

# SOMETHING TO CRY ABOUT

*by Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein*

Hashem said, "I have indeed seen the affliction of My people that is in Egypt, and I have heard its crying out because of its taskmasters. I have known its sufferings."

Would it not have been sufficient for Hashem to say that He saw their affliction, or heard their pain? We see quite a bit of redundancy here, beginning with the first phrase "indeed seen" / *ra'oh ra'isi*. The doubling of the verb implies a doubled observation on His part.

We recall another famous redundancy. Putting them together, we can address both at the same time. In Eichah, we read, "We became orphans, without a father." By definition, orphans have no father. What could this *pasuk* mean?

Consider the plight of two young princes, wrested by force from their kind and loving father by a powerful enemy. Forced to languish in captivity in a dungeon, the two spend considerable time bemoaning their fate. The two were separated by a few years - enough so that the older of the two had far more understanding of the protection and care afforded him by his father the king when they still lived in the safety and security of the royal court. The younger brother cries out at every outrage inflicted upon him. He cries out against the hunger, against the bitter cold, against the dank cell, against the work he is forced to do. His older brother, however, never mentions any of the details and particulars. He understands that life was entirely different when they lived under the supervision of their kind father. The only cry that passes from his lips is, "Woe to us, who have been separated from the table of our father!"

The younger child cannot comprehend why his brother never lashes out against the horrible conditions that they both endure. All he ever mentions is their forced separation from the king's palace. He asks his older brother why he never cries out about all the different ways he is made to suffer. The older child tells him, "How could you be expected to realize this? I, however, understand that the single cause of all our misery is the distance from Father. Were we with him, we would lack nothing, and nothing would disturb our tranquility. There is no need to mourn anything but our distance from Father.

The older brother in our story represents those who take a deeper, more enlightened look at our exile; the younger brother stands for those who do not comprehend what galus is all about, and therefore cry out over every tragedy and indignity. They fail to realize that behind all of our travail is the distance we have allowed to intrude between ourselves and HKBH.

We ought to understand the *pasuk* in Eichah similarly. We became orphans - living lives beset by a march of problems: pain, destitution, insecurity. Nonetheless, we can reduce all our woes to one simple formula: "We have no Father!" Because we grew distant from Him, and Him from us, we find ourselves in multiple predicaments. All our complaints amount to variations on this single theme.

Our two brothers lived in Mitzrayim as well. Some members of the Bnei Yisroel resembled the older brother. They understood that being suffocated by the *kelipah* of Mitzrayim, enveloped by the *tumah* of this foreign culture, was the harshest part of their sentence. Through this, they had grown distant from their Divine Source. "Their crying out because of their labor rose up to Elokim." <sup>2</sup> That is, their hope was to soften the demands of Elokim, meaning the attribute of Divine judgment, so that their *neshomos* might escape the smelter's furnace of Egypt - and with them, the *Shechinah* that went into exile with them would leave as well.

This group was exceedingly small. The first part of that same *pasuk* describes the majority. "The Bnei Yisroel groaned because of the work, and they cried out." Most were too distraught, too broken by their travail to recognize the cause of their suffering. All they saw was that suffering. Thus, it was only because of the work that they cried out, looking for relief of the symptoms rather than the disease. They groaned because of the work and nothing more, and cried out.

Although Hashem certainly understood the difference between the two groups, it made no difference. "G-d saw the Bnei Yisrael, and G-d knew." <sup>3</sup> Hashem saw the circumstances of their suffering, and how the Bnei Yisrael cried out in pain against the conditions of their servitude. But He reacted as if to a different expressed pain. He knew, going beyond what He merely "saw." He understood that their *neshamos* were in even greater pain than their bodies, as a result of being crushed by the *tumah* of Mitzrayim. Hashem therefore set into motion the forces that would win their physical freedom, and take them beyond. Moshe and Aharon would lead the people to the foot of Har Sinai, there to leave a Torah nation close to Him and attached to Him.

Here we find the reason for the doubled verb. Hashem saw two different scenes at the same time. He saw the "affliction of My people." It is not their bodies that make the people, but their souls. Thus, on the one hand He saw the real affliction of the people - their living disconnected from Him. On the other, He saw the terrible conditions under which they labored. Even though many did not cry out at the pain of their separation from Him, but only at the physical hardship, nonetheless He listened to and heeded that cry - because it came from broken hearts. He took into account the physical pain they suffered as being so overwhelming, that they could not focus on what should have been the more important source of pain - Hashem's hiddenness from them. Because He has "known its sufferings," He knew those sufferings. He understood that, whether expressed or not, on some level their *neshamos* cried out because they could not accept the pain of separation. He acted to give them what they genuinely needed.

#### Sources:

1. Based on Be'er Mayim Chaim, Shemos 3:7
  2. Shemos 2:23
  3. Shemos 2:25
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