

Fire shall be kept continually on the Altar; it shall not go out. (6:6)

I had a *rebbe* who would often say that, when one looks through blue lenses, everything appears to be blue. An individual's perspective is colored by the lens through which he views life around him. This applies equally to the way we view people. We often view others through the lens called "me." We judge others through the lens of our personal proclivities and sentiments, often diminishing the value and talents of another person because they either do not live up to our personal standard or, the contrary, they tower over us, so we must put them down. There is another dichotomy in outlook: spiritual versus physical. The physical dimension has a form of perspective which is based upon one's earthly, physical, material features and tendencies. The spiritual plane views life and living from a totally different perspective.

Horav Nissan Alpert, zl, observes that, in the standard calculation of the Jewish day, daytime follows evening. In the calculation of the *Bais HaMikdash*, it is the opposite, with evening following day. The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that, in the physical world, the symbolic evening precedes the symbolic day. Evening is a reference to darkness and ambiguity, while day personifies clarity and light. For example, man sits in "darkness," in total unknown, waiting to see whether the fruits of his labor will materialize. Will all of his endeavors achieve successful fruition, or will everything have been for naught? He must sit in "darkness," waiting anxiously to see whether the seed that he has planted will bear fruit.

The uneasiness of waiting, the anxiety of sitting in darkness, wondering, not knowing whether or when he will see tangible results from his physical efforts, places an awful burden on him. Was it not our Patriarch, Yaakov *Avinu*, the *b'chir ha'Avos*, chosen of the Patriarchs, who entreated Hashem, *V'nosan lechem le'echol u'veged lilbosh*, "Give me bread to eat and clothing to wear" (*Bereishis* 28:20)? Furthermore, even when one finally has the bread, he worries whether he will actually be able to eat it.

Feelings of insecurity concerning his physical well-being can depress a person. The toll can be debilitating, unless he has some form of support system, someone to whom to turn, someone who can give advice, comfort and soothe his anxieties regarding what tomorrow has in store for him. Thus, it can truly be stated that, with regard to the physical realm, an inevitable "evening" precedes the "day."

Once we enter into the realm of the spiritual dimension, however, the sphere in which the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, is dominant, just the opposite occurs. One's anxiety is released as he is filled with a sense of security and confidence with regard to the future. The worries – both great and petty – do not overwhelm him. Even upon hearing a distant cry from his neighborhood, he does not worry. It is not coming from his home. He certainly is concerned with the source of the cry because he is a Jew, and Jews care, but the overwhelming feeling of dread that we all have

when we see a fire truck speeding down our block no longer prevails over us.

The trust one has in Hashem is so great and empowering that the “day,” the illuminating spirit of trust as opposed to fear, overpowers the “evenings” of his life. Darkness is not a dominant factor in his life. His outlook is not bleak – it shines! Furthermore, even when things do appear to be bleak, he tells himself that, just around the corner, a new day is dawning, *Ashrei ha’gever asher sam Hashem mivtacho*, “Fortunate is the man who made Hashem his trust” (*Tehillim* 40:5). This idea is alluded to by the opening *pasuk*. The illuminating fire of the spirit burns constantly on the Altar of our mind and heart.

Perhaps we might expand on the above idea. We began with the observation that one’s perspective can be colored as a result of the lens through which he views a specific circumstance. We continued to delineate between physical and spiritual perspectives. One who views life through a spiritual lens sees the positive, because his faith and trust in Hashem tempers whatever ambiguities cloud his mind. How does one transcend fear, anxiety, when he is confronted with a challenging experience, a difficult situation, one that tests his faith and undermines everything that he would believe? How does one view life through the light of a spiritual lens when he is confronted with the darkness of a physical reality? How does one jumpstart his spiritual perspective?

Within every living thing, every situation, every edifice, every entity, there is the external façade, which one sees with his physical eyes, and there is an internal essence, which presents a deeper meaning to the reality before our eyes. This internal essence requires eyes connected to a brain and synchronized with the heart, so that one’s eyes can penetrate the external façade in order to view the inner essence.

There is a well-known parable about an old Chinese woman who had two cans which were attached to a yoke. Every day, she would place the yoke over her shoulders and walk down to the river to fetch water. She would carry the water to her modest hut where she would put the water to good use. There was a difference between the two cans: one was whole without blemish, while the other one had a crack in its side. Obviously, when she returned home, the sturdy, solid can had retained all of its water, while the cracked can was half-empty.

The cracked water can felt inferior to the other can and was ashamed that he caused the woman to lose half of its water. He felt that his “contribution” was deficient, and it bothered him. One day, the cracked can got up its nerve and apologized to the woman for being defective. The wise woman smiled gently to the can and said, “Do you think that I have been unaware of your crack, and that half the water leaks out? Take a look at the path from the river to my hut. Do you see all of those beautiful flowers on one side of the road? I planted those flowers there, and, every day when I walk back from the river, you water those flowers for me. You are the reason that such beauty adorns the side of the road.”

We confront situations that at first glance appear troubling: people that come across as lacking;

institutions which do not seem to get off the ground; individuals in various vocations whom from our superficial perspective do not seem to be making it. Yet, one person is helped by them; one family has found comfort in this institution; someone has benefitted by what appears to be a troubling situation. At first, we cannot understand why or how, but, stay around, be patient, look around with your brain and your heart and you might even see a miracle in the making. It is so much easier to notice the crack in the can than to look for the flowers on the side of the road.