

Moshe's Other Half: The Feminine Aspect of *Zayin Adar*

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Like Moshe was Molded by Women, Women Mold the Mashiach

On *Zayin Adar* (this year Sunday March 9th) we celebrate the birthday and the day of Moshe Rabbeinu's passing. At this time, Moshe's *mazal* (spiritual influence) shines most powerfully, and as the leader of Israel, he draws down Hashem's blessings to all of us. Since seven represents a complete cycle, the seventh of *Adar* inspires us to serve Hashem in a complete manner. The *Chatam Sofer* compares Moshe, the first redeemer, to the final redeemer. We learn from *Michah* 7:15: "As in the days of your Exodus from the Land of Egypt, I will show you wonders," that the redemption from Egypt is the prototype of the Final Redemption. Moshe, who was the leader of the Jewish people during the Exodus, is the prototype of Mashiach. The *midrash* gives an example of how Mashiach parallels Moshe. Just as Moshe took his wife and children and made them ride on the donkey, so too, will Mashiach ride on a donkey.¹ Just as it was the women in his life (Miriam, Yocheved, Bitya and Tziporah) who made Moshe into the leader of Israel, so is it the women who will bring about and mold the final redeemer. Tziporah's role in molding Moshe is highlighted through the *gematria* (numerical value) of her name which equals למשה (for Moshe).² Moshe had an additional name, Tzipor. These same letters also spell צַפְּ אוֹר /*Tzaf Or* – "The light floated" – as Moshe Rabbeinu saw Tziporah's light float.

By the Well - על הבאר

"An Egyptian man delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew and drew water for us, and watered the flock."³ *Ba'alei Tosfot* learn from the repetition of the word "drew" that Moshe drew Yitro's daughter out of the water and also drew water for them and their flock. Moshe is drawn from the water. His entire essence and everything about him is connected with the drawing out of water. It was Moshe's meeting Tziporah at the well that gave him the supernatural powers to save her and her sisters from the big group of hostile shepherders. Moshe's name means not only, "I drew him out of the water,"⁴ in which case it should have been "Nimshe." It also means drawing water for others, and drawing others out of the water. The Torah is called Torah from Heaven. In Hebrew heaven is שָׁמַיִם /*shamayim* which can be broken up to שָׁם מַיִם /*sham mayim* – there is water. Moshe had to draw the Torah out/down from the upper water, and draw the people out/up from the lower water. With Tziporah's help, he was also able to come back down and pull the people up. The giving of water symbolizes giving of Torah. Moshe gave Tziporah Torah. In this messianic time, it is the role of the men to give Torah to the women and allow them to develop their spiritual side. The *geulah* will come when all the men have learned to give the women this spiritual space. Water symbolizes a new dimension. There is a whole different world of life under the water. Moshe is able to access the upper dimension where there is no eating and drinking (He

¹ *Kohelet Rabbah* 1:28.

² צַפְּ אוֹר and למשה share the numerical value of 375.

³ *Shemot* 2:18-19.

⁴ *Shemot* 2:10.

stayed at the mountain for forty days without eating and drinking.) When Moshe met Tziporah he became completely connected with his essence of water. (Moshe is also a Pisces which is a water sign). When you meet your soul-mate, you become connected with your own essence and access your inherent hidden powers; you become who you really are. This is how you will know if the person who you have met is the right one. Rather than focusing only on who he is, tune into who he makes you become.

To be a Sheep-herder - לרעות בצאן

“Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father’s flock.”⁵ Tziporah was a shepherd before Moshe. Moshe learned the vocation of shepherding from her. Through Tziporah Moshe became a shepherd too, which prepared him for being the leader of the Jewish people. Seeing G-d in nature, being connected to Israel through the sheep, and having mercy on even one sheep is what makes Moshe worthy of revelation. It is thus through Tziporah that Moshe becomes ready for the revelation of the burning bush. Maharal explains that the priest of Midian had seven daughters, because the seventh is holier than the rest. Likewise the seventh is sanctified among the days, months and years. Because Tziporah was the seventh daughter, she was special and fitting to cleave to a body as holy as Moshe's. In this way both Tziporah and Moshe are connected with the level of seven, as Moshe is born and passes away on the 7th of Adar.

Swift as a Bird - קל כציפור

The name Tziporah means to peer into the future and see (צופה ורואה/Tzofa veroah). She had the ability to foresee the future, anticipate the redemption, and to see the potential in others and develop it. Anticipating people’s needs is a very archetypical feminine trait that we need to nurture and develop. Pour the cup without asking; when you notice that your husband/child/guest is thirsty. Tziporah discovered Moshe and saw his true nature. She was willing to marry Moshe although he was a stranger, an Egyptian who had nothing. She understood his true self just like Michal perceived David before he became King David. Tziporah knew who Moshe was before anyone else. She revealed him. She raised and strengthened him in shepherding until he reached the revelation of the burning bush. It’s interesting that both Tziporah and Moshe shared this ability of seeing, as it is known that there never was, is, or will be another prophet on the level of Moshe who could see Hashem in the deepest, closest humanly possible way. Tziporah’s ability of seeing was more practical. She brought Moshe’s loftiness down to earth. The word Tziporah means bird. Maharal explains that the bird is associated with life because of its swift movements which are completely alive. This is the opposite of death which has no movements. Moreover, the substance of the bird is refined and good. Therefore, she was called Tziporah because of her good and refined substance, similar to a bird that soars in the sky. The *midrash* teaches that she ran after Moshe like a bird, since there never existed a body as holy and refined as Moshe’s. Due to her refinement Tziporah was his perfect match.

⁵ Shemot 2:16.

Women's Connection to the Bread of Perfection - נשים ושלימות הלחם

Yitro, whose house was full of daughters, was concerned about how to find marriage partners for them all. Therefore he exclaimed: "Why did you leave the man, call him that he may eat bread."⁶ Rashi explains that "eating bread" refers to the woman. A similar usage is found in "Except for the bread which he eats."⁷ Immediately, Tziporah ran after Moshe like a bird and brought him back.⁸ Bread is the rectification for eating from the Tree of knowledge. ("With the sweat of your evil" Bread brings unification; this is why we sacrifice two *chametz* breads on Shavuot when a rectification for eating from the Tree took place. Even the strands of our braided *challah* symbolize unification. Marrying is the highest human unification reflecting our unity with Hashem. This is why marrying a woman is compared to eating bread.

Upon the Ass - מעל החומר

"Moshe took his wife and his sons, and set them upon the ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt."⁹ Tziporah was behind Moshe when he went to redeem his people. She was the first one to believe in him. Her encouragement convinced Moshe to fulfill his mission. Despite the danger for herself and her two babies, Tziporah was willing to follow Moshe into a strange land, in order to be part of the redemption process. In the end, she did not enter Egypt, because Aharon dissuaded Moshe from endangering her life and that of their children. Yet, Tziporah's willingness to stand by her husband and follow him in this perilous mission shows her greatness. G-d wants our hearts, our willingness. As long as we're ready to sacrifice our comforts in our willingness to follow G-d, then we often don't need to suffer the actual difficulties.

The Donkey of Mashiach- החומר של משיח

Rashi explains that the ass upon which Moshe placed Tziporah was a special donkey, designated for this purpose. This was the same ass which Avraham had saddled for the purpose of traveling to bind Yitzchak on Mount Moriah, and this, too, is the ass upon which King Mashiach will be revealed, as it states, "A poor person riding on a donkey."¹⁰ It is not by chance that Tziporah is placed upon the same donkey which Mashiach will ride. It is suitable that Tziporah, being so refined and alive – detached from the material – should ride the donkey, "*chamor*" which also means "material" in Hebrew. "Sitting on top of the donkey" means that she was above the material. She was a spiritual being – a bird that could fly. It is Moshe who placed her on that donkey, indicating that the redemption takes place when the men will place the women on top of the material. One the way to redemption, men must allow women to rise to the top. They must give women their spiritual space. Moshe's placing Tziporah on the donkey at the verge of the redemption from Egypt, moreover, alludes to the important role women play in the redemption process.

⁶ *Shemot* 2:20.

⁷ *Bereishit* 39:6.

⁸ *Shemot Rabbah* 1:32.

⁹ *Shemot* 4:20.

¹⁰ *Zecharia* 9:9.

Saving her Husband on the Spot – להציל בעלה במקום

“And it came to pass by the way in the lodging place, that Hashem met him, and sought to put him to death. Then Tziporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet and said, Surely a bridegroom of blood you are to me. So he loosened his hold of him...”¹¹

Tziporah saved Moshe’s life through her Divine inspiration to circumcise her son with a rock. It is interesting to note that the word for rock צר/*tzur* is written without the *vav* and has exactly the same numerical value as the name מרים/*Miriam* (290). Perhaps we can say that Tziporah took the merit of Miriam in order to save Moshe’s life. Miriam’s role all along was to protect Moshe. Before he was born she brought her parents back together to conceive him. She watched over him while he was floating in the Nile and she brought him his mother as a “nursemaid.” Even when she was not directly involved in saving Moshe, the spiritual energy of the numerology of her name was present to save his life. Tziporah, thus worked in a team with the spiritual energy of her sister-in-law, Miriam, the same way that all redemptions take place by means of team work of holy women.¹² It is Tziporah’s swiftness in performing the *brith mila* that rectified Moshe’s hesitation, debating, and deliberating which mitzvah to perform first: Redeeming Israel or circumcising his son.¹³ Tziporah had to apply her own sense and judgment in order to clearly discern what had to be done. There was no time to ask a Rabbi, and surely no time to send for a *mohel*. The fact that Tziporah – a woman – performs the *brit mila*, possibly alludes to the important role women play in guarding and rectifying sexuality during the time of redemption. Women have a tremendous influence in the world, particularly on men, since men’s ability to keep *tikun habrit* (rectification of sexuality) depends to a high degree on women. Therefore, excelling in *tzniut* and modesty is an important element in bringing about the redemption. The world has to rectify *yesod* (foundation) before it can achieve *malchut* (royalty).

Mashiach’s Wife – אשת משיח

“Then Yitro Moshe’s father- in-law took Tziporah Moshe’s wife, after he had sent her away and her two sons of whom the name of one was Gershom for he said I was a stranger in a strange land.”¹⁴ The Torah emphasizes that Tziporah was reunited with Moshe prior to receiving the Torah. Esther Kitov explains that in order for Moshe to give the Torah to Israel, he needed his faithful Tziporah at his side. Only both of them together as a team were able to bring down Torah to Israel. This is similar to the Halachic requirement that the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) must be married in order to perform the Temple service.¹⁵ All of the Torah that Moshe brought down from Heaven for all eternity was therefore dependant on Tziporah – his other half. Likewise, when we pray for Mashiach, we are also praying for Mashiach’s wife, who will empower the Mashiach to redeem Israel.

¹¹ *Shemot* 4:24-26.

¹² For example Shifra and Puah the midwives in Egypt, as well as the team of Ruth and Naomi.

¹³ See Rashi, *Shemot* 4:25).

¹⁴ *Shemot* 18:2-3.

¹⁵ *Mishna Yoma* 1:1.