

# A SPECIAL STEP-MOTHER

*by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner*

This week we begin the Sefer [Book] of Shemos [Names] with Parshas Shemos. "V'aileh shemos [these are the names] of Bnei Yisroel [the Children of Israel] who came down to Mitzrayim. [1:1]"

A few weeks ago I had the tremendous zechus [merit] to perform something so simple but unfortunately, very rare. My mother, who married my father when I was ten, has been an active member of Emunah Women for many decades. Emunah understandably decided to honor both of my parents at their annual dinner in Florida and I was asked to speak.

Our aging is often a cause for reflection. (That reminds me of the balding minister who stood ceremoniously silent before his congregants with his head bowed--not realizing that the sun was shining off his head. After a few moments he lifted his head and spoke softly about the importance of reflection...) In all seriousness, as we get older and go through different stages in our own lives while, at the same time, experiencing the phases that our children are going through, we gain a different perspective and hopefully a renewed appreciation for those who guided us through our own twists and turns. We often think about the way we'd like to express those feelings of love and gratitude but unfortunately, it often remains as just thoughts.

The feelings that I expressed at the dinner had been floating around my head for years. Nevertheless, it took the impetus of the dinner for me to finally express them. Like I said above, so simple to perform but sadly, very rare.

As many of those thoughts were based on this week's parsha, I'll consider myself doubly blessed with these two opportunities (and I'll ask forgiveness from those who both attended the dinner and read parsha-insights).

There is a verse, found in Divrei Hayamim [Chronicles], which states: "And his wife, Yehudiah, gave birth to Yered Avi G'dor and to Chaver Avi Socho and to Yekusiel Avi Zanoach, these are the sons of Basya the daughter of Paroah."

The Talmud [Megillah 13A] explains that all of these 'sons' are actually different names referring to Moshe. If so, the Talmud asks, how can the verse state that Basya (a.k.a. Yehudiah) gave birth to Moshe? She raised him but did not give birth to him! From this the Talmud derives that if a person raises an orphan in their home, it is considered as if they actually gave birth to that child.

Let's try to understand this concept of many names being attributed to Moshe.

In the Hebrew language a name carries incredible significance. Whereas in other languages a name is simply a label attached in order to allow us the convenience of easily communicating with one another, in Lashon HaKadosh (the Holy Tongue-Hebrew) a name describes the very essence of the person or object.

At the time of creation, the passuk {verse} states that all the animals were brought before Adom Harishon {Adam} in order to be named. "And whatever Adom called it, that was its name. [Breishis 2:19]" It didn't become its name-that was its name. Adom had the perception to see the very essence of each animal, to understand the unique role it plays in Hashem's creation and to thereby know its name.

Similarly, the word for the letter aleph, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, is written aleph-lamed-phay. The numerical value of those letters (1+30+80) equals 111. This is because aleph is the epitome of one. Its name describes its essence.

If so, we can understand that Moshe needed so many different names in order to accurately depict who he was. Moshe was called Yered because he brought the Torah down to this world. He was called Chaver because he connected Bnei Yisroel (the Children of Israel) to their Father in heaven. Avi Socho means the father of all prophets, and so on. Each of those names portrays a different unique aspect of who Moshe was.

Yet, the Medrash teaches, with all of those names describing Moshe's outstanding and almost superhuman traits and accomplishments, Hashem only called him by the name Moshe-the name given to him by Basya, the daughter of Paroah.

Why did she in fact call him Moshe? "Because from the water m'shisihu [I drew him out]. [2:10]"

At first glance this seems difficult to understand. Why did Hashem choose to use this name? This name doesn't describe Moshe... It describes that which Basya did for him. Perhaps she should have been called Moshe! Why did this become his name?

Rav Chaim Shmuelovitz zt"l explains that our actions have a profound effect on our surroundings. When we do something for someone else, it affects and changes that person to the point that our actions become incorporated into that individual.

The incredible kindness and caring that Basya gave to Moshe, risking her own life to save his and then raising and caring for him in the palace, infused kindness and caring into the very essence of Moshe. It was these midos {characteristics} which allowed him to reach the dizzying heights that he did and to ultimately become the leader and redeemer of Israel. Only someone who cared so deeply about the plight of Bnei Yisroel would be able to redeem them from that plight.

The upbringing that his stepmother, Basya, gave him had such an incredibly powerful influence that it, more than anything else, molded him and portrayed who he really was. He wasn't called by a name describing his receiving of the Torah nor was he called by a name depicting his never-again-

attained level of prophecy. He was called Moshe because "from the water she drew him out."

The greatest testimony to Moshe was the testimony to what Basya had done for him.

He was called Moshe.

Good Shabbos,

Yisroel Ciner

This week's 'parsha-insights' is dedicated, of course, to my mother, Mrs. Bea Ciner.

I would also like to dedicate it to three very close talmidim of mine on the occasion of their engagements and upcoming marriages; Mr. Joseph Sokol, Mr. Baruki Cohen and Mr. Shlomo Greenwald. May they merit to take the wonderful things they have been taught in their own homes and infuse them into the homes that they BE"H will soon be building.-YC

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