

## **All the men who have seen My Glory... and they have not listened to My voice... They shall not see the land ... all those that spurn Me shall not see it. (14:22,23)**

The terms, *Ha'ro'im*, "Who have seen (My Glory)," and *Im yiru*, "They shall not see," appear to be closely related. This, explains *Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl*, is why the Torah, in issuing the decree that this generation would not enter the Land, uses the expression, *re'iyah*, seeing, rather than *im ya'vo'u*, they will not come. He explains the rationale for the altered text. The Holy Land, the *Eretz zovas cholov u'devash*, flowing with milk and honey, the Land in which Divine intervention is to be seen on a national basis can only attain its destiny if the people "see," acknowledge the Divine Presence in every aspect of their lives. They must see G-d in the Land as well. These people experienced Egypt – both the slavery and the redemption. They saw firsthand the awesome miracles and wonders. This was followed up in the wilderness where miracles were a daily occurrence. They should have developed a trust in Hashem which would thereafter inspire them to fear nothing else in the world.

Unfortunately, the script did not play out this way. The very converse of this "seeing" Hashem in the Land, believing that nothing would stand in their way, occurred. They were guilty of *niutz*, spurning Hashem. This form of rejection is the highest degree of scorn, which does not consider the object to be worthy of consideration. It describes the attitude manifest by the people: They had nothing whatsoever to talk about. After receiving the slanderous report of the spies, Hashem was no longer in their equation. Their sin was a lack of *re'iyah*, seeing. Their punishment fit the crime: They would not "see" the Land.

Acknowledging the presence of Hashem in our lives is a staple of Jewish belief. It is how we find meaning and purpose in the seemingly ordinary moments, viewing them as opportunities for spiritual growth and connection with the Almighty. When we see Hashem in our lives, it spurs us to be grateful, mindful and develop a deeper understanding of the sacred within the mundane.

One can only see, however, if he is looking. If his vision is stunted by spiritual myopia, or if he refuses to open his eyes and look, he will not see. Consciously choosing to ignore – or blatant refusal to acknowledge – the potential threats to our spiritual/moral compass is akin to closing our eyes to the clear and present danger ahead. As a result, we fail to take the necessary precautions that would circumvent the challenges to our spiritual dimension. Being open to and perceptive of the realities – both positive and negative – that surround us are essential to our personal growth and that of our families.

*Lo ira ki Atah imadi*, "I fear no evil for You are with me" (*Tehillim* 23:4). The eternal words of *David Hamelech* should accompany a Jew throughout his life, so that he never forgets that he is not alone. Hashem is always with him. *Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl*, related that prior to leaving his friends in the world of entertainment, *Horav Uri Zohar, zl* (probably the most famous *baal teshuvah*

of our generation), they asked him for one parting joke (he had been a successful comedian). He agreed and related the following incident. Two students went for a ride on a motorcycle. They did nothing wrong and observed every rule of the road. This did not prevent an overzealous policeman from pulling them over and giving them the third degree. The two students were prepared with the correct answer to every one of his questions. He could not find a reason to give them a ticket. In desperation, he finally asked, "Tell me, how is it that you were able to ride so long without transgressing any of the laws?" They replied, "We have Hashem with us." As soon as the policeman heard this, he said, "Got you! Three riders!" He gave them a ticket. *Rav Pincus* sums it up: A *Yid* must never forget the *ki Atah imadi*; Hashem is with us.

The following story is related concerning *Horav Yitzchak Aryeh Sekel* of Michelstadt (*Baal Shem* of Michelstadt) who was a *tzaddik nistar*, hidden *tzaddik*, and a Torah scholar without peer. It is well-known that all Jews and gentiles that prayed at his grave prior to being inducted into the army during World War II returned safely. He was a descendant of *Rashi* and *David Hamelech*. News of his extraordinary abilities spread throughout the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds. His reputation reached the ears of the Duke of Michelstadt who was impressed, but felt he needed to see this brilliance first hand. He summoned the young boy to his palace.

The duke was no fool, and he decided to put the boy to a test to ascertain if his powers were that special. To this end, he instructed his guards to direct him to his office in the palace. He wanted to see if, and how long, it would take the boy to locate the duke's office. It took him no time. The boy walked in the front door and immediately proceeded to the duke's office.

Shocked, the Duke asked him how he was able to locate the office without any outside guidance. He responded, "Your lordship himself guided me. I came in, glanced upward and noticed that every window was open except for one. It was closed and covered with a curtain. I understood that your lordship was hidden behind the curtain."

The above vignette teaches that, when all the windows are closed and one has an added layer of curtain on it, this is the one through which the King of Kings is peering. The more we think Hashem has hidden Himself from us, this, in and of itself, leads us to Him. When the times become rough, when each day seems to envelop us with greater misery, we should know that Hashem is watching over us from behind the curtain of concealment.

At no time was there a *hester panim*, Divine concealment, like that which occurred during the Holocaust. Numerous stories abound of instances when all hope seemed to be lost, and, specifically at this point, salvation emerged. A young, pregnant woman in the Warsaw Ghetto was in critical need of medical attention. It was a matter of her life and death and that of her unborn child. At that time, leaving the ghetto for medical purposes was still feasible under certain conditions. She was, thus, able to leave and be attended to by a gentile female doctor who addressed the problem. The doctor said that, under no terms, could she permit her to return to the ghetto. Between the lack of sanitary conditions and hunger, she and her baby had no chance of

survival. The woman agreed to stay, but, "There are thirteen members of my family remaining in the ghetto. They are awaiting my return. What should I do? I cannot leave them." "Let them come here," the doctor said. For the rest of the war, the gentile doctor, truly one of the *chasidei umos ha'olam*, righteous gentiles, kept the young, soon to be mother and her family, in her attic. She sustained them for twenty-two months, all under the eyes of the Nazi murderers. The entire family survived.

Recently, the descendants of those survivors (over two hundred) gathered in America for a family celebration. They decided to send emissaries to bring the doctor (now elderly) who had played a critical role in their lives. We wonder from where a simple gentile merited to play such a key role in saving the lives of fourteen Jews, allowing them to have a future. We must say that, when there is unusual *hester panim*, Hashem provides extraordinary *chesed* to the point that anyone, even a gentile, can be used to facilitate salvation. This is Hashem's way of "making up," so to speak, for the need for Divine concealment. We always need a balance.