

SHEMA, YISRAEL!
(Hear, O Israel!)

“MY SHEEP CONTINUOUSLY AND
REPEATEDLY HEAR MY VOICE,...”
Jesus, as recorded by John 10:27

I know now that it was the Holy Spirit that spoke these words into my mind in the late hours of November 11 several years ago as I opened a small, but very important pamphlet entitled “Hearing God’s Voice.” As I began to read the opening sentences of the booklet, the above words (to my knowledge I had never read or heard the verse translated that way before) came into my mind. Although I prayed in response to the thought, I was unaware that I had just heard His voice. “Lord,” I asked in response, “aren’t I one of your sheep? Why can’t I hear Your voice?”

I hope the irony of those circumstances is not lost on you. Have you ever wanted to hear God’s voice? Perhaps like me, you have heard Him speak but at the time you were unaware that the voice you heard was God.

Note this, first and foremost: the problem is not getting God to speak. Believe me, He has plenty to say, and is in fact, saying it. Rather, the problem is hearing and discerning—in other words, it’s our problem. Consider this: when was the last time you heard a preacher or teacher expound on “How You Can Hear God’s Voice”? But again, the source of the problem does not lie with God’s servants—it is our problem, yours and mine. As you will see, “passing the buck” to God’s servants is part of the problem. It has been tried before—it didn’t work then, and it won’t work now.

“BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING,
DECLARES THE LORD YHWH, WHEN I
WILL SEND A FAMINE ON THE LAND;
NOT A FAMINE FOR BREAD OR A
THIRST FOR WATER, BUT RATHER FOR
HEARING THE WORDS OF YHWH.”
AMOS 8:11

The Lord said He was silent for a long time, but I believe that time is over and that the time of the hearing-famine prophesied by Amos is over as well. Anyone who wishes to hear the words of the Lord may now do so—anyone. It’s that simple. But before the story continues, some historical perspective may be helpful.

Exodus 19 - 20 records the story of the first Pentecost, called in Hebrew “Shavuot”. (You need not take my word that it was the first Pentecost; ask any observing Jew that you know.) Afterwards, Moses repeatedly said that on that day at Mount Sanai all the people heard the voice of the Lord, audibly—meaning, of course, that each one heard Him speaking in their own language. (See for example, Deuteronomy 4: 10-12).

Exodus 20:19 records the collective response: “Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us or we will die.” What were the children of Israel saying - that they would physically die if they heard more of God’s audible voice? Probably not; there is no record anyone has ever died from hearing. The point is, the children of Israel were afraid to hear God’s voice. The question is: Why were they afraid? Are you afraid to hear God’s voice? If so, why?

The children of Israel did not have a heart to obey the Lord, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear. Deuteronomy 29:4. If there is a difficulty in hearing God's voice, this is the crux of it. If someone does not have a heart to obey Father—no, more than that—to agree with Him in whatever He says, then that person will generally be afraid to hear God's voice. Saints, put aside that voice of fear, and come trusting in your loving father, as a child. He knows what is best for you! Yes, He will remove that which is in you that is displeasing to Him, but fellowship with Him is worth it. Remember Moses' words in verse 20, "Do not be afraid, for God has come in order to test (or refine) you."

Somehow we are all instinctively afraid of hearing God, and the root cause of this fear may derive from a lifetime of hearing that we need a loving Jesus to save us from an angry God. However, in the view of some, "hearing" really means "reading"—God can be heard by reading the Bible, although the Bible itself contains no evidence of this interpretation. According to this view, there is no fear; hearing is simply unnecessary. Some have even gone so far as to question whether "hearing voices" (in their words) may open one to the influence of demons. I do not believe so, for two reasons.

First, because the Lord Jesus said, "Which one of you, if his son asked for bread, would give him a stone?" When you ask to hear God's words, you are asking for the bread of Heaven. God will not give you a "stone"—your own dead thoughts, masquerading as His voice, or worse, permit a demonic influence to masquerade as Him.

Secondly, do you not know your bodies are the temple of the Lord Spirit? The voice of God is not without, but it is

within—it issues from His throne, high and lifted up in your hearts. We have this treasure in earthen vessels! My point is that neither God nor His voice are external, coming to you from somewhere else. The scriptures clearly teach that He dwells in our hearts.

It bears repeating: DO NOT be afraid, Saints, for God has come. Immanuel—God is with us. In fact, I will go further: become intoxicated with your Lord and His love; then pursue Him, letting nothing stand in your way until you have laid hold of Him and heard His voice. If others think it extreme or unnecessary, no matter! Song of Songs 3:1-4 Hearing His voice is part of fellowship with the Father and with His son, Jesus Christ, that your joy may be made complete.

It was nearly midnight on that November night, when I went to bed, longing to hear something, anything, from Almighty God. I awoke at 4 AM, and began to ask the Lord to remove anything from my heart that would prevent me from hearing His voice. I tried to empty my mind of wandering ideas, of thoughts, even of speaking. Then I prayed as follows:

"Ok Lord, my mind is as empty as it can get. Please speak to me, and don't let me imagine something was you, and it actually just be my vain imagination."

In just a few moments, the Lord spoke this thought into my mind: "Haggai 2:3-4"—in other words, a scripture reference. I did not recognize the reference—I almost never do—and had no idea what it said, so I immediately got up and looked up the verses.

I was delighted to see that the passage had what I felt was current meaning

in my life. But the greater joy was that my Father had given those words to me. The words had become mine, words to live by, directly from the mouth of God.

The children of Israel let the manna fall to the ground. But if His words are as precious to you as they are to me, you will write every one of them down, journal them, chronicle them, so that they do not fall to the ground. I have a dozen notebooks of His words, as of this writing.

There are times when either I do not receive a word, or I receive it incorrectly, as in the case of a book not having the chapter number that I thought I received, or not having the verses that I thought I received. There are also times when I have no idea as to the meaning, or applicability of the reference to anything in my life at present. At first, I was very concerned. However, the longer our fellowship goes on, the fewer instances of “mis-hearing” I have.

I recognize Father’s voice now, as He said I would, and I am believing that the passages I don’t understand are still His word to me. I expect that the understanding will come later. Also, one day it dawned on me that Father frequently gives me a passage that begins and ends as a complete paragraph in the original language. (If your Bible is formatted this way—check the front; it should say so—a new paragraph in the original manuscript is identified in the text by bold printing of the verse number or starting letter.)

This is simply another of the several ways Father has assured me that it is indeed He who is speaking. I trust He will do the same for you. Relying upon His word has taught me to trust when He speaks without a scripture reference; for example, as in the case of a question posed to Him for

guidance. In fact, it is just such a need that started me on this path (from a human perspective) in the first place.

No question and no subject is too big or too small for Father—He gives freely and without reproach. The hard questions become so much simpler if you just ask Him. Much more could be said about when and how to ask. The Lord’s words will suffice here: keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking!

An important word of caution is in order at this point. The Lord has provided a vital safeguard for us to prevent misunderstanding a word from Him on major decisions. That safeguard is called The Law of the Double Witness, found in Deuteronomy 19:15, Matthew 18:16, and five other places. Simply stated, it means make sure someone else has gotten the same word, as a confirmation to you. This is very important.

I am learning to ask the Father about more and more during each day. At night I ask Him to speak to me the following morning, and the next morning I ask again and wait for an answer. Last summer, He gave me Isaiah 50:4-5 which sums it up:

“HE AWAKENS ME MORNING BY MORNING. HE AWAKENS MY EAR TO LISTEN AS A DISCIPLE.”

Are there ever days when a word is not received? Yes, there will be such days. You should not immediately assume that something is wrong. Perhaps you missed the mark the previous day; it would be appropriate to make it right with Father. But He does not condition His words on your sinless perfection; He is much too loving for that.

Rather, Father has a purpose in being silent, in hiding His face, and in being hidden. A great deal could be said about this, but the Lord Spirit will lead you into the truth of it. I assure you He is leading you into a most wonderful and blessed experience and one that will evoke much praise from you. ASK Him!

Occasionally, upon mention that Father told me such-and-such, people will ask, "Did you hear Him audibly?" I truthfully answer in the negative, regarding the instance in question. It is my observation from Scripture that speaking audibly is not His preferred method of communication. Hebrews 1:1 states that although in the past He spoke by many portions and by many ways, now He has spoken "in His son". Here, the word "in" means stationary and at rest within. At the least, we may say His manner of speaking now differs from the way He spoke in the past. I understand from this that Father chooses not to speak audibly. Instead, He chooses to speak by what Bishop Carlton Pearson, in his book The Gospel of Inclusion, calls "conversational thought." There is no better way to describe communicating with Father, Son or Holy Spirit.

This leads to the final point that in time, you will learn to distinguish the voices of Father, Holy Spirit, and Christ Jesus. Jesus taught us pray, "Our Father..." It is

Father's words that we live by; they are spirit and they are life. His word is the daily manna, coming forth every day. But if you prefer flesh (these days it is called the "Prosperity Gospel"), He will give it to you until it comes out of your nose; speaking from experience, I don't recommend this course of action.

The Holy Spirit comes unsolicited, guiding us into truth that we did not know, we did not expect, and we did not ask about, and He whispers truth to us that we never could have come up with ourselves. He is full of surprises! As Oswald Chambers has put it: He educates us down to the scruple.

In my experience, the Lord Jesus has the preeminence and the first place in the matter of speaking to be heard. His is the voice you hear in times of great distress, when in need of salvation and deliverance, in times of healing, and in times of great revelation. As a result, His voice is not heard as frequently as Father and Holy Spirit. (I am not intending to offend anyone's doctrine, so please forgive me if I do.) But here is a wonder that you will find, as a sign that you have indeed heard the voice of Jesus: In His presence is the fullness of joy. Psalm 16:11

May God grant you the courage, and the desperation, to hear.

Your brother in Christ.