

Then we cried out to Hashem, the G-d of our forefathers, and Hashem heard our voice. (26:7)

The *Chassidic Masters* teach that, when *Klal Yisrael* was enslaved in Egypt, they lost the power to articulate their needs to Hashem. *Sagar aleihem ha'midbar*, "The wilderness has locked them in" (*Shemos* 14:3). Pharaoh claimed that the Jews were confused and lost in the wilderness; literally, they were locked in. *Midbar* is interpreted by the Masters as *medaber*, to speak. Their ability to speak, to pray to Hashem properly, to voice their concerns and plead their case was locked, i.e., they were unable to speak. Thus, the only manners of expression left for them were: *anachah*, groaning; *zaakah*, crying out; *shaavah*, outcry/crying; *naakah*, moaning. These are not terms of speech, because we had not yet reached that level in which we could speak to Hashem.

Shaavas aniyim Atah sishma, "The outcry of the poor You hear" (*Tefillas Nishmas, nusach Sfard*). *Chazal* (*Nedarim* 41a) say, "*Ein ani ela b'daas*, A (true) poor person is one who is impoverished of understanding." The *Nesivos Shalom* explains that, like the poor person/poor of intelligence, who lacks the ability to speak, to express himself intelligently, so that he cries out, so, too, was *Klal Yisrael* in Egypt. Impeded in their ability to pray to Hashem, to articulate clearly their needs, their pain, their aspirations, they resorted to crying out.

We, too, are often so overwhelmed by our physical desires that we are unable to think properly, to express ourselves cogently to Hashem. The *Nesivos Shalom* observes that *Shabbos* is a time of spiritual clarity, when the *tefillos*, prayers, that are lacking during the week, due to our impoverished/physical state, come to the fore anew, with fresh clarity. We must then see to it that our *tefillos* of *Shabbos* carry over to the week. This, of course, achieves efficacy only if one makes a point to attend *shul* and *daven* – not socialize (author's addendum). The advantage of *Shabbos*, the benefits reaped from the rich, spiritual atmosphere that permeates the person, his home, his life, allows him to *daven* in such an exalted manner that he is able to offer his heartfelt feelings to Hashem. To articulate to the Almighty is to reach out to Him in a manner ordinarily unattainable during the weekdays, when he is absorbed with the endeavors of his mundane, physical life.

The *Nesivos Shalom* quotes the *Toras Avos*, who offers a similar explanation with regard to *Tekias Shofar*. He analogizes our *Tekias Shofar* "prayer" to sons of a king who were taken captive by a band of thieves. During the ensuing stay of captivity, the princes themselves were so influenced by the rough environment and vulgar nature of their captors that they became like them. No longer did they speak with refinement. They were uncouth, gross individuals, who spoke in a manner becoming such dropouts from society. A number of years passed, and the princes were finally rescued and returned to the palace. They entered the palace and began speaking to their father, the king, in their newly-acquired vernacular.

Understandably, the king was clueless concerning what they were saying, to the point that he said, "These are not my sons!" When the princes saw that they were about to be dismissed, they began

crying out “*Tatte!* Father! Do you not recognize us?” They were no longer speaking in their vulgar language; they were crying out to their father. Now, he heard them! They were his children.

A Jew stands before Hashem on *Rosh Hashanah* unsure of what to say, how to plead, what excuse to give. He has no mouth, no words, nothing intelligent to articulate, to explain the past year and why he is not where he was supposed to be at this point in life. What does a son whose father neither understands nor recognizes him do to get his father’s attention? He cries! Our cries are the *tekios*, *shevarim*, *teruah*, the blasts of the *Shofar*, which represent our brokenhearted emotions. *Vanitzaak el Hashem, vayishma es koleinu* – “We cried out to Hashem... and He listened to our voices” – not our words, because we were unable to speak. We cried. He heard our emotional pleas.

Yosef Mendelevich was a refusenik who stood up to the evil empire of the USSR before the fall of the Iron Curtain. In his autobiography, “Unbroken Spirit,” he describes his youth and his first memory of Hashem. He was outwardly raised as a good and loyal Soviet, while inwardly he had questions concerning some unusual rituals that were somehow connected with his Jewish heritage. As a young boy, he did not have the luxury of a Jewish education, so his knowledge of religion, Hashem, Torah and *mitzvos* was nil. These are things that we take for granted. Perhaps if we would meet Jews who might even be living on our block, who were raised without everything which we take for granted, we might no longer take them for granted. He describes his first memory of Hashem at the age of ten.

Yosef recalls returning home from school to find his house in shambles, furniture overturned, books strewn on the floor, clothes all over. It appeared as if it had been hit by a tornado. His mother explained that the government was searching their home for Jewish artifacts, which they found. As a result, his father was arrested and taken off to prison. Yosef describes vividly that fateful day when the entire family came to the courthouse to be present in support of his father, when the judge would declare his verdict. At the moment that Yosef saw his father standing there, waiting for the judge’s pronouncement, he was filled with an overwhelming emotion. From the depths of his heart, he cried out, “Hashem! Please save us!” He was as shocked as everyone else, because he had never heard of Hashem. He had never prayed, studied, interacted in any manner with Hashem. Actually, being Jewishly illiterate, he was an *ani b’daas*, person impoverished in understanding, a Jewish boy by birth – but totally foreign to Judaism. Never having been educated about Hashem, how did he cry out like that? The cry emanated from his innermost soul. The *Pintele Yid*, essential Jew, was crying out to his Father in Heaven, “*Tateh! Shoin genuck*, enough! Please!”

That moment was the game-changer, as he became consumed with Judaism. He desired to meet, greet, study with, and teach fellow Jews. He was eventually sentenced to eleven years in Siberia for his activities as a “refusenik,” but he was proud. He was answering the cry from his innermost soul.

There are many Jews, some from without, others who are among us, who sadly stifle that cry. They are acutely aware of its existence, but they are afraid of the implications of allowing it to emerge from within. We should all shed a tear for them.