



The Quiet Heroines

WHY THE TORAH CHOSE HUMBLE NAMES FOR HISTORY'S GREATEST HEROES

When the Torah recounts one of history's most pivotal moments—two midwives defying Pharaoh's genocidal decree—it chooses an unexpected detail to highlight. Rather than emphasizing their world-changing courage, it calls them by names describing their gentlest actions: Shifra, "she who beautified," and Puah, "she who cooed" (*Shemos* 1:15). According to the Gemara, Shifra would tenderly straighten the newborns' limbs while Puah would soothe crying babies (*Sotah* 11b).

These were towering figures—Yocheved was married to the generation's leader Amram, while Miriam was a prophetess whose defiance saved the Jewish people from extinction.

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Yet the Torah immortalizes them through intimate moments of care rather than their monumental heroism. What does this reveal about how Hashem measures greatness?

THE TRUE TEST OF CHARACTER

Rav Shimshon Pincus offers a striking analogy (*Tiferes Shimshon, Bereishis*). During a medical emergency, while doctors frantically work to save a child's life, the mother simultaneously strokes the baby's head and whispers comfort. This tenderness doesn't detract from the lifesaving work; it reveals the depth of her love and her ability to maintain focus on crucial details amid overwhelming circumstances.

While saving the Jewish nation, Yocheved and Miriam never forgot to comfort each frightened newborn. The Torah emphasizes their names because maintaining gentleness during crisis exposes one's truest character.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY

This week, pay attention to your small interactions: how you speak to a cashier when you're stressed, whether you hold the door when you're rushing, or how you respond to interruptions at home. These moments—not just your major accomplishments—reveal and shape who you truly are. Choose one small daily interaction and consciously bring extra patience or kindness to it.

NOT JUST A STORY MORE THAN FLOWERS

Rabbi Shlomo Heiman, one of the great leaders of Torah education in America, was renowned for his dedication to spreading

Torah and his devotion to community service. His wife, who was deeply involved in *chessed*, focused in particular on helping impoverished orphans marry and build their own homes.

Rabbi Pincus shared a story about a wedding she was organizing. She took care of every detail, but before the wedding, Rabbi Heiman asked, "Did you also buy flowers for the *kallah*?"

She responded, "I've taken care of everything, but I didn't think it was right to use *tzedakah* money for flowers."

Rabbi Heiman immediately replied, "No, no, we must buy her flowers. It's very important."

Rabbi Pincus explains that Rabbi Heiman wanted the *kallah* to feel just like any other bride, deserving of every detail. But he also said, "A mother never hesitates to give flowers to her daughter on her wedding night. You must be like a mother to this girl."

In this powerful lesson, Rabbi Heiman emphasized that it's not just about managing *tzedakah*—it's about offering the love and care of a mother. ■

Rabbi Asaf Aharon Prisman, author of "Prism of Torah" and host of the weekly podcast under the same name, cultivated his unique Torah perspective through studies at Toronto's Yeshivat Or Chaim and several prestigious Israeli yeshivas. Now based in Ramat Beit Shemesh, he combines his roles as an author, podcaster, and a Ram at Yeshivat Ateres Yaakov where he gives the daily daf yomi shiur & gives personalized Gemara tutoring, where he makes profound Torah concepts accessible to all.

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