

WITHIN A CHILD'S REACH

by Rabbi Label Lam

Pharaoh's daughter went down to bathe by the River and her maidens walked along the River. She saw the basket among the reeds and she sent her maid servant and she took it...She called his name Moshe as she said, "For I drew him from the water." (Shemos 2:10)

She sent her maid servant: Our sages learn that she stretched out her arm and it became elongated many cubits. (Rashi)

"Why was it that Moshe was not named "Mashui"? which grammatically describes him as having been drawn from the water? Rather she called him Moshe which implies that he drew himself out of the water ...that is his own merit caused him to be drawn from the water." (Midrah HaGadol)

I once heard the question asked, "Why did Basya, the daughter of Pharaoh, bother to send out her hand to grasp something that was out of her reach?" Would we extend our hand to the ketchup if it was at the other end of a long table and it was impossibly far away? Why bother to reach at all for something so far out of reach?

A close friend of mine who moved to Israel years back was having a problem integrating his younger son into school. The boy, we'll call him Yehudi, was having a hard time finding his place amongst the other students. Either they weren't welcoming to him or he wasn't warm to them but the problem lingered and festered. The other children had adapted without much crisis but poor Yehudi began to resent going to school.

The father asked another close friend who has since become a sought after educational consultant what he should do for his son. He was advised to tune into his children's radio hour that evening with his son Yehudi. On the program Yehudi's problem was presented to the listening audience and callers were invited to offer Yehudi a solution. The hope was that the boy would identify some clue or suggestion of help while unaware that the discussion was about him.

A strange thing happened. Yehudi himself asked his father if he could call the radio program. He did. He suggested that the boy should bring to school candies and goodies for all the other kids in his class and that might help them accept him more. It sounded like such a good idea that the father actually implemented it and guess what? It worked! Yehudi had found his own solution and he has not looked back since.

When the daughter of Pharaoh sent out her hand it was not to grasp the ketchup or mustard. It was a

Jewish child at risk amongst the bull-reeds. Sometimes a person may have to reach impossibly far to help another and the results may prove to be disproportionately favorable if one just stretches as far as they can first. There is another factor here, though. The person has to be a willing participant in being helped, and he may likely be the key-holder to his own salvation.

Someone told me just yesterday that a young boy was brought to Rabbi Mordachai Schwab ztl for misconduct. Rabbi Schwab asked that the boy come back the next day by which time it would be decided what to do with him. When the boy returned, Rabbi Schwab handed him a wrapped up present. The boy was shocked. He asked, "What's this for?" Rabbi Schwab told him, "This is for all the times that you behaved well." Reaching that extra distance when it's a Jewish child amongst the bull-reeds may mean extending a measure of seemingly undeserved tenderness and placing the solution within a child's reach. Text Copyright © 2006 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.