

PARSHAS YISRO



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שבת פרשת בשלח

THE ART OF LISTENING

REBBETZIN SARA ITA KATZ, A”H (1933-2018)

Today’s shiur is dedicated l’ilui nishmas isha hagedola, Sara Ita bas R’ Avraham Avigdor.¹ Today was her yom hakvura. She was an outstanding person who lived day in and day out fulfilling her tafkid in life, working on her tafkid of being em b’yisroel. She was a woman with tremendous wisdom. The pasuk in Mishley (14:1) says, חִכְמוֹת נְשִׁים בְּנִתָּה בַּיִתָּה - woman’s wisdom builds the house, which refers to building one’s husband and children. She did an amazing job building and supporting her husband and children. But she also went far beyond her family responsibilities by making any person who came in contact with her, feel as her own child. She tried to enhance and better their lives and she encouraged them to shteig. I saw her deal with choshuve Rebbetzins: she never forgot them, always calling them and continuously sending them things, as well as shopping for them. I saw her deal with ordinary people who were her peers. She would try to share in their simchas, and also carry and bear their needs. I saw her deal with people who were not yet frum; she tried to encourage everybody she came in contact with to “please do her a favor” or to help her out. And she had such a sweet way of asking for it, that it was very hard to say no to such a request. But those people had no idea what “help” she was referring to: one person thought she was referring to medical help - perhaps a doctor bill that she needed a break on, or for a monetary donation, etc. But all she really wanted was for them to “step up to the plate” and climb the “Mountain of Hashem.”

She was a woman that you could sit and write about and talk about, and I am sure that there is a ra’ash gadol going on right now in shamayim from all the malachim that she created.. She loved everyone. She had a heart of hearts. The heart that she had was aza lev bori k’ulam (such a healthy heart) - it was a heart that heard, listened and felt everyone. She went to chasanas, she sent people presents. I just met a man at her funeral and asked him if he knew her. I thought that maybe his father had a shaychus. This man said to me, “Yes, I knew her. Out of respect for her, I sent her my son’s bar mitzvah invitation. She sent back a matana for the bar mitzvah with a nice brocha.” What’s amazing is that at the time, she was already in a rehab facility.

She would never forget anybody. As a matter of fact, I called her one time just to say “thank you” for something, but I couldn’t reach her. She made sure to call me back and she spoke to me on the phone for a while, giving me a lot of attention. She had an amazing personality and we all have to learn from her. In short, she was a lean, mean Mitzvah and Torah machine, but mamish. For herself she took nothing. But for everybody else she gave everything, and everyone felt it. She always used to tell me that I was very special to her and that’s why, she said, she treated me nicely. I used to think, “Yeah, okay - she treated everybody in a special way and to everybody she said the same thing.” Now at the kevura, her son came over to me and said, “I want you to know that my mother had two groups of people she dealt with - there was the hamon am that felt that they were her family, and there was another group of people whom she considered her family. You were from the top tier in the second group,” he told me. She and I undertook many different projects over the years: she encouraged me to make a Sunday shiur, she¹ arranged it and she pushed it. Amazing. So today’s shiur is b’emes apropro for her and it should be l’zechus nishmasah.

WHAT DOES LISTENING MEAN?

וישמע יתרו כהן מדין חתן משה את כל אשר עשה אלהים למשה ולישראל עמו כי הוציא ה' את ישראל ממצרים

And Yisro - the priest of Midian, Moshe’s father-in-law heard all that G-d had done for Moshe and for Israel His people, how G-d had brought Israel out from Egypt (Shemos 18:1).

The first thing you have to ask when you learn this pasuk is what's the definition of וישמע? We have to ask vos shteit du? Vos shteit du means - what is the chidush here? What's the chiddush of וישמע? The word וישמע doesn't mean "Yisro listened." I always ask my talmidim, "Are you listening?" Now, of course, they are listening, but are they hearing? Hearing is a different story. Yes, they may be listening, but they are hearing something else. What's the chilluk? What's the difference? Listening means that the words are going into my ears, but I am not understanding or accepting them. I am not taking these words into me. If it's a D'var Torah, it's like the Torah falls off them like water falls off the duck's back. I ask the talmidim, "Are you hearing what I am saying?" and they say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." Or when I close a sefer and I ask them, "Did you hear what I said?" they will say, "Sure!" Then I ask them, "If so, please tell me what I said." Their reply is: "I have no idea what you said." Wait, I thought you were listening to me? Well, you were not, because you have no idea what listening means. Listening means absorbing something. Absorbing something means that I can say it or repeat it over - otherwise it is worth gornisht. If somebody asks you a question, "Are you listening to me?" it's better to say, "Right now my mind is not focused on you, so if you want to just unload it, I'll be happy to be a sounding board for you. But if you want me to listen and absorb it, right now I am not prepared to do that." That's number one.

Number two: when somebody gives you advice or you get a message, then listening alone is not enough - you have to "take it in." Even if someone can repeat the message, that's not called "hearing" the message. Hearing means something totally different, namely, "I'm ready to act upon that advice." For example, if I tell somebody to "get with the program" and start to listen and daven more seriously, and then he doesn't come to davening on time - it means he heard what I said and he can repeat it - but he can't accept it.

YISRO'S MOST AMAZING ACT OF SHEMAIYA

So number one, Yisro heard - וישמע יתרו - he heard and absorbed the message, even though it wasn't a direct message to him! He heard the news that happened in the world. Sometimes a person gives you direct messages and you are not listening. This was an indirect message, and despite all of the above, Yisro "heard." Was there anything great about that? Yes, because he was Kohen Midian. Let's say you want to makarev a goy on the street to Torah - you want to introduce him to the truth of the Torah. That's not too hard. But if the guy happens to be the Pope, who sits in his seat with all his kavod, do you think you have a chance to mekarev him? Of course not. Why not? Because even if he heard and acknowledged you, he has too much to lose: his honor, prestige, position, etc. So he would never do it. Yisro had such a capability to be a "listener," that he was willing to sacrifice everything in order to be zoiche to become a part of Klal Yisroel, and that is the most amazing act of shmiya!

Ask yourselves the following question: how many of us have opened up a sefer that teaches ways to become more erlich, and then acted upon it and implemented those changes in our lives? If you answered this question in the affirmative, then you know you've heard the message of that sefer.

REACHING HEIGHTS THROUGH PROPER "HEARING"

But Yisro was mechadesh to me yet another chidush. If I would hear that something happened in Peru right now, or even in California, what would I do? Recently, there were terrible mudslides in California and million dollar houses, along with people, animals, and cars, were buried in mud. Did everyone hear about that? Yes. Did everybody hear about the wildfires not long ago in California? Most people heard about it. But did people hear about it? No, nothing. One giant yawn from the velt. It didn't even go into their ears. So another lesson I learn from Yisro, is that when something happens in the world - and not even to your own nation - Hashem wants you to listen, because everything is a message. As the gemora says, earthquakes, or anything that happens to other nations is a message to you. The first thing to do is to get the message, and the next thing to do is accept the message, and the next thing is to act upon the message. That's called שומע תוכחה (someone who heard reproof). Yisro was such a master at hearing תוכחה, with such honesty and conviction, and commitment to being an erliche mench, it's unbelievable! It says: שמעו ותחי נפשכם - hearken (to a reproof), and you will be revived - i.e. you will bring life to yourselves (Yeshaya 55:3). In Mishley (15:32), it says: שומע תוכחה קונה לב - he who hears reproof gains understanding. Such a person will have a tremendous and healthy heart! This is mind-blowing stuff. So how did Yisro become such a tremendous individual and reached such heights? You know how it occurred? It came from hearing, from שמיעה!

I remember how I felt years ago when I began to understand this concept that every single thing was a message. The only question is: do you really listen? If the message is a good message, such as you will win the lottery and you'll become rich, then everybody likes that message; but a lot of times Hashem sends us a message of תוכחה, but because people don't like תוכחה - they "shut down" and don't want to hear it.

THE TALE OF TWO UFRUFS

I want to tell you an amazing story about hearing. Around twenty years ago, I had an older, ba'al teshuva talmid of mine, who became observant in his mid-30's. When he found a wonderful shidduch and became engaged, he was already in his early 40's. We were very excited for him. Then came the Shabbos Ufruf. It was a big Shabbos. Meanwhile, I had another talmid who was dating a girl and they got engaged. I told him that they should wait with the vort until after this Ufruf, so that it doesn't shtet (disturb) the present simcha. Now, the kallah decided that she's coming for Shabbos. I explained to her on the phone that we could not host her on that Shabbos because of the Ufruf. I told her, "You are coming as a new kallah, and I want to give you and your family the proper attention you deserve, and right now we are being osek (busy) in the simcha of someone else. Ein mearvim simcha b'simcha - we don't mix two different simchas, so I am asking you, please give me another Shabbos and we will host you then and we'll take good care of you." She said, "I would like to come this Shabbos." I told her, "I know that you'd like to come, but please listen to me."

Next thing I know, she arrives in Wickliffe, on Friday afternoon. How did I know? Her chassan called me to let me know. I asked him, "What's her problem? I told her not to come this Shabbos." He said, "Rebbi, she has a mind of her own." What did she say? She said to her chassan, "Does R' Brog own Wickliffe?" The chassan told her that I was his family, and that's where the chassan had planned for the two of them to eat when she would come for Shabbos. She said, "Okay, so we won't go there." He stayed with us for Shabbos and he got her a place to stay nearby. I was waiting to see how Shabbos would play out. Friday night, the chassan didn't show up to shul, which was unusual for him. I was wondering where he was. I asked someone to go and find out where he was. They knocked on his room, but no one was there. I told someone to find out where the kallah was. They went to knock on her door, and she wasn't there either. It was the strangest thing. Shabbos morning comes - he didn't show up for shacharis. He was a guy who came to davening. I thought that maybe he went to eat with her somewhere else. It was very strange. Bekitzur, he wasn't there for mincha. Shalosh seudos - viter nischt, the shiur - viter nisht, maariv - viter nisht. On Motzei Shabbos, I told my wife that I was getting nervous. And then he called me. "Hello, Rebbi? You were wondering where I was?" I said, "Wondering? I was worried about you! Where are you?" He said, "I spent Shabbos in the hospital." "You spent Shabbos in the hospital? For who?" I asked him. "For my kallah." What happened? He told me that right before licht benching, her eardrum ruptured and it started to bleed. They called the ambulance and had to take her to the hospital, where they spent the entire Shabbos. "How is she doing now?" I asked him. "Oh, she is already 100%," he told me. "So did she get the message?" I asked him. "What's that?" he clarified. I repeated myself, "Did she get the message? Did she understand that maybe this had to do with listening, with hearing, and accepting?"

YOU CANNOT BEAT HASHEM'S PLAN!

It's funny how people are. "Huh, are you a Navi? Do you have ruach hakodesh?" people ask me. "Well, you have to be daft not to figure this one out - this doesn't take a genius to figure out!" But that's how people are - people just don't listen, they don't take things that Hashem says seriously, and that's what happens. After Shabbos, the girl left, and her brother called me. He was a ben Torah. He said, "I hate to do this. It feels very wrong for me to do this, but I asked a sheila from a Rav. I don't think your talmid should marry my sister, unless he wants to have a really troubled life. It's not going to be pashut (simple). I don't want to go into any of the details." I asked him, "Is it just behavioral?" He told me, "Oh, no. There's more here than meets the eye." I said, "You know, I was takka wondering - because it's unusual that when you ask someone not to come, that they come anyway." He said, "This phone call never happened." I listened to him closely - וישמע ישראל!! Then I told my talmid, "You know, I think this one, we should let go for now." My talmid got married to a different girl. Initially it looked like a dream marriage, but he suffered terribly from his wife, who had mental issues. And no one had called us about her! And I said to myself, "Wow, you can't beat Hashem's plan! It's amazing." They had a few kids. He was the nicest guy in the world, he tried to make the marriage work but she ended up in a mental facility. It was a very sad situation.

PAY ATTENTION TO WHEN THE SCOFFERS ARE KNOCKED DOWN

A person has to realize that you've got to hear the messages. Every single day Hashem sends you messages, but you've got to listen to them, and you have to hear them! Hashem talks directly and indirectly to people. When something happens to a scoffer (letz), a simple man (pesi) should smarten up (yar'im), as the pasuk in Mishley (19:25) tells us: לץ תקה ופתי יקרם. Every time you see someone walk by who is not 100% - I don't care if he's emotionally or physically not well, I don't care if you see his hand dangling, I don't care if he has four fingers on his hand instead of five, I don't care if he needs a crutch, or a cane - you

better thank Hashem, because Hashem is sending you a message! Hashem is telling you loud and clear, “Wake up and listen, hear, and do teshuva, and become better!” So how can you become better? I will tell you how. When you see a person who has a problem with his foot, you should ask yourself, “Hashem, how come not me? Am I a bigger tzaddik than this person?” No. And why did I see this person specifically today, and not yesterday or two weeks ago? Do you know why? Because Hashem is telling you the following: “I am considering something to do to your legs.” That’s what Hashem is saying.

“WALKING WITH RABBI MILLER”

I was once walking with my zeida (Rav Avigdor Miller, zt”l) at 5:45am in East Flatbush. After he did his introductory thanks to Hashem, he looked up and told me: “Look quickly, Yisroel. Look quickly!” I looked but didn’t see anything. “What am I supposed to see, zeida?” I asked. He said, “Do you see the end of the next block?” I said, “Zeida, these are very long blocks - I can’t see the end of this block!” “So you don’t see the next block? You don’t see that man there?” I said, “No.” He said, “There is a man there. Do you see what he’s holding?” I said, “Zeida, I don’t see anybody!” He said, “This man is holding a white cane - do you know why he’s there? Because Hashem is giving me a message. Do you know what the message is? Thank Hashem for your eyes!” And then he said, “Hakodosh Boruch Hu, I am going to review and analyze the greatness and the tova of the eyes.” Then, he proceeded to say a whole shiur about the eyes. It was the first time I heard the words “vee-de-o” (that’s how he pronounced the word video before they were out). He told me, “There is a new phenomenon on the horizon called vee-de-os, but you should know that I am not impressed with them - because I’ve got them right here (pointing to his eyes) in my head! And these machines are only in black and white, while I have full color! And I don’t have to twist my ears or point my nose in a certain direction to make them zoom in and focus - I can do that right away, in one second! And I don’t have to wait until my eyes adjust - as soon as I turn my head and look elsewhere, I can clearly see everything right away! (Those early video cameras had a delay before you could see clearly after zooming). “And I don’t have to carry any bulky vee-de-o machines - I’ve got it all right here and they are very light. Ah!” And he proceeded to thank Hashem for his eyes!

IN SHAMAYIM, THEY “SAVE” ALL THE MESSAGES

And everyone is going to come to Hashem some day and everyone will say, “Hashem, you never told me, I never knew that,” and Hashem is going to show you how many messages He did give you. Hashem gave you many messages. You may have met somebody, perhaps a Rebbi who came to you and said, “You know, why don’t you shape up? Isn’t it time to shape up? When are you going to cut out the nonsense - like a human being who has no da’as. When are you going to start to get serious?” And you got really ticked off and barked back at him, “What’s it got to do with you? Who do you think you are?” And then you walked away from the guy and told your friends, “Did you hear that guy? Who does he think he is to talk to me this way?” You know what you just did? You just flushed the message directly from Hakodosh Boruch Hu! You’ve forgotten those messages, but Hashem is going to save all these messages and He will show you the video of all the messages. “How many messages do you think I sent you?” Hashem will ask. “I contacted you so many times, in so many places where you went. You went to a place where you were not supposed to be and someone came over to you and said, ‘Are you Jewish? Are you a Yeshiva bochur? Are you a Rabbi?’ and you said, ‘Don’t mention those kinds of things to me. That’s not what I want to hear!’” But that was the message that Hashem gave you.

A SIMPLE PAMPHLET THAT CHANGED A LIFE

I want to share a story with you that I recently read about a taxi driver in Israel. This taxi driver picked up a young religious-looking man, who turned out to be a yeshiva student. The two of them started to shmooze during the ride. The taxi driver was very curious and inquired about a number of things: what this man was learning in the yeshiva, whether he was always religious, etc. The passenger said that he had become observant somewhat recently. Naturally, the taxi driver wanted to hear his story, so the man related a fascinating story of how he became religious. “For years,” he began his tale, “I wanted to become frum - as I knew how important it was for me - but I couldn’t commit.” The curious driver asked him, “So what was holding you back?” The man answered, “I’ll be honest with you - cigarettes.” “Cigarettes??” asked the driver. “Yes, unfortunately, my wife and I are big smokers,” the fellow continued. “We’ve been smoking since we were teenagers, and just thinking about stopping cigarettes was an impossible thought to entertain. I couldn’t go on Shabbos without smoking. I just knew it was impossible, so I asked myself, ‘Why would I start keeping Shabbos if I can’t become 100% frum?’ The driver interjected, “What do you mean? You keep what you can! It’s not an all or nothing proposition!” (As a side note, this is a very common trick by the Yetzer: “If you are not going all nine yards, it’s worthless.” You should know that this is a shtus). He continued, “One day I was driving along and I saw a long line of cars before the light. Next to the light, a van was parked in the median, with a large ‘Na, Nach, Nachma, Nachman, Meuman’ sign on its side. So while my car was slowly advancing towards the light in bumper to bumper traffic, I sat

there listening to the loud music and watching these Bresslov Chasidim dance on the street and on top of their van. While the light was still red, one of these guys ran over to my car and asked me to roll down my window. I lowered it down and he warmly said, "How are you, my friend?" I said, "Great." He said, "Here, take one of these pamphlets." I asked how much it was. He told me, "It's free, just take it." I had nothing to lose, so I took the pamphlet and I put it in the passenger seat next to me. "Have a great day," he told me, as he ran off to his next 'customer.' The light turned green and I pulled off from the intersection. When I came to the next red light, I decided to pick up the pamphlet and see what's in it. Here's what the pamphlet said: 'Do not say that just because you smoke 20 cigarettes every Shabbos, that you shouldn't become religious. Even if you are able to cut down from 20 to 19, and you do it for the sake of Shabbos, it's worth an entire world.' I couldn't believe it! I was totally stunned. The pamphlet was talking directly to me, describing in detail the exact reason why I was not religious. Here I was, thinking that if I couldn't go 'all the way,' it was all worthless, and the next thing I knew, I was staring at this pamphlet that said exactly the opposite! Just try - one cigarette less! It's worth the try! I don't remember the rest of the trip, but I remember one thing: I told myself that I was going to do something.

LONG SHABBOS NAPS

That Friday night, I told my wife that I wanted to have a nice Shabbos meal. She said, "Sure." Before Shabbos began, I made sure to dress for Shabbos. When my wife saw me, she asked, "What are you doing?" I told her, "Listen, to honor the Shabbos, I wanted to dress nicely today." When I came home (from work?) we sat down to have our regular Friday night dinner. Afterwards, I told my wife, "You know, I've had a really long week at work and I am really tired, so - if you don't mind - I'd like to go to sleep now." She said "Okay," and told me that she had to go out for a smoke. I said, "Do me a favor, could you please wait one hour before you smoke?" She looked surprised and asked me, "What is going on with you today? What are you up to?" I said, "Listen, I just want you to wait for one hour." I went to sleep and my wife decided that she would go to sleep as well. She didn't have that cigarette. I woke up refreshed, but when I saw the sun was up, I went back to sleep. It was winter time, so by the time I woke up again, I saw that Shabbos would be over in a few hours. I turned to my wife and I said, "Listen, we went almost the whole Shabbos without smoking. Let's wait for another few hours, huh? Let's try to go through the whole Shabbos without smoking. What do you say?" Now, she definitely felt that I was up to something and asked with a stern look on her face, "What do you mean? What's going on with you?" She saw I was serious. I told her, "Listen, I just want to try it once. I just want to try it once!" She became serious and thought for a moment, and then agreed. What can I say? Hakodosh Boruch Hu helped us make it through Shabbos without smoking!"

That fellow definitely "heard" the message. Every one of you gets messages. You get messages to help people. Some parents get messages to help their children, but they ignore it and say "I can't do this. I can't do that." Some people hear about their neighbors, who are going through difficult times, but instead of helping them, they become nosy neighbors and do nothing to assist.

"DO SOMETHING FOR THEM!"

This woman, Sara Ita, a"h, was a shuchen tov (a 'good neighbor') like you never saw before in your life! There was a kollel in Telshe, and I was there. She was very famous for sending people her famous chocolate mousse. Her specialty was challah and chocolate mousse. I used to really enjoy her challos. She used to sometimes send challahs and chocolate mousses to seventy yungeleit on Erev Shabbos! You know why? She told her son, "If I am not going to send it to everybody, maybe someone else will see you not delivering it to them and they will get upset."

When she heard that somebody was sick in bed or having a baby, she used to say, "Do something for them." One time a lady who moved to this neighborhood from Lakewood, called to tell me, "I am not comfortable here in this neighborhood." I asked her, "How come you are not comfortable here?" She said, "I feel pressured." I said, "Who do you feel pressure from?" She said, "From you." I said, "How do you feel pressured by me?" She answered, "Because you are always telling the ladies that they should get their 'messages,' and if they hear that a neighbor had a hard week or just had a baby, or was sick with flu, or has kids with flu - that they should make an extra kugel on Thursday for them."

Some may respond to the challenge by saying, "Ah, I feel bad, I should have made challah for them." So why didn't you? Because they didn't have the motivation - that's why! They didn't care enough about another person. Oh, I love when people say, "I am going to take care of you." Do you know what that means? It means: we won't know from you, we won't hear from you!

SHOWING KAVOD

Sara Ita, a”h, was a doer. She did for every single person, for every neighbor, for kinderlach, for her husband. It was amazing to witness. When her husband was niftar, I used to always invite her to my house, and I also visited her sometimes on Friday afternoons. Her table was always set, like she was having her entire family over for Shabbos and her husband’s seat was always perfectly set as well! She would put his becher and his challah cover on the table! They were always there! Her husband used to give out Torah sheets in the yeshiva - he used to xerox selected pages from different seforim and put together nice, short statements from Chazal, and give them out in the yeshiva. She had all these folders with older parshiyos, and each week she would take a whole folder and put it on his chair! She used to say to me, “This is my Shabbos. I am having a Shabbos with my husband!” You know what kind of kavod this is? Do you know what kind of heartz (i.e. heart/feeling) this takes? She was just amazing!

A HOUSE BUILT ON MITZVOS

She never told you about any of her tzoros, and she had plenty of those! She was a ba’alas yesurim! She lived in a small house full of kids, with one small bathroom - it was mamash unbelievable! Things were always breaking and leaking there. She tried to sell her house at some point and I came in to inspect it. If you ever went into her basement, you saw those metal joists that hold up the floor - those joists themselves were being held up by wooden posts that were all either cracking, bending or they were already cracked! I asked her if she thought anybody could ever move into a house in such a condition. She just waved me off, “Nah,” she said. “We’ve lived here for many years - other people can also live here!” I said, “Tanta Sara Ita, it’s not going to work.” I remember bringing a couple of builders to inspect her house. All they said was: “You could do one thing with this house - take it down!” But she never had any major issues in that house - Hashem watched her. And the warmth that came out of that home, the simchas ha’chaim that came out of that home - were unbelievable!

LISTEN AND BE LISTENED TO

Rabboisai, please wake up and start listening to Hashem’s messages. Do you know what happens if you start to listen to them? I will tell you. You will be zoiche to what Yisro was zoiche to! When Yisro came to Klal Yisroel and turned to Moshe, he said: עַתָּה שָׁמַע בְּקוֹלִי אֵינְךָ - now listen to me, I will give you my advice (Shemos 18:19). I listened to you, Moshe, now you listen to me. And you know what the Torah says? וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה לְקוֹל חָתָנוּ וַיַּעַשׂ כְּכָל אֲשֶׁר אָמַר - Moshe heeded his father-in-law and did everything as he had said (ibid v. 24). If you listen, people will listen to you. Now, if you listen when it’s not comfortable for you but you don’t want to change (i.e. your wife is this or that, your wife doesn’t like you, this kvetch, that kvetch) - that’s not called listening.² Listening means: wake up and smell the roses, because once Hashem starts sending you messages, the messages will keep on coming and they are not going to get softer; they will get louder, harder and more painful. So let’s listen closely to the messages that Hashem sends our way, so that we can grow, so that we will be listened to, and so that we will be able to listen to all the messages that Hashem sends us.

THE BOTTOM LINE

True listening involves not only absorbing and “taking in” the message, but having the courage and readiness to act upon it. Yisro taught us several important lessons. Firstly, he possessed an amazing gift of hearing and he was ready to sacrifice everything in order to be zoiche to become a part of Klal Yisroel. Secondly, he understood that whenever Hashem sends a person a message - directly or indirectly (like in his case) - it means that Hashem wants a person to get that message, accept it and act upon it. This coming week, I will keep my eyes and ears open for Hashem’s messages - whether they come from my spouse, my parents, my kids, my employer, my chavrusa, my Rabbi, or even a simple bystander, to first hear them, to try to understand and accept them, and then try to act upon them. And in the zechus of truly listening to Hashem’s message, IY”H, I will grow closer to Hashem, avoid more painful reminders and will merit that others will hear and accept my messages as well.