

## Hearing and Seeing the Word of God

This weeks reading is from *Parashat Yitro* (*Shemot / Exodus 18:1-20:23*), the portion opens telling us Yitro (Jethro) came to Moshe bringing his wife Zipporah and his two sons (*18:6-8*). The opening verse states that Jethro had heard all the Lord had done for Moshe and for Israel in Egypt. We read a few verses later then that Moshe clarified what Jethro had heard telling him everything the Lord had done and Jethro said *18:10* “... *‘Blessed be the Lord who delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of Pharaoh, and who delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.’* (NASB) Jethro stayed a while and saw all that Moshe was doing for the people and recommended that he select leaders from the people as judges so that he and the people would not be worn out as the text says Moshe was trying to fix all the peoples problems (*18:13-26*). Moshe says farewell to his father-in-law and on the third month after the exodus the people arrived at the wilderness of Sinai (*18:26-19:1*). The Lord told Moshe to have the people consecrate themselves for on the third day the Lord will come down on the Mountain of Sinai (*19:7-16*). The Lord warned Moshe to warn the people not to break through and gaze so they would not die (*19:24-25*) and God called Moshe and Aaron to come up on the mountain. At the end of the Torah portion, we are told the Lord gives the people His ten commandments (i) to have no other gods before Him (*20:1-5*), (ii) do not take the name of the Lord in vain (*20:6-7*), (iii) remember the Shabbat (*20:8-11*), (iv) honor your father and mother (*20:12*), (v) do not murder (*20:13*), (vi) do not commit adultery (*20:14*), (vii) do not steal (*20:15*), (viii) do not bear false witness against your neighbor (*20:16*), (ix) do not covet your neighbors house (*20:19*), and (x) do not covet your neighbors wife, male or female servants, his ox, donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor (*20:19*)

The Scriptures tell us according to *Shemot / Exodus 19:4-8*, that the Lord carried Israel out of Egypt by eagles wings, and the Scripture states ה' וַעֲתָה אִם-שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ בְּקוֹלִי וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת-בְּרִיתִי וְהִייתֶם לִי סֵגֻלָּה מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים כִּי-לִי כָל-הָאָרֶץ: ו' וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ-לִי מִמְּלֶכֶת כְּנָעַן וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר [חמישי] *19:5* ‘*Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among*

*all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 19:6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.’ (NASB)* It is important to reiterate the significance of the statements found in *Shemot / Exodus 19:5* which says, וְעַתָּה אִם-שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ בְּקוֹלִי “*Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice...*” The phrase שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ is translated as “*indeed obey*” according to the NASB. Both of these words are taken from the root word שָׁמַע meaning “*to listen/hear*.” The first word שָׁמוּעַ is a 3rd-ע Qal noun meaning “*to hear*” or “*to listen*” and תִּשְׁמָעוּ is written in the imperfect Qal second person masculine singular form denoting a past action that is in progress but not completed at the time in question. This Hebrew phrase is translated into English as “*to hear listening*,” where the NASB translates as to “*indeed obey*” the Lord your God. The act of listening is connected to obedience to what is heard, which is connected to being faithful to the covenant of God. *Hebrews 11:6* says, “*without faith it is impossible to please God...*” so on this basis we can conclude that faith is what pleases God because our faith is coupled to the way in which we live our lives. Paul wrote in *Romans 10:17* that faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Note again how faith is connected to hearing, listening, and obeying God’s Word. Based upon this Torah Portion, hearing and listening to God’s word is synonymous to obeying the Lord, applying God’s word to our lives and living it. In Hebrews, the verse goes on to say, “*because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*” (*Hebrews 11:6*) Believing in the Lord God in heaven and in Yeshua the Messiah takes a living faith, where faithfulness to the Lord God in heaven is synonymous to being faithful to His word by applying His word to our lives. Remember Paul tells us that faith comes through hearing the Word of God. Paul makes a very important statement in his letter to the Romans and the Torah perspective draws out the significance of his words.

In this weeks Torah portion, we are told how the people listened and saw the voice (בְּקוֹלִי) of God. Based upon what we have read thus far, what is the significance of both hearing and seeing the Word of the Lord God in heaven? Does the Torah portion provide for us a future expectation of what the Lord God in heaven has planned, to send His Son as the living Word, Yeshua the Messiah, for the purpose of both hearing and seeing His Word?

**ספר שמות פרק יט**

ד אתם ראיתם אשר עשיתי  
למצרים ואשא אתכם על-כנפי  
נשרים ואבא אתכם אלי: ה  
ועתה אם-שמוע תשמעו בקלי  
ושמרתם את-בריתי והייתם  
לי סגלה מכל-העמים כי-לי  
כל-הארץ: ו ואתם תהיו-לי  
ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש אלה  
הדברים אשר תדבר אל-בני  
ישראל: [חמישי] ז ויבא  
משה ויקרא לזקני העם וישם  
לפניהם את כל-הדברים האלה  
אשר צוהו יהוה: ח ויענו כל-  
העם יחדו ויאמרו כל אשר-  
דבר יהוה נעשה וישב משה  
את-דברי העם אל-יהוה:

**Shemot / Exodus 19:4-8**

19:4 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. 19:5 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 19:6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.' 19:7 So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the Lord had commanded him. 19:8 All the people answered together and said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do!' And Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord. (NASB)

In this weeks Torah portion, we are told how the people heard and saw the word of God. *Shemot / Exodus 19:5* states “if you listen to the voice of the Lord your God...” (-את-שמעו ושמרתם את-) in Hebrew, this indicates the process of listening (hearing) and obeying God’s voice is an ongoing life long process. A parallel is drawn within the sentence on “listening or hearing the voice of the Lord God” to the words “keeping” (לשמור) and “doing” (לעשות) what God has commanded. According to the Torah and the Apostolic Writings, the context of the phrase שמעו תשמעו בקלי is hearing, continuing to listen, obeying, keeping, doing, and being faithful, that is coupled to the covenant inheritance, and the “gospel” message of grace, salvation, sacrifice, and atonement. In addition to this, a little further on in the Torah Portion we read in *Shemot / Exodus 20:18*, ט וכל-העם ראים את-הקולת ואת-הלפידים ואת קול השפך ואת-ההר עשן וירא העם ויגעו ויעמדו מרחק: 20:18 All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when

*the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance.* (NASB) Notice how the people “saw” (רָאִים) the “voices/sound” (הַקּוֹלֹת, thunder), the “shofar” (הַשּׁוֹפָר), and the “mountain smoking” (הִהָר עָשָׁן). The Lord also said that the people “saw” (רָאִיתֶם) “my words from heaven” (מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם) (דְּבַרְתִּי). Did the people see letters flying down from the clouds onto the mountain? The people saw and heard the Lord speaking to Moshe (*She-mot / Exodus 20:19*, וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה כֹּה תֹאמַר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אַתֶּם, יט (רָאִיתֶם כִּי מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם דְּבַרְתִּי עִמָּכֶם: Based upon the Torah text, what Moses experienced at the revelation on Mount Sinai was different from that which was experienced by all the other Israelites. Note how the Lord addresses Moshe directly, and it is for this reason the second person singular is used in the Ten Commandments; Moses then went down to the foot of the mount and told his fellow-men what he had heard. We read “*I stood between the Lord and you at that time to tell you the word of the Lord*” (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 5:5*), but according to the Portion, the people saw and heard the voice of God and were afraid. Did hearing and seeing the word (voice) of God elicit faith in the people?

Radak has the following to say concerning this week’s Torah portion.

***Radak on Psalms 19:8, Part 1,***

*The Law of the Lord, Why does he join the idea of the Law with that of the sun ? His meaning is, that as the heavens and the sun and the spheres are witnessing to and declaring the glory of God and His wisdom, so the Law and the Commandments which He has commanded His people Israel witness to His wisdom and uprightness, as it says (Deut. 4:8), “(What great nation is there) that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this Law ?” And further he says that as the heavens and the sun benefit the world, and through them the world continues to exist, so is the Law, which is perfect and restores the soul, and upon which (depends) the preservation of the soul as the preservation of the world (depends) upon the sun ; for the soul in the body is as a stranger in a foreign land who has none to help or assist him, for the agents which minister to the body are for the most part such as follow after the appetites, and she*

*(the soul) is as a solitary one and captive amongst them. So also says Solomon, who compares her to a poor wise man (Koh. 9:15). And notice the Law restoreth the soul in that it teaches man the right way and draws him away from worldly desires and from many stumbling-blocks. And notice it restoreth the soul from captivity and confinement to her (rightful) birth and the place of her glory. And David declares in respect of the Law and the commandments and the judgments, their truth and uprightness. Now the Law (תורה, lit. teaching) is the orderly setting forth of the commandment with reference to the manner of its performance ; and this (may be understood) from the general sense of such passages as “I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers (מורי)” (Prov. 5:13) ; “and to teach (להורת) He hath put in his heart” (Exod. 35:34) ; for (the Torah) teaches the ordering of a thing, as “the law (Torah) of the beast and of the fowl” (Lev. 11:46) ; “the law of the leper” (ibid. 14:2) ; “the law of her that beareth” (ibid. 12:7) ; “the law of him that hath an issue” (ibid. 15:32) ; “the law of the Nazirite” (Num. 6:21). Nevertheless the book (itself) is called by the name of the Law (Torah) from Genesis to Deuteronomy, as is written (Deut. 31:9) : “And Moses wrote this Law” ; “Take this book of the Law” (ibid. 26) ; (this is) because it narrates the history of Creation and also narrates the affairs of the Fathers ; it likewise sets forth every single one of the things which teach about God : that He is the founder of the world, of His goodness and of the beings created by Him, and His providence in the case both of the good and the evil. He mentions the commandments also - that is, what God commanded (man) to do in the ways of the service of God and love of Him, as of a master who gives commandment to his servant. And the testimony - that is, what was testimony between Israel and God, that they had accepted Him for (their) God, and He had accepted them for a peculiar people ; cf “the ark of the testimony” (Exod. 25:22) ; “the tent of the testimony” (Num. 17:23). For the commandments about which*

*Israel received commands - these are the testimony, and also the tables which had on them the Ten Words, which contain (are) the whole Law entirely ; and these Words were a great testimony to Israel when they saw His glory on Mount Sinai in the thunderings and lightning ; and that great sight was the testimony to them and their children for ever. So also the observance of the Sabbath and the festivals is to them a testimony and a sign and memorial ; the (year of) release also, and the jubilee - all is a testimony to them and their children for ever ; as it says, “for all the earth is Mine” (Exod. 19:5); “they are My servants” (Lev. 25:55). He says : the precepts of the Lord in respect of the commandments of the understanding which God has ordained and put in the heart ; and about these the understanding teaches. He says fear because it is the beginning of the commandments and their root ; for the servant, unless he fear the master, will not do his behests, and perfect fear is in secret. He says also judgments - that is, the rules (that are to be observed) between a man and his fellow. Now it is to be noticed he has mentioned for us all the different kinds of commandments except “statutes” (חֻקִּים). The reason is that he applies to them (such epithets as) perfect, restoring the soul, sure, making wise the simple, right, rejoicing the heart, pure, enlightening the eyes, clean, true, righteous altogether, to be desired, and sweet ; all which it is only admissible to apply to the commandments whose reason is clear and apparent ; whereas the “statutes,” such as those regarding the eating of swine’s flesh and wearing mixed stuffs and the like, whose reason is not clear to all how could it be said of them that they are to be desired, are sweet and pure ? And although they are such to him to whom their reasonableness is apparent, yet this is not apparent to the great majority of men. And he says.*

Radak draws a parallel to the creation (sun and stars) declaring the glory of God, to the mitzvot which was given to the people for the purpose

of the people being able to give witness of the glory of God, His wisdom and uprightness. He states that the sun and the stars benefit the earth, and in similar fashion, God's people should also be a benefit to the world. The Torah (Law) is said to "*restore the soul*" by reason of leading a person to repentance, teshuvah, and to living one's life for the Lord God in heaven and His Messiah Yeshua. (*e.g. the Law restoreth the soul in that it teaches man the right way and draws him away from worldly desires and from many stumbling-blocks. And notice it restoreth the soul from captivity and confinement to her (rightful) birth and the place of her glory. And David declares in respect of the Law and the commandments and the judgments, their truth and uprightness.*) There is more to the Torah than simply a bunch of does and don'ts. The Torah is given for the lives of the believers in Yeshua the Messiah for the purpose as a great testimony in Israel and to the justice, mercy, grace, and love of God. The different commandments are given for a reason, "*The reason is that he applies to them (such epithets as) perfect, restoring the soul, sure, making wise the simple, right, rejoicing the heart, pure, enlightening the eyes, clean, true, righteous altogether, to be desired, and sweet ; all which it is only admissible to apply to the commandments whose reason is clear and apparent...*" The commandment is given for the purpose of holiness, righteousness, justice, and truth. This is why John said in his epistle what he did in *1 John 2:3-7*.

### ***1 John 2:3-7***

*2:3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 2:4 The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 2:5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 2:6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. 2:7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. (NASB)*

John says that if we do not keep the commandments, we do not know the Lord God our Father in heaven (*1 John 2:3-4*), and this is connected

to Yeshua through whom it is said that we know the Father (*John 14:9*). John makes it clear that whoever loves the Lord in heaven will walk in the same manner in which Yeshua walked and states *“I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.”* Studying the Torah it becomes apparent that the love of God is perfected in the person that keeps his commandments. The commandment leads us to repentance, and is the true demonstration of God’s grace and instruction for our lives.

The Lord God in heaven, Creator of all things, chose the nation of Israel to be a unique people through whom He would work His power that would later effect all of the world according to Parashat Lech Lecha (*Bereshit / Genesis 12*). We have learned in previous studies that the Torah was given for the purpose of being a witness to all the nations. The Torah calls Israel a holy people to the Lord God and that the Lord has chosen Israel to be a people for His own possession out of all the people who are on the face of the earth (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:6*). Israel was chosen to be a witnesses of God’s glory to a world that had fallen away from the Lord. The Lord also calls the gentile believer to be a witness to the world in the same manner as the Jewish believer. He says *“You are My witnesses, declares the Lord, and My servant whom I have chosen, in order that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me. I, even I am the Lord; and there is no Savior beside Me”* (*Isaiah 43:10-11*). The Jewish people were chosen to demonstrate to the world that there was one true and living God. The God of Israel is a Savior God who desires to help Jews and Gentiles, men and women, rich and poor, avoid destruction by calling people to walk in His ways, according to His Torah, and to have faith in His Messiah Yeshua.

In this weeks Torah portion, we are told how the people listened and saw the voice (יְקוֹלֵי) of God. Based upon what we have learned thus far, the significance of both hearing and seeing the Word of the Lord God in heaven is connected to bearing the testimony of God’s wisdom, uprightness, mercy, and grace to all the world. The Torah provides for us an ever present future expectation of what the Lord God in heaven has planned for our lives. We do know what God’s plan is for our lives, it is to believe in Yeshua His Messiah, and to live a life that is obedient to His word and the



Lord enters into our lives to help us by His Spirit. The biblical design is for Israel to be a witness to all nations and today, in the Messiah, both the Jew and Gentile together, are able to demonstrate the mercy of God so all of mankind may know the importance of knowing our Father in heaven, knowing Yeshua, and walking in his ways, in truth, justice, righteousness, holiness, and love towards one another. The Scriptures say if Israel were faithful to her calling, the Lord God promised to bless the nations who join themselves with her. All people would know that the God of Israel is the true God. The Lord ultimately is in control, and we learn according to the Scriptures, through either obedience or disobedience, Israel is a witness to the world that the God of Israel is faithful to His people, and seeks all men to come to Him. The most significant aspect of living our lives for the Lord according to His Word, is that the Lord God in heaven empowers us to do so, and to demonstrate the Love of God that is present today for all men, to whoever would seek and receive His blessing!

