

Realising Our Potential

This week's parashah contains the first time in the Torah that we are explicitly told the name of Moshe Rabbeinu's parents – Amrom and Yocheved. The posuk says that Amrom married his aunt Yocheved and together they had two sons – Aharon and Moshe (Shemos 6:20).

We first learned about the birth of Moshe in last week's parashah. There, the posuk says:

וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֵוִי וַיִּקַּח אֶת־בַּת־לֵוִי

"A man went from the House of Levi and took [married] a daughter of Levi." (Shemos 2:1).

It would have been more logical, it would seem, to tell us about Moshe Rabbeinu's parents when initially mentioning his birth. Why does the Torah leave out the identity of Moshe's parents when first mentioning his birth?

Rav Moshe Feinstein explains that when two people bring a child into the world – at that early stage in the child's life – the parents really have no great "claim to fame." At that stage, we do not know who the baby is or what the baby will become. At that point, the baby is only "a bundle of raw potential" – *כח* (*Koach* – unfulfilled potential) and not *פועל* (*Po'al* - fulfilled potential).

Therefore, giving accolades and honours to the parents of Moshe Rabbeinu at the stage of his birth would be premature. He was only a baby!

In this week's parashah, the situation has changed. In Parashas Vo'eiro we already know who Moshe Rabbeinu is. This is a person who could have remained comfortably in the house of Paroh, but he grew up and went out amongst his brothers and saw their suffering. Moshe Rabbeinu protected and fought for the oppressed Jew, and because of that he had to flee for his life and go to Midian. Moshe Rabbeinu stood up for the oppressed daughters of Yisro at the well. This is only a fraction of what he will yet accomplish. But he is now 80 years old; he has already demonstrated his character.

Now the posuk can inform us that he is the product of an Amrom and a Yocheved. Here the parents can now proclaim: "See the child that we have raised." They can now stand up and take credit. Let the world know who Moshe Rabbeinu's father was. Let the world know who his mother was. Moshe Rabbeinu is more than just raw potential. The potential has been realised!

A LESSON FOR EACH OF US

Our parents, together with 'ה, brought each of us into the world, and each of us has amazing potential! There is only one me, and there is only one you. You are a unique person. It is told that Rebbe Nachman of Breslov used to say: "The day you were born is the day 'ה decided the world could not exist without you." Or to put it another way: "A moment before a child is born, 'ה decides that the world – the universe! – can not exist one moment longer without this person being born into it."

Of course, that child is not meant to remain a baby, but rather 'ה and our parents want us to grow up and become our best selves, and accomplish the special mission each of us is supposed to accomplish.

This was true of Moshe Rabeinu, too, and when he started to change from the little boy, Moshe, into the great leader, Moshe Rabeinu, the Torah decided it was time to give credit to his parents for bringing him into the world, and told us their names.

Each of us needs to try to do the same, to fulfil our special potential, and so to make our parents and 'ה proud of us and reward them with the credit they deserve for bringing us into the world!
