

He called to Moshe. (1:1)

Rashi comments: “Calling”, *Vayikra*, preceded every statement, every saying and every command. It is a language of affection. In other words, prior to speaking to Moshe *Rabbeinu*, Hashem called his name (twice). This was followed by the actual message. Hashem speaks to each and every one of us – all of the time. He employs various media of “expression,” but each communication is intoned with love. Perhaps this method of signaling a communication to Moshe applies equally to us. First, Hashem signals us by calling our name in order to get our attention. This is followed by the message. Now, if we do not listen to the original calling – i.e. calling our name – we will be hard-pressed to know to whom Hashem is speaking. We tend to disregard His messages, because we do not bother to listen to the initial communication.

Hashem has various means of communication. It could be a natural occurrence; it could happen to someone else in our proximity: Hashem expects us to listen. We may not assume that things just happen. Whatever takes place within our sphere of awareness is a subtle message. This is the calling, enjoining us to listen. When the message moves closer to us, it is a sign that the message is urgent, things are beginning to heat up; we had better react soon. The message may no longer be a message – but the actual punishment.

Some of us have developed a system of selective messaging: we listen to certain messages, while ignoring others. This is not a wise approach to Heavenly messaging, since everything is important. *Horav Nissim Yagen, zl*, was walking with his son when they came upon a vicious bull dog whose appearance showed anger and fear all combined. They immediately made a retreat, looking back to see that the dog was following them. After a series of smart moves they were able to evade the dog. As soon as they reached safety, *Rav Nissim* burst out in tears. “Father, the *tzarah*, trouble, is over. We have eluded the dog. Why are you crying now?” his son asked.

Rav Nissim’s reply is one that we should all ask ourselves: “Why am I not in such fear of Hashem? Should a dog arouse greater fear in me than Hashem does? Should I have greater fear of the tax collector, an illness, a car accident – than I have of Hashem? This is why I am crying!” his father answered.

The other day I had occasion to meet someone in the hospital as he was about to take a major test. The man was as cool as ice. He displayed no anxiety; he was completely relaxed. I, being an observer of human nature, asked him how he stayed so cool under such pressure. He said (casually), “I figure it can go either of two ways. So why worry myself? It either is or it is not.” This is not the type of person whose religious beliefs would lead him to think about Divine messaging, and the idea that Hashem is “calling” to him, such that, yes, he should wake up, reach out, and heed the message. Do most of us not act similarly? We either survive the scare and return to business as usual, or we seek every avenue for salvation.

The following story – with which many of us can regrettably identify – might alter our perspective. A

photographer was visiting the Grand Canyon, looking to take some unique photos of the natural wonder. He was impressed with the overwhelming awesomeness of the place, but he sought a special shot which would define the essence of the Grand Canyon in one single image. Searching for a spot where he could get that shot, he came upon an area that had been ringed off with yellow tape that read: "Danger! Do not go past this line." Peeking over the tape, he saw the place he had come to photograph. It was expansive and captivating, capturing the beauty and awesomeness of the Canyon- all in one spot. He decided to ignore the sign, and, with camera in hand, he crossed the line in search of a perfect position to make his photo shoot.

Signs are there for a reason, but a fool is one who thinks he is smarter than those who placed the sign. One quick jump over the yellow tape gave him access to a picture of unparalleled beauty. Sadly, there was nowhere for him to place his feet – as his body, camera and all, went soaring down the walls of the canyon. He screamed, calling for help as he attempted to grab onto whatever he could to break his fall – to no avail. Halfway down, he was able to grab ahold of a weak, protruding branch. He knew he could not hold onto it for long. His hands were slipping. He would soon become part of the canyon's history. He did what all good Jews do when the future appears ominous. He cried. "Hashem, please help me! Please!" he screamed and cried over and over. Suddenly, he heard a powerful voice, "Do you really want Me to help you?" the voice asked. "Yes, yes, please help" was the man's immediate reply. "If you really want Me to save you, let go of the branch!"

Obviously, the story is allegoric, but it carries a powerful message. Each and every one of us has that branch onto which we hold for dear life. If we are to turn to Hashem with complete trust than we must believe that He – only He – can provide the *yeshuah*, salvation, for which we yearn.