“She opened it and saw the boy, and behold! A youth was crying. She took pity on him and said, ‘This is one of the Hebrew boys.’” (2:6)

Sequentially, it would have made sense to write that the infant was a Hebrew child first and only afterwards (despite the child’s ancestry) that she took pity on him. One would think that the child’s Jewish identity was the most significant aspect of the *pasuk* – not her act of compassion. *Horav Nissan Alpert, zl,* feels that the reversed sequence teaches us an important lesson, one which (I feel) we should all apply to our personal lives.

Upon seeing someone in pain, an organization in serious need, we are confronted with two immediate reactions: empathy, compassion to reach out and help as much as I can; or to ask myself is it feasible? Will I (one person) really make a difference, is this the type of person/organization I really want to help and be involved with? Can I justify spending time, money, effort on such a person/ organization, when, in fact, there will be no gratitude forthcoming, and perhaps even abuse? In other words: compassion versus cold reality; immediate heartfelt empathy and action in contrast with feasibility and long-term efficacy.

Now, let us see what Bisyah, Pharaoh’s daughter, did when she chanced upon the infant, Moshe, in the basket. She immediately took pity on this child, before checking his identity bracelet. She did not ask: Who is he? Jewish, but what kind of Jew? *Frum, yeshivishe, Chassidishe*, *heimish*, or not *frum* – who are his parents? Will he ever thank me? etc. – the usual questions. Bisyah wanted to help without regard for the outcome or the risks involved.

Indeed, as *Rav* Alpert observes, this, too, was Moshe *Rabbeinu’s* nature. When he saw a *Yid* in trouble, he intervened without thinking of his own danger. This was a situation that could have cost him his life. Yet, he did not care: a Jew was in trouble. Rather than walk away and think of himself (rightfully so), he acted. You see, Moshe already *ra’ah b’sivlosam*, saw/empathized with their bondage.

Bisyah had every reason to look away, ignore the infant. A Hebrew child was an anathema, reviled by the country and the focus of her own father’s decree of infanticide. Nevertheless, first she acted, then later thought about the consequences.

Rav Alpert explains that this idea lies in the expression *chesed v’emes*, kindness and truth. *Chesed* always precedes truth. One’s immediate thought should be to help – with logic and truth to follow after the initial first response. Veritably, *chesed* and *emes* are integrated with one another. It matters, however, from where one begins. If one begins with *chesed*, he might realistically have to demur later on when he discovers that this is all above him. If one begins with *emes*, quite possibly the act of *chesed* which could have initially made a difference would never evolve. There are always “reasons,” *cheshbonos*, calculations, for inaction. If this is the case, it is conceivable that

there will be neither *chesed* nor *emes*. We should first act and then face the music – later – after we have acted compassionately and saved a life, family, organization.