

שמות

MOSHE BY ANY OTHER NAME

ותרד בת-פרעה לרחץ על היאר

And Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe by the river (*Shemos* 2:5).

The *Gemara* (*Sotah* 12:) states that the intention of Pharaoh's daughter in going down to the river was not simply to bathe or to swim. She came to the banks of the Nile to purify herself from the idol worship of her father. The fact that the Torah uses the term "by the river" and not "in the river" indicates to us that her intentions were more than mundane (Maharsha, *ibid.*). She chose to purify herself in the very body of water that was worshipped as a deity by her father (*Ein Yaakov* *ibid.*), thus demonstrating her renunciation of the idols of the Pharaoh.

There are only three instances in Tanach where individuals are designated by the title 'Yehudi'; Basya, the daughter of Pharaoh, is one of them. For "all who reject idol worship, are called by the appellation "Yehudi" (*Megillah* 13*). The rejection of idolatry mandates ritual immersion (Rashi *Bereishis* 35:2; see *Beis Yosef*, *Yoreh Dei'ah* 268:2), and the daughter of Pharaoh was taking the first step in joining with *Klal Yisrael*.

The name "Basya" lends itself to interpretation; it is a contraction of the two words בת י"ה ("daughter of G-d"). Hashem considered her a daughter, even though she had not been born into *Klal Yisrael* (*Vayikra Rabbah* 1:3), because she took pity on the infant she discovered floating on the Nile and adopted him, raising him as her own son. The *Gemara* explains that the "children" of Basya listed in *Divrei Hayamim* (I 4:18) are all really names for Moshe *Rabbeinu*. She is thus designated as his mother and his great accomplishments are credited to her (*Megillah* 13*; see also *Vayikra Rabbah* 1:3).

ויגדל הילד ותבאהו לבת פרעה, ויהי-לה לבן, ותקרא שמו משה, ותאמר כי מן-המים משיתוהו.

The child grew up, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became a son to her, and she called his name Moshe, for "from the water have I drawn him out" (*Shemos* 2:10).

The *Yalkut* (*ibid.*) is intrigued by the fact that the Torah uses only the name "Moshe," which was given to him by the gentile daughter of Pharaoh. Hashem never referred to him in any other way (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:26), although many called him by several other names. Amram, his father, called him "Chever," חבר, (to join), for Moshe was the result of Amram's rejoining with his wife, Yocheved, after their divorce. His mother, Yocheved, called him "Yekusiel" (קוה, to hope) because she hoped to have him return to her after she had left him in the Nile. His sister, Miriam, called him "Yered" (ירד, to descend) because she went down to the river to watch over him. Aharon, his brother, referred to him as "Avi Zanoach" (זנח, to forsake) because his father forsook his mother but reunited with her to have this son. His grandfather, Kehas, called him "Avi Socho" (סכה, to protect) for he was protected from his Egyptian pursuers for the first three months of his

life (*Yalkut, Shemos 2:10*). With so many names available to this lad, why would this gentile's choice triumph?

The *Gemara (Berachos 7:)* states that a man's fate is determined by his name; inherent in a man's name, and unbeknownst to him, are the keys to his future (*Eitz Yosef, ibid.*). Each of the names given to Moshe *Rabbeinu* combine to form the subsequent composite of his inspired leadership. The Gra explains that the six names presented in *Divrei Hayamim* refer to the three major benefits which Moshe imparted to *Klal Yisrael* and the three near catastrophes which Moshe defused. The three major benefits were:

1. Yered — he brought the Torah down from Heaven to *Klal Yisrael*,
2. Chever — joining *Klal Yisrael* with Hashem via the *Mishkan*,
3. Yekusiel — focusing *Klal Yisrael's* hopes for sustenance upon Hashem because Moshe merited the rain of the *man*.

The three near catastrophes were:

1. Gedor — filling in the breach created by the transgression with the golden calf (*Megillah 13•*),
2. Socho — He shielded *Klal Yisrael* from the fire which threatened to destroy them when they complained about the arduous journey,
3. Zanoach — Moshe's *tefilah* abated Hashem's anger over the sin of the *meraglim*.

Hence, although each of the names given to him were the personal projection of the giver, they nevertheless proclaimed the future in a much broader sense. They complement rather than contradict one another. The narrower definition of each name merges into an extended spectrum describing exalted leadership.

This was true of all the names given to Moshe by his natural, immediate family; but the name given by Basya had major ramifications at the time it was given. Basya understood that her discovery of a Jewish child in the Nile was a result of the Hand of Hashem; it was not merely coincidence. She recognized that Moshe would one day rescue others as he himself had been rescued from the water by her. She had no personal motive in ascribing the name "Moshe" to the child, but immediately identified his future for all eternity. Basya, in contrast to the others, focused entirely on the child and kept her personal agenda in the background. It is this selflessness which impressed Hashem enough so that He chose the name which she had selected and never called him by any other (*Rabbeinu Bechaya, Bamidbar 13:16*). Following this auspicious beginning all of Moshe's accomplishments were ascribed to the upbringing given him by this royal princess. Basya's reward was indeed *Midah Keneged Midah*. Just as she selflessly adopted Moshe *Rabbeinu*, so too, did Hashem, so to speak, adopt her, and He renamed her "Basya," — "the daughter of Hashem."

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