



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

Rav Kehilla, Nofei HaShemesh
Maggid Shiur, Daf Yomi, OU.org
Senior Ra"m, Kerem B'Yavneh

The Shifra & Puah Within Us

וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְמִילְדוֹת הָעִבְרִית אֲשֶׁר שָׁם
הָאֵחָת שְׁפָרָה וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית פּוּעָה: (שמות א:טו)
Now the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one who was named Shifrah, and the second, who was named Puah. (Shemot 1:15).

The Shemen Hatov cites a story about Hagon Harav Hillel Kalimayer, who was once hosted by a wealthy individual. During his stay, he was constructively criticizing his host's behavior. At one point the host turned to the Rav and declared: "Last month I hosted a different renown Rav and he did not correct anything I was doing. Why is it that you have a totally different approach?" The Rav explained that there were two midwives in Egypt – *Shifra* and *Puah*. In a similar vein, there are two types of individuals, one that can positively influence others – *Shifra* (משפיע), and another who constructively criticizes with the view of correcting another's behavior, albeit in a sensitive manner – like *Puah*.

Our duty is to combine these two characteristics. Although they may seem to be mutually exclusive, having the proper balance is what creates a complete individual. To appreciate the current situation yet strive for further perfection.

YOSEF – SHEPHERD AND VICEROY

When the tribes who descended to Egypt are enumerated at the beginning of the

parsha the Torah informs us that Yosef was in Egypt. Rashi interprets this verse as follows:

הוא יוסף הרועה את צאן אביו, הוא יוסף שהיה במצרים, ונעשה מלך, ועומד בצדקו

He, the Joseph who tended his father's flocks, is the same Joseph who was in Egypt and became a king, and he retained his righteousness.

Yosef was a shepherd who later rose to become the viceroy of Egypt - second in command. A shepherd is a loner who spends his day with a flock outside the city and away from civilization. A king is someone who deals with his ministers and matters relating to the population and his empire. Although these two personalities differ, Yosef embodied both. He was able to adjust and balance two diametrically opposed characteristics.

COMBINING SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik cites a midrash on the pasuk:

וַיֵּצֵר ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָדָם עֶפְרָן מִן הָאֲדָמָה
(בראשית ב:ז)

And the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground (Bereshit 2:7).

The midrash asserts that two statements were made simultaneously. First, that man was created from dust gathered from all over the world. Second, that man was created from dust gathered from the location of the *mizbe'ach* (altar). The Rav explained that this symbolizes the outlook man is to embrace. On one hand man is created from dust gathered from all over the world, which symbolizes that he should have a worldly

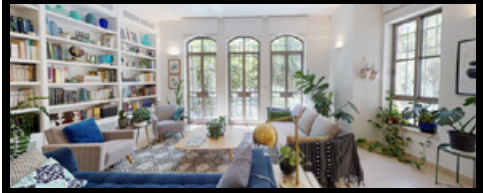
view. To be concerned with what is transpiring around him. To appreciate the physical nature of his surroundings. Yet, man was also created from the dust of the place of the altar, symbolizing man is to focus on himself and his roots, and connect to his spiritual self. The ideal is to be able combine both- the physical and spiritual, the concern for perfecting oneself with perfecting the world.

Each of us ought to combine the Shifra and Puah within us. To perfect ourselves while caring for those around us. To establish the proper balance between physical and spiritual pursuits. To be careful when dealing with others to know when to accept another for who they are and to seek to constructively criticize for the benefit of that individual. May we achieve the proper equilibrium and be rewarded as Shifra and Puah were – with *Batei Kehuna* – with offspring that are *talmidei chachamim* and *yerei shamayim!* ■

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