

INSPIRATION FROM BELOW...

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

*These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 268, The Consequence of Dropping Sefer Torah or Tephillin.
Good Shabbos!*

Dedicated This Year Le'eluy Nishmas Chaya Bracha Bas R. Yissocher Dov - In memory of Mrs. Adele Frand

An 'Inspiration From Below' Can Trigger A 'Response From On High'

At the beginning of the book of Shemos, the Torah mentions an attribute of Moshe Rabbeinu, which, in part, qualified him to be the leader of the Jewish people. "And Moshe grew up, and he went out amongst his brethren and he saw their suffering" [Shemos 2:11]. The Medrash comments that Moshe saw their suffering and cried: "How my heart goes out for your suffering! If only I could die for you, to spare you your suffering." The Medrash says that Moshe removed his princely garments and went out into the field to try to help his brethren make the bricks and mortar, just so that he could be a part of their pain. G-d, according to Medrash, said to him: "You left your comforts to participate in the pain of Israel as an equal, I will leave the company of the Higher Ones so that I may speak with you."

This Medrash says that Moshe merited communicating with the Divine Presence of G-d because he made himself a partner to and physically participated in the pain of Israel. Moshe was unable to stand idly by in the palace while his brethren were suffering. He felt the urge and the need to join them.

Rashi says on the words "And he saw their suffering", that Moshe did not merely see their suffering and then continue his daily business. Moshe "put his eyes and his heart to the matter" - he would constantly envision his brethren's suffering in his mind. When one can constantly visualize such

suffering, he does not sit idly by; he becomes an active participant. This was Moshe's great attribute - the ability to psychologically participate with his brethren in the time of their suffering.

The Alter of Kelm (1824-1898) says that there is an even greater insight here. An earlier verse says that "G-d saw, and G-d knew" [Shemos 2:28]. And there Rashi uses virtually the same expression as he did concerning Moshe: "G-d placed his eye upon them and did not remove his heart from them."

The Alter of Kelm explains that G-d was inspired - as it were - by the actions of Moshe. It was Moshe's own similar actions that triggered G-d's looking at and taking to heart, so to speak, the troubles of the Jewish people.

In Kabbalah there is a concept called "inspiration from Above" and there is another concept called "inspiration from below". "Inspiration from below" means that sometimes we, down here, take an action that prompts G-d above to react. Moshe's personal, emotional, participation in the pain of Israel was an act of "inspiration from below" which caused G-d to respond from Heaven to the point that G-d too now participated emotionally in the suffering of the Jewish people.

This teaching of the Alter from Kelm is saying that if we can participate and feel pain when the Jewish people are in a time of trouble, that elicits a similar response from G-d. When one Jew worries about another - when he cannot sleep well because another Jew is not sleeping well - then that prompts G-d to take note.

The pasuk [verse] tells us in Parshas Va'Era [6:14] "These are the heads of the houses of their patriarchs" (and the pasuk then lists the descendants of Reuven). The Torah uses the same expression by the tribe of Shimon. But when it reaches Levi, the Torah merely says, "These are names of the sons of Levi". The Shlo"h haKodesh (1560-1630) explains that there was something special about the names of the children of Levi. Levi felt bad that he was not part of the enslavement (the Tribe of Levi, as a whole, was excused from slavery). The Tribe could not live with the idea that their lives should go on normally while their brethren were experiencing a time of trouble. Therefore Levi gave each of his sons names that impressed upon them the idea that they were, in fact, in exile. Gershom - I was a stranger (Ger) there (Sham) in a foreign land. Kehas - Their teeth were blackened and knocked out (Keehu Shenaihem). Merari - Because everyone has it so bitter (Merirus).

Levi felt the responsibility to participate in the larger trouble confronting Israel. He felt the need to participate. Life cannot go on as usual when the Jewish people are experiencing a time of trouble.

During World War I, the Chofetz Chaim's (1838-1933) wife woke up in the middle of the night to find her husband not in his bed. She went looking for him and found him sleeping on a bench. She asked for an explanation. He responded: "The Jewish people are in the middle of a war. There are people who have lost their houses. Whole communities have been dispersed. There are many Jews out there tonight who do not have beds. How can I sleep in my own bed under such circumstances?"

I am not necessarily suggesting that we all should not sleep in our own beds tonight. [Rabbi Frand delivered this class during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, when Iraqi missiles were falling on Israel. It is sadly apropos today as well.] I do not believe that we are on the level of piety of the Chofetz Chaim. But we have to do something to participate in the trouble facing the Jewish people. We all have to give up something. We all have to do something physical and concrete indicating that our lives tonight and tomorrow and perhaps for the next few days cannot be the same as they have been. Even if what we give up is merely a token, at least symbolically we must do something to feel the pain that our brethren the house of Israel are feeling at this very minute.

Let me close with the words of this week's Haftorah. The Haftorah speaks of a great battle between Nevuchadnetzar King of Babylon, and Egypt. The prophet refers to a period in history where the two great powers of the world will do battle with each other and the Jewish nation will have to sit there, worrying - what will happen to us?

The whole world is fighting and the Jewish nation is worried about what will happen to it. The words of the prophet are "You shall not fear, my servant Jacob, said the L-rd. For I am with you. For I will make finished with all the nations that I have dispersed you thereto. But you I will not destroy. I will punish you with justice, but I shall not destroy you utterly." [Yirmiyahu 46:28].

There may be suffering. There may be losses, the prophet warns us. But it will be for judgment - it will serve as atonement and will be instructive. We will never be destroyed.

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.
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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Bo are provided below:

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