

I will surely hide My face on that day. (31:18)

The first lesson to be derived from this *pasuk* is that Hashem's Presence is otherwise always revealed. If we do not see His choreography in our lives it is either because we refuse to look, or we are plagued with myopic vision when it involves spirituality. If Hashem must "hide" His Presence, then it is always out in the open. *Hester Panim*, Divine Concealment, when suffering and confusion reign, one mistakenly may feel abandoned and alone. He is not. We find another seminal *Anochi*, which, superficially, is the opposite of this *Anochi*. *Anochi Hashem Elokecha asher hotzeischa mei'erez Mitzrayim*, "I am Hashem, your G-d, Who took you out of the land of Egypt." This is Hashem's introduction to the *Aseres HaDibros*, the Ten Commandments. The first commandment enjoins us to believe in Hashem. How are we to reconcile these two *pesukim* which begin with the same word: *Anochi*?

The *Baal Shem Tov*, *zl*, famously said: *Afilu b'soch ha'starah, gam sham nimtza Hashem Yisborach*; "Even within the concealment, there, too, Hashem is present." Thus, *Anochi haster astir* in the double *lashon*, language, does not merely teach that Hashem will surely conceal Himself, but rather, that he hides the fact that He is hidden. Thus, the challenge is not only that we fail to see Him, but that we may not even realize and thus acknowledge that He is present to be found. In other words: We must look for him. A Jew is called upon to pierce the layers of concealment, to uncover the *Anochi hastir*. Even in the *gai tzalmaves*, Valley of Death, Hashem is with us. He never forsakes His children. Sadly, when we do not see Him, we think he is not present. All He wants is for us to look for Him.

It is very convenient to believe in Hashem when the light is shining, when everything seems to be going our way. What about when it is dark and bleak, when everywhere that we turn we are beset with adversity? When we cry out in pain to Hashem in moments of darkness, it is a declaration affirming our acknowledgement that Hashem is present and that we beg Him to release us from our present straits. The two *Anochis* are one and the same. They have not changed; we have. We only see what is convenient for us to see.

The following well-known parable segues into a story that underscores the verity that a Jew is never alone. He just needs to look in a rational manner. A ship capsized at sea, and the single survivor was able to reach a distant, remote island that had not been recorded on any maritime charts. In other words, the survivor was alone with little to no chance of being rescued. He prayed fervently to Hashem to release him from his terrible straits. Every day, he searched the horizon in the hope that somehow someone would discover him. Life must go on, so, for protection, he took palm branches, and fixed them together to make a small, ramshackle hut which became his new home. One morning, he left his hut in search for food, and a fire broke out in his hut, which was totally destroyed. It was a large conflagration, which caused smoke to billow in the air for miles. The man was devastated. Shipwrecked and now homeless, he put his head down and wept copiously. In his subsequent depression, he cried out to Hashem, "Why? Why are You doing this to me?" He kept on crying until he heard the sound of a ship approaching. The ship docked and a

group of men alighted. He ran over to them asking, "How did you know I was here?" They replied, "We saw the billowing smoke cloud. We knew someone had to have made it." *Yiush*, despair, attempts to override hope. We do not realize that Hashem is concealed within the despair. This, in and of itself, should catalyze our hope for salvation.

Rabbi Yitzchak Hisiger ("Moments of Greatness") relates the following story. Bernie and his wife Faye spent two weeks every January in Phoenix, Arizona. Bernie was a stock analyst for Morgan Stanley, whose 3700 employees worked out of the top floors of what used to be the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. When Bernie and Fay did not appear at their usual haunts during January, 2001, it was assumed that Bernie, like his fellow co-workers, was a victim of the 9/11 terrorist attack. When they appeared a few weeks later than their usual visit, everyone thought they were ghosts. How did Bernie possibly survive the conflagration?

Apparently, Bernie was a Holocaust survivor who had suffered excruciating pain as a subject of the infamous medical experiments which the accursed Nazis performed. The fiends used Bernie's mouth as the target of their inhumane medical experiments. They would routinely cut into his gums and jawbone in order to extract teeth. This was all done without anesthesia, causing debilitating physical pain and lasting emotional trauma. As a result, Bernie would not hear of the thought of going to the dentist. The mere mention of the word dentist sent him into a tailspin. Finally, the dental pain Bernie was experiencing became so intense that he agreed to go to the dentist. Faye called around and located a specialist who would see Bernie at 9:00 a.m. on September 11th. This was the first time that Bernie missed work. As a result of Divine Providence, Bernie was the only employee of his division at Morgan Stanley who survived that day. He was at the dentist when the planes came crashing into the towers.

Tortured by the Nazis; subjected to indescribable pain, the cruelty that Bernie experienced fifty years earlier had actually been the catalyst that laid the groundwork for his survival. Hashem is in control. The *Anochi* that was brilliantly manifest during *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the Egyptian exodus, is concealed beneath layers of chronic pain, shock and emotional trauma. It may be concealed, but the *Anochi* is present, waiting to be revealed. We have to look for it – with our eyes, our hearts and our minds.

In *Likutei MoHaran*, *Horav Nachman Breslover*, *zl*, reiterates his grandfather's (*Baal Shem Tov's*) words: *V'afilu b'hastarah b'toch ha'hastarah*; "Even in a concealment within a concealment, Hashem is certainly present. And behind the difficult things that stand before you, *Ani omeid, Ani omeid, Ani omeid*; "I stand, I stand, I stand."