

Parshas Mishpatim 5763

One of the great lessons that the Torah teaches is that the רבשי"ע is especially close to those who are neediest, to those who are in pain.

The נביא ישעיה puts this beautiful:

כי כה אמר רם ונשא שוכן עד וקדוש שמו, מרום וקדוש אשכון, ואת דכא ושפל רוח, להחיות רוח שפלים, ולהחיות לב נדכאים

The רבשי"ע says: I dwell in the highest heavens, מרום וקדוש אשכון, but I am also to be found among the down-trodden and the oppressed in spirit, to raise up the spirits of those who are low, and to revive the hearts of the downtrodden.

In Yiddishkeit we have only one measure of greatness, and that is בצלם אלקים עשה את האדם.

To be great is to emulate the מידות of the רבשי"ע; הדבק במידותיו, to cleave to his מידות.

And, therefore, our greatest men have gone to great lengths to help the most needy of our people.

R' Chaim Ozer was the גדול הדור, the greatest genius of his time. He once remarked: *When I was young I thought that the great thing is to resolve a difficult Rambam. Now I know that the great thing is to help אלמנות and יתומים.*

His rebbe was R' Chaim Brisker. R' Chaim was a genius of such order that his talmidim was express disbelief that human shoulders could support such a head. But more than R' Chaim was a genius in Torah, he was a genius in חסד. At night his home was full of people who had nowhere else to sleep, and they would sleep on R' Chaim's couch, and floor. His son, R' Velvel, would recall how he would come home at night and have to step over the people sleeping on the floor of his house; his own bed was rarely vacant.

R' Chaim had wetnurses on call to suckle all the foundlings that were left on his doorstep. And first thing each morning he would check his front door to see if someone had left another.

That is the mark of Torah greatness; to emulate מידה ש'הקב"ה of רוח ואת דכא ושפל רוח.

Perhaps, in this light, we can suggest a new understanding of a פסוק in this weeks parsha:

וגר לא לא תונה ולא תלחצנו כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים *and you shall not distress or oppress a stranger, for you were strangers in Egypt.* The מפרשים consider what is

the connection between the two halves of the פסוק, and give various explanations:

Rashi: Don't taunt a גר for being a stranger, because he can taunt you right back that you, too, were a stranger in מצרים.

אבן עזרא: You know what it feels like, so you should be sympathetic.

רמב"ן: Remember that you were גרים and I took up the cudgels on your behalf; I will do the same for this גר.

Perhaps we can suggest another explanation: Remember that you were גרים, and how I overturned heaven and earth to redeem you. And if you want to emulate me, if you want to emulate my מידות, then you too have to extend yourself on behalf of those who are suffering.

In that spirit, we are very proud of our members who have returned from their mission to ארץ ישראל this week. What they have done is in the highest tradition of our *kehillah*; it is in the highest tradition of our people; and, most important, it is an embodiment of the imperative to imitate the מידות of the רבשי"ע, who is את דכא ושפל רוח, together with the suffering and the oppressed.

In that זכות may we witness ישועות ונחמות, בעגלא ובזמן קריב, speedily and in a near time, אמן.