



## REBBETZIN SHIRA SMILES

FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER

# Concealment Considered

*"Vayelech ish mi-beit Levi va'yikach et bat Levi, vatahar ha-isha va'teled ben — A man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi. The woman conceived and bore a son."* (Shemot 2:1-2) The Torah then relate how they placed their baby in a basket on the Nile, and subsequently the daughter of Paraoh found him and saved him. Is it not fascinating that only later, when the redemption shifts into full gear, we learn the names of this man and woman? Why is this information not revealed immediately? Why are Amram and Yocheved, Moshe Rebbeinu's parents, first introduced to us anonymously?

Chazal tell us that at the start of the terrible Egyptian oppression, Amram separated from his wife, as they did not want to have children who would be subject to the evil decrees of Paraoh. At the behest of his daughter Miriam's prophetic words, he remarried Yocheved.

The Zohar describes that this remarriage was arranged modestly, reflected in the concealment of their names. Chazal teach us, *"ein lecha yafeh min hatz'niut* — there is nothing more beautiful [praiseworthy, refined] than modesty." (Midrash Tanchuma 31) Amram and Yocheved model this quality for us to emulate.

The Maharal, (*Gur Aryeh*) notes that we generally attribute the greatness of a child to the greatness and merit of his parents. In concealing Amram and Yocheved's names, the focus is shifted to their child; they, as parents, remain in a secondary role. In the Maharal's understanding, Moshe Rabbeinu was destined to come into this world, if it were not through Amram and Yocheved, it would have been through others. Although in most circumstances, every child is gifted to a particular set of parents, and they are the only ones who can bring out the child's full potential, this was not the case with Moshe Rabbeinu.

Rav Shimon Schwab *zt"l* notes in *Ma'ayan Beit Hasho'eva* that concealing the names of Amram and Yocheved turns our attention to the lineage of the house of Levi; they merited to have this child because they were Levi'im. In the *zechut* of the Torah upheld by *shevet* Levi, they were given the opportunity to bear the redeemer of *Am Yisrael*.

Rabbi Meir Zvi Bergman in *Sha'arei Orah* offers a different approach that holds a

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powerful message for our lives. One may think that having a child like Moshe Rabbeinu requires special *yichus*. In concealing his parents' names however, the Torah underscores the truism that anyone can raise a child to greatness. Further, the Rambam teaches that we each have the capacity to become as great as Moshe Rabbeinu. One can't excuse himself from striving for greatness by saying, "I don't descend from greatness, what can be expected of me?" Lest one think that he will only achieve greatness if his parents are great, the Torah teaches here that the onus of responsibility is on each individual to actualize his potential greatness, irrespective of his roots.

*Yichus* can be compared to a string of zeros; each of us must find our way to place the "one" at the beginning to give the zeros value. More important than where one comes from is the direction in which one is going. ■

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