

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

*Rashi* explains the transformation in the description of the child in the basket from *yeled*, boy (infant, young child), to *naar*, youth (implying that he was far from infancy), by asserting that while the child was an infant, his voice was that of a youth. Why did Hashem change the tenor of the infant’s voice to make it seem as if it were emanating from someone much older? The commentators offer a number of explanations, many of which have appeared over the years on these pages.

*Horav Tzvi Hirsch Ferber, zl*, who was *Rav* in London’s West End over a century ago (he was a brilliant student of *Yeshivas Slabodka* and one of the primary staunch anchors of Orthodoxy in England and Western Europe during that period), explains this based upon the warning that Pharaoh received from his astrologers. Until now, he had been told that the Jewish savior would be born to a Jewish mother. Now they said that the Jewish savior might be an Egyptian child, and his birth was to be that very day. This was too much for the insecure Pharaoh to handle. No longer did he decree that only Jewish male babies be drowned, but now, all newborns – both Jewish and Egyptian – were to be murdered. Every child that entered the world was a threat to him. The simple explanation for their astrological ambiguity is that Moshe *Rabbeinu* was raised in Pharaoh’s palace by none other than Pharaoh’s daughter. This is why the Egyptian astrologers were uncertain whether the Jewish savior was Jewish or Egyptian.

*Rav Ferber* explains that by having Moshe’s voice “age” to the point of maturity, he gave the impression that he was not a recently born infant, but that he had been around for a while. He was certainly not born that specific day, as had been predicted by the Egyptian astrologers.

*Yalkut Reuveni* and *Baal HaTurim* contend that the *pasuk*, *V’hinei naar bocheh*, “And behold! A youth was crying,” refers to Moshe’s older brother Aharon (*HaKohen*). Aharon was all of three years old, but he was the youth who had stood watch over his little brother. Since the Jewish People maintained their traditional mode of dress (they did not adopt Egyptian styles), it was obvious that the boy who was standing guard over Moshe, and who was crying out of fear for the infant, was none other than Aharon, a Jewish boy. If he was Jewish, it made sense that the infant was also Jewish.

Perhaps we might add that *Bisyah*, the daughter of Pharaoh, sensed that the infant was Jewish, because she saw another older boy crying out of fear for the infant’s safety. She understood that the infant was Jewish, because only a Jew cries for his brother. I do not negate the many organizations and endeavors headed by non-Jews. They, too, perform acts of *chesed*. The difference (I feel) lies in the tears. We act out of personal empathy. Another Jew’s pain is my pain. We are all family. When a Jew is in trouble, his “brother” weeps for him. *Bisya* knew that the infant

was Jewish, because his “brother” was crying for him.

Bisya raised Moshe in her home/Pharaoh’s palace. For all intents and purposes Moshe, the infant in the reed basket, was alone in the world, cast into the water, accompanied with nothing but his parents’ prayers that Hashem would protect him. Bisya discovered the infant and took him home. *Chazal/Megillah 13a*) states: *Kol ha’megadel yasom b’soch baiso maaleh alav ha’kasuv k’ilu yoldo*; “Whoever raises an orphan in his house, the Torah considers it as if he gave birth to him.” This phrase obviously has profound meaning. One thing is for certain, raising a child that seems neglected, giving him (or her) a new lease on life (this applies to the spiritual, as well as the physical/material), is a lofty *mitzvah* and earns one a very special relationship with the child – to the point that he is considered to be the child’s (surrogate) progenitor.

We now understand, observes *Rav Ferber*, why Pharaoh’s astrologers were uncertain concerning the nationhood of origin of the Jewish savior to be born that day. Indeed, Moshe was born to Yocheved, but raised by Bisya. This allows for him to have “dual citizenship” – at least in the eyes of Pharaoh’s astrologers whose prophecies were, at best, ambiguous. Thus, they did not know Moshe *Rabbeinu’s* natural origins.

As an aside, *Horav Yitzchak Yeruchem Diskin, zl*, son of the saintly *Maharil Diskin* and successor to him at the Diskin Orphan Home for Girls, asked why *Chazal* underscore raising the orphan *b’soch baiso*, “in his home”. They could simply have said, “Whoever raises an orphan.” What meaning does the “house” have on raising the child? He explains that one is obligated to raise an orphan in such a loving manner that the child feels he/she is a member of his household. An orphan, or anyone who is challenged for whatever reason, should not feel that he is different.

In a similar vein, *Horav Yaakov Weinberg, zl* asked why young school children are called *tinokos shel bais rabban*. He explains that a child should be so close to his *rebbe* (and the relationship should be reciprocal, which it must be if the child is to feel that close) that he considers himself to be a *ben bayis*, member of his *rebbe’s* household.

The *Klausenberger Rebbe, zl*, was known for his brilliance in Torah erudition, as well as for his fiery commitment to reestablishing *Klal Yisrael* following the Holocaust. His work in Foehrenwald and Feldafing oriented towards returning the hearts of the survivors to Hashem is legend. Perhaps the crowning glory of the *Rebbe’s* work was the establishment of a *yeshiva* for boys and young men and a religious school for girls. These two institutions literally saved hundreds of young people from spiritual extinction. Indeed, the *Rebbe* (having lost his entire family) was considered the father of these orphans. The girls’ school, which soon had 250 girls, served as a spiritual haven during a time of spiritual upheaval, with the flood of apostasy raging all around. The secularists could not understand how, after suffering such physical and emotional trauma and travail, these broken souls could still maintain their relationship of love with Hashem.

One incident, which occurred on *Erev Yom Kippur* 1946, has received much documentation. I

record it to underscore how far one of the most revered and saintly *Admorim* of the last century (perhaps) altered his usual spiritual demeanor in order to comfort and hearten a young orphan.

As *Yom Kippur* approached, the principal of the girls' school came to the *Rebbe* with a request: "Is not every Jewish girl entitled to a blessing from her father on *Erev Yom Kippur*? Why should these girls lose out just because they are orphans?" The *Rebbe* was visibly moved by this request, and he acquiesced to bless the girls. Shortly before the *Kol Nidrei* service, one of the most profound, defining moments of the year, as Jews are about to usher in the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, all of the girls lined up at the window to the *Rebbe's* room. He wrapped his hands in a scarf and placed them on the head of each girl and, with great emotion, tears streaming down his face, he blessed each one in the memory of the holy souls who had perished in the Holocaust. This was "*b'soch baiso.*"