

"And Hashem said I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt and their cry I have heard ... because I know of their pain." (3:7)

Hashem appeared to Moshe for the very first time in a burning thorn bush. *Rashi* explains the symbolism of the bush as representing Hashem's "personal" sensitivity to *Klal Yisrael's* pain and anguish - *vrmc hfbt ung*. Indeed, as *Rashi* states later in *Parashas Mishpatim* (24:10), even after the redemption Hashem kept brickwork from the time of the Egyptian bondage under His Heavenly throne. This attribute of caring for others and sharing their affliction is an essential attribute of a *Torah* leader.

Upon seeing the burning bush, Moshe pondered why it was not being consumed. As he neared the bush, he was suddenly so overcome with awe that he hid his face. This constituted Moshe's instinctive reaction to Hashem's identifying Himself to Moshe. The *Torah* relates that Moshe later entreated Hashem to allow him to see His glory. The privilege was denied to him at this time. The *Talmud* cites the following response by Hashem, "*When I wished it, you did not, now that you wish it, I do not.*"

This seems puzzling. Moshe's previous concealment of his face was a direct result of his sudden apprehension of Hashem. Was this not a natural response to the overwhelming feeling of awe which gripped Moshe? Why should Moshe be responsible for his reaction to this unique phenomenon?

Horav Meir Bergman, Shlita, clarifies this matter in the following way. We are implored to "*walk in His ways*" - *uhfrsc ,fkvu*. As Hashem is merciful and compassionate, so, too, should we be. What are the essential parameters of "walking in Hashem's ways"? Obviously, one must share in alleviating the plight of the downtrodden in any way that he can. Does this obligation also apply to instances in which one is not able to offer any hope or concrete help? What is our obligation vis a vis our brethren who are captives in foreign countries, subjected to inhuman physical and spiritual degradation? Does this injunction also pertain to instances in which we are not in a position to ease their plight?

Unfortunately, in our present society success is judged by behavioral standards. *Horav Bergman* posits that this type of measuring device is invalid. The *Torah* states that we are to listen to the cry of the oppressed, even when we cannot respond with action. To emulate Hashem means not only to act and to do, but also to listen and to feel. Hashem does not only answer the problems of the afflicted; He also listens to them.

Sharing the burden of the ailing and the weak has two components. Clearly, one must offer concrete assistance whenever possible. A second form of cooperation also has great significance. This is the ability to lend an empathetic ear to another's suffering. At certain times, action is not the

practical response to another's affliction. Some individuals are unfortunately beyond the need for action. They, in turn, require a listening ear, a warm feeling of knowing someone is there to listen and to share in their affliction. This "listening ear" extends itself to a willingness to recognize another's suffering. It may even be suggested that one who refuses to help another is incapable of seeing another's misery.

Horav Bergman utilizes this concept to respond to the original question concerning Moshe's refusal to approach the bush. Hashem told Moshe that He, indeed, sees *Bnei Yisrael's* affliction and hears their cries of pain. This is due to a single reason - *uhctfn ,t h,gsh hf*. "I know of their pain." There is a direct correlation between knowing another's pain and seeing and hearing their affliction.

This was the message to Moshe: I am appearing to you from a burning bush, to symbolize My affinity to *Bnei Yisrael's* affliction. Therefore, I am capable of knowing their pain. Hashem called out to Moshe, "Come near! Share in the pain of *Am Yisrael!*" Moshe refused, reacting to his feelings of awe and apprehension. Indeed, *yiraas shomayim* is all encompassing, but it should not take precedence to the welfare of *Klal Yisrael*. Moshe should have emulated Hashem, *uhfrsc ,fkvw* and moved forward to participate with Hashem in *Klal Yisrael's* affliction. Hashem judges the righteous with a very fine measuring stick. In accordance with Moshe's lofty spiritual level, he was delinquent in his sensitivity to the plight of *Bnei Yisrael*. Consequently, when he later wanted to behold Hashem's glory, Hashem denied him this privilege.