

Visually Challenged

THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTOR: ALTER RAUBVOGEL

Moshe said to Hashem, "Please, L-rd, I am not a man of words..."

Hashem said to him, "Who puts a mouth in a man? Or who makes him dumb, or deaf, or seeing (*pikē'ach*), or blind? Isn't it I, Hashem?" (4:10-11)

ONE OF THESE THINGS IS NOT LIKE THE OTHERS. Speechlessness, deafness, and blindness are handicaps. Sight is not! If vision was meant to be the foil to blindness, why didn't Hashem also mention hearing and eloquence? Why did Hashem include sight in this list?

The Ibn Ezra answers that Hashem did, in fact, list three handicaps and their opposites, starting with "Who puts a mouth..." and "Who makes him dumb." He suggests that "seeing" corresponds with both sight and hearing, because the Hebrew word *pikē'ach*, which we usually associate with sight, can also connote the ability to hear. He proves this by quoting a verse:

You see many things, but you haven't observed; [Hashem] opens (*p'ko'ach*) the ears, but [man] doesn't hear. (Yisha'ya 42:20)

In *Ma'ayan Beis haSho'eiva*, Rabbi Shimon Schwab takes a different tack. He suggests that, in this context, eyesight is actually a handicap.


Moshe was able to see things that no one else could see. When he prophesied, it was as if he were looking at the Divine vision "through a clear lens" (Talmud, Y'vamos 49b)—something which no

one had been capable of since Adam sinned by eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. In fact, after that sin, the Torah says

The eyes of [Adam and Chava] were opened (*vatipakachna*). (B'reishis 3:7)

That's the same language Hashem used here. And in the context of Adam

and Chava, it describes their newly stunted perception of spiritual truth!

It is this limited sight that Hashem spoke of to Moshe, says Rabbi Schwab. A man's ability, or inability, to hear, to see, and to elucidate Hashem's truth is given to him by Hashem, and Moshe's gift of spiritual vision made a "normal" man's eyesight look like a handicap in comparison. 

You May Ask!

Moshe said to Hashem, "Behold—I will come to the Children of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The G-d of your fathers has sent me to you.' They will say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I tell them?"

Hashem said to Moshe, "I will be what I will be..." (3:13)

RABBI SHIMON SCHWAB, IN *MA'AYAN BEIS haSho'eiva*, points out that Hashem was about to dictate a script to Moshe, in which Hashem would, in fact, identify Himself:

Go gather the elders of Israel, and say to them, "Hashem, the G-d of your fathers, has sent me to you..." (3:15)

Wouldn't that answer any questions the people might have about Hashem's name? Why did Hashem need to prepare Moshe with what was really a second answer to that question?

Rabbi Schwab answers that the Children of Israel already knew that the name "Hashem" is associated with Divine kindness. So Moshe asked: Surely they would wonder how "Hashem," who now was offering to save them, could be the same Deity who had condemned them to slavery in Egypt!

Hashem's answer to that question was, as Rashi puts it,

"I will be" with them in this difficult time, just "as I will be" with them whenever they are subjugated...

However, we can ask a more basic question: How could Moshe challenge Hashem and ask Him to justify His claim to being merciful?

Rabbi Schwab adds that this was not the first time a righteous man challenged Hashem's assertion of goodness. Four hundred years earlier, when Hashem was about to destroy Sodom and its environs, Avraham asked,

— CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE —>

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At the Kollel

Every Day

👉👉 “Dirshu” Gemara Shiur

(Maseches Sota)

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....

Sunday 7:15–8:15 AM

Monday–Friday 5:50–6:45 AM

👉👉 Kollel Yisgaber K’ari

(amud-a-day of Mishnah B’rurah)

Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....

Monday–Friday 6:55–7:20 AM

👉👉 Kitzur Shuchan Aruch

Live video conference!

Rabbi Dani Schon.....

Monday–Friday 12:05–12:20 PM

👉 Daf Yomi

Rabbi Meir Minster.....

Sunday–Thursday 8–8:45 PM

Shabbos (at CZE) 1:00 pre-mincha

👉👉 Nightly Halacha Chabura

Rabbi Dani Schon

& Binyamin Teitelbaum.....

Monday–Thursday 9–9:45 PM

Chavrusa Learning

(private & small groups).....times vary

Sunday *Free brunch!*

👉👉 America Runs on Torah

(Jewish Law & Parasha)

Rabbi Dani Schon

and Yisroel Kaufman.....10 AM

Grand Deluxe breakfast served

Tuesday

👉 Mishnah

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....8:10–9 PM

👉👉 Partners in Torah

at the Mayerson JCC

Rabbi Binyamin Teitelbaum.....8 PM

Wednesday

👉👉 Torah Treasures for

Seniors at the Mayerson JCC

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....10:30–11:15 AM

👉👉 Downtown Lunch-n-Learn at Strauss & Troy

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....12–1 PM

Thursday

👉👉 Halacha (based on the parasha)

Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....9:10–10 PM

Homemade refreshments served.

Minyanim for Standard Time

Shacharis

Sunday.....8:15 AM

On Sundays when the Kollel is not

in session, Shacharis is at 8 AM

Monday–Friday.....7:20 AM

Mincha

Sunday.....1:15 PM

Mon.–Thurs. thru January.....2:30 PM

Sun.–Thurs., Feb.–Mar.....5:45 PM

Shabbos.....2:40 PM

Ma’ariv

In the Beis Midrash:

Sunday–Wednesday.....9:45 PM

Thursday.....10 PM

KEY: 👉👉 Beginners

👉 Intermediate

👉👉 Advanced

👉👉 for men and women

Looking for a chavrusa? See Coordinator Rabbi Chaim Heinemann!

Chavrusos are available noon–1 PM on weekdays, and 8–9:45 PM Sun.–Thurs.

You May Ask! CONTINUED

Would the Judge of the entire world not do justice? (B’reishis 18:25)

This is the same Avraham who overcame ten great tests, including the command to sacrifice his son, without a whimper. How do we explain his outspokenness about the destruction of Sodom?

Rabbi Schwab answers that, as a rule, Hashem is, indeed, inscrutable. We have no right to challenge His decisions, to question Him. However, there are specific instances where Hashem has invited man to wrap his finite mind around Hashem’s perfection, to try to “make sense” of Hashem’s decrees. The indicator to look for is the way the Torah describes these situations:

I (Hashem) will go down and see if [the evil of Sodom is] like its scream, which comes to Me. (B’reishis 18:21)

I (Hashem) have seen the suffering of My people... and I will go down to save it from the hand of Egypt... (3:8)

In both of these instances, Hashem says He will *descend*—that is, He will come within man’s limited frame of reference, in a way that allows man to try to comprehend Hashem’s thoughts, even by asking hard questions, as long as he really wants to understand.

This also explains why Moshe felt he could ask Hashem, at the end of this week’s Torah portion,

Why have You done bad to this nation? Why did You send me for this? (5:22)

In fact, Rabbi Schwab writes, this idea applies to the way we ask questions in the process of learning Torah. We are entitled and encouraged to do so only because the Torah says,

Hashem descended upon Mount Sinai... (19:20)

In other words, when Hashem gave us the Torah, He brought His wisdom into our frame of reference. He not only made it comprehensible to the human mind, He invited us to do whatever it takes, to ask all of the relevant questions, so we can understand it. 🙏