

אֵי לֵב יִשְׂרָאֵל

Throughout *Shir Hashirim* the most common reference Hashem makes to *Klal Yisroel's* beauty is the beauty of our eyes (*Shir HaShirim* 1:15,4:1,6:5). Why is this so?

Shir HaShirim describes *Klal Yisroel* during our lowliest state of *Galus*. At such times our actions may indeed be evil, however, the Jewish heart always clings to G-d in the deepest sense. This seems to be what is reflected in the beauty of the eyes, for the eyes are the window of the soul as we see from the *Pasuk* (*Eichah* 2:19): *Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord.*

We find this connection in our physical anatomy as well. The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Hilchos Shabbos* 328:9) writes: Someone who has pains in his eyes or in his eye and there is a discharge from them or tears are flowing from them from the pain, or blood is flowing, or there is discharge and *uchla* (meaning it is the beginning of illness), for these we desecrate the Shabbos. The *Mishna Berura* explains: Even though in the case of danger to a limb according to all opinions one is prohibited from committing a Torah violation, the eye is different for the nerves of the eye have a connection with the heart [*Avodah Zara* 28b].

Although the Gemara quoted above was written approximately eighteen hundred years ago, the medical connection between the eyes and the heart was always denied by medical professionals. Some have suggested that perhaps the nature of the eye has changed in our days. However, in recent years, science has finally caught up. The following is a quote from the *European Heart Journal*, an Oxford publication:

The heart and the eye, two organs at first sight not linked to each other, have more in common than one would expect. The vasculature of the eye, although some peculiarities do exist, shares many features with the vasculature of the heart and is often exposed to the same intrinsic and environmental influences. Thus, the eye, with its easily accessible vasculature, may indeed be a window to the heart...The vasculature of the eye and the heart share several common characteristics. The easily accessible vessels of the eye are therefore—to some extent—a window to the heart. There is interplay between cardiovascular functions and risk factors and the occurrence and progression of many eye diseases. In particular, arteriovenous nipping, narrowing of retinal arteries, and the dilatation of retinal veins are important signs of increased cardiovascular risk...

