

He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Ohel Moed. (1:1)

When Moshe *Rabbeinu* was summoned (*Vayikra el Moshe* – He called to Moshe), when Hashem wished to teach him a lesson or impart to him a new command, Moshe would reply, “*Hineni* – here I am, ready and willing to do whatever is asked of me.” Hashem would then inform Moshe of what it was that He wished. The *pasuk* implies that the call/summons was issued only to Moshe. This is not because Hashem’s voice is low and only Moshe could hear it. The Almighty’s voice can shatter trees; such is its awesome power. Hashem wanted that only Moshe would hear His voice. The voice/sound was out there; only Moshe heard it. Furthermore, the voice could only be heard within the environs of the *Ohel Moed*.

In a homiletic rendering of the *pasuk*, **Horav Baruch Sorotzkin, zl**, suggests that a lesson may be derived from the *pasuk* with regard to contemporary times. (The *Rosh Yeshivah* taught this lesson about fifty years ago.) We are living during a period in which Hashem’s voice, His message, is loud and clear. It has enormous power, capable of shattering cedar trees (*Kol Hashem shover arazim*). The power of His voice was heard and felt following and during the Holocaust. The sheer force of such a cataclysmic destruction gives us an idea of Hashem’s greatness and the depth of his message. On the other hand, there is a positive, majestic side to the voice (*Kol Hashem behadar*), as we observe in the rescue of some *yeshivah* students who were miraculously able to rebuild the *mekomos haTorah*, *yeshivos* that flourished before the war. The old is gone, and the new has been ushered in with great zeal, passion and fervor. Torah is alive and well and growing throughout the world.

There are *kolos*, voices/sounds: sounds of destruction; sounds of rebirth and rebuilding. The believer hears these sounds and he understands and accepts the message which these sounds convey. No message from Hashem is wasted on the believing Jew. This is how the Almighty communicates with him. The non-believer, however, sadly hears nothing. He neither hears, nor sees. Why? Because he is not in the *Ohel Moed*. One who has not merited to ensconce himself in a *makom kadosh*, holy place – a *yeshivah*, a *shul*, a place where Torah is studied and taught – does not hear. The “speaker system” is within the *bais hamedrash*. The sound ceases outside the parameters of the *Ohel Moed*.

Hashem created the world in such a manner that the greatest glory is manifest specifically when one must look for it, when there is a chance that he might err and wrongly interpret what he sees. Instead of overtly seeing the glory of G-d, it will pass over him as if nothing had occurred. True “seeing” occurs when one must look “hard” and “deep”; when he must study what he sees, delving into every aspect, until he sees G-d’s hand. When an undisputed miraculous occurrence takes place, one often misses the point, because it has all come too easily. He did not ferret out; he did not cogitate what he saw. Such vision will not last.

We often perceive Hashem's hand controlling life's events. We hear the *Kol Hashem shover arazim*: the powerful voice which shatters the strongest trees. The believer picks up on the message and, therefore, interprets loudly and clearly what Hashem wants of him. Sadly, there is an entire world out there which lacks the ability to interpret because G-d is not "there"; their *emunah*, faith, is compromised and weak. When one's eyes are sealed shut, he cannot see the obvious. He does not see; he does not hear. The Heavenly message is lost on him.

To interpret the message, one must hear it. It is "difficult" to hear dual messages when one is simultaneously listening to the messages of a world society into which he is attempting to be accepted, into which he has already assimilated himself. The word of Hashem is heard in the *mekomos haTorah*, holy places where Torah is studied and disseminated. Another reason for not picking up on the message, for ignoring what is clearly being conveyed to us, is a lack of observation and introspection. The Torah teaches that, prior to the plague of Hail, Pharaoh and the people of Egypt were warned, "Get your animals out of the fields. Take them indoors. The plague will devastate everything outside."

We are taught that anyone with a modicum of common sense listened. After all, this was the seventh plague. Hashem had a track record that had previously been proven six times to be on the mark. Yet, the Torah writes about the "one who feared G-d and his counterpart who did not fear G-d." Who were these individuals who stood out for their opposing characteristic? *Chazal* explain that *Iyov* was the one who "feared G-d," while another one of Pharaoh's advisors, *Bilaam*, did not. He was *lo sam libo*, did not stop to allow his heart to think, to reflect upon what was happening. This was *Bilaam*, the fellow who continued on with his goals in life, despite being on a crash course with Hashem.

It happened later on, with the donkey, when *Bilaam* became angry, cursed and hit his donkey. Why? He was not looking, because he was obsessed with his diabolical plan to curse and annihilate the Jews. The great *Bilaam* fell prey to simple arrogance, to an obsession based upon the vile hatred of a nation that had done him no wrong. We see this irascible, implacable hatred today, in our very own lives, as Muslim terrorists one by one – *Jihadists* – who are willing to destroy themselves out of hatred for Hashem's People.

Time and again, miracles occur which clearly speak to us, which admonish and encourage us to return to Hashem. Yet, instead we write papers and deliver speeches to "explain" why the world hates us. There is always an intellectual response. This is true; there is an intellectual response. Regrettably, the self-proclaimed secular spokesmen have no clue what it is.

Hashem calls out to us; we are too busy, too involved, too focused on our petty goals to listen, to apply His directive to our lives. At times, the message is there and germane to the individual. *Horav Yisschar Frand* relates the following story, which indicates what we have said: when one is not listening, the message just goes over his head.

An Israeli woman had become interested in changing her vacuous lifestyle and was gravitating towards religion. She attended a number of classes on Judaism and was slowly beginning to adopt *mitzvah* observance as a way of life. She was on the way towards spiritual growth and development. Then, suddenly, one day, out of the blue, she announced to her teacher that she was leaving the program. Understandably, her teacher asked for a reason. Was it the staff? Her peers? The material? Perhaps they were moving ahead at too quick a pace?

“No, it is nothing like that,” she replied. “It is just that I am pregnant, and I have decided to terminate my pregnancy.”

“Why would you do something like that?” the teacher asked – couching the question in a tone that would elicit an intelligent response. Sadly, terminating the life of a living embryo means much less to the secular-oriented person than it does to us.

“I want to embark on a career,” she replied, “and this pregnancy will impede my ability to do so seamlessly. There will just be too many issues and hassles to contend with.” (It is interesting how a living embryo has suddenly become a hassle.)

The teacher continued with another question, “What does your husband say to your decision?”

“He is in full agreement. If it will make life difficult for me – then no baby – for now,” the young woman responded.

Realizing that this was one headstrong woman who seemed bent on moving forward with her decision to terminate the pregnancy, the teacher attempted a new approach. Perhaps, this might change her mind.

“Listen,” she began. “If you are prepared to abort this pregnancy, you must be aware that it is a dangerous procedure. Prior to going for such a serious procedure, I think you should go to a holy rabbi and petition his blessing, so that you safely get through the operation without mishap. I will accompany you and act as your interpreter.”

Being that she was not “anti” religion, just “unknowing,” she agreed to meet with a great rabbi. They went to **Horav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zl**, “I would like a blessing,” she asked of Rav Shlomo Zalman. “I am about to terminate my pregnancy, and I want to be sure that it will all go smoothly.”

“Why would you want to terminate your pregnancy?” Rav Shlomo Zalman asked.

“Because I want to pursue a career,” she replied.

“What career have you chosen to pursue?” Rav Shlomo Zalman asked.

“I want to be a doctor.” She said.

“Why do you want to be a doctor?” *Rav Shlomo Zalman* asked.

“Well – for one, I want to save lives,” she responded.

“Really? What is so important about saving lives that you want to devote your life’s work to it?” *Rav Shlomo Zalman* asked.

Startled by such a question coming from the *gadol hador*, preeminent Torah leader of the generation, the woman said, “Saving a human life is the most important thing a person can do. What could be more important than saving a human life?”

All of a sudden, the significance of her statement aroused her. She now understood what *Rav Shlomo Zalman* was intimating. She pointed to her swollen stomach and said, “You do not mean ‘this.’ Do you?” she asked.

Rav Shlomo Zalman’s voice was unwavering, “I most certainly do mean ‘that.’ That embryo can become a living, breathing, vibrant child. It has a right to life as well as anyone else you are prepared to save.”

This woman heard a message. Certainly, she was aware before she spoke to *Rav Shlomo Zalman* that an embryo is a human life. She just did not think about it, because she was bent on breaking the rules. She had a goal in life which she felt was not consistent with religious observance. She had made a decision – not to listen to her messages. That was, until *Rav Shlomo Zalman* was able to jumpstart her mind.

Hashem calls to each and every one of us. If we are not in the *Ohel Moed*, we will have difficulty listening and interpreting His message. Need we say more?