

The hands of Moshe were heavy, and they took a stone, placed it beneath him, and he sat upon it. (17:12)

We can distinguish between those *mitzvos* that are incumbent upon man in his relationship with Hashem – *bein adam laMakom*; and those *mitzvos* that involve interpersonal relationships – *bein adam lachaveiro*. The basis for *mitzvos bein adam laMakom* is Hashem. He desires our service. The root of *mitzvos bein adam la'chaveiro* is *V'halachta bidrachav*, “You shall emulate His ways” (*Devarim* 11:22). Hashem interacts with our world by sharing our pain. With regard to interpersonal relationships, this trait is called *nosei b'ol im chaveiro*, sharing/carrying the burden with one's fellow.

During the Revelation that accompanied the Giving of the Torah on *Har Sinai*, *Klal Yisrael* was privy to an awesome spectacle. “They gazed upon the G-d of *Yisrael*, and beneath His feet was the form of a sapphire brick and the essence of the Heavens in purity” (*Shemos* 24:10) . This was no ordinary brick. *Rashi* explains that the brick lay before Hashem throughout the many years that the Jewish People had been slaves to the wicked Pharaoh. This brick served as a constant reminder of the pain felt by the Jews who, as slaves to Pharaoh, were forced to work with bricks. This vision (which is beyond our grasp) revealed one primary attribute of Hashem. He is *nosei b'ol im chaveiro*. He shares in our burden.

Since we are enjoined to emulate His ways, it makes sense that we, too, must make the concept of sharing in our fellow's burden the focus and motif of our interpersonal relationships.

This, explains *Horav Shlomo Wolbe*, *zl*, is the reason that *nosei b'ol* is considered the root of all *mitzvos bein adam la'chaveiro*. It is considered one of the most difficult *mitzvos* to properly carry out, because it demands that one *mamash*, actually, feel his fellow's pain. Our world contains many *baalei chesed*, and even more “do gooders,” but how many really feel, sense the pain of their fellow? In order to understand this, we must become acutely aware of what transpires in the mind of one who has just sustained a tragedy, received bad news, been devastated by a grave diagnosis that affects him, his spouse or a member of his family. These are merely some of the general difficulties people experience – each in accordance with his/her personal ability to tolerate and overcome adversity. (Hashem gives us only what we can handle.)

When someone is confronted with adversity, he is unable to (truly) deal with it alone. He feels a sense of overwhelming and debilitating loneliness. The *Mashgiach* posits that, quite possibly, these pangs of loneliness cause him even greater pain than the actual suffering that he is presently experiencing. Previously, he was on par with his circle of friends, but now he is different, alone, isolated by his challenge. When he loses his equal footing with others, he becomes overwhelmed with crushing solitude. As I mentioned earlier, each person's concept of adversity is endemic to his individual personality. For some, it is the feeling that he is not achieving materially, or spiritually on par with everyone else. For others, it is much more, but no less painful.

We learn from Moshe *Rabbeinu* the importance of incorporating this *middah*, character trait, into our lives. When Amalek attacked our ancestors shortly after they left Egypt, Moshe commanded Yehoshua to take charge of leading the physical battle against this new enemy. Moshe would address the spiritual front, because one type of battle cannot be successful without the other. Without prayer, all the soldiers and the iron domes are meaningless. The Torah relates, "The hands of Moshe were heavy, and he took a stone, placed it beneath himself, and sat upon it." *Chazal* observe that Moshe could have sat on something more comfortable than a stone. Surely, he could have been provided with a pillow. He chose a stone, in order to demonstrate empathy with *Klal Yisrael* in their time of distress

No dearth of stories exists depicting the sensitivity our *gedolim* manifest toward the feelings of others. The parameter of space does not allow for more than one. The following vignette demonstrates how a *gadol* thinks. This underscores my earlier comment concerning employing cognition in performing *chesed*. The *Chazon Ish* lived in Bnei Brak during World War II. A group of survivors, girls alone in the world, bereft of their families, arrived in Bnei Brak. They were placed in a home. They were lost in a world that had gone mad. They had no idea whether their families had survived, or, like so many others, had perished in the Holocaust. They were broken-hearted girls who had to attempt to jumpstart their lives with no familial footing. One of the girls became engaged. This was an incredible *simchah*, joyous occasion, and all of the girls broke out in song. They were so happy for their friend. A man happened to enter the home while they were dancing and singing. He went to report this to the *Chazon Ish*, thinking that it was inappropriate for the girls to sing like that. The *Chazon Ish's* reaction was classic: "What! They are singing? *Baruch Hashem*, they are able to sing!" He felt their pain and shared their joy.