

# "COMPLETE IT"

*by Rabbi Berel Wein*

We find many instances in the Torah where strangers, seemingly bystanders who are unconnected to the main characters and events of the narrative, play a pivotal and decisive role in the unfolding of the story. In a sense, they become the catalyst for all that occurs later.

The escaped refugee who comes to tell Avraham about the capture of Lot, the man who finds Yosef wandering lost in the fields in search of his brothers are but examples of this recurring theme throughout biblical narrative. In this week's parsha the daughter of the Pharaoh plays this unknowing role in Jewish history and world civilization.

Going down to the Nile with her maidservants she espies the small floating crib of the infant Moshe and she reaches out for it before the crocodiles can get to it. She thereupon sees the crying infant and even though the baby is from the Jewish slaves she takes pity upon him and secures a wet nurse for him and eventually brings him home to the palace where she raises him as her son.

And out of this strange and unlikely sequence of events, the great Moshe emerges to eventually lead the Jewish slaves out of Egyptian bondage and to bring them to Torah and eternity at the revelation at Mount Sinai. And though it is certainly God that oversees the unfolding of all human scenarios, it is through human beings making choices and decisions and behaving according to those choices that the story of humankind continues to unfold.

Nothing compelled the Pharaoh's daughter to be compassionate towards a defenseless Jewish child in danger. It was her choice and out of that choice the fate of all humanity is allowed to take a positive turn.

The tradition of the Jews is that this daughter of the Pharaoh was named Batya - the daughter of God Himself, so to speak. She is remembered in that her name has been given to myriad Jewish women over the thousands of years of Jewish existence. The continuing custom of naming Jewish women after her expresses the gratitude of the Jews for her life saving act and her human compassion.

The Talmud teaches us that the crib floating in the river was seemingly out of her reach and yet she stretched forth her hand to attempt to bring it to her. When human beings do all that they can for a noble cause or kind deed then many times Heaven takes over. Her hand somehow became elongated sufficiently to bring the crib into her reach and the baby's salvation.

Again, it is this almost mystical combination of human choice and Heaven's guidance that accomplishes this forward thrust in the story of humankind. And the Torah emphasizes that it was not sufficient for Batya to temporarily save the infant from death but that she pursued the matter of the child's welfare to the utmost, finally raising him as her son in the royal palace of the Pharaoh.

Many times we do good and compassionate deeds but we do them partially not really completing the task. The Talmud teaches us that "If one begins a mitzvah we say to him: 'Complete it.'" Batya's immortality is assured amongst all of Israel for her complete and voluntary act of compassion, goodness and mercy.

Shabat shalom,

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