

WHAT A SIGHT!

by Torah.org

Our ability to see is the strongest of our senses. What we see penetrates our inner conscience, and can guide us towards right or wrong. Visual media is so attractive and popular because it touches the core, the soul, of the human being. When advertisers want to drive you towards their product, they find an image or video footage that reels you into their grasp.

King David wrote in Psalm 69 concerning those of evil character "Their eyes go dark from seeing." How can seeing make eyes go dark? The *Midrash* explains that what they looked at was "dark." What they choose to look at drove them to engage in their dark and corrupt activities. As we say in the *Shema*, "and you shall not stray after your eyes and after your hearts" (Numbers 15:39) — our eyes can lead us astray.

The righteous, however, "will look and they will rejoice (Job 22:19)". This was demonstrated by Moshe (Moses), writes the Midrash, who, when he sought to feel the pain of his enslaved brethren, left Pharaoh's palace to go "to his brothers, and he saw their burden (Exodus 2:12)." Moshe's empathy was drawn from witnessing their slavery firsthand, and from there the story of Moshe's ascent began. (Yalkut Shimoni, Psalm 69).

The formula is simple: If you want to do positive things, look at positive things. If you want to do negative things, look at negative things. What we see can leave an indelible impression, one that shapes our values and motivates our actions.

Of course, while imagery of all kinds can affect us, it is reality which provides the most vivid sight. A movie about kindness, however powerful, will not influence us like witnessing kindness in action. If we truly wish to grow, whether in empathy like Moshe or in any area, finding and observing those who excel is truly the best way to influence our own actions. If we choose images that inspire spiritual growth, we cannot help but be led higher.