

~~Moses, the hero of the Bible whose birth is recorded in today's Sidra,~~

The birth of Moses, which is described in this morning's Scriptural Reading, is mentioned by the Rabbis in a most interesting and extraordinary Talmudic passage. They mention (Shir Hashirim Rabba,1-15) that R. Judah the Prince, known as Rebbe, was YOSHEIV VE'DOREISH, preaching to his congregation. And as he was so doing, he was faced with a most distressing problem that has presented itself to generations of public speakers, and especially Rabbis and preachers.

NISNAMNEIM HA'TZIBBUR. His audience began to fall asleep. To this day that is a major problem that is rather difficult to solve. Even the very best speaker always has one or two people in his audience who prefer a cozy nap to challenging oratory, and who find more consolation in dozing than in thinking. It is sometimes fascinating to watch heads nod and eyes grow heavy, even before the speaker has opened his mouth. When, however, the entire congregation starts to doze off, that is a bad situation. And so, moved by the speaker's instincts, Rebbe BIKEISH LE'ORERAN, he tried to wake them up.

How do you wake up a sleeping congregation? Some speakers merely raise their voices. Trusting in volume more than in quality, they shout their listeners out of sleep. Other, and more modern brands of Rabbis, turn sensational, and they change themes to the Kinsey-review type of talk. Perhaps that will keep them awake. It is a kind of sensationalism that works at times. But a Rebbe, a saint and a scholar, does not rely on such techniques. He relies on other kinds of methods. And so, he said: YALDAH ISHAH BE'MITZRAYIM SHISHIM RIBO BE'KERESS ACHASS, one Jewish woman in Egypt gave birth to 600,000 at one time. A rather sensational remark. And it is meticulously recorded by our Rabbis that at least one of his listeners was jolted by this piece of intelligence, and his name was Yishmael ben R. Yose, and he asked Rebbe what he meant by that, and how was it possible. And Rebbe replied, ZU YOCHVED SHE'YALDAH ES MOSHEH SHE'SHAKUL KNEGED SHISHIM RIBO SHE'YISRAEL, the woman was Yochved, mother of Moses, who bore Moses who was as worthy and weighty as the 600,000 Jews he led out of Egypt to freedom and Revelation.

It is, indeed, sensational news. It is sensational that a woman can be blessed with a son who can lead and spark and inspire and teach a whole nation. It is sensational for parents to be the lucky parents of a Moses. Not everyone has that good fortune. And yet all parents dream of having great and good and noble sons and daughters. And often parents ask themselves and ask others, what do we have to do to deserve great children? - no, not just well-adjusted children who will follow the lead of everyone else, not just children who will be colorlessly "normal", who will never rise higher than the pitifully low average and remain happy in their ignorance and commonness. But children who will serve and inspire and lead and achieve for a whole people and a whole world. How can parents deserve that kind of child, how can they become the parents of Moses, that is the question. And the only way to answer that question is to learn something about Amram, the father of Moses, and Yochved, she who, according to Rebbe, gave birth to 600,000 at one time. Three qualities will become clear to us, three qualities possessed by the parents of Moses which can be emulated by modern adults who wish to be proud forbears of great progeny.

The first prerequisite for seeing greatness in your child is to have some of it yourself. Superiority and greatness are not spontaneously generated. A child must be able to observe, subconsciously, in the personalities and conduct of his parents. Only then can he build on that seed foundation. Before a child can flower into greatness he must have received a seed of it from his parents.

Thus, Amram is described in our Rabbini~~u~~ literature, as GDOL YISRAEL UG'DOL HA'ARETZ, great Jew and great man. He was a leader of his people, and though he never attained a tenth of his son's greatness and renown, nevertheless, his own superiority was something which Moses was able to develop further. Yocheved is known as ISHAN TZADKANIYIS, a most pious and righteous woman. Only when a mother is devout can her son become a true saint, a Moses.

Basically, therefore, it is important for parents to remember that the way to raise great children is not to forsake their own development. By concentrating solely on their children's develop~~ment~~ and completely neglecting their own, parents give children the impression that study and ac~~ceivemnet~~ and religion and the like are only for children; why, then, should ~~they~~ continue to practice it when they come of age? For a child to be studious, he must see his father and mother reading and studying. For a child to be generous, he must see it in his parents. For a child to be sincere and hard-working, he must notice at least a trace of it in his elders. Prerequisite nu~~mber~~ one, then, for great children is un-petty and un-small parents; adults who themselves aspire to self-development.

The second quality goes a step futher. Not only must father and mother each be superior in his and her own right, but they must be magnanimous towards each other. In other words, there must be a good, peaceful, happy, loving HOME. An exemplary Jewish home is a splendid way of assuring eminent children. Our Rabbis said (Sabbath, ch.2) that HA'RAGIL BE'NER HAVYEN LEH BANIN TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM, a woman who faithfully observes the requirement to light the Sabbath candles will have children who will be scholars. Why? Because, as we know, the NEROS SHABBOS are the symbol of SHALOM BAYIS, of domestic happiness and conjugal bliss. Where there is a good home, there will be good children.

Listen to the Bible's description of the origins of Moses: VA'YELECH ISH MI'BEIS LEVI VA'YIKACH ES BAS LEVI. A man from the tribe of Levi married a woman from the same tribe. That is all. No fanfare, no deification of the parents, no ascension to heaven, no beatification or official sainthood for his mother. And, as the Zohar points out, not even their names are given in this simple account! It is all BE'TZINAH, all in modesty and humbleness and quietness. That is the true mark of a good Jewish home. TZINAH. It is a quiet, peaceful, un-noisy and gentle home. It is a home of SHALOM BAYIS that can produce a Moses. It is a home where parents are devoted to each other, where Shabbos is Shabbos, and where great difficulties are solved by recourse to G-d. The historian Josephus records (Antiquities) ~~a long and~~ beautiful prayer that Amram prayed before Moses was born asking G-d to protect his people, and the appearance of G-d in Amram's dream, telling him that his son, soon to be born, will be the one who will deliver Israel from its foes, and "his memory shall be famous while the world lasts" (Bk II, Ch. IX, 3). When parents are devoted to each other, and remember G-d, their child has the chance of being like a Moses, whose memory lasts forever.

The ~~third~~ quality is one demonstrated by Amram in a remarkable and striking story recorded by our Sages (Mechilta de'Rashbi). Remember that Pharo had ordained that every Jewish man-child be killed upon death, by drowning in the Nile. It was clearly the plan of Egypt to execut genocide against Israel and destroy them forever. And the plan was put into effect, and Jewish ~~chil~~ babies were being killed by the thousands. Imagine the bitterness of Jewish parents, especially mothers, who had laboured and travailled and then had their babes torn out of their embracing arms to be cast into the river before their very eyes. What unimaginable anguish they must have experienced as year after year their children were taken from them and killed. When Amram who, as previously stated, was a leader of the Israelites, saw what was occurring, he divorced his wife, and counselled all Jews to do so, crying out LAMAH ANU MEYAGIM ES ATZMEINU LE'CHINAM, why do we labor for naught, what use is there in bearing children if they are to be killed? Why go on with life when no life is promised to us? Let us put an end

to this tragic farce! Let us not produce targets for their trigger-practice. Let us not give the Egyptians the opportunity to impose their sadism upon our tots. Let every Jew leave his wife, and let no more Jewish children be born. Let us not fight against fate.

And so, for a long while, according to Tradition, Amram ~~left~~ separated from Yocheved, and the great majority of all Israelites did the same. But then his daughter, Miriam, urged him to reconsider. She told him that this was no solution, that by doing this he was merely saving the Egyptian hordes the task of making Israel extinct. She spoke to him of Hope and of Courage and of Determination and Sacrifice. And Amram listened to his daughter. He began to understand that it is truly possible that some day the dark and heavy clouds will part to allow a ray of sunshine to brighten their lives. He began to foresee the possibility that G-d will not remain silent, that help will yet come, and that despair never solved anything. And so he instructed his people to return to their wives and their homes and fling a challenge in the teeth of Fate. And how beautifully the Sages described the remarriage of Amram and Yocheved. He built a beautiful APIRYON or CHUPPAH for her, and their children, Aaron and Miriam danced before them, and the very angels of heaven sang for them with the words EIM HA'BANIM SMEICHAN HALLELUYAH, the mother of children is happy, praise the Lord. And out of that remarriage was born Moses, the very person who would force the black clouds apart and bring the rays of Freedom into the empty lives of his downtrodden people. VE'HISKIMAH DDATO LE'DAAS HA'MAKOM, say our Rabbis, Amram's decision was in accord with G-d's will.

That is what parents must be if their children are to be Moseses. They must have Faith even when in the hard grip of doom and gloom. They must show courage even when it seems utterly ridiculous. They must be able to challenge Destiny and dare Fate and stand firm in the face of overwhelming odds and almost certain defeat. That trust in the future, in G-d's justice, is what gives parents the right to have a child like Moses.

Amram and Yocheved were able to foresee ultimate help. Moses was then the man to prophecy GEULAH even during the thick of GALUT. Amram looked into the waters of the Nile and saw that G-d would save the indestructible babies cast therein. Moses was able to see a SNEH BO'EIR BA'EISH, the burning bush, in the desert, the bush which burns but is never destroyed.

That, friends, is the mark of greatness. The ability to hope and hold out for the sun to shine again. Only that can awaken a slumbering, moribund, coma-bound people. Let no one ever question: where will the next generation of Jews come from? They will come. * If there be amongst us this morning a man or woman who can continue his and her own development and growth as true and great Jews and Jewesses; and who can live, husband with wife, so that the Jewish verities and virtues are truly implanted in their home, a home of domestic happiness and Jewishness, and maximal Jewish education; and if these people can doggedly maintain the firm faith that greater times are yet to come for our people and that we must build and plan and labor for those great times when Jews will be great and learned and proud and unashamed and full-blooded Jews; then such parents deserve Moseses, it is they who will give birth to 12 millions at one time, to men and women who will rise to the leadership of Israel and serve their people and their G-d in Truth and in Faith.

It was not so long ago that every Jewish mother harbored the secret wish that her child become the MOSHIACH, the saviour of Israel. And NO, it was not naive or primitive. It was Jewish through and through. The wife of R. Maimon in Spain wanted - and got - a Maimonides for a child. The wife of mother of the Vilna Gaon prayed for one like him, and deserved him, therefore bore him. Who would not have laughed at the mothers of the leaders of modern Israel had they heard them silently praying that their children be leaders of their people?

* They will come from big cities + small towns, wherever there is a Jewish family. Amram's decision was in accord with G-d's will. Whenever there are parents who have a touch of Amram's faith, parents of Moses.

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It is this that can wake up a people when NISNAMNEIM HA'TZIBBUR, when they begin to succumb to an ^{deathly} eternal sleep. It is this which can shake them out of the lethargy and drowsiness which comes of despair. Yes, a woman can give birth to 600,000; a parent can develop a child who will reflect the worth and value and strength of an entire people. It can be done. But it requires these three: self-development of the parents; a good Jewish home of happiness and peace and Torah; and the faith and courage and strength to hope and hold out for better and greater eras to come.

There is nothing more sensational than the knowledge that it is within the power of each and every one of us to rear a Moses.