

# The Focus – Response Connection

We often view a lack of empathy to someone else's suffering as an indication of a cold and callous heart. We may even question our own lack of response to another's pain, asking ourselves whether the apathy we experience at times reflects poorly on our character. In this week's Parsha the Torah shares with us an insight into responding to suffering that can help us better understand ourselves and others.

The Pasuk says, (Shemos 2:11), "Moshe Rabbeinu saw the suffering of the Jews and he saw an Egyptian man striking a Jewish man from among his brother." Rashi comments on the words, "He saw the suffering of the Jews", that Moshe focused his eyes and heart to be pained over their suffering. Rashi implies that Moshe Rabbeinu's feelings were not evoked immediately upon seeing them suffering, but required focus. At first glance this seems perplexing. Moshe Rabbeinu was a giant in Middos and Ahavas Yisroel. Why would he need to focus to elicit feelings that were synonymous with his essence? It seems from here that even a person on the caliber of Moshe Rabbeinu is capable of not automatically reacting to a heart wrenching situation, and requires focus to draw out these feelings to the fullest of his potential. We can glean from here an insight into our middos and sensitivities. Each one of us is a child of Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov, and therefore

***" If we can get Hashem to focus on us, He will respond to our suffering, as He can't bear to see us in pain."***

has the middos of compassion embedded within our DNA. However, there are times when this compassion seems to lie dormant, and may cause us to question whether we possess this quality. We see from here that our good middos are there, but unless we train ourselves to focus, our most natural and lofty qualities may remain as latent potential.

It is clear from the above that responding to a person's suffering is caused by focusing on their pain. It is interesting that we find a similar idea operating with regards to Hashem. It states in the Pasuk (Shemos 2:25), "Hashem saw the Jewish people, and Hashem knew." Rashi comments on the words, "Hashem knew," that He focused His heart on them, and He didn't ignore them with His eyes." It is implied from Rashi that Hashem's response to

Jewish people's suffering was based on focusing on their pain. This concept requires clarification when being applied to Hashem, as Hashem is always focused, and has no more or less awareness of a person's suffering. It seems from Rashi, that although Hashem is all knowing, His love and care for the Jewish people is so intense, that He can't bear to watch them suffer and not respond. He therefore, so to speak, has to ignore them and pretend that He doesn't see them, thereby enabling Him to be able to allow them to suffer. This image can have far reaching implications. Often people wonder how it can be that Hashem, who is so merciful, can watch people suffer. A common answer given to this is that since Hashem knows it is for the good, He can tolerate the suffering. However, we see from this Rashi that this is not the case, and even though He knows it is for the good, He still can't stand to watch a person suffer, and must turn away so to speak.

Based on this it seems that if we can get Hashem to focus on us, He will respond to our suffering, as He can't bear to see us in pain. The Ramban and the Seforno (Shemos 2:25) share with us the secret to grabbing Hashem's attention, so to speak, even when He is trying to ignore us. The Ramban says that although the Jewish people were not yet worthy to be redeemed, Hashem focused on them because of their Tefillah. The Seforno adds, this means Tefillah with a complete heart. It seems that even when Hashem put us through pain for our own good and He feels that He must ignore us because He can't cope with us being in pain, Hashem doesn't ignore a heartfelt cry from a sincere heart.

BASED ON THE WEEKLY SHMUESS GIVEN BY HARAV SHAYA COHEN, ROSH HAYESHIVA ZICHRON ARYEH

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח  
לעילוי נשמת הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר  
לרפואה שלמה רפאל חיים דוב בן ריסא שושנה