Parshas Shemos - Feeling in Another's Pain

In those days, when Moshe had grown up, he went out to his brothers and saw in their pain.	וַיְהִי בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּצֵא אֶל־אֶחָיו וַיַּרְא בְּסִבְלֹתָם (שמות ב, יא)
He focused his eyes and his heart in order to feel their pain.	רש"י: וירא בסבלתם. נָתַן עֵינָיו וְלִבּוֹ לְהִיוֹת מֻצֵר עֲלֵיהֶם (שמות רבה א'):

Instructions For Teaching This Lesson:
Present to your class the מדה of נושא בעול עם חבירו - feeling in another person's pain.

Step 1:
Explain to the students even משה רבינו who was known for his רחמנות had to actively focus on בני ישראל's pain to fully feel in their pain.

Step 2:
Discuss the power of the מדה of נושא בעול עם חבירו. Make sure to highlight that just listening and feeling in someone's pain can be so comforting to them.

Step 3:
Review practical ways to help us focus on other people's pain.

Step 4:
Show the video and/or tell the story by Rabbi Paysach Krohn - "To Be An Angel" https://torahanytime.com/lectures/187569?t=2591 (starting at time 43:17)

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Moshe feels the pain of the Jewish People

Moshe himself was not a slave in מצרים. In fact, he was growing up in the palace. His family as well were not slaves because they were לויים. Yet, Moshe was able to truly feel the pain of כלל ישראל. What enabled Moshe to be able to feel so strongly in the pain of others?

Rashi tells us that for Moshe to be able to feel the maximum amount of pain for כלל ישראל, it was necessary for him to **actively focus** on their pain.

מפרשי רש"י

וירא בסבלותם – How did רש"י know that משה רבינו was actively focusing on בני ישראל's suffering? One of the מפרשים on רש"י explains that it is because of the extra letter "ב" - "in"

Why does it say "ב"? Why doesn't it say וירא סבלותם - He saw their pain?

The answer is that משה didn't just see their pain, he put himself INTO their pain. He felt their pain and experienced their pain.

שמות רבה ב, ב

אָמְרוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ, כְּשֶׁהָיָה מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ עָלָיו הַשָּׁלוֹם רוֹעֶה צֹאנוֹ שֶׁל יִתְרוֹ בַּמִּדְבָּר, בָּרַח מִמֶּנּוּ גְּדִי, וְרָץ אַחֲרָיו עַד שֶׁהִגִּיעַ לַחֲסִית, כֵּיוָן שֶׁהִגִּיעַ לַחֲסִית, נִזְדַּמְּנָה לוֹ בְּרֵכָה שֶׁל מַיִם, וְעָמַד הַגְּדִי לִשְׁתּוֹת, כֵּיוָן שֶׁהִגִּיעַ מֹשֶׁה אֶצְלוֹ, אָמַר אֲנִי לֹא הָיִיתִי יוֹדֵעַ שֶׁרָץ הָיִיתָ מִפְּנֵי צָמָא, עָיֵף אַתָּה, הִרְכִּיבוֹ עַל כְּתֵפוֹ וְהָיָה מְהַלֵּךְ. אָמַר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא, יֵשׁ לְךָ רַחֲמִים לִנְהֹג צֹאנוֹ שֶׁל בָּשָׂר וָדָם כָּךְ חַייֶךָ אַתָּה תִּרְעֶה צֹאנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל, חֲוִי: וּמֹשֶׁה הָיָה רוֹעֶה.

When משה was herding יתרו's flock in the wilderness, a baby goat fled from him. He followed it until it reached cover. Once it reached cover, it came to a pool of water, and the goat stopped to drink. When משה reached it, he said: "I didn't know that you were running due to thirst. You are tired." He carried it on his shoulder and was walking. Hashem said: "You have the compassion to behave with the animals in this manner; by your life, you will herd My flock, בני ישראל."

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שמות רבה א, כח

וַיַּרְא בְּסִבְלֹתָם, רָאָה שֶׁאֵין לָהֶם מְנוּחָה, הָלַךְ וְאָמַר לְפַרְעֹה מִי שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ עֶבֶד אִם אֵינוֹ נָח יוֹם אֶחָד בַּשָּׁבוּעַ הוּא מֵת, וְאֵלּוּ עֲבָדֶיךָ אִם אֵין אַתָּה מֵנִיחַ לָהֶם יוֹם אֶחָד בַּשָּׁבוּעַ הֵם מֵתִים. אָמַר לוֹ לֵךְ וַעֲשֵׂה לָהֶם כְּמוֹ שֶׁתֹּאמַר, הָלַךְ מֹשֶׁה וְתִקֵּן לָהֶם אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לָנוּחַ.

משה went and said to פרעה: "One who has a slave, if he does not rest one day a week, he will die. These are your slaves. If you do not allow them to rest one day a week they will die." פרעה said to משה: "Go and do with them whatever you say.' משה went and instituted the day of שבת for rest."

Another מדרש says, "He saw that their shoulders were bleeding from the load they were carrying, and he made bandages for them." Another מדרש says. "He saw that sand was getting in their eyes through the wind, and משה went and cleansed their eyes." Clearly the scene was one where the pain and suffering was evident, and would evoke a response from someone like משה even without focusing. So why was it necessary for him to focus to feel their pain, wouldn't someone like משה seeing such excruciating suffering automatically feel their pain without actively needing to focus?

We can glean an extremely important insight from this רש"י, that even someone as sensitive as משה, who is seeing people tortured in front of him, would not be able to reach the maximum amount of empathy without focus. The ramifications and relevance of this idea is extremely significant for us who are not on the level of משה רבינו, and surely need to focus to properly be able to feel the pain of others.

שמות ג, יג-יד

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָאֱלֹקִים הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי בָא אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתִּי לָהֶם אֱלֹקֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם שְׁלָחַנִי אֲלֵיכֶם וְאָמְרוּ־לִי מַה־שְּׁמוֹ מָה אֹמַר אֲלֵהֶם: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה תֹאמַר לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶהְיֶה שְׁלָחַנִי אֲלֵיכֶם:

משה said to Hashem, "When I come to בני ישראל and say to them, 'The Hashem of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" And Hashem said to Moshe, "אהיה אשר אהיה - I will be that I will be."

רש"י: אהיה אשר אהיה. אֶהְיֶה עִמָּם בְּצָרָה זוֹ אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה עִמָּם בְּשִׁעְבּוּד שְׁאָר מַלְכֻיּוֹת.

I will be that I will be — I will be with them in this sorrow — as I will be with them in the suffering they will suffer at the hands of other גליות in the future.

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One may ask: Hashem has many names, each conveying a certain aspect of our perception of His traits, אהיה is the rarest of those and is not used anywhere else in תנ"ך. Many of Hashem's more common names seem more fitting to convey encouragement to בני ישראל during their bondage, such as those mentioned in the י"ג מדות הרחמים. Why of all the many names of Hashem did He choose specifically this one to introduce Himself to בני ישראל during their suffering?

Let us explain with a story:

When Dr. Halperin, the eminent mental health expert in ירושלים, was asked what he does when he can't help someone he responded, "I send him to Rav Aryeh Levin."

When they asked Rav Aryeh, "What is your secret that lets you help people whom the greatest professionals couldn't help?"

He answered, "I know how to listen, and share their pain."

What Rav Aryeh said to Dr. Halperin is what we learn from the above פסוק. The first and most powerful way to relieve another's suffering is letting them know that we are with them in their pain, just as Hashem said, "I will be with them in their pain."

<u>שמות ג, ב</u>

וַיֵּרָא מַלְאַךְ ה' אֵלָיו בְּלַבַּת־אֵשׁ מִתּוֹךְ הַסְּנֶה

The מלאך of Hashem appeared to him in a blazing fire out of a thorn-bush.

Why did the מלאך appear to משה in a thorn-bush and not a more majestic tree?

<u>רש"י</u>: מתוך הסנה. וְלֹא אִילָן אַחֵר, מִשּׁוּם "עִמּוֹ אָנֹכִי בְצָרָה"

Hashem chose a thorn-bush because thorns inflict pain and He wanted to show בני ישראל that He is with them in their pain.

This lesson is extremely important in our world when we hear of tragedies that happen in ארץ ישראל and around the world to Jewish people. We all know that the power of our תפילה to make a difference is based on the feeling of our heart. The more that we can feel the pain of those that are suffering, the more we will be able to express a heartfelt תפילה. It seems from here that the secret to experiencing deeper and more intense feelings is by focusing on the pain of those that are suffering. Thinking about the impact on the families of Jews who are suffering can help us call out to Hashem with greater feelings, which will surely impact the הצלה and ישועה of so many of our brothers.

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Story:
When the time came in the morning for the young children to enter the classrooms for their daily lessons, Rav Aryeh Levine would stand at the doorway or at a window, and he would study each small boy - to the puzzlement of the children, who could not understand his reason. One day his own son asked him, "Why do you always stand at the entrance waiting for the pupils, and then you look at them so closely as they enter?"
"I'll tell you what", said Rav Aryeh. "You come and stand with me and take a close look at them. What do you see? What do you observe?"
"It is quite interesting to watch them going in," his son replied. "You can see how eager they are to study the Torah. There I saw a boy pushing ahead of another. He has a zest for learning. That one over there, though, is not at all anxious to enter. His mind is still on the games he was playing."
"Yet I look at different things altogether," said Rav Aryeh. "That child's trousers are torn. This one's shoes are quite tattered and worn. That boy over there is definitely hungry; how will he ever be able to study." Rav Aryeh would actively focus on what the boys needed so that he could figure out ways to help them.
His son later recounted, "my father would take money from his pocket and give it to children so that they could ride home on the bus in the cold winter nights and would not have to trudge through the wet muddy streets."

Another story about Rav Aryeh Levine:
Once he noticed a small student at the school going in very tattered shoes. Clearly the boy needed a new pair without delay; but Rav Aryeh knew that the lad's father was a tight-fisted gentleman who would take offense if the good Rabbi simply bought him a pair. During the morning recess, while the youngsters were playing in the courtyard, Rav Aryeh called the boy to his room, and said it was time to test the boy on his learning. The questions he asked were well within the boy's grasp, and he answered them all. "Splendid," said the good Rabbi, beaming; "that was just splendid. For this you deserve a prize." And then and there he gave the boy a note to a local shoemaker to give the boy some good shoes, for which Rav Aryeh would pay. When the boy went home after school, he took with him another note from the Rebbi to his father explaining about the "prize" he had won.

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Story:
A third grade class was having a שרשים bee. The Rebbi went around the room. Each boy was given a word in English and had to say the שרש in Hebrew and spell it. The Rebbi went around the whole class and everyone got it correct.
"If we get around the class again without any mistakes, we will have an ice cream party," the Rebbi promised. The class was buzzing with excitement.
During the second round, a boy messed up on an answer. The class was disappointed that they lost the ice cream party. Two boys later, a smart boy in the class was given the the word "call" as a question.
"קרה," the boy answered confidently, "ק - ר - ה"
"Are you sure?" questioned the Rebbi.
"Yes," replied the boy.
"I'm sorry, but that is incorrect." the Rebbi explained.
After class, the Rebbi confronted the boy and asked him why he had gotten the answer wrong. The Rebbi knew that he had really known the answer. The boy explained, "I didn't want everyone to blame the boy who messed up. I didn't want him to feel like he took an ice cream party away from the whole class, so I decided to get it wrong as well on purpose. I davened to Hashem that He make the Rebbi give me a question that I can get wrong without it being obvious that I was doing it on purpose."
Wow, this third grade boy really focused on the other boy and how he would feel if they lost the ice cream party because of him.

Practical tips on how to focus on someone else's pain:
If you see someone suffering, don't just walk by, STOP and THINK:
What if it was **me**?
How would I feel?
What would I want someone to know?
What would I want someone to say?
What would I want someone to do?
Even if there seems to be nothing that we can do to help, we can always daven for them.

If we stop and focus on other people, if we try to feel in their pain, their embarrassment, their discomfort, we can act on it and be נושא בעול - help carry their burden. We can make the burden lighter, we can help ease their pain.

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What was necessary for משה to do in order to truly feel כלל ישראל's pain?

_____

_____

Give an example of the pain that בני ישראל were in and what משה did for them (from the מדרשים)

_____

_____

What was the Name of Hashem that Hashem told משה to tell בני ישראל?

_____

_____

What does that Name mean? Why did Hashem use that particular and unusual Name in this case?

_____

_____

How can we get our תפילות for other Yidden who are suffering to be more meaningful and impactful?

_____

_____

What are two practical things you can think about in order to be able to focus on someone else's pain?

1. _____
2. _____

Parshas Shemos - Feeling in Another's Pain

What was necessary for משה to do in order to truly feel כלל ישראל's pain?

To actively focus on בני ישראל*'s pain*

Give an example of the pain that בני ישראל were in and what משה did for them (from the מדרשים)

Their shoulders were bleeding and משה *made bandages for them*

What was the Name of Hashem that Hashem told משה to tell בני ישראל?

אהיה אשר אהיה

What does that Name mean? Why did Hashem use that particular and unusual Name in this case?

I will be with you in your pain now and in the future. The greatest comfort for someone in pain is to feel that someone is with them in their pain

How can we get our תפילות for other Yidden who are suffering to be more meaningful and impactful?

Focus on their pain. Think about their families, friends and anyone else who was affected.

What are two practical things you can think about in order to be able to focus on someone else's pain?

1. *What if it was me*
2. *What would I want someone to do for me?*