. Through the power of speech man is capable of spreading light throughout the mundane world. The mind of man is firmly rooted in the heavens, and when he speaks, heavenly thoughts enter the earth.<sup>10</sup>

Man has an inner aspect.

He has an inner purity that can never be contaminated by his unworthy thoughts, words, or deeds. Regardless of what man does, his inner spark burns bright. It is from this inner light that man hears the "voice" to return to his former state of purity. The hidden essence of man is deep and beyond understanding. It cannot be explained or expressed with the spoken word.

The day of Adam Harishon's creation is Rosh Hashanah.

On this day, our mouths reveal external words of prayer.

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<sup>5</sup> Tosafos, Rosh Hashana 33b

<sup>6</sup> Rashi, Shemos 1:15

<sup>7</sup> Rav Dovid Eibeshutz develops the theme of Mitzrayim being like a womb. (Arvei Nachal – Eikev)

<sup>8</sup> Shemos 4:22

<sup>9</sup> Rashi, Bereishis 1:31

<sup>10</sup> See Sanhedrin 99b – Man was born to toil in speech