

## Yisro heard... everything that G-D did to Moshe and Yisrael, his people. (18:1)

Was Yisro the only one who heard about Hashem's wondrous miracles on behalf of the Jews? *Shamu amim yirgazun...* "Nations heard, they were anguished" (*Shemos* 15:14). The entire world heard, but only Yisro responded actively to the message. He came to join the Jews, realizing that the deities he had worshipped until now were a sham. We all hear, but we do not all *listen*. The sound enters our ears, but not our brain. Hearing without cognitive processing does not relay the message, leaving the person as if he had never even heard.

*Horav Chaim Vital, zl*, writes that the *remach*, 248 organs of the body serve as the *levush* (literally garment), covering, mantle, for the 248 spiritual organs (each corresponding to a specific *mitzvas asei*, positive commandment). When one is missing the performance of a specific *mitzvah*, the concomitant *mitzvah* will likewise be absent from his cumulative *mitzvos*. One who lacks an organ is sadly deficient in the functioning of that organ. It is not his fault, but it still does not make him whole. In the spiritual realm, one's body can be sorely lacking due to the multiple *mitzvos* in which he is deficient. Hashem responds to this situation, *Shimu u'sechi nafshechem*; "Listen, and revive your souls" (*Yeshayah* 55:3). Hashem says, "If a person falls from a roof, his entire body will suffer. The physician will patch him up with band-aids all over his body. I am not like the mortal physician," (says Hashem). Each person has 248 organs, among them the ear. The entire body may be (spiritually) soiled with sin; yet, if the ear listens (to the word of Hashem), it will catalyze the revival of the body. This is what occurred concerning Yisro, who had spent his life worshipping every deity until he "listened." His listening spurred his spiritual metamorphosis, catalyzing him ultimately to convert.

When the ear listens, it will provide the therapeutic effect vital for the healing process of the entire body to occur. One who listens well to *mussar*, reproof, will change his ways and transform his life. This is what is meant by, "Listen, and revive your souls."

We attend a speech on a topic that addresses the need to refine our ethical behavior, our religious commitment, and, at the end of the session, we pat ourselves on the back and proceed to continue along our merry way as we did earlier. *Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl*, relates the story of the new *oleh*, émigré, to *Eretz Yisrael*, who, during his first *Shabbos* in the Holy Land, climbed a fig tree that was not his and plucked figs to his stomach's content and ate them. Not only did he steal the figs, he climbed a tree and harvested some of its fruit, an act of desecrating *Shabbos*.

Another Jew was walking by wrapped in his *Tallis*, having just concluded *davening*. He took in the whole scene. He called out to the man, "Do you realize how many prohibitions you have just transgressed? *Shabbos*, stealing, eating unchecked figs (they could be infested with bugs, prohibited for his consumption)." The *oleh* continued eating, ignoring the rebuke that was directed at him. The man said, "*Eretz Yisrael* is so wonderful. I could never have done this in the Diaspora."

Here I am able to eat sweet figs and listen to words of Torah to accompany my meal.” This man heard the rebuke, but did not listen to it. To him, it was words of Torah.

*Horav Isser Zalmen Meltzer, zl, Slutzker Rav*, moved to *Eretz Yisrael* and became the *Rosh Yeshivah* of Eitz Chaim Yeshivah. He lived in Batei Brode (a section of Yerushalayim) near *Horav Aryeh Levin, zl, Mashgiach* of Eitz Chaim. *Rav Aryeh* would teach a class to the congregants of the shul nightly before *Maariv*. *Rav Isser Zalmen*, who had been *Rav Aryeh's Rebbe* in Slutzk, had no problem imbibing his student's lecture.

One week, one of the women who listened to his nightly *shiur* (it was not so common for women to attend evening services and listen to the proceeding class) asked if *Rav Aryeh* could speak the following week prior to the end of *Shabbos* on the imperative of honoring one's wife. Apparently, her husband left much to be desired in his manner of treating her. She felt that requesting her husband to cease denigrating and humiliating her would not be as effective as a public class on the topic. This way, her husband would not feel singled out and might adjust his behavior on his own.

*Rav Aryeh* obliged, and that week he spoke of the importance of treating one's wife with the utmost respect. He focused on the dictum, “He loves her as he loves himself, and honors her even more than he honors himself.” *Rav Isser Zalman* came early to the *shiur* and listened intently taking in every word. Following *Maariv*, the venerable *Rosh Yeshivah* approached his *Mashgiach* and said, “Thank you so much. I am certain that you were speaking to me. It is appropriate that you brought up the issue. After all, when one is engaged all day with male students, upon coming home, he often forgets to honor his wife properly.”

When *Rav Aryeh* heard his *Rebbe* thank him, he became anxious: “No, *Rebbe*. In no way was my intention to address the *Rebbe*.” *Rav Aryeh* was speaking to the recalcitrant husband (who probably did not hear what he was saying), but *Rav Isser Zalmen* thought that it was meant for him. This is the meaning of *shemiyah*, listening.