

Behold! Bnei Yisrael have not listened to me. (6:12)

Moshe *Rabbeinu* raised the issue of his inability to speak well. Furthermore, he thought that the people had lost confidence in him, because his earlier intercession with Pharaoh had catalyzed greater work for them. Nonetheless, despite *Klal Yisrael's* probable unenthusiastic response to him, Hashem still sent Moshe to them. Why? If they would not listen, perhaps it would be best that he not come. We must remember that consecrated words do not simply go into oblivion. When someone of the calibre of Moshe speaks, his words are not wasted – ever. If they do not penetrate the ears of the subject upon whom he is focusing, they will one day be heard. The following vignette accentuates this idea.

Horav Yisrael, zl, m'Vishnitz, would take a stroll every *Erev Shabbos* in the accompaniment of his *gabbai*, aide. One Friday, his walk took him to the home of the manager of the bank, a Jew who had become victim to the baneful spiritual contamination wrought by the *Haskalah*, Enlightenment, as he had alienated himself from Jewish observance. Unlike many others, he did not maintain a malignant attitude towards his observant brothers; he simply lived his life as he saw fit, ignoring the comments of his compatriots. The *Rebbe* knocked on his door and was welcomed in by the butler. The *Rebbe* entered, and the butler showed him to a chair in the drawing room. Shocked that the *Rebbe* would visit him, the banker anxiously entered the room. He asked the *Rebbe* how he could be of assistance. The *Rebbe* did not respond. In fact, he just sat there, saying absolutely nothing. The banker asked one last time, inflecting his question with a bit more vigor, hoping to elicit a response.

This time the *Rebbe* replied, "I came here to perform a *mitzvah*, which I, *baruch Hashem*, have succeeded in carrying out."

"Which *mitzvah* is that?" the banker asked. "Our sages teach that, just as it is a *mitzvah* to say what will be heard, it is likewise a *mitzvah* not to say what will not be heard." (In other words, if someone will not listen, one should not say something to him.) Therefore, if I simply sit in your home and do not speak (because you will not listen to what I have to say), then I have fulfilled a *mitzvah*."

"*Rebbe*, what is it that his honor wanted to say to me? Who says that I will not listen?" "No," the *Rebbe* replied, "I know that you will not listen."

The banker did not let up until the *Rebbe* finally divulged his message. "There is a widow living in abject poverty who owes a sum of money to your bank, which holds a mortgage on her small house. In a few days, the bank will foreclose on the house and sell it in a public sale, leaving the widow without a roof over her head. I wanted to ask you to dismiss the loan, but I said nothing, since it is a *mitzvah* not to say what will not be heard."

"But, *Rebbe*, I am only a manager. I am not in charge of loans. It is not as if she owes the money personally to me. It is a bank loan, which is out of my purview."

“That is exactly what I said. I knew that you would not want to help her.” The *Rebbe* arose from the chair and prepared to leave. The banker was beside himself, “What can I do? I am not in charge!” he declared (respectfully). The *Rebbe* said nothing (he had fulfilled his *mitzvah* by doing what had to be done). Finally, the banker was so shaken up that he removed a number of large bills from his wallet and said, “Fine! I will personally pay off her loan! The widow may remain in her house. It will all be settled!”

When the *gabbai* returned, he related the incident and added, “This is why Moshe was sent to *Klal Yisrael*, even though the people would probably (at first) be reluctant to listen. The words of Hashem, by their very nature, will ultimately be heard.”