

For in a Cloud will I appear upon the Ark-Cover. (16:2)

No one was permitted to enter the *Kodesh HaKedoshim*, Holy of Holies, except for Aharon *HaKohen* and future *Kohanim Gedolim*. This would take place once a year, on *Yom Kippur*. It was in the *Kodesh HaKedoshim*, from within a Cloud hovering above the *Kapores*, Ark Cover, that Hashem's Glory was manifest. Hashem's Glory is hidden beneath many veils. It is within the innermost area of sanctity and, even then, it is shrouded within a cloud. **Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita**, derives a powerful, inspirational lesson from Hashem's clandestine Presence. *Ki be'anan eiraeh*, "For in a Cloud will I appear." Every time, every moment, at every juncture that a person feels his life inundated with darkness; he is within a murky cloud of ambiguity; his problems have trapped him into a corner; the vicissitudes of life have gotten to him; he sees no way, no avenue, no light at the end of the tunnel – he should not give up. Concealed within the problems and darkness is Hashem's Presence. He is behind, hidden within the challenges. If one maintains his spiritual stamina, if he keeps the faith, he will find Hashem.

In his commentary to the Torah, *Devarim* 31:8, the **Baal Shem Tov, zl**, explains, *V'Anochi astir panim...*, "And I will have surely concealed My Face." How can Hashem hide Himself from us? He explains this with an analogy. A king placed a number of optical illusions on the road and in the palace, as he concealed himself within a room in the back of the palace. The average person might believe that the king is nowhere to be found. The astute observer understands that a king who cares, a loving Father in Heaven, does not leave. He is present, taking refuge behind various cover-ups which enshroud His Presence. The true believer keeps looking for Hashem. He never gives up, because he realizes that Hashem will never forsake His children. The various canopies which seem to conceal Him are actually figments of our imagination. If we look – we will find Him.

This is what our *pasuk* is teaching us. Whenever there appears to be a *hastoras panim*, concealment of the Divine Presence, it means that we must look harder and deeper, because Hashem is "hidden" within the Cloud.

A well-known analogy is worth repeating. There was once a man who was continually stricken with misfortune. Nothing seemed to go right. If it was not an illness, it was a financial problem, or an issue with a child – it was always something. Feeling alone and forsaken, he looked Heavenward and asked the One Above, *Keili, lamah azavtani?* "My G-d, why have You abandoned me?"

One night, the man dreamed that he was walking on a long path. When he looked back, he saw two sets of footprints. The prints were not consistent, since in areas in which the path narrowed, he saw only one set of prints. He contemplated the meaning of the dream, quickly realizing that the dream was about his life. The path represented his journey through life, from birth, childhood, youth and middle age, and finally the present: old age. As he traveled the road of life, he was accompanied by Hashem; hence, the two sets of foot prints. The wider road represented the good times, the happy times, when the sun shone on him. The narrower road symbolized the periods of adversity, times of challenge that he had experienced. This part of the road was bumpy, as well as

narrow.

He was now even more troubled, since apparently when the road became difficult to traverse, there was only one set of footprints. Apparently, when he needed Him most, Hashem had abandoned him. What other explanation could there be for the single set of footprints? He cried out to Hashem, "Why, why did You forsake me when I needed You most? Why did You leave me to travel alone at my most difficult time? It was then that I needed Your support more than ever!"

Suddenly, he heard a Voice gently say, "My beloved son, you are greatly mistaken. While it is true that there are difficult times, when the road narrows and it seems that you are walking all alone, it is specifically during these times when you perceive loneliness and abandonment, that quite the opposite is true. During those times a wide path is unnecessary, because there is need for only one set of footprints – Mine. I do not walk beside you; rather, I carry you. Please realize that during those times when you feel most forsaken, when you feel that I have abandoned you – I am closer to you than at any other time. I know that you need Me, and I am there."

The man woke up a transformed person. He learned to rely on *emunah*, faith, in Hashem during his times of travail. Adversity no longer frightened him; challenges no longer overwhelmed him. He walked with Hashem.

We tend to ignore another aspect of adversity: Hashem's pain. A parent who cares, a teacher who is sensitive, invariably feels pain when punishment is required in order to maintain his child's / student's proper behavior and attitude. No one enjoys punishment – least of all the parent or teacher who is charged with meting it out. Why should our Heavenly Father be different? The average person does not think this way. It is all about "me" and "my" pain. The following vignette should prove inspirational.

Horav David Dubiner, zl, was an outstanding holy Torah scholar who lived in Tzefas. For many years this righteous Jew, together with his wife, lived alone. Hashem had not yet blessed them with a child. When a son was finally born to them, the *simchah*, rejoicing, was reflected throughout the entire community. The boy was raised in a pure Torah environment and, at the age of seventeen, he was engaged to be married to a wonderful like-minded girl. Alas, shortly prior to the wedding, the young man became ill and succumbed to his illness.

The shock and pain reverberated throughout the entire Torah community. The city's Jewish population all attended the funeral. Everyone shed bitter tears of grief over the tragedy and for the pain that the parents were experiencing. One person did not cry – neither at the funeral, nor during the first three days of *shivah*, seven-day mourning period. *Rav* David listened to the visitors' comments, bent his head, and said nothing. There was no manifestation of grief on his face – only silence. On the fourth day, he began to weep and continued to do so for the remainder of the *shivah*.

After the *shivah*, he explained his seemingly strange behavior: "I believe with complete faith that Hashem, Who gave me a precious gift – my son, took him back with complete justice. This is why, for the first three days of *shivah*, I remained silent. I did not protest Hashem's decree by shedding tears. On the fourth day, however, I became calm enough to accept my *tzarah*, trouble, and reflect on the tragedy and how to react to it.

"I felt that Hashem is certainly correct in punishing me so cruelly. In as much as the blow is immense, I must accept it without question, without protest. Thus, for the first three days, I did not shed a tear. On the fourth day, however, I realized that when a father strikes his child, regardless of the justification, it causes the father great pain – even more than that of his son. It then came to my attention that Hashem's 'pain' over having to punish me so severely is far greater than my own pain. For this pain of the *Shechinah*, I cried."