

It happened in those days that Moshe grew up and went out to his brethren and observed their burdens. (2:11)

Although raised amidst the majesty and splendor of Egyptian royalty, Moshe *Rabbeinu* remained the son of Amram and Yocheved. Raised as an Egyptian prince, but cognizant of his Jewish roots, Moshe remained totally committed and sensitive to his Jewish brethren. When he matured, growing up into a position of responsibility, he made it a point to go out and **see** – to observe – the plight of his brethren, to see their suffering and grieve with them. What is meant by “seeing” their suffering? Is it not sufficient simply to be aware of the misery? Does observing it firsthand make a difference?

If we go back to *Sefer Bereishis* and the beginning of *Parashas Vayeira*, we note that when Avraham Avinu had his encounter with the three angels in the guise of Arabs, the Torah (*Bereishis* 18:2) uses the word, *va'yar*, “and he saw,” twice in one *pasuk*: “He lifted his eyes and **saw**. And, behold, three men were standing over him! He **perceived**, so he ran towards them.” What does the second *va'yar*, “he perceived/saw,” add to the *pasuk*? In his *Shaarei Orah*, *Horav Meir Bergman, Shlita*, notes that being a giving person is not merely having a kind, compassionate, sensitive heart. It requires the ability to sense an individual’s needs – to perceive his hurt, his pain. To qualify as a *baal chesed*, an individual who performs acts of lovingkindness, one needs to perceive the other person’s needs before he comes to your door to ask for assistance. Once the individual has to ask, our act of kindness towards him has been stunted. Asking for help can and does degrade many a person. Often, the asking is more demoralizing than the actual taking.

Chesed is built upon two premises: perception and execution. The benefactor must perceive the need before the beneficiary is compelled to ask. He must then open his wallet, dip into his wherewithal and share with an unfortunate Jew. *Horav Yissachar Frand, Shlita*, relates an incident which took place concerning the *Rosh Yeshivah* of Ner Yisrael, *Horav Yaakov Weinberg, zl*, which supports this idea.

A divorced mother with a family of young children called the *Rosh Yeshivah* shortly before *Succos* with a *Halachic* question. She did not have much money – period. The added responsibilities of *Yom Tov* made her financial burden that much more difficult. Purchasing a *succah* was prohibitive, but she recognized that a *mitzvah* is a *mitzvah*. If she must have a *succah*, she would find some way to acquire one. Her question was: Since she was a woman and, thus, not obligated in the *mitzvah* of *succah*, and her young sons were also not obligated due to their tender ages, did she have to purchase a *succah*? In addition, as a result of the custody agreement, the boys would only be with her for part of the Festival. What should she do?

The *Rosh Yeshivah* replied that, based upon the *Halachah*, her presumption was completely correct. However, since she was an *ishah chashuvah*, distinguished woman, and this was something about which her children should be acutely aware, then for that reason alone it was

proper to have a *succah*.

The very next day, a pre-fabricated *succah* was delivered to her door by an anonymous donor. The woman need not have been a “rocket scientist” to conjecture the identity of this donor. The *Rosh Yeshivah* **perceived** a need and **acted** accordingly.

This story is reminiscent of an episode concerning the *Bais HaLevi*: A Jew came before the *Rav* with a *Halachic* query: Since he could not afford the four cups of wine for the *Pesach Seder*, could he use milk instead? *Halachically*, one must use *chamar medinah*, a national beverage. Was milk a *chamar medinah*? The next day, the *Bais HaLevi* sent this man money with which to purchase wine and meat, as well. The *Rav* figured that if the person was able to drink milk at his *Seder*, apparently he was having neither chicken nor meat. This gesture indicated that a person should not just think with his heart, but also with his eyes. When we listen carefully to what the individual is **not** saying, we invariably learn much more about his needs.