**Caring like Pharaoh's Daughter**

Pharaoh’s daughter makes a very brief appearance in the story of the Hebrews, although tradition suggests that she was around a bit longer and became part of the Jewish community. We can read about her in Exodus 2:5-10.

*The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. “This must be one of the Hebrews’ children,” she said. Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?” Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Yes.” So the girl went and called the child’s mother. Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages.” So the woman took the child and nursed it. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, “because,” she said, “I drew him out of the water.”*

Pharaoh’s daughter famously found the baby Moses in a basket nestled among the reeds at the edge of the river Nile. The background is that Pharaoh had ordered that all Hebrew baby boys should be killed: ‘Every boy that is born you must throw into the Nile’. When his daughter went to bathe she found a child, heard him crying, recognised him as a Hebrew baby and rather than following her Father’s command – which she would have been well placed to do as she was in the exact position from which to throw the baby into the Nile – instead she chose to save this child.

**Q - Why do you think she went against her Father’s command?**

The Exodus passage tells us that Pharaoh’s daughter felt sorry for the baby. Maybe she also felt the horror of what Pharaoh had commanded with the slaughter of so many children and was glad to be able to save one of them.

The Jewish writings in the Talmud suggest that Pharaoh’s daughter had come to the river to bathe as part of an act of ritual cleansing, that she had grown tired of her people’s idolatrous ways and that she converted to Judaism and travelled with the Hebrew people when they left Egypt led by her adopted son. She could be the same ‘Pharaoh’s daughter’ who is mentioned in Chronicles 4:18 and said to have married Mered a member of the tribe of Judah. Whether or not we make that connection, it is interesting to wonder what happened to her next especially given that her Father would probably have realised that Moses whom she had adopted was the same man who was plaguing him about letting the Hebrew people go.

**Q - Do you think that she took a risk in adopting Moses? If so, what kind of risk might you take so as to be able to offer care and safety to someone?**

The baby still needed milk to feed on and so, through his sister’s ingenuity, he ended up being returned to his own mother for nursing. When the child grew older his mother returned him to Pharaoh’s daughter and he was given the name Moses. It must surely have been hard for his mother to let him go again but she knew it was necessary to keep him safe. This also led to him having a much more privileged upbringing than he would have done otherwise but perhaps also gave him a difficult sense of his own identity, was he a Hebrew or an Egyptian?

Pharaoh’s daughter’s care saved Moses from death and gave him a new and different life.

**Q - How much do we see God’s hand at work in this account?**

Read Exodus 2:1-10 and see if there are any other aspects of the story which strike you as interesting or which you would like to comment on.

It is easier to care for others when it does not cost us anything. Caring for the baby she found at the edge of the Nile may have cost Pharaoh’s daughter more than we realise as she risked her Father’s anger. The Christian faith teaches that love can be costly, but it is also life-giving.

**Q - How might our actions bring life into the lives of others?**