

Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro



**Sharing a friend's burden:
Daily Lessons**

Dedication

May the merit of these lessons in
Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro,
implemented in our lives,
help to ensure the safety of
our brethren in Israel
and worldwide.

Dedications

לזכר נשמת הרב ישראל יוסף אליהו

בן ר' טוביה הלוי זצ"ל

אחי ורבי, ידיד נאמן, נעים בכל דרכיו

Rabbi Yosef Lasdun, zt"l, the toil of Torah was his joy

לזכר נשמת הרב ראובן צבי זצ"ל

בן הרב מנחם יצחק הי"ו

מלמד תשב"ר, אהוב וחביב לתלמידיו קרוביו וחבריו

Rabbi Reuven Bauman, zt"l, beloved Yeshiva Rabbi

יהי זכרם ברוך

Dedication

לזכר נשמת

ר' לייב בן אברהם

Mr. Walter Spier, ז"ל

who gave of his generous heart to
carry the burdens of the Jewish
community and people in need.

יהי זכרו ברוך

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Introduction

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The Mishna in Pirkei Avos (6:6) lists forty-eight (48) behaviors and qualities that are instrumental for Torah acquisition. One of them is the *ma'alah* (virtue) of "*Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*" – carrying (i.e., sharing) his fellow's burden. The famed Mirrer Mashgiach and Mussar personality, ¹Rav Yeruchem Levovitz defines *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* as feeling our friend's burden and pain as if it were our own, being together with him or her in a time of need. (Henceforth, the phrase "the *ma'alah* or *middah* of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*" will often be shortened to "*Nesiah B'ol*," i.e., the notion of sharing someone's feelings).

²Rav Chaim Friedlander explains when we are *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*, we give someone a piece of our very being by projecting ourselves into his or her situation to share (i.e., experience) their feelings. Therefore, the benefits of *Nesiah B'ol* surpass the relief rendered by providing goods and services (i.e., *Tzedaka* and *Chesed*). He adds, "*The essence of Nosei B'ol is not to reduce or remove the other person's suffering, but rather, to be with him in his distress and to feel his pain, to share in his suffering even if we are unable to tangibly help him.*" The message we convey is: "We are with you; you are not alone in your struggles."

A reasonable English translation of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* is "empathy", which is defined by ³Rabbi Lord Jonathon Sacks as: "*seeing the world through someone else's eyes, entering into their feelings and acting in a way as to let them know they are understood, they are heard and that they matter.*" Whether people are struggling through a personal crisis, exerting themselves to study Torah or working hard to arrange their Shul's annual dinner, the common essential need we all have is **to know that we matter** and that our experiences, efforts and feelings **actually register on another person's heart**. Thus, being *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* not only validates my friend's experiences and emotions, but perhaps more importantly, it affirms that his or her existence and place in this world are needed and valued.

The introduction to *Sefer Nefesh HaChaim* was written by Rebbi Yitzchok of Volozhin, the son of this classical work's author, Rebbi Chaim of Volozhin. Rebbi Yitzchok extolls the sublime character of his illustrious father. Among the many noble virtues mentioned, Rebbi Yitzchok writes that throughout his father's life, he "gave of his soul" to revive the spirit of the downtrodden with his encouraging, comforting words and his generous financial support, bringing joy and relief to the destitute. Even on his deathbed, wracked with pain and suffering from his illness, his thoughts remained focused on the Jewish people's suffering. Rebbi Yitzchok writes, "*He would rebuke me, saying that he observed I did not share in the pain of others. His constant reminder to me was: 'This is the entire essence of a person - one is not created for himself, but to help others in every possible way.'*"

Although we translated *Nesiah B'ol* as empathy, it is really much more than that. My empathy for a friend who struggles does, in fact, remove a portion of his pain because "a burden shared is a burden halved." However, empathy has no power to change the course of my friend's troubles which Heaven has allotted to him. Being *Nosei B'ol*, on the other hand, can positively change the Heavenly-decreed fate awaiting my friend. By feeling my friend's pain or needs to the extent whereby my heart truly yearns for his or her salvation, I project this virtue of *Nesiah B'ol* into my Tefillos (prayers) on my friend's behalf. In the [Day 6](#) and [Day 7](#) lessons, we will see that prayers which emerge from a heart filled with *Nesiah B'ol* for someone, have special powers to change the

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Heavenly decree for that person. In addition, being *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* has the power to arouse Heavenly mercy for fellow Jews in need (see [Day 19 lesson](#)). Thus, my *Nesiah B'ol* has the power to positively alter the course of my friend's fate in a manner that cannot be explained by simple empathy. ⁴Rav Boaz Shalom writes that one time while he was accompanying Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, he mustered up the courage to express to the Rav his heartfelt feelings about him: "Every time I ask the Rav for advice or for a *Berocha*, I sense the Divine help (*Seyata Dishmaya*) inherent in the Rav's advice and his *Berachos* blessings always come to fruition." Rav Shlomo Zalman good naturedly waived his hands (to minimize his own role in actualizing these *Berachos*) and responded, "People say that having one's *Berachos* fulfilled is related to his piety or greatness in Torah. In truth, this is erroneous; any person can accomplish this. Hashem listens to the *Berachos* of any Jew who blesses another person because he is a child of Avrohom, Yitzchak and Yaakov with special powers and ancestral lineage. However, in order for a person's *Berachos* to be fulfilled, he must truly desire that the other person will receive good fortune (i.e., blessings). This is what I endeavor to do, I try to enter the other person's situation and truly desire that he receives blessings. However, in reality, anyone can accomplish this through his *Berachos*." Rav Shalom concludes: "During Rav Shlomo Zalman's life, many people came into his humble abode for help with their difficulties and misfortunes. We witnessed before our very eyes the meaning of his words, 'to enter the other person's situation and truly desire that he receives blessings.' Anyone who came in contact with Rav Shlomo Zalman would sense how he was *Nosei B'ol* with others."

In this work, we will discuss the importance of the *ma'alah* of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* for Torah acquisition and safeguarding the identity of the Jewish nation as one unified, collective soul, as well as the criticality of this *ma'alah* for delivering Heavenly salvation both to individuals in need and to *Am Yisrael* (the Jewish nation) as a whole. Being *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* enhances our performance of interpersonal Mitzvos and helps us prioritize Kiddush Hashem as the primary focus of our lives. Perhaps the multiple benefits of this *ma'alah* in perfecting one's *Avodas Hashem* (service to Hashem), in both Mitzvos between man and man and between man and G-d, help explain the description of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* by the ⁵Sabba of Kelm as "כליל המעלות" – "the crown of all virtues." Similarly, ⁶Rav Yeruchem declares, "this middah is the foundation for all Mitzvos between man and man and probably also for Mitzvos between man and G-d." We will recount inspiring stories of *Tzaddikim* who excelled in being *Nosei B'ol*, which demonstrate that even in modern times, excellence in *Nesiah B'ol* is within our reach. May the teachings and examples of these *Tzaddikim* inspire us to reach great heights in the *middah* of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*.

THE ESSENCE OF BEING *NOSEI B'OL IM CHAVEIRO*:

- ❖ Being a partner with someone in his pain or happiness, sharing that person's feelings as if I am living through the situation that caused him the distress or joy.
- ❖ Communicating the message: "I am with you; you are not alone in your struggles."

Section 1: The root of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*: The unity of Jewish souls

Day 1: Chesed which flows from the source of the Jewish soul

What characteristic could be defined as a singularly Jewish trait? The Gemara in Mesechta Yevamos (Daf 79a) states that Dovid Hamelech said, *“There are three defining characteristics of this (Jewish) nation: They are merciful, exhibit shame and perform acts of kindness.”* Yet, we know that much kindness (*Chesed*) is also conducted by the other nations?

⁷Rav Matisyahu Salomon explains that there are two types of *Chesed*: Ordinary *Chesed*, and a special type of *“Chesed which flows from the source of the Jewish soul.”* What is the meaning of *“Chesed which flows from the source of the Jewish soul?”* Rav Salomon explains: *“I am driven to help my friend because of our close familial kinship, whereby his distress adversely affects me as if I am suffering from the same pain. I save my friend because his pain is so unbearable for me (and thus, I feel that I am saving myself).”* In other words, I perform this act of *Chesed* not merely because I see someone who lacks something or because my emotions are aroused by his pitiful plight. Rather, his unmet need is transformed into my own need and his difficult plight hurts me as if I stand in his metaphorical “shoes” enduring all the pain that he now suffers. Since I vicariously experience his suffering, therefore, when I help him, I feel as if I am rescuing myself from that distress.

This type of empathy, whereby one person feels another person’s pain or joy as if experiencing it himself, is the *ma’alah* (virtue) of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*, carrying (i.e., sharing) a fellow’s burden, which is one of the forty-eight qualities listed in Pirkei Avos (6:6) that facilitate acquiring the Torah:

Torah is even greater than priesthood or royalty; for royalty is acquired along with thirty prerogatives, and priesthood with twenty four [gifts], but the Torah is acquired by means of forty-eight (48) qualities, which are ... Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro (carrying his fellow’s burden) ...

^{1,8}Rav Yeruchem Levovitz vividly presents the following two aspects of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*:

- 1) Feeling our friend’s burden and pain as if it were our own: A laceration of a friend’s limb feels as if our own flesh is being cut, our head throbs when our friend suffers a headache. Using the power of visualization (imagination), we “transplant” ourselves into someone else’s situation to vicariously experience the struggles and emotions that he or she is living through; and
- 2) The potency of our *Nesiah B'ol*, i.e., its beneficial effect on others is astounding: The relief provided to someone’s suffering is directly proportional to the degree that we feel his or her pain! (see [Day 19](#) lesson for discussion about this aspect).

Let’s discuss the first aspect – feeling another’s pain as if it was our own: The following story is told about the Tzaddik of Yerushalayim, ⁹Rav Aryeh Levine. One time he accompanied his wife to the doctor. When he saw the doctor, Rav Aryeh exclaimed, *“our foot hurts us!”* His wife was then seen by the doctor. After she emerged from the exam room feeling significantly better, the doctor then invited Rav Aryeh to come in to be treated. *“No thank you,”* said Rav Aryeh politely, *“I do not need to be seen.”* *“But,”* asked the doctor, *“didn’t you say that your foot hurts you as well?”* *“Indeed,”* answered Rav Aryeh, *“when my wife came in with a painful foot, I also felt the pain with her. But now that, Boruch Hashem, she is feeling better, I am also feeling better.”* In *Visions of*

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the Fathers, Rabbi Abraham Twerski, MD, recounts that his great-grandfather, the Rabbi of Hornostipol, said, "When any of my people feel even a slight pain in their finger, I feel that pain too."

What gives us the ability to have such profound empathy? In *Sefer Tomer Devorah (Middah 4)*, Rabbi Moshe Cordovero explains: "All Jews are close familial relations ("שָׂעָר בְּשָׂר") with another because our souls are combined together ... Our fellow's pain should cause us anguish as if we experienced the same pain ourselves. Likewise, our fellow's good fortune should gladden us as if we experienced the same good fortune ourselves."

¹⁰Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, MD, writes: "The Jerusalem Talmud states that a person should not seek revenge against someone who had harmed or offended him, any more than if one had injured his left hand, he would hit it with his right hand as punishment for having caused him pain ... The soul is part of G-d Himself, and G-d is absolute unity. Therefore, all souls are essentially one. We are separate and distinct beings [only] by virtue of our physical bodies ... To the extent that we minimize the importance of the body relative to the soul and give the soul primacy, to that extent we are one, and can feel for another the way we feel for ourselves" (from Tanya, Chapter 32).

The reason a Jew is able to identify with his or her fellow's feelings of pain or joy to the extent of experiencing the identical feelings, is because on a higher spiritual level all Jewish souls coalesce into a single unit. Hence, "*Chesed which flows from the source of the Jewish soul*," refers to *Chesed* that I perform while, simultaneously, experiencing the feelings of the recipient, i.e., sharing his or her feelings of pain, sorrow, or vulnerability. When one Jew performs *Chesed* for another, it is done in the mode of a right hand bandaging the injured left hand of the same body. In subsequent lessons, we will see that the unity of the Jewish people is a real phenomenon, i.e., although our bodies are separate, on a spiritual level, we are genuinely one. Therefore, sharing another Jew's feelings is very much within our ability.

Note: The words, "*ma'alah*" and "*middah*" (of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*) will be used interchangeably.

CHESED WHICH FLOWS FROM THE SOURCE OF THE JEWISH SOUL IS:

- ❖ *Chesed* performed while feeling the recipient's pain or need as my own. Thus, when I do *Chesed* for that person, I feel as if am rescuing myself from his or her distress.
- ❖ The basis for our ability to perform *Chesed* with such feelings is that all Jewish souls are combined into a single unit, allowing us to experience another person's emotions.

Section 1: The root of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*: The unity of Jewish souls

Day 2: A special unity gives rise to special Chesed

In the [Day 1](#) lesson, we saw that our ability to identify with another person's feelings, i.e., to truly share the pain or joy in another's heart, is due to the unity of Jewish souls. In a similar way, ¹¹Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev describes the Jewish people as multiple organs of one body. Just as with one physical body, if a serious illness or injury befalls any one organ, the entire body senses the insult to that organ, similarly, *"if one individual suffers pain, his fellow Jew will also feel it ... and likewise, if one individual experiences joy, his fellow Jew will also feel his happiness."* In other words, because of our existence as a unified entity, we are "spiritually wired" to share the feelings of our fellow Jew.

The ¹²*Tanna Debai Eliyahu* ([Appendix A-11](#), p. 63) states that the Jews who left Egypt made a covenant that they would perform acts of kindness (*Gemillas Chessed*) with each other:

Also, (King) David praised the generation who emerged from Egypt, for even the single Mitzvah in their hands was more pleasing to the Holy One, blessed is He, than many Mitzvos [that we observe]. What was the single Mitzvah in their hands? They gathered together as one united group ("אגודה אחת"; literally: one bundle) and made a covenant that they would perform acts of kindness (גמילות חסדים) with each other.

Why does performing *Chesed* require creating such a covenant?

In the times of the Tanach, when a covenant was made between two parties, it was a common practice to split an animal into two halves and the parties would walk between them. ¹³*Sefer Halkarim* explains this symbolism: *"The essence of a covenant is to forge a bond between the two parties to reinforce the love between them so that they become transformed into one body, whereby each party will preserve the other's wellbeing just as one preserves oneself."* While the animal was intact and alive, each organ sensed the existential threat when another organ of the same body was severely injured or sickened. Similarly, both parties of a covenant are transformed into one body so that, *"when one party perceives injury or pain befalling the other, he will subject himself to great tribulations to save his fellow, just as he would do for himself."*

Accordingly, ¹⁴Rav Azarya Berzon suggests that the reason a covenant was created to perform kindness with each other, was to ensure that their kindness would be carried out with such intense unity as if they were one body, whereby each person felt the other person's needs and feelings as his own.

We can now answer our original question from the [Day 1](#) lesson. Why is *Gemillas Chessed* considered a unique characteristic of the Jewish people? While it is true that the nations of the world perform many kind deeds, the uniquely Jewish kindness is one which emanates from the aforementioned spirit of intense unity whereby another person's feelings become my own. When I act kindly toward a fellow Jew in distress, I feel as if I am experiencing his or her situation and therefore, I am rescuing myself from that distress.

In a eulogy for ¹⁵Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, his son, Rav Shmuel Auerbach emphasized his father's overwhelming compassion and empathy for his fellow man. He related that his father would often recount an incident concerning the saintly Rav Baruch Frankel Teumim (the Baruch Taam) whose son made a *shidduch* (i.e., became engaged) with the daughter of a well-known wealthy man. During that time period, the town's water

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carrier became ill. The Baruch Taam was distraught over the man's illness. He could not eat. He prayed incessantly for him to return to good health. He was so overcome with concern for this man's welfare that he personally became visibly transformed. The parents of his future daughter-in-law came to town for a visit and were taken aback by the Rav's changed appearance. The first thing that came to their mind was that he had regrets regarding the *shidduch*. The girl's parents asked, "Perhaps the Rav is unhappy with the *shidduch* and would like to retract?" The family assured them that this was not the case. The distress was the result of his concern for the water carrier. When the girl's mother heard this, she approached the Rav and said, "I can understand that the Rav is concerned about the water carrier and prays for his recovery. But to become so affected by his plight - is this not a bit too much? It is hurting the Rav's health." When the Rav heard these words, he immediately called off the *shidduch* saying, "If the mother does not understand the meaning of feeling another Jew's pain - to take it truly to heart, then it is not a suitable family with which to make a *shidduch*." Merely saying a prayer for the ill man's recovery as the girl's mother suggested, would have been ordinary *Chesed*. However, the Baruch Taam experienced the water carrier's suffering and prayed in a manner as if he was personally afflicted with his illness because he practiced "*Chesed which flows from the source of the Jewish soul*." The water carrier's plight was his own personal suffering as if his most beloved relative was stricken. To make a *shidduch* with a family who could not appreciate this exalted, uniquely Jewish type of *Chesed*, was unthinkable.

JEWISH UNITY: ONE BODY WITH MULTIPLE ORGANS "WIRED TOGETHER" TO FEEL FOR EACH OTHER

- ❖ Our existence as a unified entity renders the Jewish people as multiple organs of one body. Therefore, we are spiritually "wired" to feel each other's pain or joy, just as every organ in one body senses when another organ is grievously injured or sickened.
- ❖ The Jews who emerged from Egypt formed a covenant to ensure that their acts of kindness would be done with the spirit of intense unity as if they were one body, whereby each person felt the other person's needs and feelings as his own.

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Day 3: My *Nesiah B'ol* with another person induces a powerful kinship between us

In the two previous lessons, we learned about the nature of unity within the Jewish people, i.e., we are like multiple organs of one body per Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev; this enables us to share the feelings of our fellow Jew. ¹⁶Rav Yeruchem Levovitz, comments on the Mitzvah of “ואהבת לרעך כמוך” (love your fellow as yourself):

We are commanded to “love your fellow as yourself,” which means “as yourself” literally. One attains this exalted level through the process of “איחוד הנפשות” (the “unification of souls”) so that a person’s nature becomes transformed to such an extent that he feels the pain of his fellow.

To illustrate that such a transformation of one’s nature is possible, Rav Yeruchem cites the Gemara Bava Basra (16b) which describes the arrival of Iyov’s (Job) three friends to comfort him. Although Iyov’s friends lived far apart, they learned of his suffering through a communication system whereby each friend had three trees, each engraved with one of the friend’s names. When the tree which bore the name of one of the friends withered, they knew that affliction had come upon him. The signal system immediately relayed the information, despite the distance of 300 Parsah (approximately 800 miles) separating them! Rav Yeruchem comments that this communication system worked flawlessly on account of their mutual love and bond of kinship that bound them together, as if no separation existed between them. We see from here that we have within us the potential to develop a connection between our own heart and the hearts of fellow Jews, enabling us to experience their feelings as if we were living through the very same events that caused them pain or joy.

In truth, just because two people are members of *Am Yisrael*, does not, in of itself, automatically create the close connection needed to share another person’s feelings in the manner of Iyov and his friends – this requires working on ourselves to acquire this *middah*. We all have the potential to forge this deep connection because of our holy ancestry and the common root of all Jewish souls. By working on ourselves to develop the *middah* of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*, Rav Yeruchem expounds, this potential can become actualized and our kinship with fellow Jews can become as finely tuned as the trees which withered when one of them was in trouble.

The ¹⁷*Chasam Sofer* describes the proper mindset when praying on behalf someone in distress: “*The entire Jewish people are partners with a single body and soul. When one person is in pain, his friend also feels it and suffers alongside him.*” Accordingly, when we pray on behalf of an ill person, we should view ourselves as if we are the sick person. A parable to understand this is: Imagine we are all on a ship and a hole is ripped in the deck of a ship under “Chaim’s” cabin. Everyone on that ship feels the same anguish when the water rushes into Chaim’s cabin since the entire ship is in danger of sinking. Similarly, if Chaim becomes ill or suffers any personal distress, his pain becomes our pain as well because our souls are bound together. Consequently, when we pray for Chaim to be healed, we do not approach Hashem as a third-party advocate on his behalf, but rather, as his “co-defendant”, just like everyone on the ship would pray that the hole under Chaim’s cabin be plugged before the ship sinks.

Section 1: The root of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*: The unity of Jewish souls

This special kinship and unity of souls helps to explain an apparent difficulty with regard to praying on behalf of another person. ¹⁸Rabbi Yaakov Abramovitz poses the follow question: We know empirically that prayer on behalf of a fellow person in need often works to save that individual and furthermore, the Gemara (Berachos 12b; [Appendix B-1](#), p. 64) describes the imperative to pray on another's behalf as an obligation, to the extent that one who fails to do so, is considered a sinner. However, Rabbi Abramovitz asks, the reason Tefilla works to change my fate is because of the change in my personality and in my relationship with Hashem that occurs through the process of prayer. Due to these changes, I am now a transformed person; this "new" person deserves a better fate than the "old" person did prior to praying. If so, how can my prayer, which albeit transforms me, help to save another person from his or her difficulty? After all, the person who needs the help is the one who must become transformed to deserve a better fate?

Rabbi Abramovitz answers this question based on Rav Yisrael Salanter's explanation of Tehillim 19:10: "משפטי ה' אמת צדקו יחדיו" (*The judgments of Hashem are true, altogether righteous*): When Hashem judges any individual for a wrongdoing, before issuing the sentence, He determines the effect of that individual's deserved punishment on his or her loved ones and friends, i.e., how they would be adversely affected by the defendant's punishment. If any of the defendant's circle of loved ones does not deserve the "collateral damage," i.e., the pain they would suffer when he is punished, the sentence is annulled, and he is saved. If I am *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* and share my friend's pain, I become his or her "co-defendant" since I suffer the same pain that he endures (Chasam Sofer, *ibid*). Accordingly, because of the spiritual transformation I undergo when I pray on his behalf, my "new" self does not deserve the "collateral damage" from my friend's pain; consequently, he is released from suffering solely because of the changes made in my personality. We see from here that by working on myself to share another person's woes, the kinship between us becomes so powerful that the changes made in my personality during my Tefillos "count" in his favor to rescue him, as if he made the changes himself. Thus, the unity of Jewish souls is the foundation through which we have the potential to develop the *middah* of *Nesiah B'ol*. Moreover, by developing this *middah*, in turn, our unity becomes further strengthened which empowers our prayers, leading to great salvations for the Jewish people.

CREATION OF SPECIAL KINSHIP BY BEING *NOSEI B'OL IM CHAVEIRO*:

- ❖ By working on ourselves to share another person's feelings, we create a powerful kinship so that our personal spiritual improvements will "count" for our fellow to rescue him or her from suffering.
- ❖ The potential to forge this deep connection is due to the common origin of all Jewish souls. Through the process of through the process of "איחוד הנפשות" (the "unification of souls"), a person's nature becomes transformed to such an extent that he feels the pain of his fellow.

Section 1: The root of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*: The unity of Jewish souls

Day 4: The Jewish people are organically bound together on the level of the soul

The Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 4:1; [Appendix A-1](#), p. 59) expresses the unity of the Jewish people as “נפש אחת” - one collective soul, a phenomenon resulting from a process expressed by ¹⁴Rav Yeruchem Levovitz as “איחוד הנפשות” - unification (or interconnectivity) of souls. Our physical bodies, although distinct from one another, are merely the shells to house our soul - which is essence of a person. On the level of the soul, we are all one.

¹⁹Rav Yechezkel Levenstein (henceforth: “Rav Chatzkel”) explains:

... we are all souls whose origins are Divine from Above and whose continuous source of existence flows from the One G-d ... being connected to the One Creator unites all who experience this connection, i.e., any two of the same type naturally bind with another with a powerful bond such that they cannot be separated ... Similarly, for G-d's creations (here, referring to Jewish people), as a function of binding with their Creator, they will necessarily connect and unite with each other since we are all a portion of the Divine from Above, Who is One and Indivisible.

The interconnectivity of Jewish souls is the basis of the following two phenomena:

1. Our ability to vicariously experience the feelings of our fellow Jew: Because we are unified as “נפש אחת”, the feelings of one person will naturally flow to his friend. The explanation for this, says Rav Chatzkel, is that the feelings will radiate from one segment of our collective soul to a contiguous segment of the same soul. This concept was elegantly explained by ¹⁰Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, MD, who we cited in the [Day 1](#) lesson.
2. The spiritual effects of one Jew's good deeds or sins reverberate and impact all fellow Jews in a global manner. The above Midrash Rabbah states: “[Why] is Israel likened to a sheep? If a sheep is hurt on its head or another limb (or organ), its entire body feels it. Similarly, with Israel, if one of them sins, everyone feels it.” In a similar vein, the Midrash (Tanchuma, Netzavim 1:2; [Appendix A-2](#), p. 59) deduces from the words, “every person of Israel” (i.e., the singular “איש ישראל”; Devarim 29:9), that the righteous deeds of even one Tzaddik saves the entire Jewish nation and the entire world.

These two phenomena appear to be interrelated. As we mentioned in the [Day 3](#) lesson, when we refine our personality to be *Nosei B'ol* and feel other people's suffering, we create a powerful kinship between fellow Jews that enables my personal spiritual efforts to effect positive changes in the fate of my friend, even if he is unaware of my *Avodah* (spiritual work). Thus, the *middah* of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* creates the portal through which our prayers and Mitzvos can bring about salvations for fellow Jews. This can help us understand the following profound statement of Rav Yeruchem (ibid):

Thus, the middah of Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro has such great importance because the overarching goal of the entire Torah, both the study of Torah and performance of its Mitzvos, is uniting our souls - such that we feel each other's (pain or happiness), that we literally become one ... This is the foundation of the entire Torah, to be Nosei B'ol.

With the above background, we can appreciate the following words of *Sefer Tomer Devorah*, written by the *Ramak* - Rabbi Moshe Cordovero (*middah* 4):

Section 1: The root of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*: The unity of Jewish souls

All Jews are close familial relations ("נְשִׂאֵר בְּשָׂר") with another because our souls are combined together ... For this reason, all Jews are responsible for one another because each Jew has within himself a portion of every other Jew. When a person sins, he harms not only himself, but also the portion of a fellow Jew's soul included within him. Due to their shared soul, he is responsible for the other; thus, they are like one flesh. Therefore, it is fitting to seek the benefit of our fellow, we should be pleased with our fellow's success, and his honor should be as dear to us as our own since we are in fact one and the same.

²⁰The following story was told about Rav Elazar Menachem Man Shach, which illustrates how he internalized the interconnectivity of Jewish souls to such an extent that he reacted to other Jew's troubles with a greater physical (pain) response than he did to an injury of his own body. Rav Shach had a growth in his foot and was told by the doctor that it that must be operated on immediately. Although the surgery would take a few hours, the anesthesia would knock him out for the rest of the day. "Impossible!" said Rav Shach. "I must give the *shiur klali* (a major lecture) in the Yeshiva. If I cannot be back by tomorrow, I refuse to have the surgery." The doctor responded: "There is only one way you can be done by tomorrow: If you agree to surgery without anesthesia, right here in your home." Rav Shach readily agreed. His gabbai (assistant) and a student both helped Rav Shach remain still as the doctor operated on him, cutting open his leg without any painkiller or anesthesia. Although Rav Shach was in tremendous pain, he did not utter a sound. Soon the surgery was over and the doctor left. Rav Shach warned his two helpers not to tell anyone what occurred. The next day he was back in Yeshiva with no one being the wiser. During the same time period, while Rav Shach was once sitting in the Bais Medrash, a man came over and whispered in his ear. Rav Shach began to cry, heartrending sobs. Later the man told the *talmidim* (students) that he informed Rav Shach about a helicopter accident involving Israeli soldiers who were all killed. Despite the fact that his own physical agonizing pain did not elicit a sound, Rav Shach had such depth of feeling for every Jewish soul that he cried bitter tears over these soldiers he never met.

EFFECTS OF OUR EXISTENCE AS A UNIFIED "נפש אחת":

- ❖ The feelings of one Jew radiate to his fellow, i.e., from one part of the unified soul to a contiguous segment of the same soul.
- ❖ The spiritual effects of one person's positive or negative deeds reverberate globally to impact all fellow Jews.

Section 2: The power of prayer with the spirit of *Nesiah B'ol* to help people in need

Day 5: "There's no way my prayers can help people in need!" Think again!

Sefer Tomer Devorah describes G-d's thirteen attributes (*middos*) of Divine mercy and the imperative for us to emulate these Divine *middos*. By emulating one of these *middos*, we open the channels for that same *middah* Above, activating the Heavenly flow of this *middah* toward us, on a level proportional with our efforts. The fourth *middah* in Tomer Devorah, "לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נְחֻלָּתוֹ", is G-d's empathy with the suffering of the Jewish people, whereby all our pain is G-d's pain. Hence, says ²¹Rav Matisyahu Salomon, when we are *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* - sharing our fellow Jew's burden, we open the Heavenly channel of G-d's corresponding *middah*, "לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נְחֻלָּתוֹ", inducing its flow to us.

²²Rav Avrohom Yaffon offers an illuminating insight regarding the incident in when Moshe Rabbeinu killed the Egyptian who was beating a Jewish man. The Pasuk (Shemos 2:12) states: *He turned this way and that, and saw that there was no man* ("וַיִּפֶן כֹּה וְכֵן וַיִּרְא כִּי אֵין אִישׁ"), *so he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand*.

Moshe Rabbeinu had a prominent position in Pharaoh's court and, thus, had the unique opportunity to wield positive influence to help his brethren. By killing the Egyptian to save one Jew, Moshe was forced to flee and give up all his power and good standing with Pharaoh, which could have benefitted many more Jews than the one individual he saved. Thus, asks Rav Yaffon, the cost of saving a single Jew does not appear to justify the lost opportunity of helping an entire nation?

Rav Yaffon explains that the Torah's words, "*He turned this way and that, and saw that there was no man,*" means that Moshe looked to see if anyone else would be aroused to rise up on behalf of his fellow Jew being beaten, but he saw no one sufficiently inspired with the spirit of *Nesiah B'ol* (sharing someone's suffering) to come to the victim's defense. Moshe realized that without this spirit of *Nesiah B'ol*, there was no hope of the Jewish people meriting Hashem's redemption. Thus, any cost-vs.-benefit analysis, i.e., saving one individual versus millions, was immaterial since without the merit of *Nesiah B'ol*, all of Moshe's influence in Pharaoh's palace would not accomplish anything. Moshe, therefore, took matters into his own hands, rising up for his imperiled brother, creating an inspiration of *Nesiah B'ol* below, to arouse the Divine empathy above (i.e., G-d's *middah* of "לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נְחֻלָּתוֹ"), through which G-d would redeem His people. Rav Yaffon adds that in every generation, the holy Shechinah seeks out individuals who are like Moshe Rabbeinu, i.e., when these individuals see "there is no man," i.e., no one else is inspired to feel the Jewish people's pain and cry out in prayer for their suffering, they take the responsibility upon their shoulders. The Shechinah (Divine Presence) seeks out these individuals who are inspired with the spirit of *Nesiah B'ol*, and through their *Mesiras Nefesh* (sacrifice) below, Hashem's Divine empathy Above will be aroused to save the Jewish people.

After the sin of the Golden Calf, G-d informed Moshe of his plan to destroy the Jewish nation. Moshe prayed for the forgiveness and survival of the Jewish people (Shemos 32: 32): "*And now, if You would but bear their sin! – but if not, erase me from Your book that You have written.*" The Gemara (Berachos 32a; [Appendix B-2](#), p. 64) states that Moshe wanted to sacrifice his life to suffer the very fate of annihilation decreed upon Klal Yisrael. Moshe thereby declared his entire existence was tied to the survival of the Jewish people, i.e., he could not bear

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living without them, an act of supreme *Nesiah B'ol*. The “secret” as to how Moshe Rabbeinu’s efforts succeeded in annulling the decree of destruction against the Jewish people was explained by Rav Chatzkel Levenstein in an address to the Mirrer Yeshiva students while they were refugees in Shanghai during World War II. In his address, Rav Chatzkel urged the Yeshiva students to uphold their awesome responsibility of pleading for mercy on behalf of their brethren trapped in the raging inferno in Europe:

²³“We read ‘Va’yechal Moshe ...’ [And Moshe pleaded ...], on a fast day to impress upon us that all of Israel’s salvations depend upon one’s identification with, and feelings for another’s pain and trouble ... From Moshe Rabbeinu’s actions we learn it is within the power of one person – the personality whose soul is filled with the suffering of *Klal Yisrael* – to annul even a Heavenly decree of destruction. Do not think that it was because of Moshe Rabbeinu’s exalted spiritual stature that his prayers were accepted and *Klal Yisrael* was forgiven for the sin of the Golden Calf. This is not so. It is because he was willing to stand in the breach and have his name erased from the Torah for Israel’s sake that he was answered. It was because of his complete *Mesiras Nefesh* (self-sacrifice) for others that overturned the Heavenly decree.”

Thus, the formula for Moshe Rabbeinu’s success in saving the Jewish people from destruction was his total *Nesiah B'ol* which he invested into his prayers on their behalf. We might think that only Moshe could accomplish this, but Rav Chatzkel teaches us otherwise. It is within the power of anyone whose soul is filled with the suffering of his or her fellow Jews, to achieve great salvations for them when we pray with the spirit of *Nesiah B'ol*. Hashem seeks out the “Moshe Rabbeinu personalities” in every generation, i.e., the people inspired to feel *Klal Yisrael’s* pain and cry out in prayer for their suffering. When G-d finds these individuals, His Divine empathy Above will be aroused to save His people.

THE LATENT “MOSHE RABBEINU QUALITY” WITHIN EACH JEW:

- ❖ Each of us can develop a personality whose soul intensely feels the suffering of *Klal Yisrael*.
- ❖ When we pray with this state of mind, we can annul even a Heavenly decree of destruction just as Moshe Rabbeinu’s prayers saved the Jewish people from annihilation.
- ❖ Hashem seeks people in every generation who are inspired to feel the Jewish people’s pain and cry out in prayer because of their suffering. Through their *Mesiras Nefesh* below, Hashem’s Divine empathy Above will be aroused to save the Jewish people.
- ❖ All of Israel’s salvations depend upon one’s identification with, and feelings for another’s pain and trouble.

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Day 6: Tefilla with *Nesiah B'ol*: Opening Heavenly gates for people in need

Imagine the awe-inspiring scene of a courtroom. You are a defense attorney sitting next to your client, a defendant on trial for an alleged crime he stands accused of. You come prepared to fight for his life, hoping to attain a verdict of acquittal. But whether your client walks free or is found guilty, at the end of this trial, you will be heading home where a hot dinner and other comforts await you. Your client, however, has no such assurance. Now let's suppose you knew that were headed to the same destination as your client, i.e., if he would be jailed after a guilty verdict, you would be joining him (and not as his counsel, but as his fellow prisoner!). Certainly, your arguments on his behalf would be just a tad crisper, better prepared, and charged with more energy and emotion. Because a cold prison cell is the last place on earth you want to spend your life in.

Now, let's switch the scenery. Instead of criminal court, I find myself in Shul, arguing before the Judge of judges on behalf of a fellow Jew who is suffering. E.g., I am pleading for Heavenly mercy for *Mr. and Mrs. R.* who have not been blessed with children for several years. If it is "just their problem," sure – I will put in my "good word" in the *Shemoneh Esrei* on their behalf. But at the end of the day, I return to my pleasant home, to a Shabbos table surrounded by my wife and lively children who eagerly read from their *Parsha* sheets and sing *zemiros* with me. The emotional urgency of my prayers will not begin to compare to the urgency of my pleas to Hashem if I would mentally experience the fate of this childless couple. If I would visualize myself walking home alone after Shul to a painfully quiet home without the lively sounds of children, devoid of colorful *Parsha* projects to regale the family, my Tefillos would be charged with far more emotional urgency and feelings of desperation.

When we feel the pain of another Jew, this itself has the power to change his or her fate in a most positive manner. ²¹Rav Matisyahu Salomon explains, by being *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*, empathizing and identifying with our friend's suffering, we open the Heavenly channel for Divine empathy (the Divine *middah* of "לְשִׁאֲרֵית נַחֲלָתוֹ") to flow down toward mankind. Putting myself into the shoes of my fellow Jew when I plead his case before the Master of the World, opens a window in the gates of Heaven to arouse Hashem's mercy for those who are suffering.

The ²⁴Sabba of Kelm writes: *"It is impossible to reach the level of feeling another's pain ... unless we abundantly utilize mental imagery, i.e., visualizing ourselves, Heaven forbid, experiencing the pain, hardship or illness that another person is suffering."*

Thus, to be a *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*, we "transplant" ourselves into the person in distress – imagining ourselves experiencing that person's situation and associated feelings. This "transplantation" is even more important when we pray on behalf of that person as the ¹⁷Chasam Sofer explains, *"The entire Jewish people are partners with a single body and soul. When one person is in pain, his friend also feels it and suffers alongside him. **When we pray on behalf of an ill friend, we view ourselves as if we are also the choleh (ill person).**"* We become that person's co-defendant (Chasam Sofer), so that his or her struggles become our own when we approach Hashem in prayer. This *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* quality endows our Tefillos with the power to open a Heavenly window and induce Hashem's blessings to flow down to those in need.

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²⁵Rabbi Yechiel Spero points out an astounding observation: One of the greatest *Nosei B'ol* personalities in Jewish history was Rochel Immeinu! How so? Rochel gave the “signs” to her sister Leah to enable her to marry Yaakov, and to spare her the shame of being discovered as an imposter! How was it possible for Rochel to reach such an unimaginable level of *mesiras nefesh* for her sister? Rabbi Ephraim Wachsman answers, **Rochel visualized Leah’s pain and shame** when she would be unable to answer Yaakov’s query about the “signs”. Rochel said, **“I cannot bear my sister’s pain and shame.”** Accordingly, says Rabbi Spero, perhaps this explains why only Rochel succeeded in arousing Hashem’s mercy for the Jewish people in exile, after the Patriarchs and Moshe Rabbeinu failed (Eichah Rabbah, Pesichta). Rochel argued: “Maybe the Jewish people do not deserve mercy,” argued Rochel, “but how can You bear the pain of Your children’s suffering? Look how I pushed aside my own wishes and needs because I could not bear my sister’s pain.” Thereupon, Hashem responded to Rochel, *“For your sake, I will return Israel to their home.”*

All because of the merit of Rochel’s empathy - her visualization of Leah’s pain – this merit is guaranteed to save the day for the Jewish people! From our Mamma Rochel we learn that the merit of being *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* elicits Hashem’s mercy and salvation, even when all other avenues of hope are lost.

How do we emulate Mamma Rochel in being *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*? I suggest a very attainable goal – dedicating two minutes after lighting candles on Erev Shabbos, to reflect on the anguish of people who lack the basic happiness that we take for granted when we celebrate Shabbos with our families, such as couples confronted with infertility, singles yearning for a Shidduch, widows, divorcees and their children, etc. Visualize the sorrow of a Jewish wife who has been struggling to have children for years, as she lights candles and recites the prayer, *“Grant me the merit to raise children and grandchildren ... who love Hashem ... who illuminate the world with Torah and good deeds ... Please hear my supplication at this time.”* Feel the sadness in the hearts of children who cannot have both parents at their Shabbos table, because of, Heaven forbid, the death of a parent or divorce. How they long to reclaim their previous happy times – and yet – like sand through their little fingers, those days are gone forever. After “transplanting” yourself into their situation for a moment, beseech Hashem to bring happier times to these people, to fill the void in their lives and bless their Shabbos table with the happiness they desperately seek. These prayers, emerging from a heart filled with empathy, will open a Heavenly window and elicit Hashem’s mercy for people in need. After all, we are all Mamma Rochel’s children, and embracing her legacy of opening Heavenly gates, is in our spiritual genome!

“TRANSPLANTING” OURSELVES INTO THE PERSON IN DISTRESS:

- ❖ When we pray for people in distress, we view ourselves as if we are them by visualizing their struggles and imagining ourselves living through the same experience. This has the power to open a Heavenly window to induce Hashem’s blessings to flow to people in need.

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Day 7: Creating a "window" in Heaven for our prayers through *Nesiah B'ol*

The Gemara (Nedarim 40a; [Appendix B-3](#), p. 64) states that one who visits a sick person (*choleh*) causes him to live, whereas one who fails to visit causes him to die. The Gemara explains: When a person visits, he will beseech Hashem for mercy that the *choleh* be saved, whereas by failing to visit, he will not pray; consequently, the *choleh* will not be saved. The *Rosh* (Rabbeinu Asher ben Yechiel) writes that failing to visit is a great wrongdoing because if he had visited, he would have beseeched Heavenly mercy and perhaps it would have been an "עת רצון" (a time of favor) for his prayers to be accepted, resulting in the *choleh's* recovery. Now that he failed to visit, the opportunity for the עת רצון is lost and alas, the *choleh* will not recover.

²⁶Rav Avrohom Weinroth explains the above Gemara as follows: By visiting the *choleh*, my senses are directly confronted with the totality of his difficult situation, enabling me to identify with his plight. This, in turn, will bring me to pray with all my heart on his behalf which will cause him to live. We may deduce from this Gemara that prayer which emerges from an anguished heart that is *Nosei B'ol* with someone who is suffering, has the power to create a window in the gates of Heaven to penetrate and evoke Hashem's mercy for the person in distress, thereby eliciting salvation for him or her.

A similar theme is powerfully described by ³Rav Yeruchem Levovitz: *"Tefillah (prayer) is defined by the degree that we share another's pain ... when my anguish [for my friend's pain] is too great to be contained in one's heart, it pours forth in Tefillah."*

Praying on behalf of people in distress is certainly an act of kindness, especially when the prayer arises from a spirit of *Nesiah B'ol*, imagining the suffering of that person and trying to vicariously feel his or her pain. Thereby, when we pray, we will do so with the emotional urgency of someone who needs a personal salvation, rather than viewing it as someone else's problem, as ¹¹Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev writes: *"Since all Jewish souls originate from one spiritual origin, if one individual suffers pain, his fellow Jew will also feel it, just as a person with a serious injury or malady to one limb, whereby his entire body also senses distress."* Such prayer is far more suited to pierce the gates of Heaven and elicit salvation for the person in need.

The Gemara (Shabbos 67a; [Appendix B-4](#), p. 65) permits certain practices that were performed by Emorites, providing they have evident therapeutic value. The Gemara then questions why a Braisa permits dyeing an overly vital tree (which sheds its fruits prematurely) with a red dye, which was an Emorite practice. Surely the red dye has no therapeutic value for the tree; yet it is permitted? The Gemara answers, the purpose of dyeing the tree was to inform the public of the orchard owner's misfortune so that people will pray for Heavenly mercy on his behalf. Rav Yeruchem Levovitz (ibid) recounts that the Sabba of Kelm would frequently express the inspiration he derived from this Gemara: *"How deeply the middah of sharing in another's pain was ingrained in the hearts of former generations! From the simplest to the greatest of people, whenever they passed by and noticed a failing tree, they implicitly understood that the tree's owner was in distress even if he said nothing, and thus, became so deeply immersed in his pain that they would pray for mercy on his behalf. Such was their exalted level of sharing in their fellow's pain, [that it effervesced into heartfelt prayer on his behalf]."*

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Sefer Chassidim (Siman 553) says: *“Some people pray and their requests are answered, while other people’s prayers are not answered. The reason that some people’s prayers go unanswered is because they do not take the suffering and humiliation of others to their heart, i.e., the pain of another person fails to arouse them to pray on their fellow’s behalf.”* We see from here that the effectiveness of our prayers on behalf of other is directly proportional to the degree of *Nesiah B'ol* we project into our prayers for them (which is also stated by ⁸⁹Rav Matisyahu Salomon).

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, ZT”L, the legendary Rosh HaYeshiva of the Mirrer Yeshiva in Jerusalem, was well known for his keen sensitivity to the suffering of others and his awesome empathy for others. ²⁷Rabbi Paysach Krohn describes the following scene during the 1976 Entebbe hostage crisis: The Mirrer Yeshiva scheduled a gathering to recite Tehillim. When Rav Shmuelevitz attempted to enter the *Beis HaMedrash* and saw the huge tense crowd waiting to say Tehillim, he could go no further; he grabbed onto a chair and began to sob uncontrollably for several minutes. Finally, the Rosh Yeshiva composed himself enough to walk to front of the *Beis HaMedrash* to speak to the yeshiva students. Through his muffled sobs, the Rosh Yeshiva managed to force out only one sentence in a barely audible voice choked with pain: *“Imagine how you would be saying Tehillim if it were your father or mother, your brother or sister, who was there.”* Clearly, the Rav Shmuelevitz was urging his students to visualize the suffering of the hostages as if they were personally victimized, to ensure that their prayer would arise from the depths of their souls. We now know the “rest of the story”, how their prayers were answered when nearly all the hostages were rescued alive in a miraculous and daring raid by the courageous *Chayalim*. When we visualize our fellow Jew’s pain and then channel our shared anguish into heartfelt Tefilla on his or her behalf, the opportunities for salvation are endless.

TEFILLA IS DEFINED BY THE DEGREE WE SHARE IN ANOTHER PERSON’S ANGUISH:

- ❖ Tefilla which emerges from an anguished heart that identifies with someone in distress, has the power to create a window in the gates of Heaven to ascend and evoke Hashem’s mercy for people who are suffering, thereby eliciting salvation for them.
- ❖ The effectiveness of our prayers on behalf of others, is directly proportional to the degree we experience their pain as our own.

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Day 8: Avrohom Avinu and Moshe Rabbeinu prayed with the spirit of *Nesiah B'ol*

²⁸Rav Chatzkel Levenstein explains that Avrohom Avinu exemplified the *middah* of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* when he prayed to avert the destruction of the Sodomites. The Torah records Hashem's decision to inform Avrohom of His plans to destroy Sodom (Bereishis 18: 17-19). In Pasuk 18:18, G-d said, "For Avrohom is surely to become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed through him." The Ramban explains that Hashem said:

"Now, Avrohom is destined to become a great and mighty nation, and his memory will be a blessing among his descendants and among the nations of the earth. Therefore, I will not conceal My plans from him, for otherwise, future generations will say, "How did Hashem conceal it from him? Or, if He did tell him about it, how could the righteous Avrohom be so cruel (נתאכזר) toward his neighbors nearby, showing no mercy – he did not pray for them at all?"

We learn from the Ramban, says Rav Chatzkel, that one who fails to pray for another in need, exhibits cruelty: *We see that a Tzaddik is obligated to pray and exhibit concern for the wellbeing of the people in the world. One who fails to pray accordingly, **exhibits the middah of cruelty**. Although Hashem, blessed be He, wants to punish the evildoers (referring to the Sodomites), this has no bearing on one's obligation to pray and be concerned for them.*

Based on the following Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 49:9; [Appendix A-3](#), p. 60), Rav Chatzkel explains that Avrohom Avinu merited that Hashem spoke to him solely because of the *middah* of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* that he exemplified when he prayed on behalf of the Sodomites:

The Holy One, blessed is He, said to Avrohom: "You love righteousness, and you hate wickedness; therefore has G-d, your G-d, anointed you with oil of joy from among your peers" (Tehillim 45:8). This is interpreted as follows: "You love righteousness" – you love to vindicate My creations; "and you hate wickedness" – you refuse to assign any guilt to them. "Accordingly has G-d, your G-d, anointed you with oil of joy from among your peers" – from Noach until yourself there were ten generations; yet, from all of them, I did not speak with a single one, only with you," as the verse (Bereishis 12:1) states: "And Hashem said to Avrohom, go for yourself."

Rav Chatzkel quotes the Zohar which says that while Avrohom Avinu profusely prayed for the Sodomites, Moshe Rabbeinu went a step further by volunteering to sacrifice his *Olam Habboh* to save Israel from the decree of destruction after they sinned with the Golden Calf (see [Day 5](#) lesson). Moshe Rabbeinu reached an even higher level of *Nesiah B'ol* in his prayers than Avrohom Avinu because of his willingness to sacrifice his *Olam Habboh* to save his brethren. For this reason, the Zohar says, Moshe Rabbeinu is called "the faithful shepherd."

Throughout their difficult exile in Shanghai during the desperate times of World War II, Rav Chatzkel stressed to the Mirrer Yeshiva students that although each Jew has an obligation to pray for the well-being of others and thus, share in their pain and suffering, a *ben Torah* is obligated even more than others: ²⁹*"It is the responsibility of the ben Torah to seek the welfare of the Jewish people at all times and this is especially true now when there is*

Section 2: The power of prayer with the spirit of *Nesiah B'ol* to help people in need

so much danger, illness and suffering ... It is all important that the ben Torah spends time each day to deeply reflect on the troubles confronting Israel and to share in the burden of both the congregation and the individual. It is of greatest importance that you concentrate on the well-being of the Jewish nation during prayer."

³⁰Rav Elazar Menachem Shach repeated a story told by the Ponovezher Rov about his visit to Radin to receive a Brocha from the Chofetz Chaim. When the young Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman arrived at the Chofetz Chaim's home, he was told that the *Gadol* had left and would be returning shortly. As he sat and waited for the Chofetz Chaim to arrive, he began hearing piercing cries from the upper story of the house, and he felt compelled to investigate what was happening there. The Chofetz Chaim's family assured him, though, that there was no need for concern; the voice belonged to the Chofetz Chaim himself. "Before you came," they explained, "he was told that a certain woman is having a difficult childbirth and her life is in danger, and he went upstairs to say Tehillim." When Rav Shach repeated this story, he declared, "*The Chofetz Chaim wept so passionately because he was a Nosei B'ol; he shared the burdens of others. The woman was not his granddaughter or niece; she was simply another Jew. But who else would be concerned for her, if not the Chofetz Chaim? We must learn from him to share the burdens of others.*"

AVROHOM AVINU AND MOSHE RABBEINU PRAYED WITH *NESSIAH B'OL*

- ❖ On account of Avrohom Avinu's prodigious *Nesiah B'ol* that he displayed when he prayed on behalf of the Sodomites, he merited that Hashem spoke to him.
- ❖ Moshe Rabbeinu prayed with complete *Mesiras Nefesh* – willing to sacrifice his *Olam Habboh* to save the Jewish people from destruction after the sin of the Golden Calf. In the merit of this supreme *Nesiah B'ol*, the Jewish people were saved, and Moshe is called the "faithful shepherd."

Section 3: The reciprocal *Nesiah B'ol* relationship between G-d and the Jewish people

Day 9: The Divine *middah*, “לְשִׂאֵרֵית נְחֻלָּתוֹ”, is the source of our ability to be *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*

Hashem is the ultimate *Nosei B'ol* – He, so to speak, feels and experiences all the suffering and joy of the Jewish people as if it were His own. At the burning bush encounter, the Midrash (Tanchuma, Shemos 14; [Appendix A-4](#)) says Hashem told Moshe that His revelation from a thorn bush was an expression of “עָמְוֹ אֲנֹכִי בְצָרָה” – “I am with him (i.e., the Jewish people) in distress.” In Shemos 3:7, Hashem said to Moshe: “I have indeed seen the affliction of My people in Egypt and I have heard its outcry because of its taskmasters; for I know its pains.” Rashi explains: “I have focused My heart to understand and know his pains, and I did not hide My eyes, and I shall not block My ears to their cry.”³¹ Rav Yeruchem Levovitz explains that when Hashem rises up to save the Jewish people from their troubles, it is as if He is rescuing Himself – as if He can no longer endure the pain He suffers on our account. He saves us with the spirit of partnership in all our suffering. Moreover, even when a single individual suffers, the Shechinah (Divine Presence) says: “I am burdened by My head, I am burdened by My arm,” (Mishna, Sanhedrin 46a; [Appendix B-5](#), p. 65), i.e., Hashem intimately feels that individual’s distress.

In *Sefer Tomer Devorah* (fourth Divine *middah*, “לְשִׂאֵרֵית נְחֻלָּתוֹ” - Hashem’s keen empathy with the Jewish people), the *Ramak* writes: G-d says, “שִׂאֵר בְּשֵׁר לִי עִמָּהֶם” - “I have a close (familial) relationship with them (*Klal Yisrael*).” Consequently, Hashem feels the pain of the Jewish people and He experiences their distress, as the verse (Isaiah 63:9) says “In all their distress, He (G-d) was distressed.” The expression “שִׂאֵר בְּשֵׁר” is explained by³² Rav Yaacov Haber as “extensions”, using a neurophysiology analogy. When a person’s foot is injured, the central nervous system (brain) receives the pain sensation via communication from the nerve endings in the foot. In an analogous manner, Hashem, so to speak, is the central nervous system and we are His extensions, i.e., the nerve endings attached to Him. As such, any pain we experience, is His own pain.

The “human equivalent” of the Divine *middah*, “לְשִׂאֵרֵית נְחֻלָּתוֹ” (G-d’s empathy), is *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*. Being *Nosei B'ol* means expanding my “emotional experience” to encompass my fellow man’s emotions – to feel his or her pain or joy as if it was my own.

The Mishna in *Pirkei Avos* (3:2) says that if not for people’s fear of the government, each person would swallow his fellow man alive. Left to our own devices, man would treat his fellow in the most egregiously cruel manner. If man’s very nature is so selfish, the ideal of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* - feeling another person’s emotions, seems like a totally unattainable delusion. How can we be expected to strive for a virtue that is so selfless, which sets aside boundaries of self to embrace and identify with our fellow man? The answer, says^{28,33} Rav Chatzkel Levenstein, when we strive to elevate ourselves above our natural limitations, we can express the Divine portion (חֵלֶק אֱלֹהִים מִמַּעַל) that is hidden within ourselves. When Hashem created man in His Divine image (*b'Tzelem Elokim*), He implanted within us the potential to develop noble qualities that mirror His Divine attributes. It is this Divine portion within us that enables us to emulate G-d’s *middah* of “לְשִׂאֵרֵית נְחֻלָּתוֹ”. Hashem thereby endowed us with the ability to access a portion of His capacity to share another’s feelings, transcending our human limitations. This should give us great encouragement by realizing that the potential to reach great heights in *Nesiah B'ol* is inherent to our “spiritual DNA”; it merely requires unveiling to express it.

Section 3: The reciprocal *Nesiah B'ol* relationship between G-d and the Jewish people

The notion that we can transcend our natural human limitations to transform our essence from destructive selfishness to a sublime G-dly empathic existence whereby we keenly identify with each other's feelings, is consistent with the teachings of Rebbe Schneur Zalman of Liadi (Tanya 32): The greater value we place on our soul relative to our body, the more unified the Jewish people become, enabling us to feel for each other the way we feel for ourselves. The reason for this is because, "*The soul is part of G-d Himself, and G-d is absolute unity*" (¹⁰Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski).

The *Nesiah B'ol* of Rav Chatzkel for the suffering of the Jewish people in general and for any individual in pain, was legendary. In his eulogy for Rav Chatzkel, ³⁴Rav Shmuel Rozovsky said: "*We can say to future generations that we merited to see the essence of an Eved Hashem (servant of G-d) in the person of the Mashgiach (Rav Chatzkel) ... One only had to hear him recite a chapter of Tehillim over the pain of Klal Yisrael to become a baal teshuvah (repentant person).*" ³⁵Rav Michel Yehuda Lefkowitz was once present when Rav Chatzkel returned from visiting a sick person. Upon entering the room, Rav Chatzkel proceeded to explain with deep emotion, at great length and in minute detail, each aspect of the person's mental, emotional, and physical pain and anguish – literally recreating the patient's condition to all of those present. Later Rav Lefkowitz commented, "*We then saw what it means to bear the suffering of another.*"

Rav Chatzkel's beloved partner in leading the Mirrer Yeshiva through the World War II years in Shanghai, Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, was also exemplary in the *middah* of *Nosei B'ol*. ³⁶Rav Shmuelevitz wept and spoke every Yom Kippur about the need to empathize with the dangers that the IDF soldiers face on a daily basis. He stated that we all owe a tremendous debt of *Hakoras Hatov* (gratitude) to the IDF soldiers. ³⁷Once, when told of the loss of a IDF soldier's life, Rav Shmuelevitz cried, paused, cried again, paused and cried again. He explained, "*First I cried for his life cut so short, then I thought of his mother's pain, and then, his father's pain*". ³⁸Rav Chaim Walkin recalled the following event about his Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Shmuelevitz, while studying at the Mir Yeshiva in Jerusalem: "During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, he entered the Beis HaMidrash and asked: '*Young men, did you sleep last night? Are you sleeping well at night? Do you know how many mothers are not sleeping at night because their sons are at the battlefield? How can you sleep peacefully? Where is the sharing in the pain of another person? Where is the Nosei B'ol?*'"

THE SOURCE OF OUR ABILITY TO BE *NOSEI B'OL IM CHAVEIRO*:

- ❖ Our ability to feel another person's emotions is rooted in Hashem's *middah* of "לְשִׂאֵרֵיט נְחֻלָּתוֹ", i.e., G-d's complete identification with the pain or joy of His children, *Am Yisrael*. When Hashem created us in His Divine image (*b'Tzelem Elokim*), He endowed us with the ability to emulate His Divine *middos*, including His *middah* of "לְשִׂאֵרֵיט נְחֻלָּתוֹ".

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Day 10: Being *Nosei B'ol* with G-d's pain and focusing on the restoration of His glory

In the [Day 9](#) lesson, we mentioned that the Shechinah (the Divine Presence) is anguished when a person suffers. Therefore, ³⁹Rav Shlomo Wolbe advises, when praying on behalf of an ill person (*choleh*), the primary intent of our prayers should be that the Shechinah be relieved of pain when the *choleh* is cured. Our prayer should also express our wish to see *Kavod Shomayim* (Heavenly glory) amplified when the *choleh* recovers and serves Hashem in full strength, as Rav Wolbe writes, "This is the entire focus of all Tefillah – to plead that the Heavenly Glory be revealed in the world."

Along the same vein, ⁴⁰Rebbi Chaim of Volozhin states in *Sefer Nefesh HaChaim*: "When an individual is in pain, he should plead to Hashem for relief of G-d's pain, for every human pain produces great anguish to the Shechinah Above." Moreover, the subjugation of the Jewish people to oppression by the nations during our exile, causes Chillul Hashem (desecration of Hashem's Name), as the prophet Yechezkel states (36:20), "It (the Jewish people) came among the nations where they came (in exile), and they desecrated My holy Name when it was said of them, 'These are the people of Hashem, but they departed His land.'" Thus, the *Nefesh HaChaim* says: "... when Jews suffer from oppression, we are required to pour out our souls in prayer over the desecration of Hashem's Name." When our motivation in requesting relief from suffering is to remove the Chillul Hashem, we are, in fact, *Nosei B'ol* with Hashem since the theme of our prayers is our identification with His pain. The focus of our prayers for the ultimate Redemption should be to plead for the restoration of G-d's glory (*Kavod Shomayim*) via the Redemption, as stated in Yechezkel (36:23-24): "I will sanctify My great Name that is desecrated among the nations ... I will take you from among the nations and gather you from all the lands, and I will bring you to your own soil."

The ²⁴Sabba of Kelm writes, one who develops his character to feel another person's pain, will also feel the pain of the Shechinah. In other words, our personality will become one that aspires to find ways to heighten *Kavod Shomayim* wherever we turn, and any diminution of Kiddush Hashem (sanctification of Hashem's Name) in the world will become our personal pain. Similarly, ⁴¹Rav Chatzkel Levenstein declares, one who feels pain for his fellow's suffering will develop a desire and concern to ensure that Kiddush Hashem will arise from every situation.

How does being *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* with our fellow Jew cultivate an inner concern for *Kavod Shomayim* and a desire to sanctify Hashem's Name in the world? In the [Day 9](#) lesson, we explained that the "שָׂאֵר בְּעוֹר" relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people denotes the fact that we are Hashem's "extensions," akin to nerve endings that are extensions of the brain (per Rav Yaacov Haber). If we are *Nosei B'ol* with our fellow Jews, i.e., feeling the pain of Hashem's extensions, we will come to be *Nosei B'ol* with Hashem Himself (i.e., feeling His pain due to His children's suffering). Our *Nosei B'ol* capability will also advance to feeling Hashem's pain from the desecration of His Name (e.g., due to our exile and destruction of the Beis HaMikdash). As a corollary, we will endeavor to uphold Hashem's honor by always acting in a way that sanctifies His Name.

In the [Day 3](#) lesson, we saw that through our *Nesiah B'ol* with fellow Jews, the kinship among us is greatly strengthened. Thus, our unity (i.e., our "נִפְשׁ אֶחָת" existence, see [Day 4](#) lesson) is enhanced by being *Nosei B'ol Im*

Section 3: The reciprocal *Nesiah B'ol* relationship between G-d and the Jewish people

Chaveiro. ⁴²Rav Chatzkel explains that our proclamation of Hashem's sovereignty is directly proportional with the extent of our unity as "נפש אחת". This is supported by the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 15:18; [Appendix A-5](#), p. 60): *When is Hashem's throne, so to speak, established Above? When Israel becomes "אגודה אחת" – one bundle*. Hashem's sovereignty becomes firmly established when the Jewish people are unified as "one bundle". It follows logically that when we are *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*, since our unity becomes enhanced, we perfect our coronation of Hashem as King over the world. This might explain why the Sabba of Kelm and Rav Chatzkel declare that developing the *middah* of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* leads us to prioritize Kiddush Hashem as the primary focus of our lives.

⁴³Rav Matisyahu Salomon comments that when we emulate Hashem's ways, our behavior creates Kiddush Hashem in the world. Since we are created in the Divine image (*b'Tzelem Elokim*), our sublime behavior which resembles Hashem's *middos*, proclaims the greatness of our Creator Who endowed us with a "portion" of His Divine qualities. On this basis, Rav Salomon explains the ⁴⁴*Sifri* ([Appendix B-9](#), p. 66) which infers a reference to the Mitzvah of emulating Hashem's ways from the verse (Yoel 3:5): "כל אשר יקרא בשם ה' ימלט". The *Sifri*, based on its homiletic interpretation of this verse, "Everyone who will be called by the Name of Hashem will escape," asks, "Is it possible for a human being to be called by Hashem's Name?" The *Sifri* answers, a person is "called by the Name of Hashem" by following in His ways: "Just as the Omnipresent is called merciful and gracious, you, too, should be merciful and gracious." When the world sees that our noble behavior is governed by the exalted *middos* through which G-d is described, this itself proclaims the greatness of Hashem's Name, thereby publicly creating a Kiddush Hashem. Accordingly, Rav Salomon's beautiful insight helps us understand how being *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* enables us to prioritize Kiddush Hashem in our lives since our behavior resembles Hashem's *middah* of "לשאריית נהלתו", and thus, we will be counted among those "who will be called by the Name of Hashem."

BEING *NOSEI B'OL* WITH G-D'S PAIN AND INCREASING HIS GLORY IN THE WORLD

- ❖ The underlying theme of all prayer is to plead that *Kavod Shomayim* (Heavenly Glory) will be revealed in the world.
- ❖ We are enjoined to feel the pain of the Shechinah and pray for end of this pain, i.e., when Hashem's glory will be restored at the time of our redemption.
- ❖ By being *Nosei B'ol* with our fellow man, we will become sensitized to feel Hashem's pain and to increase Kiddush Hashem in the world.

Section 4: Models of living a life of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* in the Torah

Day 11: Moshe Rabbeinu's *Nesiah B'ol* was the basis for Hashem appointing him as the nation's leader

⁴⁵Rav Matisyahu Salomon notes that the Torah records very few events in Moshe Rabbeinu's life from birth until the encounter at the burning bush, a period of 80 years which is chronicled in a mere 21 verses! Rav Salomon cites the Sabba of Kelm to explain that the Torah only recounts those events which demonstrate Moshe's qualifications to be chosen by Hashem as the leader of the Jewish people. The few events which the Torah captures for posterity, are remarkable because they demonstrate Moshe Rabbeinu's supreme *Nesiah B'ol*, indicating that it was this virtue alone that qualified Moshe to become the Jewish people's redeemer and transmitter of the Torah. The Sabba delineates these seminal events in Moshe's Rabbeinu's life which bear witness to his exalted *middah* of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*, and thus, his worthiness to lead the Jewish people:

Event A: Moshe leaves Pharaoh's palace to witness and share the brutal slavery of the Jewish people.

Event B: Moshe intervenes to defend the Jew who was attacked by the Egyptian taskmaster.

Event C: Moshe intervenes to stop two Jewish men from fighting with each other. This event, along with "Event B", led to Moshe receiving a death sentence and his subsequent escape to Midyan.

Event D: Moshe intervenes to defend Yisro's daughters from rogue shepherds in Midyan.

The Sabba remarks that each of these events successively illustrate higher gradations in Moshe Rabbeinu's *middah* of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*. **Event A** illustrates how the mass suffering of the Jewish people affected Moshe Rabbeinu to the extent that he left his palatial office, exchanged his regal attire for a common laborer's clothes, and helped his brethren bear their onerous burdens (see Midrash, [Appendix A-6](#), p. 61). **Event B** demonstrates that the oppression of even a single individual by his tormentor affected Moshe so much as to jeopardize his entire standing in Pharaoh's court and his very life, by defending the oppressed person. In this case, the victim and his oppressor were well defined and distinct, innocent versus evil; thus, our instinctive reaction is to rise to the defense of the innocent victim. In **Event C**, this clear distinction did not exist since both parties were culpable for participating in reprehensible behavior. Our instinctive compassion would not easily be aroused for such people, and we might easily justify not getting involved. Yet, Moshe Rabbeinu could not bear seeing his brethren engaging in such behavior and he intervened to stop them. In the above three events, Moshe Rabbeinu's intervention was on behalf of his own people in his native land, which afforded him some sense of security. However, in **Event D**, Moshe was a fugitive without shelter on foreign soil among strange people, with no one to protect him in a clash between himself and the locals. He could easily have said, "why should I meddle in the altercations between one non-Jew and another?" After all, his intervention to save a fellow Jew in a country where he knew the authorities, nearly cost him his life. Certainly, he could not expect to be treated fairly in a totally strange country if he intervened in a local quarrel. Nonetheless, his identification with other people's suffering pained Moshe so much that he defended Yisro's daughters from the local ruffians and even watered their animals. By selecting these events to be recorded, the Torah illustrates that Moshe's *middah* of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* was the basis for Hashem choosing him to lead the Jewish people.

⁴⁶Rav Chatzkel Levenstein explains that Moshe Rabbeinu's *zechus* (merit), by which he merited to receive Hashem's revelation to him at the burning bush, was his identification with the suffering of the Jewish people as the Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 1: 27 and 2:6; [Appendix A-6](#)) says: *The Holy One, blessed is He, said to Moshe, "You*

Section 4: Models of living a life of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* in the Torah

left aside your usual affairs to go out and observe the suffering of Israel, treating them as brothers. So too, I will, so to speak, leave aside the upper and the lower realms and speak to you.” ... The Holy One, blessed is He, said “This person (Moshe) is downcast and upset upon seeing the affliction of Israel in Egypt. Therefore, [since he feels their pain], he is worthy of being their shepherd.” Immediately, it states: “G-d called out to him from amid the bush.” Moshe merited that Hashem talked to him, not due to his wisdom or lofty spiritual level, but rather, because he emulated G-d’s *middos*, by virtue of his *Nesiah B’ol* with the Jewish people.

Before Moshe Rabbeinu was forced to flee Egypt, he was appointed to a high-ranking position in Pharaoh’s court (Rashi Shemos 2:11). Yet, the Midrash (ibid) describes how Moshe would remove his princely garments and go out to physically share in the burdens of his enslaved brethren:

Moshe would see their burdens and [share their sorrow to the extent that he would] cry: “Woe is me on account of you! If only I could die for your sake! For there is no work as hard as working with clay.” And Moshe would lend a shoulder and assist every one of the Israelites ... Moshe would remove his royal garments and go to rearrange the Israelites’ burdens [in accordance with each one’s capacity].

Moshe Rabbeinu’s purpose in physically carrying the bricks and mortar was not to tangibly lighten the Jewish people’s workload (³¹Rav Yeruchem Levovitz, ⁴⁷Rav Shlomo Wolbe and ²Rav Chaim Friedlander). Millions of Jewish people were enslaved; hence, Moshe’s physical assistance would not accomplish “as much as a drop in the ocean” to reduce their workload! Rather, Moshe Rabbeinu’s purpose was two-fold: (1) To implant in his own heart a keen understanding of the depths of their distress, to enable him to feel their suffering; and (2) To be together with his brethren in their suffering and console them by seeing the noble Moshe share in their pain. To accomplish this, it was necessary for Moshe to advance his empathy with his brethren, from an inner passive state into concrete actions of sharing their burdens. From Moshe’s conduct, we learn that developing the *middah* of *Nosei B’ol Im Chaveiro* requires taking concrete action even if it does not tangibly ease someone’s suffering; physical actions foster within us the emotional capacity to share another person’s feelings. Moreover, when assisting someone in distress, we should not be dissuaded by “how insignificantly” (we think) our assistance will relieve the person’s hardship. Often the most difficult aspect of people’s pain is their sense of isolation, feeling they have no one to share their distress. Hence, even our seemingly minimal help will go a long way to encourage and strengthen the person’s spirits when he or she sees how we want to share in their distress. The fact that the person no longer feels alone in his or her suffering, provides great emotional support.

LESSONS FROM MOSHE RABBEINU - HOW TO BE *NOSEI B’OL IM CHAVEIRO*:

- ❖ Moshe Rabbeinu is the paradigm for sharing in the suffering of the community, deeply reflecting upon their distress, abandoning his position of privilege and nobility to physically participate in their suffering. He completely immersed himself in their distress in order to feel their pain.
- ❖ From Moshe Rabbeinu, we learn that we must translate the empathy in our hearts into concrete actions that demonstrate our sharing in someone’s suffering even if our actions do not tangibly improve the person’s distressful situation.

Section 4: Models of living a life of *Nesei B'ol Im Chaveiro* in the Torah

Day 12: Yosef HaTzaddik excelled in sharing the suffering of others, in all his stations of life

In Bereishis 41:50, the Torah states that two sons were born to Yosef HaTzaddik before the years of famine. The Gemara (Tannis 11a; [Appendix B-10](#), p. 67) derives from this verse that marital relations are prohibited during times of famine. *Tosfos* comment that Yosef's abstention from marital relations during the famine was a *middas chassidus* (pious practice, but not obligatory). The ⁵Sabba of Kelm and *Yibadel L'Chaim*, ⁴⁸Rav Matisyahu Salomon, view Yosef's pious conduct as an illustration of his exalted *Neseiah B'ol*, sharing in the suffering of the community in a personal way. Because of his refined character development, Yosef intuited this practice of self-denial during a communal calamity. Although Yosef and his immediate family were shielded from the ravages of hunger because of their privileged status in the royal palace, he identified with the people's suffering to such an extent, that this pious practice was the only possible conduct for him, as if it had been formally legislated!

This reference to Yosef's piety is part of a discussion in the above Gemara regarding the imperative of sharing in the community's suffering. The Gemara cites Moshe Rabbeinu as the paradigm of such sharing. During the war against Amalek, when Moshe needed to sit, he insisted on sitting on an uncomfortable stone, reasoning: *"Since the Children of Israel are steeped in distress, I, too, shall be with them in distress."* Yosef HaTzaddik and Moshe Rabbeinu lived with the same ideal of immersing themselves in the suffering of the community through specific practices of privation or pain. Even when my life is not directly affected by the suffering, I cannot sit back and enjoy the pleasures of life when my brethren are in distress, as the Gemara states, *"When the community is immersed in suffering, a person may not say: I will go to my home and I will eat and drink, and peace be upon you, my soul ... Rather, a person should suffer along with the community."*

The Sabba notes that, although the Torah's subtle hint to Yosef's supreme *Neseiah B'ol* is mentioned only after he became the viceroy of Egypt, Hashem elevated him to royal stature precisely because of Yosef's perfection in this *middah*. Thus, Hashem observed this character refinement within Yosef HaTzaddik even before he rose to prominence. Where do we see evidence of Yosef's *Neseiah B'ol* before he became the viceroy?

Rav Nochum Zev Dessler and Rav Sholom Schwadron offer the following beautiful insight: Yosef HaTzaddik was incarcerated in an Egyptian prison on trumped-up charges. Separated from his father and family for twenty years, he had every reason to be depressed, to feel sorry for himself. Yet, we find a completely different Yosef than what we would expect. Adding to the squalor of the Egyptian dungeon, the refined Yosef, scion of the noble Patriarchal heritage of *Klal Yisrael*, was locked up with hooligans – the lowest individuals in society. Among those imprisoned with him were Pharaoh's royal stewards, his baker and cupbearer. A prison is not a happy place, and it would take an astute, discerning and caring person to notice a change in someone's countenance. One day, Yosef looked at his two fellow prisoners and noticed a transformation in their facial expressions: *"Yosef came to them in the morning. He saw them and behold! They were aggrieved"* (Bereishis 40:6). They appeared more depressed than usual because of disturbing dreams they had the previous night. Yosef's concern and readiness to share in their anguish prompted him to ask them, *"Why do you appear downcast today?"* despite his own personal seemingly endless suffering. This led to Yosef's successful interpretation of their dreams, his release from prison to interpret Pharaoh's dream and appointment to viceroy of Egypt, sustaining his father and brothers

Section 4: Models of living a life of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* in the Torah

during the famine, and their descent to Egypt. It was all because Yosef noticed a change in the facial expression of the two royal stewards and he encouraged them to unburden their souls – due to his deep concern and empathy. It was all because of his august *middah*, *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*, that Yosef merited to become the king of Egypt, setting the stage for all the events leading to the redemption of the Jews from Egypt, receiving the Torah, and entering the Land of Israel (*from*: ⁴⁹Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum and ⁵⁰Rabbi Don Bacharach). The ⁵Sabba of Kelm concludes, “Go out and see which path a person should choose – to be *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* and thereby, merit all the blessings.”

⁵¹Rav Wolbe descriptively portrays the ordeal of someone who is suffering, as if locked in a prison of loneliness, separated from the circle of people who enjoy each other’s presence: “A person who has been stricken by illness or other suffering ... sits alone in a cave, in subterrestrial darkness. No one understands his pain ... If you reach out to join him in his prison ... to feel his pain and to give over your heart to understand his distress – you have broken the chains of his isolation.” Being *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* with this person unfetters him from the “prison” of isolation, by trying to understand his distress and sharing his burden.

⁵²Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, commenting on Rav Wolbe’s thoughts, adds practical advice how to reach out to a person “imprisoned” in loneliness: *All it may take (to uplift his mood) is saying “good morning” with a smile, showing respect to someone on the sidewalk, not ignoring him ... which takes all of 1½ seconds ... all the anguish, anger and agitation which enveloped him one second ago, has now vanished as if it never existed.* Indeed, this is the lesson we derive from Yosef HaTzaddik. Even in the depths of his own misery and abandonment, a wretched prisoner separated from his family, he reached out to others suffering in prison, exhibiting genuine concern for their anguish. In his state of suffering, Yosef’s reaching out to other souls in distress was an act of supreme sacrifice. And yet – so many doors of salvation were opened by his *Nesiah B'ol* !

The ⁵³Ruzhiner Rebbe, Rav Yisrael Friedman, was incarcerated by the Russian Czar for nearly two years on trumped up charges, suffering great humiliation and pain under terrible conditions in the notorious Kiev dungeons. In a powerful demonstration of kinship, Rav Meir of Premishlan took a vow to sit in darkness during the time the Rebbe was sitting in prison. It was also said that he did not sleep on a bed and avoided the use of silver vessels during those dark days. This demonstration of kinship emulated the actions of Moshe Rabbeinu and Yosef HaTzaddik who personally immersed themselves in the suffering of others in a physical manner.

LESSONS FROM YOSEF HATZADDIK – HOW TO BE *NOSEI B'OL IM CHAVEIRO*:

- ❖ Yosef HaTzaddik reached out to give cheer to fellow prisoners even when his own situation appeared hopeless, and he shared the common person’s suffering while he enjoyed supreme success and power. It was because of this *middah* that Hashem chose him to become the Egyptian ruler.
- ❖ Even when our own life is not directly affected by the suffering of the community, we must share in their distress by undertaking specific practices that remind us of their pain or discomfort.

Section 5: Why is *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* instrumental for Torah acquisition?

Day 13: Three approaches how being *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* facilitates Torah acquisition

1) A person who is *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* views situations from another person's perspective:

⁵⁴Rebbi Chaim of Volozhin explains that one who is *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* will show respect for his fellow's opinion. He will thus take pains to hear and thoroughly consider another person's views in Torah study and will not limit his understanding to fit his own initial position. ⁵⁵Rav Chaim Friedlander further elaborates: One who is a *Nosei B'ol* has freed himself from the limitations of viewing life exclusively from a personal perspective. Instead, he views a situation through the lens of the individual living through it, and therefore, is primed to share another person's emotions. Because of this aptitude, he will also merit to arrive at the truth in Torah since he is unconstrained by personal biases and is receptive to other people's approaches in Torah learning. Similarly, ⁵⁶Rav Matisyahu Salomon comments that a person who is a *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* will listen to his friend's view in Torah with an open mind even if it differs from his own view, rather than immediately trying to refute an opposing position. Consequently, his horizons will become expanded, and he will experience growth in Torah learning.

2) To acquire Torah, one must participate in the unity (*Achdus*) of the Jewish people:

The Torah was given to the Jewish people as one united community and not as many individuals (⁵⁷Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz). Rav Salomon elaborates: Because of the Torah's exalted spiritual nature, when we exist as many isolated individuals, no corporeal human being can grasp the Divine wisdom in the Torah. However, when we function as one collective soul ("נפש אחת"), Hashem sends us special Divine assistance to develop insight and depth in our Torah study. To merit this Divine assistance, we must act in a manner that preserves and advances our existence as "נפש אחת". This thought is reflected in the ⁵⁸*Tannah d'Bai Eliyahu* pertaining to *Matan Torah* ([Appendix A-12](#), p. 63): "The Holy One blessed is He, said, 'Since Israel has disavowed conflict and instead, embraced peace – creating a single encampment – now is the fitting time for Me to give them My Torah.'" Rashi's famous words (Shemos 19:2): "כאיש אחד בלב אחד" - "as one man, with one heart" (i.e., the Jewish people encamped in the Wilderness of Sinai as one united entity and were, therefore, worthy of receiving the Torah), convey the same message.

In the [Day 3](#) lesson, we saw that authentically sharing in another person's distress, promotes a powerful kinship between fellow Jews, reinforcing our status as "נפש אחת". Our enhanced existence "כאיש אחד בלב אחד" – "as one man, with one heart," therefore enables us to merit Divine assistance to learn and understand Torah.

Rav Salomon adds: A person who is a *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* will feel a keen concern for the spiritual welfare of his brethren, and therefore, will share his Torah knowledge with them to improve their lot. Thus, there is no one who is more worthy of receiving Torah from Hashem because his essence is bound to the unified communal existence of the Jewish people.

3) A *Nosei B'ol* searches for common roots to relate to his fellow's predicament. Torah study also seeks underlying commonalities to connect seemingly disparate topics:

Section 5: Why is *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* instrumental for Torah acquisition?

The Sabba of Kelm explains that the *middah* of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* actually facilitates developing an in-depth understanding of Torah. Rav Salomon explains: To attain an in-depth understanding of Torah, I must look beyond the external appearances of a situation to access the fundamental principles, i.e., to draw analogies between cases, extrapolating the core principles from one situation to another, without being constrained by the external presentation of a case (i.e., not limiting my understanding to the superficial features of a case in the Gemara or Halacha). Similarly, being *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*, by definition, requires extrapolating (or liberating myself) from my own personal experiences and emotions, to relate to the situation facing my friend, even though his challenges may have no tangible bearing on my own life. A *Nosei B'ol*, has trained himself to look beneath the surface to find common roots with his or her fellow, thereby relating to the other person's situation and empathizing with him or her. Hence, he is primed to develop an in-depth understanding of Torah.

Rav Yitzchak Breitowitz explains the Sabba's approach regarding the connection between *Nesiah B'ol* and Torah acquisition. The Gemara will often compare two areas that on their surface are very different, by identifying a common denominator between them which will either be the basis of a question or an answer. In order to make such an analogy, one must be able to remove the superficial and incidental differences to see the true common connection that the two disparate cases share. This same capacity, to remove the superficial differences so that things that appear different are seen as actually the same, is also required to be a *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*. One might argue: "I am different than you – why should your problems impact on my well-being?" However, if I remove the external "shell", i.e., our physicality and materialism, and instead focus on the underlying reality that we are all one rooted in Hashem's indivisible unity, I will understand that I am so connected to you, so that whatever is happening to you is also happening to me. Therefore, one who is *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* will merit to acquire the skills for incisive Torah learning.

HOW DOES BEING *NOSEI B'OL IM CHAVEIRO* FACILITATE TORAH ACQUISITION?

- ❖ One who is *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* has broadened his perspective to view situations through the lens of other people. Therefore, he will also listen to his friend's view in Torah with an open mind. Since he is receptive to all approaches, he will merit to reach the truth in Torah.
- ❖ When we are *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*, we strengthen Jewish unity (*Achdus*), i.e., our existence "as one man and with one heart" - "כאיש אחד בלב אחד". Therefore, we are deserving of Divine assistance to learn and understand Torah.
- ❖ In order to relate to another person's situation and empathize, a *Nosei B'ol* has learned to look beneath the surface to find fundamental common roots with his or her fellow. This skill is also instrumental to attain depth in Torah understanding, by seeking commonalities between seemingly disparate topics.

Section 6: What is the reason for the imperative to be *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*?

Day 14: The Mitzvah of “following in G-d’s ways”: Being *Nosei B'ol* emulates Hashem’s ways

In the [Day 9](#) lesson, we described Hashem’s solidarity with the Jewish nation’s suffering and His sharing in our pain. Hence, says ⁵⁰Rav Shlomo Wolbe, the Mitzvah of following in Hashem’s ways would obligate us to emulate His *Nesiah B’ol*, i.e., the Divine *middah* of “לְשִׂאֵרֵית נַחֲלָתוֹ”. The imperative to emulate Hashem’s ways is derived by Chazal from several sources. In the Gemara (Shabbos 133b; [Appendix B-6](#), p. 65), the word, “וְאֵנֹהוּ” (Shemos 15:2), is homiletically interpreted as “אֲנִי וְהוּא” – “*me and Him (Hashem)*,” from which we derive the Mitzvah to “*be like Him, just as He is gracious and compassionate, you too, should be gracious and compassionate.*”

The Rambam in Sefer HaMitzvos (‘מצוות עשה ח’) writes that the Mitzvah of emulating G-d’s ways is derived from the Torah’s words, “וְהִלַּכְתָּ בְּדַרְכֵי” (you shall go in Hashem’s ways; Devarim 28:9): “*The eighth mitzvah is that we are commanded to emulate G-d, may He be exalted, to the best of our ability. This Mitzvah is explained: ‘Just as the Holy One, blessed is He, is called gracious, you too, should be gracious. Just as the Holy One, blessed is He, is called compassionate, you too, should be compassionate.’*” The Rambam’s words are based on the ⁴²Sifri ([Appendix B-9](#), p. 66).

The Ramak (*Tomer Devorah, middah 4*) explains that Hashem identifies with our distress because of His intimate familial (“שִׂאֵר בְּשָׂר””) relationship with us. The Ramak then describes the imperative for us to emulate this Divine *middah*: “*All Jews are close familial relations (“שִׂאֵר בְּשָׂר”) with another because our souls are combined together ... Therefore, it is fitting to seek the benefit of our fellow, we should be pleased with our fellow’s success, and his honor should be as dear to us as our own since we are in fact one and the same ... [Our fellow’s pain] should cause us anguish as if we were immersed in the same pain ourselves.*” The close familial bonds within the Jewish people dictate that a fellow Jew’s suffering would pain each of us and another person’s good fortune would bring us joy, just as the members of a close family feel for each other.

The following stories illustrate how several Tzaddikim emulated Hashem’s *middah* of “לְשִׂאֵרֵית נַחֲלָתוֹ” on a very superlative level, as demonstrated by their keen identification with the suffering of fellow Jews.

⁵⁹During World War I, the saintly Chofetz Chaim could not rest. He grieved constantly for the suffering endured by *Klal Yisrael* throughout Europe. He was well into his eighties when his wife woke up in the middle of the night and noticed that her saintly husband was not in his bed. She rose quickly to see if he was feeling well, and found him lying on the cold, hard floor, with his hands bent under his head in place of a pillow. Seeing her elderly husband in such a position frightened her, so he explained his actions: “I was lying so comfortably in my warm bed, and then I began to think of all my fellow Jews who have been forced from their homes by the advancing armies and have no warm bed to sleep in. *How can I sleep in my bed while others sleep on the cold, hard floors? I, too, will do the same. So, I arose and lay on the floor as well.*” In a slightly different version, the Chofetz Chaim explained that at a time when Jewish soldiers were struggling, fighting for their lives in bunkers and foxholes, grappling with the bitter cold in the winter and the unbearable heat in the summer, he just could not permit himself to sleep in a bed. Similarly, when Rav Chaim Soloveitchik was the Rav of Brisk, half the city burned down leaving hundreds of Jews homeless. Rav Chaim promptly moved out of his home and slept on a hard bench in a

Section 6: What is the reason for the imperative to be *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*?

Beis Medrash, exclaiming. “How can I sleep in a comfortable bed when so many people do not have a roof covering them?!”

^{60,61}Another example of profound *Nesiah B'ol* involves Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer (the father-in-law of Rav Aharon Kotler). His grandson, Rav Shneur Kotler, who was engaged to be married, escaped the horrors of Europe during World War II by staying with Rav and Rebbitzin Meltzer in Israel (Palestine). Rav Shneur's future Rebbitzin had escaped to Shanghai. Needless to say, the grandparents became very close to Rav Shneur. After the war, when it was time to say goodbye to Rav Shneur who was leaving for America to be married, Rav Meltzer escorted him down from their fourth-floor apartment. Halfway down, Rav Meltzer stopped on the stairs, blessed his grandson, wished him “Mazel Tov” and went back up to his apartment. People who saw this were astounded – why didn't the Rav accompany his grandson down to the taxi waiting in the street? Rav Meltzer explained, “Do you know how many people in this building would do anything to have a child, let alone a grandchild, who survived the war? Do you know how hard it would be for the woman across the street looking out the window, who lost her entire family? *How could I go down to the street and embrace my grandchild, flaunting my joy publicly, when these people can't do the same?!*”

⁶²Rav Chaim Stein, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Telshe Yeshiva, often spoke publicly about the plight of young women having trouble finding a *shidduch*. Incredibly, he even invoked these women's anguish during his heartrending eulogy for his own son, Rav Sholom Refoel Yehuda Stein, who passed away at a relatively young age. During his eulogy, the Rosh Yeshiva leaned over his son's *aron* (casket) and spoke to him in almost a whisper: “My dear Sholom Rephoel Yehuda, don't forget your widow, don't forget your mother and your daughter and the entire family. Don't forget *alleh Yiddishe techter* (all of the Jewish daughters) who need to find their *zivugim* (marriage match). Go to the *Kisei Hakavod* (Divine Throne of Glory) and say '*kra roah gezar dineinu*' – ‘tear up the harsh decree.’” Rav Chaim repeated this last plea three times before he stepped down from his eulogy.

May the examples and teachings of these Tzaddikim inspire us to follow in their footsteps and actualize the Divine qualities that Hashem has endowed in us.

THE MITZVAH OF EMULATING HASHEM'S WAYS AND BEING *NOSEI B'OL IM CHAVEIRO*:

- ❖ The Mitzvah of emulating Hashem's ways mandates that we emulate His Divine empathy (i.e., the Divine *middah* of “לְשֹׂאֵרֵי תַנְחֵלְתוּ”), i.e., to be *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*.
- ❖ When Hashem created us in His Divine image (*b'Tzelem Elokim*), He empowered us to reach levels of *Nesiah B'ol* that transcend natural human limitations.
- ❖ The “שְׂאֵר בְּעָר” (close familial) bonds within the Jewish nation enable each Jew to feel his fellow's pain, just as members of a close family would feel for each other.

Section 6: What is the reason for the imperative to be *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*?

Day 15: *Nesiah B'ol* transforms the interpersonal Mitzvos we perform into a service of the heart

⁴⁷Rav Wolbe declares that *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* is the fundamental *middah* that defines all the interpersonal (בין אדם לחבירו) Mitzvos we perform: “מדה זו היא מדה שרשית העמוק לכל המצוות שבין אדם לחבירו”. One might ask: why must we become partners in our friend’s pain, to feel it as if it were our own? Why is it insufficient to simply deliver acts of kindness (*Chesed*) to those in need?

The quality of the *Chesed* acts we perform, e.g., feeding the hungry, visiting the ill (*Bikur Cholim*) etc., can range across a wide spectrum – from “apathetic and disengaged” at one end – to “empathic and loving” at the opposite end. For example, the Mitzvah of *Bikur Cholim*, could be carried out with genuine care, taking pains to ensure that the ill person’s needs are addressed, reassuring him that his wellbeing is of foremost importance on our mind, or we could “pay our visit” merely to discharge our duty and then leave without giving the person another thought.

The Rambam in Hilchos Matnos Aniyim (10: 4-5; [Appendix B-12](#), p. 68) states, “Anyone who gives charity to a poor person ... should give it to him with a pleasant countenance, with joy (to perform the Mitzvah), commiserating with him about his plight ... he should speak to him words of sympathy and comfort.” The quality of being *Nosei B'ol* with the poor person’s plight, receiving him with a countenance that demonstrates a true joy to help him, is the factor that imbues the act of giving charity with a “living spirit”, thereby creating the holy Mitzvah of *Tzedaka* which the Rambam describes as “an identifying mark for a righteous person, a descendant of Avrohom, our Patriarch” (ibid, 10:1). Even when one has nothing to give the poor person, the Rambam says we console him with words. This theme is found in several statements of Chazal including the Midrash (see below) and the Gemara (Bava Basra 9b): *Rebbi Yitzhak says: “Anyone who gives a peruta to a poor person receives six blessings, and whoever consoles him with words (of comfort and encouragement) receives eleven blessings.”*

⁸Rav Yeruchem Levovitz asserts that the essence of *Bikur Cholim* (visiting the ill) is, “to sense and feel the pain of the ill person in whatever manner possible, for only in this way, one truly alleviates his suffering.” Merely walking into the hospital room to discharge one’s obligation “does not meet the essential parameters of this Mitzvah,” and therefore, would not fulfill the Mitzvah of *Bikur Cholim* even at a minimal level. Just as the Rambam described regarding the Mitzvah of *Tzedaka*, Rav Yeruchem teaches us that the *middah* of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* imbues a “living spirit” into mechanical acts of kindness, transforming them into the true “צורה” (form) of the Mitzvah which Hashem commanded. Similarly, Rav Wolbe says that *Nesiah B'ol* is a critical component for the Mitzvos of *Bikur Cholim* and *Nichum Aveilim* (comforting mourners). Perhaps, this why the ⁵Sabba of Kelm described *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* as “כליל המעלות” – “the crown of all virtues.” Hence, Rav Wolbe’s assertion that *Nosei B'ol* is the fundamental *middah* that defines all interpersonal Mitzvos, is now understandable: Since *Chesed* performed with the spirit of *Nesiah B'ol* is qualitatively transformed from a mere mechanical act to a service of the heart, therefore, the *middah* of *Nosei B'ol* is a critical component of all interpersonal Mitzvos.

The notion that *Nesiah B'ol* converts our acts of “giving,” from a mechanical act to a service of the heart, is corroborated by ²Rav Chaim Friedlander who states that when we are *Nosei B'ol*, “we give someone a piece of our very being.” This statement is especially meaningful based on the verse (Isaiah 58:10): “[If] you **offer your soul** to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, your light will shine in the darkness, and your deepest gloom will

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be like the noon." The Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 34:15; [Appendix A-7](#), p. 61) interprets the words, "offer your soul," as consoling the poor person with words:

"[If] you offer your soul to the hungry": R' Levi said, If you have nothing to give to [the poor person], console him with words. [For example], say to him: "My soul goes out for you because I have nothing to give you."

Thus, we see that the Midrash defines commiserating with the poor person's sorrow as "**giving one's soul.**" This fits Rav Friedlander's thoughts beautifully.

⁶³Rav Yisrael Ciner writes that on one Erev Shabbos, he was in the marketplace ("shuk") in Jerusalem where many indigent people collect alms. He explained, "Usually we rush to complete all our final shopping in honor of Shabbat, and then mechanically toss a few coins into the poor person's cup in an impersonal manner, accompanied by a mumbled 'Shabbat Shalom.'" On one Erev Shabbos, Rav Ciner took note of the distraught appearance of an elderly man as he handed him the coins, and "I looked into his eyes, smiled and asked him how he was feeling, I shook his hand and warmly wished him a Shabbat Shalom. Then an unbelievable change occurred. He would not let go of my hand. He followed me out of the marketplace holding my hand, all the while thanking and blessing me! I was very moved by this encounter, seeing the incalculably great impact of a 'small' Mitzvah, by merely giving a few coins with a simple smile and a few kind words that demonstrate concern." This validates the wisdom of the Rambam's directive: "Anyone who gives charity to a poor person ... should give it to him with a pleasant countenance, with joy ... he should speak to him words of sympathy and comfort."

NESSIAH B'OL IMBUES A "LIVING SPIRIT" INTO ACTS OF CHESED:

- ❖ *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* is the fundamental *middah* that defines all interpersonal Mitzvos. It is the crown of all virtues. The *middah* of *Nesiah B'ol Im Chaveiro* imbues a "living spirit" into mechanical acts of kindness, transforming them into the true "צורה" (form) of the Mitzvah which Hashem commanded.
- ❖ *Nesiah B'ol* is a critical component of the Mitzvos of *Tzedaka*, *Bikur Cholim* (visiting the ill) and *Neichum Aveilim* (comforting mourners).
- ❖ When we give *Tzedaka* with the spirit of *Nesiah B'ol*, it is considered as if we are "giving our soul" to the person in need.

Section 7: Examples of Mitzvos which demonstrate the importance of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*

Day 16: Loaning money: Viewing ourselves as if we are the poor person

When commanding us to lend money to a poor person, the Torah states (Shemos 22:24), *“to the poor person who is with you”* (“את העני עמך”). Rashi comments: *“Look at yourself as if you are the poor person.”* Why is it necessary to “visualize” myself as the indigent person when I am the lender; certainly, if I am lending money to someone, I am aware of his needs?

²Rav Chaim Friedlander (Ref. 18) and *Yibadel L'Chaim*, ⁶⁴Rav Matisyahu Salomon (Ref. 39) explain that the Torah incorporates the imperative for empathy within the laws of loans, to define the very nature of the Mitzvah of lending money, i.e., it must be done in the spirit of compassion and concern with the borrower's state of mind. An integral part of this Mitzvah, as well as the Mitzvah of giving Tzedaka (charity), is the imperative to uphold the dignity of the downtrodden spirit who, due to his misfortunes, is compelled to lower himself and ask for assistance. Therefore, the Torah instructs us that when we are approached by an indigent person for charity or a loan, we must imagine ourselves in his situation and act toward him in the manner we would want if the tables were turned. Imagine if, Heaven forbid, misfortune forced us to ask for a loan or charity, we would feel so helpless and degraded, silently pleading to be treated with understanding, that the lender would talk to us in a compassionate manner. Thus, the Torah's laws of lending instruct us to see the situation through “the lens” of the person in need; we must identify with the supplicant's suffering, his demoralized state and sense of shame, to fulfill the Mitzvah properly.

The Rambam in Hilchos Matnas Aniyim (10:2; [Appendix B-12](#), p. 68), states: *“The entire Jewish people and all those who attach themselves to them are as brothers ... And if a brother will not show mercy to a brother, who will show mercy to them? ... Behold their eyes are pointed to their brethren alone.”* The entire Mitzvah of Tzedakah is imbued with the spirit of empathy for the suffering of those forced to beg for alms, as the Rambam continues (ibid, 10:4): *“He should give with a pleasant countenance, commiserating with him about his troubles, as stated (Iyov 30:25): ‘Did I not weep for the unfortunate? Did I not grieve for the needy?’”* If giving Tzedaka was merely to exercise our social consciousness, *“weeping for the unfortunate and grieving for the needy,”* would hardly be necessary. Perforce, the “heart and soul” of Tzedaka is identifying with the suffering of the unfortunate, to the extent of feeling and weeping for their sorrow. The factor that enables us to perform such an exalted level of Chesed, is: *“The entire Jewish people and all those who attach themselves to them are as brothers,”* i.e., a single family whose members organically feel each other's pain.

A beautiful story which vividly describes a Tzaddik who excelled in seeing the situation through “the lens” of the person in need, was told by ⁶⁵Rav Michael Yammer about his Rebbi, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach. A Jewish religious couple in Israel who experienced fertility difficulties, adopted a non-Jewish infant girl. A non-Jewish child who is converted by Jewish parents, must accept Torah and Mitzvos before reaching Bar/Bas Mitzvah to validate and complete the conversion. This girl was not told about her adopted status until shortly before she reached Bas Mitzvah, at which time she announced she would not complete the conversion; she decided to live the rest of her life as a non-Jew. For a full month, the teachers at her religious school relentlessly tried to persuade her of the immense privilege to be a member of the *Am Segulah* (treasured nation) and the Jew's

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eternal reward in *Olam Habboh* (World to Come), but to no avail. The sense of desperation of her parents cannot even be imagined, but there was another problem that even magnified their anguish. After they adopted this girl as an infant, Hashem blessed them with several natural children. If this girl would have gone on to live as a non-Jew, her parents would have to raise her to adulthood – as a non-Jew, in the same household with their Jewish children! Who can even fathom the depths of their heartbreak! In desperation, the girl's mother took her to see Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach a couple of days before her twelfth birthday. Upon hearing the mother's description of the situation, the Rav asked to privately speak with her daughter. After three minutes of private conversation, the girl emerged from the Rav's study, ran to her mother and announced that she wanted to become a full-fledged Jew. Her shocked mother, who felt hopeless just one moment ago, asked the Rav if he could repeat what he told her daughter. With the girl's permission, the Rav said, "I promised your daughter that if she becomes a *Bas Yisrael*, she will merit to have a husband who will stay faithful to her until 120 years and will never abandon her." The mother, still stunned, asked, "The Rav did not speak to her about *Olam Habboh*, etc.?" The Rav answered, "What was bothering your daughter that prevented her from committing to a Jewish life? It was not a lack of appreciation for *Olam Habboh*. One month ago, she learned that her biological mother abandoned her as an infant and she was afraid that it will happen again – this is what bothered her. Therefore, I had to go into her Neshoma (soul), to feel what troubled her and allay her anxiety and pain, and then she was happy to accept Torah and Mitzvos."

In the depths of her heart, this girl really wanted to grow up as a Jewish woman, but without the amazing ability of Rav Shlomo Zalman to go into her world and see the situation from her perspective – to see the anguish in her soul, she would have been lost to the Jewish people forever. All because of Rav Shlomo Zalman's exquisite *Nesiah B'ol*, her parent's lives were transformed from unimaginable heartbreak to joy and jubilation in three minutes!

LESSONS IN *NESSIAH B'OL* DERIVED FROM THE MITZVAH OF LOANING MONEY:

- ❖ "*Look at yourself as if you are the poor person.*" When lending money or giving *Tzedaka*, we must leave our personal comfort zone to view the situation through the lens of the person who is in need.
- ❖ Imagine ourselves in the "shoes" of the poor person, experiencing his emotions, feeling his demoralized state, and then interact with him through this mindset. This same approach is applicable to many other scenarios of interpersonal interactions.

Section 7: Examples of Mitzvos which demonstrate the importance of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*

Day 17: Sensitivity to avoid hurting the convert; sensitivity to the servant's feelings of degradation

1) Sensitivity to avoid hurting the convert:

In Shemos 23:9, the Torah instructs us not to oppress the convert: *"You know the soul of the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."* Rashi comments: *"[You know] how hard it is for him when they oppress him,"* because you lived through the same experience as strangers in the land of Egypt.

On a perfunctory level, the Torah's words, *"you know the soul of the stranger ... in the land of Egypt,"* are difficult to understand. Does the Torah need to justify its injunction against harming the convert? If we had never been strangers in Egypt, would it have been permissible to hurt a convert? ⁶⁶Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks shares the following powerful thought: *If there is one command above all others that speaks of the power and significance of empathy, it is ... "You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger: You were strangers in the land of Egypt" ... That is why this specific command is so life changing. Not only does it tell us to empathize with the stranger because you know what it feels like to be in his or her place. It even hints that this was part of the purpose of the Israelites' exile in Egypt in the first place ... There is only one reply strong enough to answer the question: Why should I not hate the stranger? Because the stranger is me.*

Psychologist ⁶⁷Brené Brown, Ph.D. explains: *"Empathy is a vulnerable choice - in order to connect with you, I have to connect with something in myself that knows that feeling."* Although my life history may be quite different from the person with whom I empathize, nonetheless, my own experiences have instilled something in myself that knows that feeling. The Torah's message of, *"you know the soul of the stranger,"* teaches us that we can extrapolate from our own life experiences to connect to others through the agency of *Nesiah B'ol*. We just need to look past the external differences between us that prevent us from accessing this aptitude. Thus, the Torah's formula for being *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* with the convert, applies to all types of interpersonal interactions.

2) Sensitivity to the servant's feelings of degradation:

The Gemara (Kiddushin 20a; [Appendix B-7](#), p. 66) discusses the required conduct for treating a Jewish servant. From the Torah's words (Devarim 15:16), *"כי טוב לו עמך"* – *"for it is good for him with you,"* the Gemara derives: *"One who acquires a Jewish servant has, in fact, acquired a master for himself,"* because the master is obligated to ensure that his servant's accommodations are equivalent to his own. For example, the owner may not eat bread made from fine flour while the servant eats bread made from inferior flour. The owner may not drink aged (superior) wine while the servant drinks new (inferior) wine. The owner may not sleep on soft mattresses while the servant sleeps on straw.

Tosfos ask, since the living accommodations that the master must provide his servant are equal to his own, why does the Gemara describe the servant as *"the master"* – he is merely on par with his owner? In their answer, *Tosfos* cite a ruling from the Talmud Yerushalmi. In a case where the owner has one pillow, he must give it to the servant for the following reason: If the owner uses the pillow himself, he violates the principle of *"כי טוב לו עמך"* since the servant has inferior accommodations. If the owner neither uses the pillow himself nor gives it to his servant, it is *middas Sodom*. (Since the owner may not use it himself, he loses nothing by giving it to his servant.

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Thus, denying his servant the use of the pillow is *middas Sodom* since he cannot bear someone else benefitting from his possessions). Hence, the servant must be given the sole pillow; consequently, he is deemed “a master” over his owner since his accommodations are superior.

Rav Aryeh Leib Lopian (cited by ⁶⁴Rav Matisyahu Salomon), asks, why would the owner violate “כי טוב לו עמך” if he keeps his only pillow for himself? The word, “עמך” – “with you,” seemingly indicates that both the owner and servant should enjoy the same provisions, which would only pertain to a case where he owns two pillows. However, in a case where this is impossible because only one pillow is available, why must he give it to his servant? Rav Lopian answers, Chazal (our Sages) understood from “כי טוב לו עמך” that the Torah demands a level of sensitivity to another person’s emotional wellbeing, whereby we must spare the servant any degradation beyond being under someone else’s “ownership”. This sensitivity prevents us from sleeping with a pillow if the servant has no pillow, because the servant will suffer not only the ignominy of having been sold, but also being forced to live under inferior conditions relative to his owner. Whether the owner possesses two pillows or only one, if the servant sleeps without a pillow while his owner enjoys this comfort, he suffers the same sense of degradation which the Torah deems intolerable. Therefore, if the owner only has one pillow, “כי טוב לו עמך” requires that the owner must sleep without a pillow; consequently, to avoid *middas Sodom*, it must be given to the servant. Rav Salomon marvels at the exalted level of *Nesiah B'ol* that Chazal personally lived at, which enabled them to unlock the Torah’s hidden message within the words, “כי טוב לו עמך”, and to extrapolate the Halacha to the case of the solitary pillow.

LESSONS IN *NESIAH B'OL* FROM THE TORAH’S INSTRUCTIONS RELATING TO OUR INTERACTIONS WITH THE CONVERT AND THE JEWISH SERVANT:

- ❖ Sensitivity to the convert: “*You know the soul of the stranger*” – you were “in his shoes” once: Extrapolating from our own experiences to empathize with someone else’s hardships.
- ❖ Giving our only pillow to the Jewish servant: The Torah’s sensitivity to his emotional wellbeing demands we spare him any degradation beyond being under someone else’s “ownership”.

Section 7: Examples of Mitzvos which demonstrate the importance of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*

Day 18: Gladdening the hearts of the less fortunate: Including them in our festivities

When describing the Mitzvah of rejoicing on the Jewish festivals, the Torah states (Devarim 16:11): *"You shall rejoice before Hashem, your G-d – you, your son, daughter, slave, maidservant, the Levite, the convert, the orphan and the widow."* Rashi explains that the Torah lists two groups of four people. Hashem tells us that the second group – the Levite, convert, orphan and widow – are *"Mine"* (i.e., G-d's). The first set – your son, daughter, slave and maidservant – are yours. G-d's message in this verse is: *"If you will make Mine happy, I will make yours happy."*

Why does Hashem call the convert, orphan and widow, *"Mine"*? In the laws pertaining to Purim, the Rambam states (Hilchos Megilah V'Chanukah, 2:17; [Appendix B-13](#), p. 68): *"There is no greater and more splendid happiness than to gladden the hearts of the poor, the orphans, the widows, and the converts. One who brings happiness to the hearts of these downtrodden individuals resembles the Divine Presence."* The Rambam then cites a verse in Isaiah (57:15) affirming that Hashem dwells with the downtrodden souls and uplifts their spirits: *"I abide in exaltedness and holiness, but I am with the despondent and lowly of spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the despondent."* Rashi explains that, notwithstanding His exalted abode, G-d "lowers" His Shechinah (Divine Presence) to dwell with the downtrodden.

It is the way of Hashem, so to speak, to "lower" Himself and "squeeze" into the narrow straits of people who are suffering; G-d shares in all their burdens. Since Hashem dwells with the despondent and lowly of spirit, we can understand Rashi's statement that G-d calls the convert, orphan and widows, *"Mine"*. Therefore, says the Rambam, a person who, at the time of personal happiness and celebration, opens his heart to tend to the needs of downtrodden souls to bring happiness into their hearts, emulates Hashem's ways and thus, resembles the Shechinah. Similarly, the Rambam (Hilchos Shevisas Yom Tov, 6:18; [Appendix B-13](#)) writes one is required to provide festive meals to gladden the less fortunate on *Chaggim*. Moreover, the holiday festivities of one who fails to gladden these unfortunate souls, are devoid of any Mitzvah, and instead, are festivities of gluttony. Since Hashem lowers His Shechinah to share the plight of the less fortunate, if we open our hearts and homes to share our celebratory times with them, our festivities will be graced with His Divine Presence and thus, be a rejoicing of a Mitzvah.

The following story regarding ⁶⁸Rav Elazar Shach, the Rosh HaYeshiva of the Ponovezh Yeshiva, was written by Rabbi Yehonasan Gefen. Rav Shach was once informed that a particular Jew who had lost his wife was plunged into a deep depression. In his grief he ceased to eat, speak or function. Rav Shach immediately went to visit him but there was no response when he knocked on the door. Seeing that the door was not locked he went inside and took a seat next to the couch upon which the poor fellow lay. Placing his hand on the fellow's shoulder he said to him: "I understand you so well. I too am a widower and I also felt as if my world had come to an end. We share the same grief, for whoever is without a wife, our Sages say, is without simcha. You need simcha and I need simcha." A spark of life was suddenly visible in the eyes of the listener and Rav Shach continued: "I have an idea of how we can help each other. I know how to prepare a good cholent for the Shabbos meal. I will prepare such a cholent on Erev Shabbos and send it to you here. On Shabbos I will come to your home. We will eat together, sing *zemiros* together and give strength to each other." For the first time a smile came to the lips of his

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listener who gently protested that there was no way for him to thus impose on the Rosh HaYeshiva. "If so," concluded Rav Shach as he departed, "please think of some other plan. In any case I will visit you again tomorrow because I gain strength from being together with you."

⁶⁹Rav Yaakov Yosef Herman, a Torah pioneer in America, was well known for his prodigious *Hachnosos Orchim* (welcoming guests). At many Shabbos meals, he and his wife would host more than thirty guests, including great rabbis, people collecting money (*meshulachim*) and a motley crew of people down on their luck. Once there was a guest who ate sloppily, spilling his food all over the tablecloth. One Shabbos when Rav Herman returned from Shul, he found this guest seated alone at a little table in the corner of the room. The other guests managed to find him a solitary little table where he would not disturb them. Instead of seating himself at the head of the table as he always did, Rav Herman took his armchair, carried it to the little table and joined the "exiled" guest. The other guests were very perturbed, so after much coaxing from them, Rav Herman consented to return to his regular place – with that special guest seated next to him. Rav Herman used to portion out the *cholent* and served it personally to each guest. On one Shabbos, Rav Herman served *cholent* while wearing a new expensive, well-tailored *kapota* (kaftan). When he put the plate of hot *cholent* in front of an emotionally unstable guest, the man screamed, "I don't want this portion!" and dumped the contents all over Rav Herman's new *kapota*. Everyone gasped, aghast at what had occurred. The guest, frightened at what he had done, jumped up and fled from the house. Rav Herman ran after him and returned in a few minutes, holding the guest's hand, soothing him kindly, "I will give you another plate of cholent that you will like!" After he wiped off his *kapota* as much as permissible, his son said to him, "Papa, you need so much *savlonus* (patience)!" Rav Herman responded, "If you have *rachmonus* (pity), you need no *savlonus*."

INCLUDING THE POOR AND DOWNTRODDEN PEOPLE IN OUR FESTIVITIES:

- ❖ We are obligated to include poor people, orphans, widows and converts in our festive times.
- ❖ Hashem dwells with downtrodden souls and uplifts their spirits. Therefore, if we bring happiness to them by including them in our festivities, we resemble the Shechinah.

Section 8: How our *Nesiah B'ol* arouses Heavenly salvation for the Jewish people

Day 19: Being *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* induces the flow of Hashem's *middah*, לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נְהַלְתּוֹ, toward us

In *Sefer Tomer Devorah*, the *Ramak* declares when we act in a way that emulates one of Hashem's *middos* (attributes) of mercy, we open the channel Above for the corresponding Divine *middah* to flow down to us, in a manner proportional to our efforts:

Precisely in the manner we act below, we merit to open [the Heavenly channels, inducing the flow of] that same supernal attribute from Above. Just as we behave, so too, we influence [the flow from] Above, causing that same attribute to shine in the world.

⁷Rav Matisyahu Salomon applies this concept to the Divine *middah* of “לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נְהַלְתּוֹ” which we emulate by being *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* (see [Day 9](#) lesson). When we are *Nosei B'ol* with each other, we open the Heavenly channels for Hashem's *middah* of “לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נְהַלְתּוֹ” to flow toward us. Because of this *middah*, G-d cannot bear to see us suffer as the *Ramak* states: “*He cannot bear their pain and their disgrace, because they are the remnant of His inheritance.*” Thus, by inducing the flow of “לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נְהַלְתּוֹ”, our *Nesiah B'ol* helps deliver Heavenly salvation for the Jewish nation. This process might explain the astounding comment of ²Rav Yeruchem Levovitz: *The relief rendered to our friend's suffering is directly proportional to the degree that we feel his or her pain.* The level of our *Nesiah B'ol* proportionally induces the flow of “לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נְהַלְתּוֹ”, bringing relief to the person in need.

In Parshas Shemos (3: 6-22), Hashem deputized Moshe Rabbeinu to demand Pharaoh to release the Jews. Pharaoh responded by increasing the difficulty of the Israelites' labor, forcing them to collect their own straw without reducing their quota for brick production. Consequently, when the oppressed laborers could not fill the quota, the Jewish officers were beaten by their Egyptian taskmasters. Rashi (Shemos 5:14) explains that the Jewish officers were ordered by the Egyptians to force their fellow Israelites to fill the draconian quota, but because of their pity for their fellow Jews, they chose to be brutally beaten rather than subject their brethren to additional suffering, a display of great *Nesiah B'ol*. Moshe believed his “disastrous” mission only served to worsen *Bnei Yisrael's* suffering, making their lives unsurvivable. Thus, Moshe said to Hashem in dismay (verses 5:22-23): “*Why have You harmed this people, why have You sent me. From the time I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name, he harmed this people, but You did not rescue Your people.*” Hashem reassured Moshe, that on the contrary, his actions triggered the sequence of events from which the salvation will ensue (Shemos 6:1): “*Now you will see what I shall do to Pharaoh, for through a strong hand he will send them out ... from his land.*” How did Moshe's overture to Pharaoh trigger the redemption of the Jewish people?

Rav Eliyahu Lopian (quoted by ⁷Rav Matisyahu Salomon) explains that Hashem knew that the redemption of *Bnei Yisrael* required His *middah* of “לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נְהַלְתּוֹ” because their merits were inadequate to deserve redemption. To activate this Divine *middah*, it was necessary for the Jewish people to be *Nosei B'ol* with each other. To induce this *Nesiah B'ol* between fellow Jews, Hashem engineered a chain reaction, whereby Moshe's overture to Pharaoh triggered the latter's harsh decree, leading to the Jewish officers' display of great *Nesiah B'ol*, submitting themselves to brutal beatings to spare their brethren further suffering. Their *Nesiah B'ol*, in turn activated Hashem's *middah* of “לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נְהַלְתּוֹ”, with which He redeemed *Klal Yisrael*.

Section 8: How our *Nesiah B'ol* arouses Heavenly salvation for the Jewish people

Rav Salomon states that the mechanism by which we will be redeemed from our current exile, will mirror our redemption from Egypt. We must take the first step – to be *Nosei B'ol* with each other, thus arousing G-d's *middah* of “לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נְחֻלְתּוֹ”, through which He will redeem us.

The Gemara Nedarim (39b) states that one who visits an ill person (“*choleh*”) alleviates one-sixtieth of his suffering. ¹Rav Yeruchem Levovitz explains that the *choleh* is viewed as the “debtor” and the *middas Hadin* (Hashem's attribute of exacting justice) is viewed as his “creditor” demanding payment of his “debt” (i.e., the *middas Hadin* demands punishment from the *choleh* because of his sins). If I am *Nosei B'ol* with my ill friend and feel his pain as if I were stricken with his illness, I “pay up” the “debt” that the *middas Hadin* demands from him. Consequently, Hashem annuls his Heavenly sentence of suffering. ²⁴Rav Salomon explains Rav Yeruchem's words based on the Ramak's words (above). When I feel my ill friend's pain as if I am personally suffering, this exalted level of *Nesiah B'ol* arouses the Divine *middah* of “לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נְחֻלְתּוֹ” to the extent that Hashem can no longer bear to see the *choleh* suffer. Consequently, the *middas Hadin's* claim against the *choleh* is annulled and his pain is removed.

Rav Salomon offers a second explanation of Rav Yeruchem's words based on Rav Yisrael Salanter's explanation of the verse, “משפטי ה' אמת צדקו יחדיו,” which we recorded in the [Day 3](#) lesson: When Hashem judges any individual for a wrongdoing, He determines the effect of that individual's deserved punishment on his or her loved ones, before issuing the sentence. If any of his loved ones do not deserve the “collateral damage,” i.e., the pain they would suffer when he is punished, the sentence is annulled, and the defendant is saved from his sentence. Accordingly, Rav Yeruchem's notion of “paying up” the *middas Hadin's* demands on behalf of another person, can be understood. If I am *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* and immerse myself in my friend's pain, I become his or her “co-defendant” since I suffer the same pain that he or she suffers. However, since the *middas Hadin* has no claim against me, I do not deserve to suffer my co-defendant's pain, and therefore, Hashem annuls the *middas Hadin's* claim against my friend and his pain is removed or reduced.

OUR *NESSIAH B'OL* AROUSES HEAVENLY MERCY FOR FELLOW JEWS IN NEED:

- ❖ Being *Nosei B'ol* with fellow Jews opens the Heavenly channels for Hashem's *middah* of “לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נְחֻלְתּוֹ” (Divine empathy) to flow toward us on a proportional level to our *Nesiah B'ol*.
- ❖ The supreme *Nesiah B'ol* of the Jewish officers in Egypt, who opted to get beaten rather than subject their brethren to additional suffering, opened the channels of the Divine *middah* of “לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נְחֻלְתּוֹ”, arousing Hashem to redeem the Jewish people.
- ❖ Our redemption from the current exile requires our *Nesiah B'ol* with each other, which in turn, will activate Hashem's *middah* of “לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נְחֻלְתּוֹ”, with which He will redeem us.

Day 20: Being *Nosei B'ol* means creating a “bond of shared pain” and honoring the person’s feelings

1) Creating a bond of shared pain – letting people know that we value their feelings:

²Rav Friedlander explains, when people go through difficult times, a significant aspect of their difficulty is their sense of isolation (“*no one understands me or shares my pain*”). Our role is to give them the same message that Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu by the burning bush (see [Day 9](#) lesson): “עמו אנכי בצרה”, “*I am with him in distress,*” which is independent of any practical help that we can offer. By merely showing them that we identify with their suffering, i.e., we value their feelings and recognize their troubles as worthy of our concern and support, we ease their pain significantly because they are no longer alone in their struggles.

In Tehillim (142:5), Dovid HaMelech says: “הביט ימין וראה ואין לי מכיר ואין לי מנוח ממיני אין דורש לנפשי” (*Look to the right and see that I have no friend; escape is lost to me, no one seeks to rescue my life*). ⁷⁰Mrs. Rivka Yudin explains: When a person feels that “אין לי מכיר” – *no one gets me, no one is looking out for my interests* - this is the epitome of desperation and loneliness, such that “אבד מנוח ממני” – *all hope for escape is lost*.

⁵¹Rav Sholomo Wolbe picturesquely portrays this scene: “*He sits alone in a cave, in subterranean darkness ... No one understands or reaches out to him, his soul is imprisoned.*” However, says Rav Wolbe, “*If you reach out ... to bear his burden with him, to feel his pain and to give over your heart to understand his distress ... the magnitude of the salvation delivered to someone ... by being Nosei B'ol is boundless!*” Hence, Mrs. Yudin says, the antidote to “אין לי מכיר” is *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro!* Psychologist ⁶⁷Brené Brown, Ph.D. similarly affirms: “*Empathy fuels connection, empathy is feeling with people. Empathy is a vulnerable choice - in order to connect with you, I have to connect with something in myself that knows that feeling.*”

We see from this that perhaps the most basic aspect of being *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* is **forming the human connection** with someone in a vulnerable predicament who feels “down and out.” More than ever, people who are struggling need to feel connected, that their troubles register on another person’s heart and mind, i.e., **they matter** (³Rabbi Lord Jonathon Sacks). Yet, Mrs. Yudin explains, we often shy away from approaching a person in distress because, “*I won’t know what to say.*” Often, what people need, says Mrs. Yudin, is just to feel heard, to know that someone really wants to listen and understand their anguish or anxiety, rather than any specific response or solution. Dr. Brené Brown advises, when our natural inclination to people’s sorrowful story is to try to find a way make things better, we need to remind ourselves: “*Rarely can a response make something better. What makes something better is connection.*” This is elegantly synopsized by ⁶⁵Rabbi Eytan Kobre: “*Sharing the pain of others is about giving to others a piece of your very being. It is about joining in their suffering even when you can’t improve their plight. It is about creating a bond of shared pain.*”

2) Honoring another person’s feelings by listening attentively and non-judgmentally:

When presenting strategies to be *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*, ²⁵Rabbi Yechiel Spero offered an adage: “*Anyone can be a great storyteller. It takes someone special to be a great ‘story hearer’ – to listen and really hear what people are saying.*” This special skill of listening is needed for us to be *Nosei B'ol*. The reason this is such an effective strategy is that by listening to people in an attentive and non-judgmental manner, we honor their feelings.

Section 9: Developing the virtue of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*

⁷²Mrs. Tamar Shames quotes Rav Aharon Feldman who explains that all our sensory organs have both input and output functions, except our ears. For example, our eyes take in sights, but also communicate non-verbally to the external environment. Our mouths take in food and articulate speech. However, human ears only have an input function, to receive sound; they have no output function (by contrast to certain animals). Therefore, when people talk to us, rather than formulating a response in our mind, we should maintain our focus on internalizing their “story,” i.e., both the words and the feelings they are conveying.

Previously (in the [Day 7](#) lesson), we saw the Gemara (Shabbos 67a; [Appendix B-4](#), p. 65) which explains that people would paint their “sick” non-producing tree with red dye to signal people to pray for mercy on the tree owner’s behalf. The Gemara compares this to the Metzora who calls out “*I am impure, I am impure,*” to arouse people to pray for mercy on his behalf. ⁷³Rav Friedlander asks: How can the Gemara compare the two situations? The *Metzora* is afflicted with a serious spiritual malady, for which he is defiled and isolated from his entire family and community, while the orchard owner suffers merely financial loss? Rav Friedlander answers, from this Gemara, we learn a vital lesson. The magnitude of my friend’s hardship has no bearing on my obligation to be *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*. If my friend is in pain, my responsibility is to share that pain and pray on his or her behalf, regardless of how minimal the problem may seem to me. From this Gemara, we learn that we do not “sit in judgment” over other people’s distress, i.e., whether the magnitude of their problem warrants their emotional reaction. When we encounter people who express or display anguish over a misfortune, the last thing they need is for us to challenge the legitimacy of their emotional reaction. Being told that their feelings of anguish are either unwarranted or an overreaction to the seriousness of the problem, often feels like “salt poured on an open wound” - the pain it causes can persist far longer than the original distressful situation. Although people may need to adjust their perspective if they frequently overdramatize life’s disappointments, the time for giving such advice is not when they are in acute pain and distress. Honoring a person’s feelings, rather than judging them, will pay far greater dividends, by establishing a bond of understanding – the essence of *Nesiah B'ol*.

FORMING THE HUMAN CONNECTION AND HONORING PEOPLE’S FEELINGS:

- ❖ *Nesiah B'ol* is about creating a bond of shared pain even when you cannot improve someone’s plight. Giving over our heart to understand someone’s distress, helps him feel less alone. It is the antidote to “אין לי מכיר” (“no one gets me”) and to “אבד מנוס ממני” (hopelessness).
- ❖ We are *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* when we listen attentively and non-judgmentally to people who are hurting (without trying to fix their problem). By doing so, we honor their feelings and let them know that their troubles and feelings matter to someone.

Section 9: Developing the virtue of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*

Day 21: The Sabba of Kelm's principle of mental imagery: Visualizing someone else's struggles

The ²⁴Sabba of Kelm offers fundamental advice for developing the *middah* of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* is not merely an emotive process. If our empathy is no more than an emotional reaction to someone's misfortune, it will be fleeting and inconsequential. We must also use our cognitive processes, i.e., mental imagery, to visualize the details of someone's suffering. In a letter, the Sabba writes: "*It is impossible to reach the level of feeling another's pain, unless we abundantly utilize mental imagery, i.e., visualizing ourselves, Heaven forbid, experiencing the pain, hardship or illness that another person is suffering.*" For example, says the ⁷⁴Sabba, if our *Nesiah B'ol* is merely a visceral, emotional reaction, we will empathize with an ill person's (*choleh's*) condition only when his illness is severe or profoundly impedes his ability to function. However, once his condition has improved from the severe stage to the recovery phase, our natural, visceral empathy dissipates even though he may still experience considerable pain or disability during his recovery period. However, if our *Nesiah B'ol* is also *middah* of the intellect, we will continue to visualize the *choleh's* discomfort and struggles and hence, share his pain and discomfort until he is restored to perfect health. Thus, to authentically share another's feelings, our *Nesiah B'ol* must originate from our cognitive faculties.

This strategy of using mental imagery to develop our feelings of *Nesiah B'ol*, is further developed by the Sabba using an example (which is recorded by ⁵⁶Rav Matisyahu Salomon). Imagine that a *meshulach* (charity collector) who needs to raise several hundred thousand dollars for his family's vital necessities in Israel, knocks on our door. If our empathy for his situation is merely an emotional reaction, it will fade as soon as he leaves our line of sight. Rather, says the Sabba, we must "escalate" our *Nesiah B'ol* to a *middah* of the intellect by thinking about the details of his situation, and imagining ourselves living through the very same situation. ²⁵Rabbi Yechiel Spero suggests imagining that circumstances forced us to travel to a foreign land to solicit charity donations from hundreds of people we never met before, to support our family's needs. What thoughts would enter our mind as we walk toward the door of each potential donor? Imagine the exhaustion and apprehension each day as we face the daunting task of knocking on yet more doors to plead our case. We would desperately hope to be welcomed warmly with a smiling and gracious reception, to receive magnanimous assistance as the Rambam states (Hilchos Matnas Aniyim 10:2; [Appendix B-12](#), p. 68): "*And if a brother will not show mercy to a brother, who will show mercy to them?*" By "painting this picture" in our minds, we will feel the anguish of the *meshulach* as he trudges from door to door, and therefore, respond to him in the same way we would want if the roles were reversed. We will welcome him with a hearty, "*Shalom Aleichem, how are you? Please come in and warm up with a hot drink. Tell me what's wrong.*" These thoughts are in consonance with Rashi's comments regarding the Mitzvah of loaning to the poor (see [Day 16](#) lesson): "*Look at yourself as if you are the poor person.*" Moreover, since this cerebral *Nesiah B'ol* was created through deliberate toil, it will be sustained long after the person has left our presence, by contrast to a visceral emotional reaction which quickly fades. Thus, utilizing mental imagery to imprint another person's struggles on our mind, is a vital element of *Nesiah B'ol*.

²Rav Chaim Friedlander explains, to become a *Nosei B'ol*, we must put our own perspectives aside in order to "see" the situation through the perspective of the other person, i.e., to fully immerse ourselves in his or her situation. This is hinted in the verse in Shemos (2:11) when Moshe Rabbeinu went out to see the burdens of his enslaved brethren: "*וַיֵּצֵא אֶל אֶחָיו וַיִּרְאֵם בְּסִבְלוֹתָם*" (*he went out to his brethren and saw their burdens*), regarding

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which Rashi comments: *"He focused his eyes and his heart to be distressed over them."* One must exit his own emotional comfort zone to authentically experience the suffering and emotions of the person in need, i.e., by seeing the situation through his or her lens.

From Rashi's words, *"He focused his eyes and his heart,"* ³¹Rav Yeruchem Levovitz concludes that merely seeing someone else's distress with our eyes is insufficient for us to truly feel that person's suffering. We must also **apply our hearts** to delve into the depths of the person's difficulties, *"using all our contemplative and analytical abilities."* In the [Day 9](#) lesson, we saw Rashi who explains that, at the burning bush encounter, Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu: *"I have focused My heart to understand and know his pains, and I did not hide My eyes, and I shall not block My ears to their cry."* Moshe emulated G-d's *Nesiah B'ol* by using, not merely his eyes, but also his heart to fully focus on all aspects of the Jewish people's suffering. Rav Yeruchem's eloquent words describe the requisite depths of our thoughts regarding another person's distress, in order to properly be *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*: *"In order to feel another person's pain, to feel all of the person's suffering, our thoughts must deeply contemplate – how the pain penetrates and flows through his arteries and veins, to feel trajectory of the pain, in which artery and vein it is found – for this we require prolific focusing of our hearts to understand."*

⁶Rav Yeruchem was told about an individual, who, due to his illness, was unable to turn from side to side in bed. For most of us, hearing about this person's disability would hardly evoke much of an emotional response. However, Rav Yeruchem says that hearing about this person's condition taught him a fundamental message. To gain a grasp of this individual's suffering, Rav Yeruchem said, we must deliberately reckon how many times we typically turn from side to side in bed before finding a comfortable position to fall into a restful sleep. Then, we can begin to imagine ourselves as that ill person, yearning to roll over without avail, lying awake for hours, unable to make himself comfortable. Only then, can we gain a perspective of the ill person's anguish and be *Nosei B'ol* with him. Rav Yeruchem concludes, *"this middah is the foundation for all Mitzvos between man and man and probably also for Mitzvos between man and G-d."*

USING MENTAL IMAGERY TO BE *NOSEI B'OL IM CHAVEIRO*:

- ❖ To be *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*, we must imagine ourselves experiencing the hardship facing the person in distress, deeply contemplating the various ways it would affect our lives if we were in his or her "shoes".
- ❖ Putting aside our own perspective to view the situation through the lens of the other person, is essential for being *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*. It is the key to connecting with a person in distress.

Day 22: The power of smiling and receiving people with “האררת פנים” - a radiant countenance

No discussion of the “human connection” can be complete without including the power of smiling and greeting people with a resplendent countenance (“האררת פנים”). The Torah (Devarim 4: 41) states that Moshe Rabbeinu prepared cities of refuge for unintentional killers in the TransJordan: “*Moshe designated three cities in the TransJordan, toward the rising sun (‘מזרחה שמש’).*” The words, “מזרחה שמש”, are homiletically interpreted by the Gemara (Makos 10a; [Appendix B-8](#), p. 66): “*G-d told Moshe, ‘You caused the sun to shine for (unintentional) killers.’*”

⁷⁵Rav Shlomo Wolbe was greatly inspired by this Gemara: “*The father of all prophets (Moshe) - immediately before his death - found no more important Mitzvah than ‘shining the sun’ for the distraught and downtrodden souls exiled in cities of refuge.*” The “take home” message, Rav Wolbe explains, is: “*This is the entire essence of a person – to be an individual who shines the sun, (i.e., one who greets everyone with a resplendent countenance). This is the foundation of all interpersonal Mitzvos and all our relationships with friends.*”

From Rav Wolbe’s words, it is now evident how the Gemara’s words, “*shining the sun,*” refer to greeting people with a smile and a radiant countenance (“האררת פנים”). Just as the sun’s rays are converted by a plant into life-giving nutrients, similarly, the smiles we greet people with are converted into energy and vitality by the recipients, as Avos D’Rebbi Nosson (13:4) comments: “*One who receives his friend with a cheerful countenance, even if he does not give him anything, Scripture considers it as if he had given him all the finest gifts in the world.*”

⁷⁶When we greet people with a warm and cheerful countenance, we demonstrate that we are glad they are in this world - one of the most precious gifts of love. The message of, “*I am happy to be with you,*” is truly a life-sustaining gift.

The following ⁷⁷correspondence was written by a young man who approached Rav Wolbe for help with a personal difficulty: “*I merited that the Mashgiach (Rav Wolbe) graced me with a smile so special, of which I never experienced ... The entirety of the Mashgiach was immersed in the short conversation with me. I felt so esteemed by the manner with which he shared in my predicament, demonstrating how much he wanted to help me ... The Mashgiach’s radiant countenance was like a great light, illuminating and warming me in a dark forest where the light is most precious, revealing hidden pathways for troubled people. The Mashgiach’s radiant reception fortifies and recharges (resuscitates) people who meet him, with enduring vitality.*”

In his final year of life, the ⁷⁸Sabba of Slabodke spoke before the blowing of the Shofar in Rosh Hashanah, in the Slabodke Yeshiva in Chevron: “*How can we merit a positive judgment on this awesome day of judgment? With what merit can we approach the Heavenly court? By saying ‘good morning’ to our friend every morning with a resplendent countenance – this will tilt the scales to the side of merit (L’kaf Zechus).*”

⁷⁹Rav Wolbe once asked a young man who returned to his religious roots, “What led you to begin studying Torah?” The man replied that he had grown up in a secular neighborhood in Israel, and whenever he went to school each morning, the only person on the street who daily greeted him was an elderly man who wore the garb of an Orthodox Jew. Years later, when he began to search for more meaning in his life, the memory of the religious man who had greeted him so warmly every morning inspired him to enter a Yeshiva.

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Finally, we return the theme of connection. Smiling and receiving people with a radiant smile strengthens interpersonal bonds, as the *Orchos Tzaddikim (Sha'ar Ahavah)* states: *“One should receive all people with joy and a cheerful countenance, for such kindness strengthens love.”* ⁸⁰Rav Moshe Gerelick writes that a sincere smile emanates from the *Tzelem Elokim* (Divine image or spark) within each person’s soul: *“At the moment a person smiles and greets another resplendently, the two souls, the smiling person and the recipient, become connected.”* The heartfelt smile is, thus, the channel through which the warmth of the “giving” person is transmitted into the soul of the recipient. Thus, our smiles and kind facial appearance truly *“shine a sun”* toward people. Even when we have no tangible way to help someone, let us remember the story about the radiant countenance of Rav Wolbe, i.e., how it shone light and warmth and resuscitated people with new vitality.

THE POWER OF RECEIVING PEOPLE WITH A RADIANT COUNTENANCE:

- ❖ Greeting and receiving people with an authentic smile and radiant countenance, illuminates the darkness within troubled souls; it warms and revitalizes them.
- ❖ This the entire essence of a person – to be an individual who “shines the sun” at others – the foundation of all our relationships.
- ❖ When we greet someone with a resplendent countenance, it strengthens the love and connects the souls of both people (i.e., the smiling person and the recipient).
- ❖ People who are struggling, often find their sense of isolation more painful than the specific hardships that life has presented them with. Reaching out to them in very simple ways, e.g., greeting them with a smile and showing them that they truly matter to us, can give them the strength they need to persevere – reviving their lives!

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Day 23: Acts of kindness, whether large or small, foster authentic feelings of *Nesiah B'ol*

In the Day 11 lesson, we saw that Yosef HaTzaddik and Moshe Rabbeinu undertook concrete actions to demonstrate their sharing in the distress of the community, despite the absence of a tangible benefit to relieve the suffering. Taking these concrete actions fosters within us the ability to share another person's feelings.

Not everyone is blessed with the innate ability to empathize with others. But, fear not, says the ⁸¹Chazon Ish, our *Nosei B'ol* capacity is molded by action:

Are you lacking the feeling of sharing in another person's pain? The solution for this is by taking concrete actions to help another and spare him from pain. Your actions will transform your heart. Similarly, prayer on behalf of another in distress, even if it does not feel truly heartfelt, will foster authentic Nesiah B'ol.

In a similar vein, ⁴⁷Rav Wolbe says:

Nesiah B'ol is not confined to thought and feeling; it also requires specific action ... Therefore, one who wants to train himself to be Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro, should designate a concrete uncomplicated action or practice to undertake. This, in of itself, is considered Nesiah B'ol even if it does not tangibly solve the other person's difficulty, as we see Moshe Rabbeinu went out to take his brethren's burdens and carry them himself. On a practical level, Moshe's assistance hardly relieved any of the immense suffering of the entire Jewish population who were enslaved. Rather, Moshe's intent was to simply participate in their suffering.

Taking concrete action to help or bring cheer to someone in pain, even if it feels forced initially, fosters authentic feelings of *Nesiah B'ol*. Even if the effort is minimal, the positive effects of our actions can be profound. The "Tzaddik of Jerusalem," ⁷⁹Rav Aryeh Levin, would make a point of greeting the street cleaners he passed early in the morning on his way to Shul. He appreciated their thankless, low-paid, repetitive jobs and expressed his appreciation of their value. Surely, we can also extend a bit of courtesy toward people with menial jobs, if only to help them feel appreciated for their difficult and unrewarding work. When we meet them, let's make a special effort to smile and thank them for their work, especially since they typically go through their daily chores without anyone even glancing at them, as if they were fixtures on the wall. By according respect to them and recognizing their work as meaningful and valued, we lift their spirits, putting a spring in their step for the entire day. It is also an amazing way to create a daily Kiddush Hashem.

Rav Moshe Feinstein would help the Gabbai in Yeshiva Tiferes Yerushalayim (where he was the Rosh HaYeshiva) by climbing on benches to put away Seforim before Shabbos. On Erev Yom Kippur, Rav Moshe would help count the Tzedaka contributions so that Gabbai could make it home in time to eat before the fast began. If such an august Torah leader, whose shoulders carried weighty life and death Halachic queries world-wide, was happy to lighten the burdens of the Gabbai, surely, we can undertake small tasks to lighten the load of other people, at home, work and in Shul.

A common misconception is assuming that whatever "minimal" help I can offer will be too trivial to alleviate the suffering of a person who is struggling. ²Rav Friedlander advises us that the relief provided by being *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* with someone who struggles far exceeds the level of tangible help we can provide. Even our seemingly insignificant help will strengthen the person's spirits when he sees our earnest desire to share in his distress. The

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huge benefit of relieving the sense of isolation which often haunts people in crisis, is much greater than the tangible assistance we can offer. The fact that the person no longer feels alone in his suffering, provides great emotional support. Furthermore, the ⁷⁴Sabba of Kelm makes an astounding observation: The selection of Rivka as a wife for Yitzchak Avinu by Eliezer was precisely due to her desire to extend even “minimal” *Nesiah B'ol*. Rivka watered Eliezer’s camels because she wanted to spare his servants the trouble, even though the effort needed by ten strong servants would have been trivial. Yet, it was only because of this “minimal” *Nesiah B'ol*, that Rivka merited to become Avrohom Avinu’s daughter-in-law, Yitzchak’s wife and Matriarch of *Klal Yisrael*. Had Rivka discounted the importance of such “trivial” *Nesiah B'ol*, her destiny as the Matriarch of the Jewish nation would have been lost forever. Look, says the Sabba, how much eternal reward arises from diligently seizing life’s “minimal” *Nosei B'ol* opportunities. Conversely, how great is the loss when these seemingly “trivial” nuggets of eternity are squandered.

The following story about the sterling character of ⁸²Rav Aharon Lichtenstein was told by Rabbi Michael Taubes. At the time of the Six Day War in 1967, a rally was held in Washington, DC, to encourage US support for Israel. Several busses went from Yeshiva University (YU) with students and faculty members, including Rav Aharon on board. When the busses returned to YU, it was very late at night. A student offered to walk Rav Aharon home (who lived several blocks from YU at that time). The people quickly filed off and this student found himself waiting on the sidewalk for Rav Aharon whom he did not see anywhere. Assuming that Rav Aharon must have somehow gotten off the bus unnoticed and walked home by himself, the student was about to leave when he decided to go back onto the bus just to check one more time. And there indeed he found Rav Aharon helping the bus driver collect all the bags, wrappers, cans, and bottles which the students had left on the bus, explaining that the driver too wanted to get home and there is no reason that he should have to be delayed because people had left garbage behind.

TAKING CONCRETE ACTIONS TO HELP ANOTHER, LEADS TO GENUINE *NESIAH B'OL*:

- ❖ Concrete actions to help someone in need, even if they feel forced initially, will eventually foster authentic feelings of *Nesiah B'ol*. Our emotions are molded by our actions.
- ❖ Try to “sacrifice” a few seconds every day by cheerfully greeting or thanking people who have menial, thankless jobs, to let them know their work is appreciated and their contribution to the world is valued.

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Day 24: *Nesiah B'ol* with Hashem's anguish, yearning and praying for it to end via our redemption

⁸³Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev says that one should contemplate how much contentment ("*Nachas*") Hashem received when the *Beis HaMikdash* was extant, i.e., the great level of "*Nachas*" we would give Hashem through our daily *Avodah* (priestly service), the Yom Kippur *Avodah* and the sacrifices we offered. Then, reflect on the contrast between then and now, how we presently cannot deliver such contentment to Hashem, and the pain this causes Him. Our prayers for the redemption will thereby be driven by our "sharing" in Hashem's sorrow, yearning and expressing our desire to see His pain removed when the *Beis HaMikdash* will be rebuilt. Similarly, the ⁸⁵*Mesillas Yesharim* states: *[A pious person] surely ought to experience constant, authentic anguish over the exile of Israel and the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, inasmuch as this (state of exile and destruction) causes a diminution of the honor of Hashem, blessed be He. And he will yearn for the redemption because through it there will be an elevation in the honor of Hashem, blessed be He ... And he will pray persistently for the redemption of the Children of Israel and for the restoration of the honor of Heaven.*

Previously we noted that ³⁹Rav Wolbe advises: *"We should be Nosei B'ol not only with our fellow man, but also with the Shechinah! ... This is the entire focus of all Tefillah – to plead that the Heavenly Glory be revealed in the world."* Expressing our yearning for Hashem's glory to be magnified when we pray for our redemption, is a wonderful way to be *Nosei B'ol* with Hashem. Moreover, the act of praying for Divine help for a fellow Jew in need, also presents an ideal opportunity to be *Nosei B'ol* with Hashem, *"for every human pain produces great anguish [to the Shechinah] Above"* (⁴⁰*Nefesh HaChaim*). Therefore, when praying on behalf of an ill person, our primary focus should be that Hashem's anguish be removed upon his recovery and that His glory will be magnified by the recovered person's enhanced ability to serve Hashem (Rav Wolbe, *ibid*). Through such intent in our prayer, we are thereby *Nosei B'ol* with Hashem, as well as the ill person.

Shir HaShirim (5:2) states: *Hark! My Beloved is knocking: "Open up for Me, My sister, My beloved, My perfect one, for My head is full of dew, My locks with the drops of the night."* The Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 33:3; [Appendix A-10](#), p. 63), comments on this verse: *"The Holy One, blessed is He, says: For how long must I wander without a home? Behold, My head is drenched with dew. Construct for Me a Sanctuary so that I won't need to remain outside."*

What vivid imagery the Midrash portrays! G-d, so to speak, is standing outside our door, knocking, "Let Me in. My head is drenched with dew from waiting outside your door all night (i.e., during the exile). Build Me a Sanctuary so that my interminable wait will end."

The powerful image portrayed by this Midrash is further developed in the ⁸⁴*Tanna Debai Eliyahu* ([Appendix A-13](#), p. 63) which describes Hashem's comforting words to the Jewish people at the time of the Redemption: *"My children, from the day that I destroyed My home below, I never ascended and dwelled in My home above. Instead, I sat in the dew and rain. And, if you do not believe Me that I have never entered My home, place your hands on My head and see that it is drenched with dew."* The physical aspects of this awe-inspiring image are intended as an allegory, to convey Hashem's powerful desire to end His interminable wait during our exile, to enter our lives with the special closeness we experienced when His Divine Presence had a Sanctuary to reside within.

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How immense is Hashem's pain as long as the Jewish people remain in exile! The Gemara (Berachos 3a; [Appendix B-11](#), p. 67) says when Hashem hears us answer "יהא שמא רבא מברך וכו'" (*may His great Name be blessed forever and for all eternity*), He shakes His head and says: "Fortunate is the King who is praised this way in His house. How great is the pain of the Father Who exiled His children! Woe to the children who were exiled from their Father's table."

What tools do we have to be *Nosei B'ol* with Hashem's pain during our prayers? Just as the Sabba of Kelm suggests using mental imagery to visualize another person's suffering, we can do the same to be *Nosei B'ol* with Hashem. In the *Shemoneh Esrei*, before we recite "ולירושלים עירך ברחמים תשוב" (*Return mercifully to Jerusalem, Your city*), "את צמח דוד" (*Cause the offspring of Your servant, David to flourish speedily*), and "ותחזינה עינינו בשובך" (*Let our eyes witness Your return to Zion in compassion*), let us take a moment to ponder Hashem's suffering, His longing for His children to reunite with Him and visit His home for the *Chagim*. Remember Hashem's reassurance: "If you don't believe Me that I have never entered My home, place your hands on My head and see that it is drenched with dew." Thinking of this allegory will help us feel Hashem's anguish; consequently, we will recite these prayers with a true yearning for the day that these prayers will be answered, speedily in our days.

The recitation of "יהא שמא רבא מברך וכו'" during Kaddish, affords us frequent opportunities to express our desire to see Hashem's pain removed when the Redemption will restore His glory to its proper grandeur.⁸⁷ Rabbi Zev Leff explains that "יהא שמא רבא מברך וכו'" is an expression of our desire that Hashem's Name be magnified at the time of the Redemption. At that time, we will perceive that all that Hashem did from time immemorial until the end of time, was for our ultimate good. Hashem's ineffable Name, with the letters, *Yud-Kei-Vav-Kei*, signifies the past, present and the future, and therefore connotes His attribute of mercy. Until the Redemption, our perception of Him is diminished, limited by the boundaries of time; consequently, misfortunes appear as harshness. Because we cannot appreciate that which Hashem's Name signifies, His Name is incomplete until our redemption. Therefore, when we say "יהא שמא רבא מברך וכו'", we express our yearning for the time when the truth and our perception will coalesce, i.e., at the Redemption, at which time Hashem's Name will be magnified because of our increased recognition of His greatness.

When the Ruzhiner Rebbe was incarcerated by the Czar (see [Day 12](#)), some of his Chassidim were able to obtain permission to visit him in the frightful dungeon. They found the conditions appalling, a dark and damp cell with all sorts of vermin scurrying around. On the ground, they saw their beloved Rebbe, crying with copious tears. The Chassidim were shocked – they had never seen the Rebbe looking so hopeless and broken. When they expressed their sorrow to the Rebbe, he explained, "I am not crying over my own lamentable condition. I am heartbroken because of the Shechinah that is forced on account of my imprisonment, to reside here in this abominable state along with all the filth and vermin. For the Shechinah's pain, I am crying."

BEING *NOSEI B'OL* WITH HASHEM'S ANGUISH AND PRAYING FOR IT TO END:

- ❖ We are *Nosei B'ol* with Hashem's pain when we pray that His Glory be magnified at the time of our redemption. Contemplate how much "*Nachas*" Hashem derived from our service in the Beis HaMikdash and how much pain He currently endures because of our inability to give Him such "*Nachas*".
- ❖ When praying for the redemption, ponder Hashem's "homelessness" during our exile, and His yearning for His children to reunite with Him in His beloved home.
- ❖ When we respond, "יהא שמה רבא מברך", in the Kaddish, if we consciously yearn for the glory of Hashem's Name to be magnified at the time of the Redemption, we are *Nosei B'ol* with Hashem.

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Day 25: Rejoicing in other people's good fortunes is an angelic feat!

⁸⁶Rav Reuven Leuchter explains that one who is *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*, "enters into the world" of the other person's feelings and thoughts. It takes great work (*Avodah*) to enter into the world of someone who is suffering, i.e., to authentically share his or her feelings of pain. It takes an even a higher level of *Nesiah B'ol* to enter into the world and share the joy of people who are experiencing good fortunes, i.e., feeling happy for them as if it was our own personal joyful event. It is far more natural to feel envious that someone else was blessed with good fortune, wishing that it would have been our own lot instead. A person who overcomes this natural inclination to genuinely rejoice in another's happiness as if it were his own, has transcended human limitations, as stated by Rav Mordechai Pogramasky: *"If one does not share in another person's pain as if it was his own pain, he lacks qualities of a human being, but if he rejoices in another person's time of happiness as if it was his own joy, he is an angel!"* (quoted by ⁵⁶Rav Salomon).

During the encounter of the burning bush, when Hashem deputized Moshe Rabbeinu to return to Egypt and liberate the Jews, Moshe expressed reluctance for the mission, asking Hashem to send his brother, Aharon, instead (Shemos 4:13). The Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 3:16-17; [Appendix A-8](#), p. 62) explains the reason for Moshe's reluctance: Moshe said, *"Before I rose to prominence, my brother Aharon was prophesying to them in Egypt for 80 years. Shall I now trespass my brother's domain and cause him to be pained!"* Hashem assured Moshe that, on the contrary, rather, than feeling slighted by being superseded, Aharon will rejoice over Moshe's ascent to greatness (Shemos 4:14): *"When he will see you, he will rejoice in his heart."* The Midrash comments on Aharon's happiness: *R' Shimon bar R' Yose said: The heart (of Aharon) that rejoiced in the greatness of his brother, shall be privileged to wear the Urim v'Tumim, as it says (Shemos 28: 30): "And they shall be on Aharon's heart."*

What is the connection between Aharon rejoicing over his brother's rise to prominence and his worthiness to wear the *Urim v'Tumim*? When the Jewish people seek Divine guidance, the *Kohen Gadol* (high priest) conveys their inquiry to Hashem through the *Urim v'Tumim* which he carries in the breastplate (*Choshen*) over his heart.

⁸⁸Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz explains that in order for the *Urim v'Tumim* to be a vehicle for Heavenly guidance during the Jewish people's difficulties, the *Kohen Gadol* must have a heart of empathy, which identifies with the feelings of a person in his moment of distress. Rav Shmuelevitz adds: *"The magnanimous heart that holds within it the exalted middah to rejoice in another's happiness,"* i.e., Aharon's heart that rejoiced over Moshe's selection as the redeemer of Israel, *"is sensitized to feel the heart of each Jew, and therefore, precisely is the place for the Urim v'Tumim to rest upon."*

⁸⁹Rav Matisyahu Salomon explains that certainly Moshe understood the great value of the *middah* of rejoicing in another person's good fortunes and also, he recognized the exalted personality of his brother, Aharon. Why, then, did Moshe fear that he would be "trespassing" on his brother's domain and hesitate to accept the mantle of leadership? The answer, says Rav Salomon, Moshe could not imagine that the heart of any human being, even as great as Aharon, could be so pure as to rejoice in another's success and good fortune as if it was his own personal happiness. Surely, Moshe worried, Aharon would have a smattering of resentment for having the leadership taken from him and given to his younger brother. Thus, when Hashem responded, *"When he will see*

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you, he will rejoice in his heart," He assured Moshe that Aharon's heart would completely be filled with joy over his brother's rise to prominence, free of even an iota of resentment. Because of this exquisite purity of his heart, Aharon merited that, *"the heart that rejoiced in the greatness of his brother, shall be privileged to wear the Urim v'Tumim."*

⁹⁰Rav Chatzkel Levenstein suggests it is possible that one who rejoices in the good fortunes of another (which he describes as the *middah* of "טוב עיין" - good eye) is even at a higher spiritual state than one who sacrifices his life to sanctify Hashem's Name! When Avrohom and Yitzchak were traveling to carry out the *Akeidas Yitzchak*, the Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 56:4; [Appendix A-9](#), p. 62) says that the Satan attempted to dissuade Yitzchak from carrying out this self-sacrifice. The Satan said to Yitzchak, *"Son of a forlorn woman! This man is going to slaughter you!"* Yitzchak responded: *"It is with this understanding that I go."* The Satan said to him: *"If so, all these fine garments your mother made for you, will go as inheritance to Yishmael, the hated one of the house and you do not take this to heart?!"* The latter argument of the Satan (i.e., Yishmael would inherit his fine clothes) weakened Yitzchak's resolve to carry out the *Akeidah*, such that Avrohom Avinu needed to admonish him to get him back on track! Rav Chatzkel presents the following approach of the Sabba of Kelm to deal with the obvious difficulty: How could Yitzchak's resolve have been weakened by such a specious argument of the Satan?

Since Yitzchak was enroute to sacrifice his life, what good would the fine garments from his mother do for him and what loss does he suffer by Yishmael taking them? Hence, why should the Satan's argument affect him? ... (Rav Chatzkel answers): *Yitzchak was affected by (a speck of) the middah of "רע עיין" (the opposite of the middah of "טוב עיין") - even when a person will have no benefit from something owed to him, it is implanted in his nature that he cannot tolerate when it is given to someone else who will benefit from it. Therefore, it is possible that even at a time of literal Mesiras Nefesh (sacrificing one's life), this "רע עיין" middah can exert its effects.*

From this approach of the Sabba of Kelm, Rav Chatzkel infers the notion that a person who genuinely is happy about another person's good fortune may be greater than one who sacrifices his life for Kiddush Hashem:

From these words of Chazal, we derive ... how fortunate is the one who has implanted the middah of "טוב עיין" in himself. One who sacrifices his life for Kiddush Hashem will receive an unimaginably great portion of Olam Habbah. However, from this Midrash, it is reasonable to deduce that one who merits the middah of "טוב עיין" may receive an even greater portion. For we see that even at a time of Mesiras Nefesh, one cannot escape the middos of envy and "רע עיין" ... Thus, we can understand that who succeeds in becoming a "טוב עיין" may possibly be even more valued and dear (to Hashem) than one who sacrifices his life since the latter has not fixed this middah.

REJOICING IN OTHER PEOPLE'S GOOD FORTUNES: LIKE AN ANGEL!

- ❖ Aharon HaKohen rejoiced when Moshe was designated as the leader of the Jewish people, as if it was his own personal good fortune. In the merit of this supreme *Nesiah B'ol*, Aharon was selected by Hashem to become the *Kohen Gadol*.
- ❖ Our fellow's good fortune should gladden us as if we enjoyed the same good fortune. One who does so, is like an angel and may even surpass the level of sacrificing one's life for Kiddush Hashem!

Section 9: Developing the virtue of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*

Day 26: The Jewish nation's responsibility to be *Nosei B'ol* with all mankind

On May 22, 1960, Chile was struck by the most powerful earthquake ever recorded (the “Valdivia earthquake,” which registered a magnitude of 9.4–9.6). This catastrophe left approximately two million people homeless and untold thousands injured and dead, due to the earthquake-induced tsunamis which battered Chile, Hawaii, Japan, the Philippines, New Zealand, Australia and the Aleutian Islands. During a *mussar* address following the earthquake, Rav Chatzkel Levenstein reprimanded the Yeshiva students for failing to be *Nosei B'ol* with those who were devastated by this disaster and for not feeling sorrow for their unimaginable suffering. The following is an excerpt from ⁹¹Rav Chatzkel's address:

*“It is astonishing that we see the severely difficult events in the world and we witness Heavenly punishment playing out before our eyes ... we fail to understand that it behooves us to feel the misfortune, punishment and suffering in the world; the world is not in a state of peace. The earthquake has left thousands killed, injured and homeless with no roof overhead. Yet, this has left no impression upon us; we remain apathetic to their terrible suffering. I do not see anyone talking about this. Why are we not thinking about the tremendous calamity that has befallen the residents of the impacted countries? ... We are obligated to feel the pain of the nations of the world. If we have a Torah obligation to care about the pain of animals, how much more so we must feel the pain of people who are created in the Tzelem Elokim (the Divine image). [The root of our failure to feel the pain of the earthquake victims] is also the reason we fail to be *Nosei B'ol* with patients in agony from severe illnesses, who we observe whenever we visit the hospital. We [leave the hospital and] return home in complete tranquility and serenity. [Our inability to share in the pain of ill people as well as the victims of the earthquake] is due to our rejoicing in other people's misfortunes.”*

Rejoicing in another person's misfortune is a character flaw that is severely condemned by *Chazal*. Yet, Rav Chatzkel did not hesitate to call out his students, characterizing their failure to feel the pain of the victims of the Valdivia earthquake, as “rejoicing in other people's misfortunes.” Rabbeinu Yonah in *Sharei Teshuva* (3:39) states “we have been admonished to **remove** the *middah* of hatred (שנאה),” rather than, “we have been admonished **not to acquire** the *middah* of hatred.” Rav Chatzkel explains that Rabbeinu Yonah is telling us that negative traits such as hatred are innate, lying dormant within us, just awaiting the opportunity to rise to the surface and influence our behavior, unless we consciously exert much effort to overcome and uproot them. Thus, if we are apathetic to the suffering of non-Jews, excusing ourselves, “oh well, they are just *Goyim*,” this attitude is simply an expression of our *middah* of hatred. When we have such a negative *middah* operating unchecked within us, there is no hope of us attaining *Ahavas Yisrael* (love of Jews) or *Ahavas Hashem* (love of G-d), because negative *middos* have a “ripple effect”, eroding our entire moral character including our behavior toward fellow Jews and our relationship with Hashem.

On May 23, 1960, Israel announced to the world that Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, *yemach shemo* (may his name be blotted out), had been apprehended and would stand trial. This news caused a considerable stirring of emotions within Israel, including a sense of relief and jubilation that finally one of the Nazi murderers would have to pay for his atrocities and barbarism. In the above *mussar* address, Rav Chatzkel pointed out that while we

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have an obligation to carry out the Torah's justice, it antithetical to the Torah's outlook to gloat over Eichmann's capture or rejoice at the suffering of (even) such a thoroughly wicked person. In fact, because of the proximity in the timing of these two cataclysmic events, Eichmann's capture and the catastrophic Valdivia earthquake, Rav Chatzkel contrasted the reaction of the religious community to both events:

"If murder was so terrible in our eyes, how incongruent it is that the earthquake, which killed many thousands, has no effect at all on us and it occupies no room in our thoughts?! ... We are obligated to feel the pain of all the victims swept away by the catastrophic earthquake and to feel the terror of those who live in that area ...

If these principles would be evident to us, we certainly would not be so enamored with this murderer's capture. Rather, we would be far more aroused by the recent earthquake; we would perceive the punishment which Hashem brought to teach us ... that nothing in the world is by happenstance. All events [are directed by Heaven] for us to take heed and learn ... If only our hearts were imbued with love of mankind, we would be alarmed and aroused by this catastrophe; we would perceive and feel Heaven's punishment [warning to us to repent]."

It is worthwhile to record a few vignettes of Tzaddikim who demonstrated remarkable sensitivity and pain over the suffering of non-Jews. ⁹²Rav Yeruchem Levovitz mentions that when the Sabba of Kelm saw non-Jews traveling long distances to their houses of worship, he felt unbearable sorrow for them, imagining their great disappointment when they would leave this world and realize all their toil was for naught. When the Ponovezher Rov, Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, returned from a fund-raising trip in South Africa, he visited the Chofetz Chaim and reported his observations. The Chofetz Chaim expressed his concern and pain over the appalling living conditions that the black population in South Africa were subjected to at that time. Rav Yaacov Haber recounts that after the devastating tsunami of 2004, Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl, former chief rabbi of the Old City of Jerusalem who was nearly 70 years old at the time, packed his bags intending to travel to the disaster site to personally participate in offering humanitarian aid. It was only with great effort that his family managed to dissuade him from undertaking this very strenuous trip. We cannot turn the "empathy button" on and off at will. To reach the exalted level of being a *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* toward our fellow Jews, we must also demonstrate significant empathy to non-Jews as well. To do otherwise, is to turn our backs on the great heritage that Avrohom Avinu bequeathed to us, as stated in Bereishis 18:19: *"For he commands his children and his household after him that they keep the way of Hashem, acting with righteousness and justness."*

...

OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO BE *NOSEI B'OL* WITH ALL MANKIND:

- ❖ We are obligated to feel the pain of the nations of the world. When misfortune comes upon the world, we must contemplate and be *Nosei B'ol* with the suffering of all mankind. Remaining apathetic to the suffering of other nations is antithetical to the children of Avrohom Avinu.

Summary Table

Summary: <i>Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro</i>: Definition, importance, and applications	
Being <i>Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro</i> means ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being together with someone in his or her distress or joy, sharing the person's feelings, as if we are living through same the situation that caused the distress or joy. • Immersing ourselves in the person's world, giving him or her "<i>a piece of our very being</i>" to feel what he or she is going through, even if we are unable to tangibly help them.
Being <i>Nosei B'ol</i> carries the message ...	<i>I am with you in your distress or joy, living through it with you. I hear ("I get") you, I value your feelings and troubles - you matter. You are not alone in this journey.</i>
Hashem's <i>middah</i> of "לְשִׂאֵרֵית נַחֲלָתוֹ" is ...	An expression of His intimate kinship with us. Hashem feels every pang of our anguish as His own and He rejoices in all our happiness.
When we are <i>Nosei B'ol</i>, we emulate ...	Hashem's <i>middah</i> of "לְשִׂאֵרֵית נַחֲלָתוֹ", thereby proclaiming the greatness of our Creator Who created us in His Divine image (<i>b'Tzelem Elokim</i>).
The basis for our ability to be <i>Nosei B'ol</i>, is ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hashem created us in His Divine image (<i>b'Tzelem Elokim</i>), endowing us with the ability to emulate His Divine <i>middah</i> of "לְשִׂאֵרֵית נַחֲלָתוֹ", thereby transcending our natural human limitations. • The Jewish people are one unified entity ("נֶפֶשׁ אֶחָת"), akin to multiple organs of one body. Therefore, we are "spiritually wired" to share the feelings of our fellow Jew.
3 reasons why being <i>Nosei B'ol</i> helps us acquire Torah: Because the virtue of <i>Nosei B'ol</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthens our existence as "כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד בְּלֵב אֶחָד" – "<i>as one person with one heart,</i>" thereby meriting Divine assistance to learn and understand Torah. • Develops our aptitude to view situations through another's perspective. We, therefore, become receptive to different views in Torah, which broadens our horizons. • Enhances our concern for another's spiritual welfare. Therefore, we will naturally share our Torah knowledge with others, thereby meriting Divine assistance to acquire Torah.

Summary: <i>Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro</i>: Definition, importance and applications	
<p>Some positive effects of being <i>Nosei B'ol</i>:</p> <p>By developing this virtue ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We strengthen our existence as one unified entity (“נִפְּשׁ אֶחָת”), perfecting our coronation of Hashem, Whose kingdom becomes established when we are united. • We transform our interpersonal (בין אדם להבירו) Mitzvos from mechanical acts to a service of the heart. This is the virtue that defines all our interpersonal Mitzvos. • We activate the Heavenly flow of Hashem’s <i>middah</i> of “לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נְחֻלָּתוֹ” toward us on a level proportional to our <i>Nesiah B'ol</i>. • We arouse Heavenly help for another person in pain. The degree of relief afforded to that person is proportional to the degree with which we feel his or her pain.
<p><i>Nesiah B'ol</i> in prayer:</p> <p>When we pray on behalf of a fellow Jew in pain ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We beseech Hashem for relief from personal suffering <i>because our friend's pain is our suffering as well</i>. Imagine if our friend’s distress would, ה"ו, befall us, how would we pray to Hashem? Pray with the same sincerity on behalf of the friend. • Prayer which emerges from an anguished heart that identifies with people who are suffering, has the power to create a window in the gates of Heaven to penetrate, thereby eliciting Heavenly mercy and salvation for the person in distress. • The effectiveness of our prayers on behalf of others in need, is directly proportional to the degree we experience their pain as our own.
<p>Suggestions for developing and expressing the virtue of <i>Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro</i>:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Enter the world” of another person’s feelings and thoughts, using mental imagery to visualize the person’s distress and imagine ourselves being in his or her situation. • Reach out to people in their “prison” of loneliness: Greeting people with a smile and showing them that they truly matter to us, can give them the strength to persevere. • Listen in an attentive, non-judgmental manner. Resist the urge to formulate a response while people in distress talk to us or to “judge” the “appropriateness” of their emotional reaction. • “Sacrifice” a few seconds every day by cheerfully greeting or thanking people who have menial, thankless jobs, to let them know their work is appreciated and their contribution to the world is recognized. • When lighting candles on Erev Shabbos, take a moment to think about people whose pain of loneliness is especially poignant on Shabbos. Then, plead for Hashem’s mercy that their pain will be removed, and that their Shabbos experiences will be filled with joy.

Appendix A: Midrashim

Note: Translation of the Midrashim is taken from the Artscroll Midrash Rabbah series and Sefaria.com.

A-1: Vayikra Rabbah: The Jewish people are considered “one soul” – “נפש אחת”

<p>Chezkiya taught: <i>“Israel are scattered sheep”</i> – [why] is Israel likened to a sheep? If a sheep is hurt on its head or another limb (or organ), his entire body feel it. Similarly, with Israel, if one of them sins, everyone feels it ... This is likened to people on a ship. One of them began drilling underneath himself. The others said to him: “What are you doing?!” He replied: “What do you care - I am only drilling under my own space!” They said to him: “[We care] because the water is rising and sinking the ship!” ...</p> <p>There were 70 souls (members) in Yaakov’s family, but the Torah writes “soul” (נֶפֶשׁ) in the singular: <i>“All those who descended from Yaakov were seventy souls”</i> (שִׁבְעֵים נֶפֶשׁ).” Since Yaakov served one G-d, the Torah describes a single soul - “נֶפֶשׁ אחת”.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><u>מדרש ויקרא רבה ד', ו':</u></p> <p>תני חזקיה (ירמיה נ: ז): “שה פזורה ישראל”, נמשלו ישראל לשה, מה שה הזך לוקה על ראשו או באחד מאבריו וכל אבריו מרגישין, כך הן ישראל, אחד מהן חוטא וכלן מרגישין ... משל לבני אדם שהיו יושבין בספינה נטל אחד מהן מקדס והתחיל קודם פתתיו, אמרו לו חביריו מה אמה יושב ועושה, אמר להם מה אכפת לכם לא תחתי אני קודם, אמרו לו שהמים עולין ומציפין עלינו את הספינה ... ובניעלב שבעים נפש וכתוב ביה נפש אחת, דכתיב: “ויהי כל נפש יצאי ירד יעקב שבעים נפש” ... יעקב שהוא עובד לאלוק אחד כתיב בו נפש אחת, “ויהי כל נפש וגו”.</p>
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A-2: Midrash Tanchuma: The positive reverberations of one Jew’s righteous behavior are felt globally

<p><i>“Your heads, your tribes, all the men of Israel”</i>: All of you are responsible for one another. Even if there is only one righteous person (<i>Tzaddik</i>) among you, you all shall survive (literally, stand) on account of his merit. Moreover, the entire world will survive in the merit of one <i>Tzaddik</i> among you, as stated, <i>“A Tzaddik is the foundation for the world.”</i> When one person sins, the entire generation is stricken as we find stated by Achan, <i>“Did not Achan ben Zerach commit treachery regarding the consecrated property?”</i> If the entire generation was dealt punishment [on account of one person’s sin], how much the more [the generation will be favored] with good fortune [on account of one person’s merit] whose measure is much greater than punishment! It is therefore stated, <i>“every person of Israel.”</i></p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><u>מדרש תנחומא, נצבים א', ב':</u></p> <p>“ראשיכם שבטיכם כל איש ישראל” (דברים כט: ט): כלכם ערבים זה בזה. אפילו צדיק אחד ביניכם, כלכם עומדים בזכותו. ולא אתם בלבד, אלא אפילו צדיק אחד ביניכם, כל העולם כלו בזכותו עומד, שנאמר (משלי ו: כה): “וצדיק יסוד עולם”. וכשאחד מקם חוטא, כל הדור לוקה. וכן אתה מוצא בעקן (יהושע כב: ו): “הלא עקן בן זרח מעל מעל בחרם וגו”’. מדת פרעניות מועטת, והדור נתפס בה, מדה טובה מרבה, על אחת כמה וכמה. לכה נאמר: “כל איש ישראל”.</p>
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Appendix A: Midrashim

A-3: Bereishis Rabbah: Avrohom Avinu merited that G-d spoke to him because of his efforts to save Sodom

R' Ada said, [Avrohom said to G-d]: *"You swore never again to bring a flood upon the world. Are You now are contriving to evade the oath? You will not bring a flood of water, but a 'flood of fire' You may still bring? If so, You have not fulfilled Your oath!"* R' Levi said, [Avrohom said to G-d]: **"The Judge of the earth shall not do justice,"** – if You desire a viable world, there can be no strict justice, while if You desire strict justice, there can be no viable world. You are holding a rope at both ends; You desire a world and yet You desire strict justice! Unless You forgo strict justice a little, the world cannot endure. The Holy One, blessed is He, said to Avrohom: **"You love righteousness"** – you love to vindicate My creations; **"and you hate wickedness"** – you refuse to assign any guilt to them. **"Accordingly has G-d, your G-d, anointed you with oil of joy from among your peers"** – there were ten generations from Noach to you; yet, from all of them, I did not speak with a single one, only with you, [as the verse states]: **"And Hashem said to Avrohom, 'go for yourself.'"**

מדרש בראשית רבה מ"ט, ט:
 אָמַר רַב אַדָּא נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ שְׂאִין אַתָּה מְבִיא מַבּוּל לְעוֹלָם, מָה אַתָּה מַעְרִים עַל הַשְּׁבוּעָה, מַבּוּל שֶׁל מַיִם אֵין אַתָּה מְבִיא, מַבּוּל שֶׁל אֵשׁ אַתָּה מְבִיא, אִם כֵּן לֹא יִצְאָתָּ יְדֵי שְׁבוּעָה. אָמַר רַבִּי לְוִי, "הַשֹּׁפֵט כָּל הָאָרֶץ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט" (בראשית י"ח, כ"ה): אִם עוֹלָם אַתָּה מְבַקֵּשׁ אֵין דִּין, וְאִם דִּין אַתָּה מְבַקֵּשׁ לֵית עוֹלָם, אַתָּה תְּפִיס חֲבָלָא בְּתַרְוֵין רְאִשֵׁין, בְּעֵי עֲלָמָא וּבְעֵי דִינָא, אִם לֵית אַתָּה מוֹתַר צְבָחַר, לֵית עֲלָמָא יְכִיל קָאִים. אָמַר לוֹ הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: אַבְרָהָם, "אַהֲבַת צְדָק וְנִשְׁנָא רְשָׁע" (תהלים מ"ה, ח): אַהֲבַת לְצַדִּיק אַתְּ בְּרִיּוֹתִי; "וְנִשְׁנָא רְשָׁע": מֵאַנְתָּ לְסִיבּוּ; "עַל כֵּן מִשְׁחָה אֱלֹקִים אֱלֹקִיךָ שְׁמֹן שֶׁשׁוֹן מִחֲבָרֶיךָ" (תהלים מ"ה, ח). מַהוּ מִחֲבָרֶיךָ? מִנֵּחַ וְעַד אֲצִלָּה עֲשָׂרָה דוֹרוֹת וּמִכְלָם לֹא דִבַּרְתִּי עִם אֶחָד מֵהֶם אֲלָא עִמָּךְ, "וַיֵּאמֶר ה' אֶל אַבְרָם לֵךְ לְךָ" (בראשית י"ב, א').

A-4: Midrash Tanchuma: "עמו אנכי בצרה" – Hashem is with us in our pain

And why [did Hashem appear] out of the midst of a thorn bush and not out of a taller tree such as the palm tree? The Holy One, blessed is He, said, "I have written in the Torah 'I am with him in [his] distress.' Just as they are suffering in oppression, so too, I am [dwelling] in the narrow straits of the bush that is entirely thorns."

מדרש תנחומא שמות י"ד: ד':
 וְלָמָּה מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּנֵּה, וְלֹא מִתּוֹךְ אֵילָן גָּדוֹל, וְלֹא מִתּוֹךְ תַּמְרָה? אָמַר הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: פְּתַבְתִּי בַתּוֹרָה, "עִמּוֹ אֲנֹכִי בְצָרָה" (תהלים צ"א, ט"ו). הֵם נִתְּוֵנִים בְּשַׁעֲבוּד, וְאִנִּי בְּסִנֵּה מִמְקוֹם צָר. לְפִיכָף מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּנֵּה שֶׁכֵּלּוֹ קוֹצִים.

A-5: Bamidbar Rabbah: Hashem 's sovereignty is strengthened when we become one united bundle

"Who builds His upper strata in the Heavens and He founds His group upon the earth; [Who calls to the waters of the sea and pours them out upon the face of the earth – Hashem is His Name]." To what is this compared? To a palace that was built upon boats. As long as the boats are connected, the palace upon them will stand. Thus, *"Who builds His upper strata in the Heavens"*: When is His throne, so to speak, established Above? When Israel becomes one bundle ("אגודה אחת"). It therefore states, *"Who builds His upper strata in the Heavens,"* i.e., [His upper strata will be built] when *"He founds His group upon the earth."*

מדרש במדבר רבה ט"ו, י"ח:
 (עמוס ט: ו): "הַבּוֹנֵה בַשָּׁמַיִם מַעְלוֹתָו וְנֹאגְדָתוֹ עַל אֲרֶץ יִסְדָּה וְהִקְרָא לְמֵי הַיָּם וַיִּשְׁפְּכֵם עַל פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ ה' שָׁמוּ". לָמָּה הַדְּבָר דּוֹמֵה? לְפִלְטִין שֶׁהֵיטָה בְּנוּיָה עַל גְּבֵי הַסְּפִינּוֹת, כֹּף לְזֶמֶן שֶׁהַסְּפִינּוֹת מְחַבְּרוֹת פְּלִטִין שֶׁעַל גְּבִיָּהוּ עוֹמְדָת. כֹּף הַבּוֹנֵה בַשָּׁמַיִם מַעְלוֹתָו, כְּפִיכּוֹל כְּסֹאֵ מְבוֹסָס לְמַעְלָה בְּזֶמֶן שֶׁיִּשְׂרָאֵל עֲשׂוּיִן אֲגָדָה אַחַת. לְכֹף נֶאֱמַר: "הַבּוֹנֵה בַשָּׁמַיִם מַעְלוֹתָו". אֵימָתִי? "וְנֹאגְדָתוֹ עַל אֲרֶץ יִסְדָּה".

Appendix A: Midrashim

A-6: Shemos Rabbah: Moshe Rabbeinu's Nesiah B'ol with Klal Yisrael's suffering – the basis of Hashem's revelation to him

<p>What is meant by the expression, “<i>And he saw (their burdens)?</i>” It alludes to the fact that Moshe would see their burdens and [share their sorrow to the extent that he would] cry: “Woe is me on account of you! If only I could die for your sake! For there is no work as hard as working with clay.” And Moshe would lend a shoulder and assist every one of the Israelites ... [Moshe] would remove his royal garments and go to rearrange the Israelites’ burdens [in accordance with each one’s capacity] ... The Holy One, blessed is He, said to Moshe, “You left aside your usual affairs to go out and observe the suffering of Israel, treating them as brothers, so too I will, as it were, leave aside the upper and the lower realms and speak to you.” Thus, it is written, “<i>And Hashem saw that he [Moshe] turned aside to see.</i>” The Holy One, blessed is He, saw that Moshe turned aside from his affairs to see the burdens of Israel. Therefore, “<i>G-d called out to him from amid the bush.</i>”</p>	<p><u>מדרש שמות רבה א', כ"ז:</u> מהו "וַיֵּרָא (בְּסִבְלֹתָם)" ? שֶׁהִיא רוּאָה בְּסִבְלֹתָם וּבֹכָה וְאוֹמֵר: "חֲבַל לִי עֲלֵיכֶם מִי יִתֵּן מוֹתִי עֲלֵיכֶם, שָׂאִין לָךְ מְלֶאכֶה קָשָׁה מִמְּלֶאכֶת הַטֵּיט", וְהִיא גֹתֵן כְּתַפְיוֹ וּמְסִיעַ לְכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד מֵהֵן ... וְהִיא מְנִיחַ דְּרַגּוֹן שְׁלוֹ וְהוֹלֵךְ וּמֵיִשֵׁב לָהֶם סִבְלוֹתֵיהֶם ... אָמַר הַקַּב"ה: "אַתָּה הַנִּחַתָּ עֲסָקִיךָ וְהִלַּכְתָּ לְרֵאוֹת בְּצַעְרֵךְ שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְנִהְגַּתָּ בְּהֵן מִנְהַג אַחִים, אֲנִי מְנִיחַ אֶת הָעֲלִיוֹנִים וְאֶת הַתַּחְתּוֹנִים, וְאֶדְבַר עִמָּךְ", הִדָּא הוּא דְכֹתֵיב: "וַיֵּרָא ה' כִּי סָר לְרֵאוֹת", רָאָה הַקַּב"ה בְּמַשָּׁה שֶׁסָּר מֵעֲסָקִיו לְרֵאוֹת בְּסִבְלֹתָם, לְפִיכָךְ: "וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו אֱלֹקִים מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּנְיָה".</p>
<p>R' Yitzchak said: What is meant by “<i>Moshe was 'סָר' to see?</i>” The Holy One, blessed is He, said: “This person (Moshe) is downcast and upset upon seeing the affliction of Israel in Egypt. Therefore, [since he feels their pain], he is worthy of being their shepherd.” Immediately, it states: “<i>G-d called out to him from amid the bush.</i>”</p>	<p><u>מדרש שמות רבה ב', ו':</u> אָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק: מַהוּ "כִּי סָר לְרֵאוֹת"? אָמַר הַקַּב"ה: "סָר וְנָעַף הוּא זֶה לְרֵאוֹת בְּצַעְרֵךְ שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמַצְרַיִם, לְפִיכָךְ רָאוּי הוּא לְהִיּוֹת רוּעָה עֲלֵיהֶן". מִיָּד "וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו אֱלֹקִים מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּנְיָה".</p>

A-7: Midrash: Empathizing with an indigent person's sorrow is critical for Tzedaka

<p>“<i>[If] you offer your soul to the hungry</i>”: R’ Levi said, If you have nothing to give to [the poor person], console him with words. [For example], say to him: “My soul goes out for you because I have nothing to give you.” “<i>And satisfy the afflicted soul</i>”: If you have done accordingly, then, “<i>Your light will shine in the darkness, and your deepest gloom will be like the noon.</i>” “<i>Then Hashem will guide you always, sate your soul in times of drought (בצחצחות) and strengthen your bones</i>”: R’ Tevyomi said, if you have done accordingly, you are likened to your Creator, as it says, “<i>My Beloved is pure white (צח) and ruddy.</i>”</p>	<p><u>מדרש ויקרא רבה ל"ד: ט"ו:</u> “וַתִּפְקַד לְרַעֵב נַפְשֶׁךָ” (ישעיה נח: י-יא): אָמַר רַבִּי לְוִי אִם אִין לָךְ לִתּוֹן לּוֹ נַחֲמוּ בְּדַבְרֵיךָ, אָמַר לּוֹ: “תַּצַּא נַפְשִׁי עֲלֵיךָ שָׂאִין לִי מַה לִּתּוֹן לָךְ.” “וַיִּנְפֹשׁ נַעֲנָה תִשְׁבִּיעַ: אִם עָשִׂיתָ כֵּן, וְנִזְרַח בְּחַשְׁךְ אוֹרָךְ וְאֶפְלַתָּה כְּצִהָרִים.” “וַיִּנְחֶךָ ה' תָּמִיד וְהִשְׁבִּיעַ בְּצַחְצַחוֹת נַפְשֶׁךָ וְעַצְמוֹתֶיךָ יִתְלַיֵּץ”: אָמַר רַבִּי טֵבּוּיָמִי אִם עָשִׂיתָ כֵּן תִּהְיֶה אֶתְּ כַּבּוֹרְאָךְ, כְּאוֹתוֹ שֶׁקְּתוּב בּו (שיר השירים ה': י'): “דוֹדִי צַח וְאָדוּם”.</p>
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A-8: Shemos Rabbah: Aharon rejoiced over Moshe's rise to prominence

The Sages said: If you think that Moshe held back from going [because he simply did not want to go], know that this is not so. Rather, he did so as a way of according respect to Aharon. For Moshe said, "Before I rose to prominence, my brother Aharon was prophesying to them in Egypt for eighty years" ... Moshe thus exclaimed, "Shall I now trespass my brother's domain and cause him to be pained?!" This is why Moshe did not wish to go ...

[G-d said to Moshe]: "Now, regarding what you think, i.e., that Aharon will be distressed [by you superseding him] – it is not so. Rather, he (Aharon) will rejoice, as it says, 'When he sees you, he will rejoice in his heart.'" R' Shimon bar R' Yose said: The heart (of Aharon) that rejoiced in the greatness of his brother, shall be privileged to wear the *Urim v'Tumim*, as it says, "And they shall be on Aharon's heart."

מדרש שמות רבה ג', ט"ז-י"ז:

ורבנן אמרי סבור אתה שהיה מעכב משה לילך, אינו כן, אלא כמכבד לאהרן, שהיה משה אומר עד שלא עמדתי היה אהרן אחי מתנבא להם במצרים שמנים ושנה ... אמר משה עכשיו אכנס בתחומו של אחי ויהיה מצר, בשביל כך לא היה מבקש לילך ... ומה שאמה סבור שהוא מצר לא כן אלא שמם, ושנאמר (שמות ד': י"ד): "וראה ושמה בלבבו". אמר רבי שמעון בן רבי יוסי הלבב ששמח בגדלת אחיו ילבש אורים ותמים, ושנאמר (שמות כ"ח, ל'): "והיו על לב אהרן".

A-9: Bereishis Rabbah: The Satan unsuccessfully attempts to dissuade Yitzchak from carrying out the Akeidah

"And Yitzchak spoke to Avrohom and said 'Father.'" Samael (Satan) approached Avrohom Avinu and said to him, "Old man, old man! Have you lost your mind? You are going to slaughter a son that was granted to you when you were at the age of one hundred years?!" Avrohom said to him, "It is with this understanding that I go" ... When [Samael saw that] he had accomplished nothing [in dissuading Avrohom], he approached Yitzchak and said to him: "Son of a forlorn woman! This man is going to slaughter you!" Yitzchak responded: "It is with this understanding that I go." The Satan said to him: "If so, all these fine garments your mother made for you, will go as inheritance to Yishmael, the hated one of the house and you do not take this to heart?!" Although a spoken word may not enter one's ears completely, it enters partially (i.e., the Satan succeeded in planting seeds of doubt in Yitzchak's mind). This is the meaning of that which is written, "And Yitzchak spoke to Avrohom his father and said 'Father!'" Why did he say "Father ... Father," twice? In order that Avrohom should be filled with mercy for him. And he (Yitzchak) said moreover, "Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the offering." [Avrohom] said [to Yitzchak], "Much to the dismay of the one (Satan) [who is trying to dissuade us] – that man whom G-d rebukes - nevertheless, 'G-d will seek out for Himself the lamb.' And if He does not [provide the lamb], then you will be the lamb for the offering, my son."

מדרש בראשית רבה נ"ו, ד':

"ויאמר יצחק אל אברהם אביו ויאמר אבי" (בראשית כב, ז): בא לו סמאל אצל אבינו אברהם אמר ליה "סבא סבא אובדת לבך, בן שנתן לך למאה ושנה אתה הולך לשטטו", אמר לו "על מנת בן" ... וכיון שלא הועיל ממנו כלום בא לו אצל יצחק, אמר לו "ברא דעלובתא, הולך הוא לשטטו", אמר לו "על מנת בן". אמר לו "אם בן כל אותן הפרגזיות שעשת אמה לישמעאל שנאיה דביתה ורותא, ואתה אינך מקניס בלבך". פד לא תיעול מילא תיעול פלגא, הדא הוא דכתיב: "ויאמר יצחק אל אברהם אביו אבי", למה אבי אבי שתי פעמים, כדי שיתמלא עליו רחמים. ויאמר הנה האש והעצים" (בראשית כב, ז), אמר לו "יצא ליהוא גברא דיגער ביה, מכל מקום יאלקים יראה לו השעה בני" (בראשית כב, ח), ואם לאו אתה השעה לעלה בני".

Appendix A: Midrashim

A-10: Shemos Rabbah: G-d's sorrow and "wandering" during the years of our exile

<p>"Open for Me, My sister, My beloved." [G-d says to the Jewish people]: "How long must I wander without a home – 'For [behold], My head is drenched with dew!' [Please] - 'Construct for Me a Sanctuary' – so that I won't need to remain outside."</p>	<p><u>שמות רבה ל"ג:ג:</u> "פתחי לי אחתי רעיתי" (שיר השירים ה, ב): עד מתי אהיה מתהלך בלא בית, "שראשי נמלא טל"! אלא עשו לי מקדש שלא אהיה בחוץ.</p>
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A-11: Tanna Debai Eliyahu: A covenant of Chesed that was formed by the Jews who emerged from Egypt

<p>Also, Dovid praised [the generation] who emerged from Egypt, for even the single Mitzvah in their hands was more pleasing to G-d than many Mitzvos [that we observe]. What was the single Mitzvah in their hands? They gathered together as one united group (<i>literally</i>: one bundle) and made a covenant that they would perform acts of kindness with each other.</p>	<p><u>תנא דבי אליהו רבה כ"ג:ב:</u> אף דוד היה משבח את יוצאי מצרים כי אפילו המצוה האחת שהיתה בידם נוח לפני הקב"ה הרבה יותר מן כמה מצות שלנו. ומהו המצוה האחת שהיתה בידם? שנתקבצו כולם באגודה אחת וכרתו ברית שיעשו גמילות חסדים זה עם זה.</p>
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A-12: Tanna Debai Eliyahu: The unity of the Jewish people made them worthy of receiving the Torah

<p>Chizkiyah said: How great is peace! In all the travels [of the Jews in the wilderness], Scripture states, "they sojourned", "they encamped" – they traveled in strife and encamped in strife. When they arrived at Sinai, they formed a single encampment, as Scripture states: "And Israel encamped there" (in the singular: "ויחן"). The Holy One, blessed is He, said: "Since Israel has disavowed conflict and instead, embraced peace – creating a single encampment – now is the [fitting] time for Me to give them My Torah."</p>	<p><u>תנא דבי אליהו זוטא. פרק השלום ה':</u> חזקיה אמר גדול הוא השלום, שבכל המסעות כתיב "ויסעו", "ויחנו", נוסעין במחלוקת וחונין במחלוקת. בזמן שבאו לסיני חנו חנייה אחת, (שמות י"ט): "ויחן שם ישראל". אמר הקב"ה הואיל ושנאו ישראל את המחלוקת ואהבו את השלום ונעשו חנייה אחת, הרי השעה שאתן להם את תורתך.</p>
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A-13: Tanna Debai Eliyahu: G-d's sorrow and "wandering" during the years of our exile

<p>[At the time of the redemption], the Holy One, blessed is He, says to Israel: "My children, from the day that I destroyed My home below, I never ascended and dwelled in My home above. Instead, I sat in the dew and rain (i.e., I remained without a home). And, if you do not believe Me [that I have never entered My home], place your hands on My head and see that it is drenched with dew, as is stated (Shir HaShirim 5:2): 'For my head is drenched with dew, My locks with the drops of night.'"</p>	<p><u>סדר אליהו זוטא פרק כ"א :</u> אומר להם הקב"ה לישראל: "בני מיום שהחרבתי את ביתי של מטה, לא עליתי וישבתי בביתי של מעלה, אלא הייתי יושב בטל, ואם אין אתם מאמינים לי [שאני לא נכנסתי לביתי], תנו את ידיכם על ראשי ותראו שהוא מלא טל, שנאמר (שיר השירים ה: ב): 'שראשי נמלא טל קוצות רסיסי לילה.'"</p>
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Appendix B: Gemara/Sifri/Rambam

Note: Translation of the Gemara/Sifri is taken from the Artscroll Schottenstein Talmud and Sefaria.com.

B-1: Gemara Berachos 12b: The imperative to pray on behalf of others in need

<p>Rabbah bar Channah the elder said in the name of Rav: Anyone who has the opportunity to beseech G-d for mercy on behalf of his fellow and does not beseech Him is called sinner, as it is stated, <i>“And I also – far be it from me to sin against Hashem, to refrain from praying on your behalf.”</i> Rava said: If the person [who is in need of mercy] is a Torah scholar, one is required to make himself ill on his behalf.</p>	<p><u>גמרא מסכת ברכות דף י"ב ע"ב:</u> ואמר רבא בר חיננא סבא משמיה דרב: כל שאפשר לו לבקש רחמים על חבירו ואינו מבקש נקרא חוטא, שנאמר (שמואל א י"ב, כ"ג): "גם אנכי תלילה לי מחטא לה' מתדל להתפלל בעדכם". אמר רבא: אם תלמיד חכם הוא, צריך שיחלה עצמו עליו.</p>
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B-2 Gemara Berachos 32a: Moshe wanted to forfeit his life to save the Jewish people from destruction

<p><i>“And Moshe pleaded before Hashem”</i>: Shmuel said, [the term, <i>“ויחל”</i>] teaches that Moshe gave (i.e., he wanted to give) his life for Israel, as it is stated: <i>“And now if You would forgive their sin – but if not, erase me from Your book [of life].”</i></p>	<p><u>גמרא מסכת ברכות דף ל"ב ע"א:</u> "ויחל משה את פניו" (שמות ל"ב: י"א) ... ושמואל אמר: מלמד שמסר עצמו למיתה עליהם, שנאמר (שמות ל"ב: ל"ב): "ואם אין מחני נא מספרך".</p>
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B-3: (a) Gemara Nedarim 40a; (b) *Rosh* (ר"א"ש): Life preserving effects of *Bikur Cholim* (visiting the sick) are due to the visitor's prayers which are accepted by Heaven at a time of favor ("עת רצון")

<p>Rav Dimi said: One who visits the sick causes him to live and one who fails to visit the sick causes him to die ... <i>The meaning of Rav Dimi's statement is:</i> Whoever visits a sick person will supplicate Hashem for mercy that he will live ... But one who does not visit the sick will not pray for Hashem's mercy [that he should live].</p>	<p><u>גמרא מסכת נדרים דף מ' ע"א:</u> כי אתא רב דימי אמר: כל המבקר את החולה גורם לו שיחיה, וכל שאינו מבקר את החולה גורם לו שימות ... כל המבקר את החולה מבקש עליו רחמים שיחיה ... וכל שאין מבקר את החולה אין מבקש עליו רחמים.</p>
<p>[Failing to visit] is a great wrongdoing (dereliction). If he would have visited, he would have prayed for Hashem's mercy on the ill person's behalf, and perhaps it would be a time of favor, enabling his prayers to be heard. But now that he refrained from visiting, he has caused the ill person to die.</p>	<p><u>רא"ש ד"ה אינו מבקש עליו רחמים:</u> זו היא רעה גדולה, שאם היה מבקרו היה מבקש עליו רחמים, ואפשר שעת רצון ותהא תפילתו נשמעת, ומניעת הביקור גורם שימות.</p>

B-4: Gemara Shabbos 67a: A signal to pray for Heavenly mercy on behalf of the owner of a “sick” tree

Abaye and Rava both say: Any practice that is of evident therapeutic value is not subject to the prohibition of following in the Emorite’s ways. This implies that an Emorite practice with no evident therapeutic value, is prohibited. But a *Braisa* has taught: One who possesses a tree that sheds its fruit prematurely, dyes it with red dye and burdens its branches with rocks. We can understand [the therapeutic value of] burdening the tree’s branches with rocks – so that its vitality will be sapped [and its fruits will no longer ripen prematurely]. But dyeing it with red dye – what healing has he performed? [The Gemara answers: The tree is dyed to draw the attention of the public] so that people will see his misfortune and pray for mercy on his behalf. As it was taught in a *Braisa* regarding a *metzora*. The verse states: “*And he shall call out: ‘I am impure, I am impure,’*” to teach us that one must inform the public of his misfortune so that they will beg for mercy on his behalf.

גמרא מסכת שבת דף ס"ז ע"א:
 אביי ורבא דאמרי תרוייהו כל דבר שיש בו משום
 רפואה אין בו משום דרכי האמורי. הא אין בו
 משום רפואה יש בו משום דרכי האמורי. והתניא
 אילן שמשיר פירותיו סוקרו (וצובע אותו) בסיקרא
 וטוענו באבנים. בשלמא טוענו באבנים כי היכי
 דליכחוש חיליה, אלא סוקרו בסיקרא מאי רפואה
 קעביד? כי היכי דליחזייה אינשי וליבעו עליה
 רחמי, כדתניא (ויקרא י"ג, מ"ה) "וטמא טמא
 יקרא", צריך להודיע צערו לרבים ורבים יבקשו
 עליו רחמים.

B-5: Mishna, Sanhedrin 46a: The Shechinah is anguished when a person suffers

Rebbi Meir said: At the time when a person suffers [for his sins], what expression does the Divine Presence articulate? [So to speak, G-d says]: “*I am burdened (I feel heavy) by My head, I am burdened by My arm.*” If the Omnipresent is pained for the spilled blood of the wicked, how much more so [is He pained] for the blood of the righteous.

משנה מסכת סנהדרין דף מ"ו ע"א:
 אמר רבי מאיר: בשעה שאדם מצטער שכינה מה
 לשון אומרת? "קלני מראשי קלני מזרועי", אם כן
 המקום מצטער על דמן של רשעים שנשפך קל
 וחומר על דמן של צדיקים.

B-6: Gemara Shabbos 133b; and Rashi: Mitzvah to emulate G-d's attributes is derived from “ואנוהו”

It was taught in a *Braisa*: Scripture states (Shemos 15:2): “*This is my G-d and I will beautify Him*” ... Abba Shaul says the word “ואנוהו” implies: Be like Him – just as [G-d] is gracious and compassionate, you too, should be gracious and compassionate.

גמרא מסכת שבת דף קל"ג ע"ב:
 דתניא "זה קלי ואנוהו" (שמות טו, ב) ... אבא שאול
 אומר: "ואנוהו": הוי דומה לו. מה הוא חנון ורחום, אף
 אתה היה חנון ורחום.

Rashi – Be like Him: The word “אנוהו” denotes, “me and Him,” i.e., I will make myself like Him, i.e., to cleave to His ways.

רש"י ד"ה הוי דומה לו:
 ולשון אנוהו אני והוא, אעשה עצמי כמותו לדבק בדרכיו.

B-7: Gemara Kiddushin 20a: Jewish servant is treated as the “master” – “כי טוב לו עמך”

It is taught in a *Braisa*: Scripture states of a Jewish servant: “For it is good for him with you.” This teaches that your servant shall be “with you” in food and “with you” in drink. **This means that the following must be avoided:**

- You (i.e., the owner) eat bread made from fine flour while he (i.e., the servant) eats bread made from inferior flour;
- You drink aged (superior) wine while he drinks new (inferior) wine;
- You sleep on top of soft mattresses while he sleeps on top of straw.

On account of this, it was said: Anyone who acquires a Jewish servant has acquired a master for himself.

גמרא מסכת קידושין דף כ' ע"א:

דתניא (דברים ט"ו, ט"ז) "כי טוב לו עמך":
עמך במאכל ועמך במשתה, שלא תהא אתה
אוכל פת נקיה והוא אוכל פת קיבר, אתה
שותה יין ישן והוא שותה יין חדש, אתה ישן
על גבי מוכים והוא ישן על גבי התבן. מכאן
אמרו כל הקונה עבד עברי כקונה אדון לעצמו.

B-8: Gemara Makos 10a: Moshe shined the sun upon unintentional killers exiled in cities of refuge

Rebbi Simlai explained: What is the meaning of that which is written: “Then Moshe designated three cities in the TransJordan, toward the rising sun?” The Holy One, blessed is He, said to Moshe: “Cause the sun to shine for killers [by preparing their living necessities in the refuge cities].” Others explain, [Hashem] said to Moshe: “You have caused the sun to shine for killers [by separating cities to provide for their refuge].”

גמרא מסכת מכות דף י' ע"א:

דרש רבי שמלאי מאי דכתיב: (דברים ד, מא) "אז יבדיל
משה שלש ערים בעבר הירדן מזרחה שמש"? אמר לו
הקב"ה למשה "הזרח שמש לרוצחים". איכא דאמרי,
אמר לו "הזרחת שמש לרוצחים".

B-9: Sifri Devarim 49:1: The Mitzvah of emulating Hashem’s ways is derived from “ללכת בכל דרכיו”

“To walk in His ways”: What are the ways of the Holy One, blessed is He? “Hashem, Hashem, G-d, Merciful and Gracious, Slow to Anger, and Abundant in Kindness and Truth; Preserver of Kindness for two thousand, Forgiver of Iniquity and Willful Sin, and Error, and Who Absolves.” And it is written: **“Everyone who calls in the Name of Hashem will escape.”* Is it possible for a human being to be called by Hashem’s Name? Rather, [the intent is] just as the Omnipresent is called merciful and gracious, you, too, should be merciful and gracious and give gratuitously to all. ... And it is written: “Everyone who is called by My Name and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have fashioned, even perfected.”

ספרי דברים מ"ט: א': (דברים יא: כב):

“ללכת בכל דרכיו”: אלו דרכי הקב"ה שנאמר (שמות
לד: ו-ז): "ה' ה' קל רחום וחנון ארץ אפים ורב חסד
ואמת נוצר חסד לאלפים נושא עון ופושע וחסאה ונקה".
ואומר (יואל ג: ה): "כל אשר יקרא בשם ה' ימלט". וכי
היאך אפשר לו לאדם להיקרא בשמו של הקב"ה? אלא
מה המקום נקרא רחום וחנון, אף אתה הוי רחום וחנון
ועשה מתנת חנם לכל ... ואומר (ישעיה מג: ז): "כל
הנקרא בשמי ולכבודי בראתיו, יצרתיו אף עשיתיו".

*Sifri interprets this verse homiletically: “Everyone who will be called by the Name of Hashem, will escape.”

B-10: Gemara Taanis 11a: The imperative to share in the community's suffering

Reish Lakish said: It is prohibited for a person to have marital relations in years of famine as it is stated (Genesis 41:50): *"And to Joseph were born two sons before the year of famine came."* ...

It was taught in a *Braisa*: At a time when the community is steeped in distress, a person should not say, "I will go to my house and eat and drink and peace be upon you, my soul" ... Rather, a person should suffer along with the community, for we have indeed found regarding Moshe, our Teacher, that he suffered along with the community, as it is stated (regarding the battle against Amalek): *"And the hands of Moshe were heavy, and they took a stone and placed it underneath him and he sat on it."* And did not Moshe have one mattress or one pillow upon which to sit? Rather, thus said Moshe: "Since the Children of Israel are steeped in distress, I, too, shall be with them in distress." And whoever suffers along with the community, will merit and witness the consolation of the community.

גמרא מסכת תענית דף י"א ע"א:

אמר ריש לקיש אסור לאדם לשמש מטתו בשני רעבון שנאמר (בראשית מ"א, נ'): "וליוסף ילד שני בנים בטרם תבוא שנת הרעב" ... תניא אידיך בזמן שהצבור שרוי בצער אל יאמר אדם "אלך לביתי ואוכל ואשתה ושלום עליך נפשי" ... אלא יצער אדם עם הצבור שכן מצינו במשה רבינו שציער עצמו עם הצבור שנאמר (שמות י"ז: י"ב): "וידי משה כבדים ויקחו אבן וישמו תחתיו וישב עליה". וכי לא היה לו למשה כר אחת או כסת אחת לישב עליה? אלא כך אמר משה "הואיל וישראל שרויין בצער אף אני אהיה עמהם בצער". וכל המצער עצמו עם הצבור זוכה ורואה בנחמת צבור.

B-11: Gemara Berachos: Hashem's constant pain over the exile of His children

It was taught in a *Braisa*: R' Yose said: I was once traveling on the road, and I entered one of the ruins of Jerusalem to pray. Elijah the prophet, Who is remembered for good, came and waited for me at the entrance until I finished my prayer ... He said to me: "My son, what voice did you hear in that ruin?" I said to him: "I heard a Heavenly voice cooing like a dove and saying: *'Woe to the children because of whose sins I destroyed My house, burned My Temple, and exiled them among the nations.'*" He said to me: "By your life and by your head, not only in this moment does the Heavenly voice say this, but it repeats this [lament] three times every day. Not only this, but at the time that the people of Israel enter the synagogues and houses of study and respond (in Kaddish): *'May His (G-d's) great Name be blessed (for eternity),'* the Holy One, blessed is He, shakes His head and says: *'Fortunate is the King who is praised this way in His house. What remains for (i.e., how great is the pain of) the Father Who has exiled His children! Woe to the children who have been exiled from their Father's table.'*"

גמרא מס' ברכות דף ג' ע"א:

תניא א"ר יוסי פעם אחת הייתי מהלך בדרך ונכנסתי לחורבה אחת מחורבות ירושלים להתפלל. בא אליהו זכור לטוב ושמר לי על הפתח עד שסיימתי תפילתי ... ואמר לי: "בני מה קול שמעת בחורבה זו?" ואמרתי לו: "שמעתי בת קול שמנהמת כיונה ואומרת: "אוי לבנים שבעונותיהם החרבתי את ביתי ושרפתי את היכלי והגליתים לבין האומות". ואמר לי: "חייך וחי ראשך לא שעה זו בלבד אומרת כך, אלא בכל יום ויום שלש פעמים אומרת כך. ולא זו בלבד, אלא בשעה שישראל נכנסין לבתי כנסיות ולבתי מדרשות ועונין: "יהא שמיה הגדול מבורך", הקב"ה מנענע ראשו ואומר: "אשרי המלך שמקלסין אותו בביתו כך, מה לו לאב שהגלה את בניו, ואוי להם לבנים שגלו מעל שולחן אביהם".

Appendix B: Gemara/Sifri/Rambam

Note: Translation of the Rambam is taken from Chabad.org.

B-12: Rambam: Spirit of the Mitzvah of Tzedaka: Empathizing with the indigent person's sorrow

<p>The entire Jewish people and all those who attach themselves to them are as brothers, as it states: <i>"You are children unto Hashem, your G-d."</i> And if a brother will not show mercy to a brother, who will show mercy to them? To whom do the poor of Israel lift up their eyes (for charitable assistance)? To the gentiles who hate them and pursue them? Behold their eyes are pointed to their brethren alone.</p>	<p><u>רמב"ם, פרק י' מהלכות מתנות עניים, הל' ב':</u> כל ישראל והגולה עליהם פאחים הם שנגאמר (דברים י"ד, א') "בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם". ואם לא ירחם האח על האח, מי ירחם עליו? ולמי עניי ישראל נושאים עיניהם? הלעכו"ם ששונאים אותן ורודפים אחריהם? הא אין עיניהם תלויות אלא לאחיהן.</p>
<p>4) Anyone who gives charity to a poor person with an unpleasant countenance (with a scowl) and with his face buried in the earth (in a surly manner), loses and destroys his merit even if he gives him one thousand gold pieces. Instead, he should give him [charity] with a pleasant countenance and with happiness, commiserating with the poor person about his troubles, as it states: <i>"Did I not weep for heavily burdened; did not my soul feel sorrow for the destitute?"</i> And he should speak to him words of sympathy and comfort, as it states: <i>"I would bring joyous song to a widow's heart."</i></p> <p>5) If a poor person asks [one for a donation] and he has nothing to give him, he should appease him with words.</p>	<p><u>רמב"ם, פרק י' מהלכות מתנות עניים, הל' ד-ה:</u> (ד) כל הנותן צדקה לעני בסכר פנים רעות ופניו פבושות בקרקע אפלו נתן לו אלה והובים אבד נכותו והפסידה. אלא נותן לו בסכר פנים יפות ובשמחה ומתאוונ עמו על צרתו שנגאמר (איוב ל': כ"ה): "אם לא בכיתי לקשה יום עגמה נפשי לאביון", ומדבר לו דברי תחנונים ונחומים שנגאמר (איוב כ"ט: י"ג): "ולב אלמנה ארגן". (ה) שאל העני ממך ואין בידך פלוס לתן לו פסהו בדברים.</p>

B-13: Rambam (Laws of Purim and Yom Tov): Including the poor and downtrodden in our festivities

<p>It is preferable for a person to be more liberal with his donations to the poor than to be lavish in his preparation of the Purim feast or in sending portions to his friends. For there is no greater and more splendid happiness than to gladden the hearts of the poor, the orphans, the widows, and the converts. One who brings happiness to the hearts of these downtrodden individuals resembles the Divine Presence, [as the prophet Yeshayahu states that G-d Himself descends], <i>"to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the despondent."</i></p>	<p><u>רמב"ם, הלכות מגילה וחנוכה, פרק ב' הלכה יז:</u> מוטב לאדם להרבות במתנות אביונים מלהרבות בסעודתו ובשלוש מנות לרעיו. שאין שם שמחה גדולה ומפארה אלא לשמח לב עניים ויתומים ואלמנות וגרים. שהמשמח לב האמללים האלו דומה לשכינה שנגאמר (ישעיה נ"ז: ט"ו): "להחיות רוח שפלים ולהחיות לב נדכאים".</p>
<p>While a person eats and drinks (in celebration of a holiday), he is obligated to feed the convert, the orphan, and the widow with all the other impoverished, downtrodden people. But if someone locks the doors of his courtyard and eats and drinks with his children and his wife, without feeding the poor and the embittered, this is not the rejoicing of Mitzvah, but rather the rejoicing of his stomach.</p>	<p><u>רמב"ם, הלכות שבייתת יום טוב, פרק ו' הלכה יח:</u> וכשהוא אוכל ושותה חייב להאכיל לגר ליתום ולאלמנה עם שאר העניים האמללים. אבל מי שנועל דלתות חצרו ואוכל ושותה הוא ובניו ואשתו ואינו מאכיל ומשקה לעניים ולמרי נפש, אין זו שמחת מצוה אלא שמחת פרוסו.</p>

Appendix C: Insights on the *middah* of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* by Rav Yeruchem Levovitz

- 1) Previously (Day 4 lesson), we mentioned that ¹⁶Rav Yeruchem Levovitz posits: “...the overarching goal of the entire Torah, both the study of Torah and performance of its Mitzvos, is uniting our souls - such that we feel each other’s (pain or happiness), that we literally become one.”

In another place, ⁶Rav Yeruchem notes: *Chazal call this middah, Nosei B’ol Im Chaveiro, which means that one should sense and feel another person’s pain, yoke and burden ... Moreover, all the Mitzvos of the Torah are subsumed under this Mitzvah (i.e., the imperative of Nosei B’ol Im Chaveiro) because this middah is the foundation of the Torah and the foundation of the Mitzvos.*

These are startling thoughts. The statement that *Nosei B’ol Im Chaveiro* is the *middah* that forms the foundation of all Torah and Mitzvos, suggests that one who acquires this august *middah*, will come to proper fulfillment of all Mitzvos. Our putting on Tefillin and our shaking of the *Arba Minim* on *Sukkos* will be on a higher level, meeting the intent that Hashem had for us in every Mitzvah He instructed us. How are we to understand the connection between acquiring the *middah* of *Nosei B’ol* and elevated Mitzvah performance?

³¹Rav Yeruchem points out an interesting observation concerning the redemption of the Jewish people from Egypt. In the Day 9 lesson, we quoted the Rashi explaining Hashem’s words to Moshe Rabbeinu at the burning bush encounter: “*I have focused My heart to understand and know his pains, and I did not hide My eyes, and I shall not block My ears to their cry.*” Certainly, Hashem was well aware of the Jewish people’s troubles before this event; He saw their suffering and heard their cries. What changed now that G-d said, “*I have focused My heart,*” compared to His apparent indifference before? Rav Yeruchem answers that at times Hashem leads the world through His attribute of strict judgment (*middas Hadin*), during which He is in a state of *Hester Panim* (concealment). While G-d always sees and hear us, at times He is less receptive to our suffering and thus, He does not spare us from the pain we deserve. However, once Hashem’s leadership changes to His attribute of mercy (*middas Harachamim*), He becomes so finely tuned to our suffering that even the faintest and slightest twinge of our pain comes before His *Kisei Hakavod* (throne of mercy) to elicit His immediate mercy and He promptly acts to deliver us from our troubles, as if he cannot tolerate even one more second of our suffering. Rav Yeruchem describes this as the *Sod Hageulah* (secret of redemption).

Rav Yeruchem explains that G-d’s Divine empathy – whereby He finely focuses His attention to even the slightest twinge of our pain, was emulated by Moshe Rabbeinu and Dovid Hamelech, and furthermore, this trait was the factor by which Hashem determined their worthiness to become leaders of His people. The Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 2:3) says: “*The Holy One, blessed is He, does not grant greatness to a person before He tests him with a small matter; afterward, He promotes him to greatness.*” Hashem tested Moshe and Dovid and they proved worthy by the way they treated the animals in their care. Since leadership over the community would require the *middah* of feeling and sensing every small aspect of pain and hardship among their charges, it was necessary for Moshe and Dovid to demonstrate that even the slightest discomfort of lowly animals did not escape their attention. Since Moshe and Dovid demonstrated their

Appendix C: Insights on the *middah* of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* by Rav Yeruchem Levovitz

finely tuned attention to the faintest level of hardship through the way they treated the animals, they were deemed worthy by Hashem to lead His flock, the Jewish people.

We see from Rav Yeruchem's words that being *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro* entails exquisite attention to the smallest details of someone else's needs and pain, just as Hashem is so finely tuned to the faintest twinge of our pain. Maybe someone who reaches this level will be able to become finely tuned to the specific *Ratzon Hashem* (will of G-d) in every situation, and will be able to have the proper intent when shaking a Lulav to what Hashem wants from him at that moment, and similarly for each different Mitzvah, the person will be able to latch onto whatever it is that Hashem wants him to bear in mind when he performs that specific Mitzvah. Rather than just doing Mitzvos in a perfunctory manner, he become "laser-tuned" to the details of the intent that Hashem instilled in every Mitzvah, and through cleaving to Hashem's will, one will come to a greater attachment and love of Hashem.

- 2) ⁸Rav Yeruchem points out that after the sin of the Golden Calf, the factor that saved the Jews from Hashem's decree of destruction was Moshe Rabbeinu's pain, whereby he told G-d that he preferred to die rather than witness the Jewish people's doom. This pain of Moshe and his desire to be put to death so as not to see the downfall of his brethren, was the ultimate manifestation of his *middah* of *Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro*. Rav Yeruchem comments that this demonstrates the value and significance of this *middah* – because of which, Moshe deemed it fitting to give away the rest of his life. Rav Yeruchem says we see from here that there is nothing in the world which is not worth giving up for the *middah* of *Nosei B'ol* – even the exalted life of Moshe Rabbeinu was worth giving up for this *middah*! In the merit of Moshe Rabbeinu's *Nesiah B'ol* alone, Hashem annulled the decree of destruction against the Jewish people.
- 3) The Gemara (Bava Metzia 83b) interprets the verse in Tehillim (104: 20): “[*You made darkness and it is night*], in which every forest beast stirs” – this refers to the wicked people who resemble the beasts of the forest. The Sabba of Kelm explains that wicked people are compared to forest beasts in that both groups lack any empathy for someone else's pain. This illustrates the magnitude of the perversion of one who does not feel another person's pain, to the point where Chazal refer to such people as, “beasts of the forest.”

⁶Rav Yeruchem explains the Sabba's words: The Mishna in *Pirkei Avos* (3:2) says that if not for people's fear of the government, each person would swallow his fellow man alive. A wild beast whose nature is to devour live animals, does not pay attention to the suffering of its prey who cries and struggles as it is being killed. Rav Yeruchem explains that the above Mishna is telling us that one who does not pay attention to and sense the suffering of another person, has a nature like that of the devouring animal, to the point where he has the ability to swallow another person alive. Rav Yeruchem extends this to say that when one sees a sick individual whose suffering do not leave the proper impression on him, even if he emits a sigh at the sight of the ill person's pain, since he can walk away in complete peace of mind, he has the ability to actually kill him. Since he fails to be *Nosei B'ol* with the sick person, we can assume that he could come to kill him!

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