

And (he) went out to his brethren. And (he) saw their burdens. (2:11)

Rashi defines *vayar b'sivlosam*, "And he saw their burdens: *Nasan einav v'libo liheyos metzar aleihem*, 'He focused his eyes and heart to be distressed over them.'" Literally, the phrase means that Moshe *Rabbeinu* "saw into their burdens." He delved into their adversity. Apparently, the word *va'yar*, or its root *raah*, to see, means much more than superficial perception. It demands cognitive application in conjunction with the perception. To see, and not to see beneath the surface, is not *reiyah*, seeing.

I think that we have just uncovered a deep insight into the concept of "seeing" as evinced by the word *reiyah*, in its various forms. It means much more than the simple translation we accord it. In order to see, one must engage his mind. To perceive, one must think. Hashem told Avraham *Avinu Lech lecha... el ha'arets asher areka*, "Go for yourself... to the Land that I will show you" (*Bereishis* 12:1). Here, too, the word *reiyah* is used. I think Hashem was teaching Avraham, I will show you *Eretz Yisrael* in such a manner that you will perceive what makes it so special, so unique. It is this perception that Avraham transmitted to his descendants. It is this emotion that every Jew carries in his heart, a feeling that courses through him when he experiences that *reiyah* of the land first hand.

Perhaps this is why Moshe asked to see the Land. He knew that he would not enter it, but seeing it would not be a simple, insignificant perception. His seeing was commensurate with experiencing *Eretz Yisrael*.

With this idea in mind, we suggest that this is the underlying meaning of *yiraas Shomayim*, "fear of Heaven," which is normally translated as "fear of awe." One is awestruck with a profound fear of the greatness of Hashem. *Yiraah*, fear, is related to *reiyah*, seeing. Only one who has a deep perception of Heaven can truly fear. In order to fear, one must see – with depth. He who is clueless concerning Heaven has not yet achieved the plateau of *yiraas Shomayim*. Thus, in the process of inculcating students with *yiraas Shomayim*, we must first open up their minds to what *Shomayim* represents. They require a deeper understanding of the Almighty. Otherwise, they are unable truly to "fear."

The *Talmud Chagigah* 2a states: "One who is blind in one eye is excused from the *mitzvah* of *Reiyah*" (going down to Yerushalayim during the *Shalosh Regalim*, Three Festivals, to celebrate in the *Bais Hamikdash*, to "see" and "be seen"). **Horav Elimelech, zl, m'Lishensk**, quoted by the *Yismach Moshe*, explains that a person was created with two eyes; one eye is for seeing his own lowliness, while the other eye is for perceiving the awesome greatness of Hashem. One who is blind in one eye, who is unable to see his own inferiority, is, as a result, unable truly to see and perceive Hashem. To come close to Hashem, to embrace *emunah*, faith, to be inspired with *kedushah*, sanctity, one must divest himself of "himself." One must realize that, without Hashem, he is absolutely nothing.

Parashas Re'eh (*Sefer Devarim* 11:26) begins with an exhortation to distinguish between blessing and curse and to choose blessing. *Re'eh anochi nosein lifneichem hayom brachah u'klalah*, "See, I place before you today a blessing and a curse. Choose blessing." What is the meaning of "seeing" blessing and "seeing" curse? Does one "see" the difference between blessing and curse, or does one experience the difference?

My *Rosh Yeshivah*, **Horav Boruch Sorotzkin, zl**, explained that, before one can distinguish between blessing and curse, it is necessary that he take a close, educated look at the blessing. Is it truly a blessing, or might it be a curse? How often do we choose a path which we feel is blessed, only to discover later on that this was a road to curse? Thus, it is important to have an acute understanding of the true meaning of blessing and curse. Therefore, the Torah underscores the need to "see," to look with understanding, to apply heart and mind, to look beyond the superficial.

With this in mind, we have a deeper understanding of the concept of *nosei b'ol im chaveiro*, sharing/carrying the yoke/burden together with his friend. In order to do this, one must elevate his level of empathy to the point that he personally identifies with his fellow's needs. This is what *Moshe Rabbeinu* exemplified. When he "looked" at his brethren, he thought about – and then felt – the burdens which they were experiencing. In order to "feel" the pain, however, one must see with an open mind.

Nosei b'ol im chaveiro is one of the forty-eight qualities through which one acquires Torah. It, therefore, makes sense that the greater one is connected with the Torah, the greater is his understanding of the importance of sharing the burden with those less fortunate than he. All too often we view the *gedolei Yisrael*, Torah giants, throughout the ages from the perspective of their incredible erudition and devotion to Torah dissemination. They are equally *gedolim* and *gaonim* in the area of interpersonal relationships. Every Jew is their brother and sister. They sense the responsibility and feel the obligation to reach out to those members of their wider "family" who are in need.

There is no shortage of stories demonstrating this concept. I chose the following vignette, related by Rabbi Yechiel Spero in his wonderful book, "*One Shining Moment*." When we think of the **Chazon Ish**, the first thing that comes to mind is his outstanding scholarship. Commensurate with his consummate greatness in Torah was his unique love for all Jews.

The *Chazon Ish* lived in Bnei Brak, where *Horav Yosef Kahaneman, zl*, the *Ponevezer Rav*, had reestablished the *Ponevezer Yeshivah*. It was during the war years, and the *yeshivah* had experienced incredible growth, not only in numbers, but also in the intensity of the learning. Therefore, it was no wonder that, on *Simchas Torah*, the day that we celebrate with the Torah, the sense of ecstasy and effusive joy emanating from the students was palpable. The dancing was a celebration that went beyond the mundane. Each individual felt spiritually uplifted, as he danced in concert with the other *yeshivah* students who truly felt a kinship with the Torah. Once a year, the elderly *Chazon Ish* came to the *yeshivah* to celebrate *Simchas Torah* with the students.

It was a sight to behold. The elderly sage danced in a way that was unmatched by those decades his junior. He was neither a part of the *yeshivah* administration, nor did he hold any official rabbinic position. He just wanted to dance with the *bachurim* of the *yeshivah*. Seeing the *gadol hador*, preeminent Torah giant of the generation, dance with such vigor enlivened the students to dance in kind.

All good things come to an end at the appropriate time. Once the dancing ended, everyone felt the exhaustion of their para-spiritual workout. While the dancing endured, no one felt the physical toll. They were in on a different plane, far removed from the physical. Now it was time to accompany the frail *Chazon Ish* to his home. The sage also felt the strain. Once the dancing had ended, he realized how old his physical body was. Escorted by the *yeshivah* students, the elderly sage slowly made his way home.

On the way, they came upon a man dressed in clothes that would not pass as *Yom Tov* garb even by today's lax standards. The man looked like he just did not belong. He appeared withdrawn, despondent. The *Chazon Ish* stopped and walked over to the man to ask him what was bothering him. The *Chazon Ish* himself was exhausted; yet, when he saw another Jew in pain, he felt that man's pain. The man did not need more. He was like a bottle of soda that had been shaken up, waiting to burst through. He began with his dismal tale of woe. "I was born out of the Jewish faith. After years of study and a deep-rooted desire to become a part of the *am Hashem*, nation of G-d, I converted. Tonight, on the night when Jews all over celebrate their relationship with the Torah, I have nowhere to go. It is like a wedding, only I was not invited! I was alone with nowhere to go. Look at me. I look different, I talk different. I am different. I sat myself down on the street and contemplated my exclusion from the Jewish world that I wanted to join." The man concluded his sad story and hung his head down in defeat.

The *Chazon Ish* listened to the man's tale of woe, then asked, "Do you know any Jewish songs?" The sage asked the man to pick one of the songs that he knew and begin singing: "You sing, and I will dance. Together, we will celebrate *Simchas Torah*."

The students were shocked beyond belief. Their *Rebbe* could hardly walk home. Already advanced in years, he was unusually frail and in poor health. Tonight, he had added the weight of hours of spirited dancing. Yet, if another Jew felt alone and in need, he would gather whatever little reserve he might have and garner it to enliven the life of another Jew. And dance he did.

The man slowly began to sing. Unsure of himself, he commenced with a mumble. *Toras Hashem temimah*, "The Torah of Hashem is perfect," he sang, picking up speed and pitch as he became emboldened. The *Chazon Ish* began to dance with a fervor that overshadowed his earlier dancing. As a *chassan*, bridegroom, dances before his *kallah*, bride, the elderly sage danced before this man. The man smiled and cried at the same time, as he began to belt out the words of the song. Each stanza brought renewed vigor, matched only by the *Chazon Ish's* exuberant dancing. Why did he do this? He wanted to make a young man smile. The *ger*, convert, felt out of place without

family and friends on a night that everyone seemed so happy. The *gadol hador* taught him otherwise. No Jew is left behind. No Jew is left alone.

The students stood there in amazement, as they watched a man, who minutes earlier had hardly been able to trudge home, now dancing gracefully with a joy that apparently transcended this physical world, carrying him aloft to another dimension – a dimension reserved only for the few, the unique, the worthy.