

"And Yisro rejoiced over all the good which Hashem had done for Yisrael." (18:9)

Rashi cites the *Talmud Sanhedrin 94a* which suggests that the word *sihu* alludes to the word *ohsusj*, prickles. The reference to prickles could have one of two connotations. They might be prickles of joy, indicating that Yisro was overwhelmed with happiness. Alternatively, they could be prickles of distress. Although Yisro was filled with happiness for the Jews, he still felt uneasy over what had happened to the Egyptians. *Chazal* go on to say that one should neither humiliate a gentile, nor speak disparagingly in the presence of a *ger*, convert, even up to ten generations after his conversion. **Horav Yechezkel Levenstein, zl**, notes that *Chazal* recognize a strong innate attachment to one's roots, to the point that ten generations later one might still be sensitive to a negative reference to his biological ancestors. Certain traits remain inherent in a person's character, unaffected by time or superficial environmental changes.

Horav Levenstein continues to posit that if we learn of *tzaros*, afflictions, which our brethren in another part of the community -- or anywhere in the world -- are enduring, we are responsible to act on their behalf. If we do not feel a strong sensitivity towards them, it is not simply a deficiency in the *middah* of *chesed*. Rather, it represents a blemish in our personality, a lack of human decency. A person should have a natural

inborn attachment to his own people. If he does not, if he has somehow divorced himself from his heritage, then he is not a *mentch*! He is missing that ingredient which determines his ability to be an *adam*, a connected human being.