

# FEELING THE PAIN

*by Rabbi David Begoun*

*"And it came to pass in those days that Moshe grew up and he went out to his brothers and saw their burdens." (Shemos/Exodus 2:11)*

The Medrash explains that Moshe's intention was to observe their suffering to enable him share in their pain and empathize with their misfortune. Moshe, who was raised in the palace of Pharaoh, in the lap of royal luxury, had been spared the anguish and misery of his Jewish brethren, and certainly could have remained aloof and oblivious. Instead, he chose to accept their burden as his own, to share in their suffering and to forgo a life of extravagance and opulence. It was for this reason, explains the Medrash, that Moshe was chosen to be the Redeemer of Israel and to lead his people out from Egyptian bondage. And, expounds Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv (1), it is this character trait, the ability to share in the anguish and affliction of another Jew, to empathize with his needs and feelings, which is the channel to the ultimate redemption of our people.

The Medrash elsewhere teaches that it was only when G-d observed the compassion displayed by the young shepherd David toward the sheep under his protection that He deemed David fit to be the King of Israel. It was not his intellect, his shrewdness of mind or his mighty prowess that earned him the position of progenitor of the Royal Davidic lineage. Rather, the consideration he showed his sheep when sending them out to pasture earned him this distinction. When leading the sheep to graze, he would first send forth the young, tender sheep so they would be afforded the opportunity to graze from the softest grass. Next he would send the elderly sheep to eat from the reasonably soft grass. Only then would he send out the strapping, strong sheep to eat from the hard grass. Knowing that if he allowed them all to graze simultaneously the strong would overpower the weak and devour the softest grass, leaving the young and elderly with what they could not consume, he devised this system to ensure each animal's needs were met. The Medrash concludes that G-d said, "the one who knows to pasture his sheep, each according to its ability, let him come and shepherd my people."

Life presents constant opportunities to identify with the anguish and distress of our fellow Jews. We should constantly seek out those in need of empathy and search for opportunities to help bear the burden of a Jew in need. Often the greatest kindness we can do for someone who is suffering is to merely accept their pain upon ourselves as our own. In doing so, we will merit to see the ultimate redemption of our holy nation and the restoration of the Davidic dynasty.

*Have a Good Shabbos!*

(1) The "Alter of Kelm"; 1824 - 8 Av 1898; of the three leading students of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, founder of the mussar movement, Rabbi Simcha Zissel was the one who Rabbi Yisrael expected to carry on the movement; R' Simcha Zissel devoted his entire adult life to R' Yisrael's teachings; Rabbi Simcha Zissel taught that the whole world is a classroom where one can learn to improve his character and increase his belief in G-d.

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