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ע"ה דוד חנניה פינטו

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## Shouldering Another's Burden

Today is the thirty-seventh day of the Omer and we are approaching the festival of Shavuot. The thirty-seventh attribute with which Torah is acquired, is "*sharing his fellow's yoke*". We will attempt to clarify its significance.

Sharing the burden does not just refer to deeds, because when someone is carrying a heavy load, it is self-understood that one must try and help him. However, it is important to realize that even when he is suffering under the weight of a distressing hardship, one must offer one's heart and help him by providing a listening ear and paying careful attention to his pain.

Among the participants at the levaya of HaGaon Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz zt"l, was a blind man who cried bitter tears on the passing of the Gadol Hador. Noticing his great sorrow, his friend asked him if he had shared a close relationship with the Gadol Hador. He replied, "On one occasion only I visited Rabbi Chaim, and he showed a special interest in my condition. He asked if the doctors think I will ever regain my sight and when I told him they believe my situation is hopeless, Rabbi Chaim broke out in terrible sobs, crying for about twenty minutes. Those tears of the Gadol Hador touched me so deeply. I sensed that here is someone who not only feels compassion for me, but actually feels my pain. It is fitting then that I should shed tears on the passing of such a great person." This is an example of sharing a friend's burden, for even if he cannot help him, he nevertheless sincerely shares in his pain.

I dedicate thousands of hours to receiving the public. I sit for many hours, listening to the troubles of Am Yisrael and trying to give advice and offer assistance to each person as much as I can. But even in cases where there is nothing I can do, I try hard to show how much I feel the person's pain. It is not easy to step into someone else's shoes and sincerely feel his distress, especially since I hear so many difficult stories every day. But only once I feel that I have a clear picture of the situation and truly feel that I am a partner to his suffering, do I pray for him with all my heart and bless him in the merit of my holy ancestors zy"ta, that he should merit a speedy salvation.

The matter is sevenfold harder in cases where the person is not even aware of his problematic plight. Times like these cause me to shed tears like water.

During one of my trips to Argentina, I was asked to speak to someone who had left the correct path and accepted a different religion r"l. I invested many hours of my time to speak with him and try and understand what had made him digress, but I noticed that the more I spoke, the more his resistance grew. My words simply fell on deaf ears. The man was completely unaware of the deep pit into which he had fallen and did not want to discuss it at all.

Since I understood that my hands were tied and there was no natural way for me to get past his obstinacy, the only thing left for me to do was to pray for him from the depths of my heart, that he should merit returning to the correct path. His situation caused me such distress that I burst into tears.

I am unaware of the fate of this man, but I do know that my sincere tears of pain for a fellow Jew certainly did not go to waste.

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