



Parshas Yisro 2022, see through the noise

This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, the wife of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, whose Yahrzeit is the 22nd of Shevet.

This week's Parsha Perspective honors the birthdays of Yoram and Yael Cohen. May bless them and their entire family with a year of happiness, health, and success!

This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna and Shaul Ben Berta.

This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Our Parsha has the Aseres Hadibros, the Ten Commandments, making it one of the most significant portions of the Torah. G-d, Himself came down to the mountain and said the Ten Commandments and confirmed that we are His chosen nation.

Just six weeks after leaving Egypt, the Jewish nation arrived at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Moshe instructs them to purify themselves for three days in preparation for the giving of the Torah. They must not approach or touch the mountain, for it is holy and pure; only Moshe and Aaron were allowed to be on it.

Heavy thunder and lightning appeared on the third morning as G-d descended the mountain. **G-d said the Ten Commandments to the frightened and terrified Jewish nation.** They turned to Moshe and begged him to act as an intermediary, for G-d's holy and divine words were more than they could

physically handle. Moshe responded (20:17), *"don't fear G-d, for He has shown Himself to you so that you fear Him and not sin."*

However, a question comes to mind: just after the giving of the Ten Commandments, the Torah recounts what the Jewish people experienced at Mt. Sinai. (20:15) *"the whole nation saw the noise, thunder and lightning, the sounds of the shofar and the smoke coming from the mountain"*. But why does the Torah write *"the whole nation SAW the noise,"* rather than *"the whole nation HEARD the noise"*?

The Rashbam (*Rav Shmuel Ben Meir, one of Rashi's grandsons*) answers this question by explaining that it is a figure of speech. He quotes multiple places in the Torah that uses the verb "see" to convey that the individual was aware of what was in front of them.

Similarly, we use the expression *"I see what you're saying"* or *"I see where you are coming from"* to indicate that we understand what is being explained. Since the Torah is written in the way we speak, it makes sense that it writes *"the nation SAW the noise"*.

However, the Rabbeinu Bachya (*Rav Bachya Ben Asher, a Spanish commentary*) gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He, amongst others, writes that the Jewish people actually saw the sound waves of G-d's holy and divine voice at Mt. Sinai. G-d said to Moshe that He will come down to this lowly world and proclaim His love for the Jewish nation. As the Pasuk (19:9) *"G-d said to Moshe, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and trust you ever after."*

Rabbeinu Bachya explains that G-d revealed Himself in such a visible manner so every Jewish person could intimately experience His Holiness.

The experience was so profound that their physical bodies couldn't handle that exposure, causing their souls to return to their source twice. Hence, they were forced to ask Moshe to be an intermediary between them and G-d.

Rav Sadia Gaon (*one of the most well-known Scholars from the Era of the Gaonim, circa 600 CE to 1040 CE*) adds that this is why the Pasuk ends with "*when they saw it, they became afraid and stood at a distance.*" For G-d removed His normal cover that conceals His existence in this physical world.

In our daily life, we should practice the art form known as **active listening**. Rather than think about what to speak about next when the other one is talking directly to us, we need to close our minds and open our hearts.

Implementing this practice enables us to not only listen to what they are saying. But recognize the hidden meaning behind their words and see the true message they are trying to convey.

One way to implement active listening is to pay attention to what others are saying. We should not use our phones or anything else to distract us from the conversation. Maintain eye contact and nod when it is appropriate to show your attentiveness.

A major benefit of active listening is that the person who is speaking becomes more comfortable and eager to say what they really mean. Following these tips will avoid the feeling that happens when someone at the end of a long conversation asks, *So, what do you think?!*

“Listening doesn't always equate to hearing.

Hearing doesn't always lead to understanding.

But active listening helps each person truly "see" the other.”

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*