

TUNING IN

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This week we start the Sefer [Book] of Vayikra. The Ramban explains that Shemos, the Sefer of Exile and Redemption, concluded with the Shchinah [Hashem's Presence] filling the Mishkan [Sanctuary]. Vayikra begins with Hashem calling to Moshe from the Mishkan, instructing him to instruct Bnei Yisroel [the Children of Israel].

"And He called to Moshe and Hashem spoke to him from the Ohel Mo'ed [the Tent of Meeting]. [1:1]"

Rashi explains that the voice of Hashem only reached Moshe's ears--past the Ohel Mo'ed the voice wasn't heard. (This is as opposed to Sinai where the entire nation heard Hashem speak.) One might mistakenly assume that Hashem's voice was low and therefore didn't extend past the Ohel Mo'ed, but the passuk [verse] in T'hilim leaves no room to misunderstand the nature of Hashem's voice: "The voice of Hashem is powerful, the voice of Hashem is full of majesty, the voice of Hashem breaks cedars... [Psalms 29:5]" We therefore see that the full, resounding power of Hashem's voice reached Moshe, yet it came to a complete stop at the perimeter of the Ohel Mo'ed.

Why did Hashem miraculously make His voice stop and not be heard outside the Ohel Mo'ed?

Rav Yaakov Naiman, z"l, in Darchei Mussar, explains that it actually wasn't a miracle at all. We live in a world filled with radio waves. The more powerful the equipment, the greater the ability to detect more delicate signals. The voice of Hashem resounded (and resounds) throughout the world. The voice didn't stop but no one heard it. Physical ears in materialistic places don't hear that voice. Moshe had spiritually uplifted his physical body to the point that when he was in the Ohel Mo'ed, his ears were able to tune-in to the voice of Hashem.

Rabi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Each and every day, a heavenly voice emanates from Mount Chorev, proclaiming: Woe to the creations that the Torah is so disgraced. [Mishna Avos 6:2]

He heard it every day and worked at minimizing that disgrace. We don't hear a thing and keep going on our merry way.

The Sages teach that thunder was created in order to "straighten out the crookedness of the heart." One can hear thunder and one can hear thunder. It all depends on the level of sensitivity--how attuned that person is to Hashem and His messages. The message can be so powerful and we can be so oblivious.

When the Torah discusses a person being put to death by Beis Din [the halachic court] it says that

others will hear and will be frightened. A person will take life more carefully and more seriously. The Talmud teaches that a beis din that kills every seven years is called murderous. There is an explanation offered that once every seventy years is also considered murderous. [Makkos 7A] When a person's ears were open, such an event would be taken as a message, as a wake-up call. The effects lasted anywhere between seven and seventy years.

But we can be so oblivious. We hear about a ten-month-old baby targeted and killed by a hell-bound coward-sniper but we don't listen. We hear about two terrorist bomb blasts in one day but the effect lasts anywhere between seven and seventy seconds.

Time doesn't pass by--rather it is we who move through the cycles of time. Each time period contains its particular potential, its energy. We are now in the month of Nissan--the time designated for redemption. We must open our ears. We must 'hear' the message of these jarring events and take life and our responsibilities more seriously. The redemption must begin on a personal level.

The Talmud [Sotah 49B], when discussing the period immediately before the Moshiach [Messiah], teaches that we'll reach a state where there will be no other source of security--we will have no one to lean and depend upon besides Avinu [our Father] in the heavens. That realization will come about and the impact of that realization and the resulting changes in our focus will bring the geulah [redemption].

But we have to hear it.

Good Shabbos,
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