

## ParShaT *SheMoTh*— One Pager Series

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**Rashi #1,#2,#3,#4. Biblical Text:Ex01-15b,c,d** Pharoh summoned the Jewish midwives; one of which had the nickname Nicen and one of which had the nickname PooPoo  
**Rashi Text:** 1) Nicen: She was called Nicen because she “niced” up the infants (who were soiled at birth). 4) Nicen was the nickname given to Yocheved, PooPoo was the name given to Miryam. 2) PooPoo: She was called PooPoo because she made PooPoo sounds to the infants to calm them down. 3) PooPoo: This word has a nuance of screaming, for example, *I will scream like a woman giving birth.*

**Rashiyomi Explanation:** #1) Notice that we have translated the biblical *Shaym* as *nickname*. But it is usually translated as *name*. Notice that the inference Name of Nicen → She nicened up the infants is not so strong; in contrast the inference Nickname of Nicen → She Nicened up the infants appears natural and intuitive. This is consistent with the Rashiyomi approach: We do not seek *grammatical rules* but rather seek *nuances and Figures of Speech*, we seek *spontaneity and instantness*. The translation *nickname* instantly captures the *nuance* of a *fundamental characteristic of a person*. The Matnoth Kehuna on Genesis Rabbah 37:8 suggests that the biblical he called his name should be properly translated as he called his nickname. We have built and extended this to include any mention of name since e.g. the verse could have simply said *Pharoh summoned the Jewish midwives, Shifrah and Puah*. It is not that I am making a fuss on the extra biblical words, *That the name of one was Nicen and the name of the other PooPoo*, but rather I am responding to a trend throughout the Bible which frequently uses the style and he called his (nick)name such and such because such and such was happening. It is this and other Biblical verses (e.g. *Avigayil's bitter exclamation about her husband whose name was disgust, because as his (nick)name so is he*) that justify both the Rashiyomi approach and the Matnoth Kehuna. Note this midrash was overlooked by Dr. Nechama Leibowitz in her popular Parshah sheets.

#2,#4) PooPoo: Clearly PooPoo is the universal voice gesture that people use to calm down infants. This needs no explanation. But should the Hebrew verb *epeh* be translated as *poopooing*? Rashi simply says *a nuance (Lashon) of screaming*. It is debatable how to translate Rashi's *lashon*; we have translated it as *nuance*. For one thing, *lashon* does not mean actual translation. Rashi does not say: *epeh: screaming* but rather says *epeh: A nuance (lashon) of screaming*. Let us review the Bible: The Hebrew root pay-ayin occurs with regard to i) the voice gestures of a woman in childbirth; but it also refers to ii) a snake, apparently it refers to *hissing*. I would therefore not translate *as a woman screaming in childbirth* but would translate *as a woman groaning in childbirth*. The root pay-ayin-hey seems to mean, or more precisely using the Rashiyomi concept of *nuance*, non-verbal exclamations of tension; screaming and hissing are simply examples in particular contexts. The verb is rare occurring (like many biblical verbs) less than 10 times in the Bible. It could, in the content of an infant, refer to *PooPooing*; this is the closest English translation; this is the Rashiyomi translation.

#4) Miryam and Yocheved: I am surprised no Rashi commentary explained this. Recall Miryam went to Pharoh's daughter offering to find a midwife. If she was just Miryam, she would 'give herself away' and be liable to a death penalty for violating the King's orders of killing, not preserving, all infants. She obviously went to her as a middleperson for the Jewish people, that is, a midwife. Thus this is a *peshat* that comes *from context*.