

“Moreover, I have heard the groan of Bnei Yisrael whom Egypt enslaves.” (6:5)

A businessman once came to the Chasam Sofer to pour out his heart. Apparently, he was doing poorly in business and needed the blessing of a great man of the Chasam Sofer's stature. The Chasam Sofer looked at the man and said, “V'gam ani shomati,” “Moreover, (also) I have heard that your brother is destitute with no source of income, and you have refused to help him.” The man looked back at the Chasam Sofer and replied, “But Rebbe, I just finished saying that I am not doing well myself. I have enough to worry about myself.” The Chasam Sofer explained, “Hashem said, ‘I have also heard the groan of Bnei Yisrael.’ The word “gam,” moreover, also, is an inclusive term. It incorporates something or someone else.

Hashem was saying, ‘I am also listening to their groan, to their pain.’ What does Hashem mean? Is there anyone else who was listening to them? This teaches us that, although every Jew was in an “eis tzarah,” period of misfortune and pain, he still thought of his brother's suffering. He suffered, but he thought of his brother! As a result of their empathy for one another, they were liberated from the Egyptian exile. The fact that you are in need does not in any way mitigate your responsibility towards your brother.”