



HEARING

THE VOICE OF GOD

Have you ever heard the voice of God before? I'm not referring to seeking God's will and sensing His direction, such as a call or an intuitive sense of direction. I am referring to His audible voice, out loud, to the extent that you were aware of a specific presence (direction of the voice) and tonal quality in His voice?

Adam in the Garden of Eden knew God's voice. When God would visit him in the cool of the evening, most likely they spoke to one another. When Adam and Eve sinned, they hid while listening to God call out to them. The Genesis record gives us the actual audible conversations between God and Adam and God and Eve.

*They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." **Genesis 3:8-13***

Adam and Eve had an audible speaking relationship with the LORD, but as a result of their disobedience to His voice, they lost it. Adam preferred listening to his wife over listening to the LORD.

*Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it;' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." **Genesis 3:17-19***

Adam's son, Cain, also heard the voice of God, particularly after he slew his brother Abel.

*Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth." **Genesis 4:9-12***

Again, a real voice and conversation are recounted. It is not just an interesting way of telling a story. Noah's conversation with God has been the subject of modern humor. I remember as a young man listening to Bill Cosby's rendition of God giving direction to Noah to build an ark. We all naturally accept the fact that God and Noah were able to audibly speak with one another.

Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks. Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. **Genesis 6:13-18**

Almost all ancient cultures have a great story in their past. Only through Shem to Abraham to Moses do we have actual conversations being expressed in such detail in the Bible. The dimensions of the ark could only have come from God, since Noah was not a fisherman or mariner. Abraham had a similar relationship with God. God spoke to Abraham in three ways: in visions, audibly, and even waking him from sleep.

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great." **Genesis 15:1**

And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." **Genesis 15:5**

Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. God said to Abram: ... **Genesis 15:12 -13**

What is fascinating about this account is that all three methods were used in essentially the same event. Later, at the age of ninety-nine, Abram will have an even stronger interchange with the LORD.

Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly." Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you will be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will

make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. **Genesis 17:1-7**

Abraham clearly heard God's voice, and he fell on his face in response. But consider this conversation that came later. The LORD visited Abraham at the oaks of Mamre and ate lunch. The LORD promised the birth of Isaac. Sarah could hear Him speak to her husband and she laughed nervously. As the LORD departed, the subject of Sodom and Gomorrah came up. This is a fascinating dialogue. Abraham heard the voice of God questioning God Himself. What's more, Abraham is given the answer to God's conversation with Himself. First, the question...

Then the men rose up from there, and looked down toward Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send them off. The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him." **Genesis 18:16-19**

Now, the answer...

And the LORD said, "The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave. I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know." **Genesis 18:20-21**

It is one thing to hear the voice of God, it strikes me as another thing altogether to hear God's voice talking to God.

Abraham's relationship with God was very powerful and yet simple. Take, for example, when God told Abraham to take Isaac to Mount Moriah. First, God calls out to Abraham to take Isaac to the mountains.

Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." **Genesis 22:1-2**

Surely Abraham's mind was full of questions concerning this matter, but he acted on God's voice. As we all know, this was a test from God to see if Abraham would obey God's voice. Abraham passed the test and we are left with this audible imperative.

But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." Genesis 22:11-12

What stops us from hearing God's voice like Abraham? It probably has to do with our unwillingness to really hear and do what the LORD says. Maybe this is why God chose Abraham and made him to be our father of faith. He heard the voice of God and believed. It was counted to him as righteousness.

Jacob had his own experiences in hearing the voice of God. On Jacob's departure from the land, he saw a vision of a ladder. He heard God speak audibly to him about his trip and promised his return to the land. He memorialized the event by naming the place "Bethel." Then when Jacob returned to the land, he prayed to (pleaded with) the LORD for protection and deliverance from his brother Esau, and the LORD appeared as an Angel and wrestled with Jacob through the night. The resulting conversations differ greatly from his prayers.

Then he [the Angel] said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." But he [Jacob] said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." And he said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him and said, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And he blessed him there. So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved." Genesis 32:26-30

While the Scripture describes the wrestler as an Angel, Jacob knew who he was talking to. Jacob was able to hang onto the Angel despite his hip being dislocated. Personally, I believe that Jacob was fully his name "hand on the heel." I think Jacob wouldn't let go of the Angel's ankles and heels, thus he got a name change. Jacob inquired of God's name but the answer to Jacob's question would not be given until Moses at the burning bush.

Jacob heard God's voice again when he received the news that his son Joseph was alive and in Egypt. God told Jacob to go to Egypt to be with his son.

And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am." And He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes." Genesis 46:2-4

Four generations went by until we came to the days of Moses. Then, the voice of God was heard emphatically on numerous occasions. First, Moses is introduced to God at the burning bush. Virtually all of the conversation is shared with us. The voice of God comes from a bush that is burning but not consumed. The sound of the voice is firm and authoritative. God instructs Moses to remove his sandals.

When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush, and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." Exodus 3:4-5

God's voice is personal. God introduces Himself as the God of his father and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God." Exodus 3:6

Do you remember how Abram fell on his face when God introduced Himself as God Almighty?

God proceeds to describe the situation of the children of Israel in Egypt. He then commissions Moses to go back to Egypt and Pharaoh to bring his brethren back to this mountain. Moses is able to converse back and forth, asking questions. Moses even asks what he is to say when questioned by his brethren.

Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations." Exodus 3:13-15

Jacob sought the name of the LORD, but Moses was the messenger of The Name (HaShem) to the descendants of Jacob. The fact that Moses spoke with God directly, could share His Name directly, and could show signs to prove what he was saying was not enough for Moses brethren or for Pharaoh. While the children of Israel were despondent, Pharaoh complained that he didn't know the God of the Hebrews since he too busy being a god himself and trying to keep track of all the other Egyptian gods.

We have all heard the story of the Egyptian Exodus—how God spoke to Moses to warn of the ten signs of judgment leading to the release of all the slaves in Egypt. The next time we hear of the audible voice of God is when Moses and his brethren return to the mountain (Mount Sinai).

The people were told to prepare themselves by taking a mikveh (immersion) bath. (It is the origin of baptism in our faith today.) The people were warned not to approach the mountain. Boundary markers were set at the base to keep everyone at a safe distance. A loud shofar (trumpet) blast signaled for everyone's attention.

Then God spoke the Ten Commandments...

The location of His voice was from the top of the mountain accompanied with much fire and dark smoke. The sound of His voice was much more than anyone before or after has ever heard. Psalm 29 tells us about His voice.

³The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD is over many waters. ⁴The voice of the LORD is powerful, the voice of the LORD is majestic. ⁵The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; yes, the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon. ⁷The voice of the LORD hews out flames of fire. ⁸The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. ⁹The voice of the LORD makes the deer to calve, and strips the forests bare, and in His temple everything says, "Glory!" Psalm 29:3-5, 7-9

As God spoke, rocks on the mountain split and tumbled down the face of the mountain. This was apparently the reason for the boundary markers and no one being permitted on the mountain. The sound waves struck the people, causing great fear. Their bones were shaken. Trees were shattered. Animals in their flocks calved and gave birth immediately. It was an awesome experience beyond anything experienced by mankind. Moses has summed up the experience of hearing the

Ten Commandments this way.

Then the LORD spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form—only a voice. Deuteronomy 4:12

Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard it, and survived? Deuteronomy 4:33

Even the children of Israel offered their commentary in similar fashion.

And when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. You said, 'Behold, the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire; we have seen today that God speaks with man, yet he lives. For who is there of all flesh, who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?'

Deuteronomy 5:23-24, 26

The children of Israel were full of fear and trembling. The people came to Moses and pleaded with him to stop God from speaking to them audibly any further. They wanted Moses to go up to God on the mountain, let God share with Moses, then have Moses return to recount what God had said. They committed themselves to hear and obey whatever God had said through Moses. God liked the plan, but He also knew how the plan would fail for many. Moses said:

The LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me, "I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken. Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!" Deuteronomy 5:28-29

God knew that it would be a good plan to send someone from the mountain (heaven) to recount what the LORD had said, but that the people didn't have the heart to listen to Him. Not only was this true for Moses with the Torah, but it also applied to the Messiah bringing us His message of redemption. Moses addressed this problem and tried to keep us focused on hearing God's voice.

O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. Deuteronomy 6:3

God spoke many times with the Patriarchs. We have reviewed those instances given to us in the Scripture. But then God spoke from Mount Sinai to all the children of Israel at once—to make an impact. We must listen and be able to hear the Lord if we are to be a part of His house. Those who have been taught the Torah know that this one lesson is called the “watchword of Israel,” the “Shema.”

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!
Deuteronomy 6:4

This is the instruction to keep hearing God’s voice from the mountain where He spoke the Ten Commandments. When a person recites the Shema, he is reminding himself and others to listen to the LORD from Mount Sinai. He is reciting the commandment that must be kept before any commandment can be kept. You must hear the voice of God before you can follow any of His commandments. It naturally follows that the greatest commandment follows this instruction to ‘hear.’

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:5-9

According to the agreement which our ancestors made with God, Moses, or those designated by God, would carry the message (voice) of God to us. Therefore, we would not be frightened, but we would be under pledge to obey the voice of the LORD. Moses for his part did not continue going up the mountain every day. God built a tabernacle in the midst of the people, and Moses would hear from the LORD speaking from the Holy of Holies.

Now when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim, so He spoke to him.

Numbers 7:89

While all this is very interesting, let me pose a question to you. How did this change, or did any of this change with the coming of the Messiah? Did people hear the voice of God from Heaven when Yeshua of Nazareth came? The answer is Yes. The apostle Mark records for us that God’s voice was heard when Yeshua came to be baptized by John the Baptist.

In those days Yeshua came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.” **Mark 1:9-11**

God spoke the same statement again when Yeshua was seen with Moses and Elijah on Mount Tabor. Peter, James, and John were witnesses to this. Peter was so impressed that he suggested building three tabernacles there. The Lord corrected him with these words.

While he [Peter] was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” **Matthew 17:5**

The Apostle Peter recounts this event and testifies to the truth of it at the conclusion of his own ministry.

For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased”—and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

2 Peter 1:16-18

On the day that Yeshua entered Jerusalem on the colt, the voice of God was heard again. Many people wanted to see Yeshua, having heard about Lazarus being raised from the dead. It was the days just prior to the Passover, and Yeshua knew His time was near.

And Yeshua answered them, saying, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” **John 12:23**

“Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour?’ But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came out of heaven: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, “An angel has spoken to Him.” Yeshua answered and said, “This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes.”

John 12:27-30

There was no difference. The voice of God was heard in the days of Yeshua just as it had been heard in the days of Moses. And Yeshua echoed the message of Moses and the need for us to hear the voice of God. Specifically,

He addressed the need for us to hear His voice.

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.” This figure of speech Yeshua spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them. **John 10:1-6***

Yeshua actually addressed multiple things about His ministry at this point, but one item that stands out is hearing the voice and recognizing who has spoken. This is the same lesson Moses taught. Our ancestors heard a powerful voice from the fire and the mountain. However, they preferred not to hear it again. They asked for someone to come from the mountain and speak the Word of God. Moses explained how it would happen; Yeshua came in accordance with what Moses said. Yeshua came as a shepherd; Moses led the children of Israel like a shepherd with a shepherd’s staff. Yeshua plainly stated that He was the shepherd.

*I am the good shepherd; and I know My own and My own know Me, **John 10:14***

*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. **John 10:27-28***

At Yeshua’s trial, this subject came up again.

*Therefore Pilate said to Him, “So You are a king?” Yeshua answered, “You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” **John 18:37***

Maybe you’ve asked the question before: Why didn’t everyone believe Yeshua when He did all the miracles and spoke so powerfully? The answer is right before us. Because they didn’t recognize the voice; they didn’t want to hear. They didn’t understand (or know) what Moses and the Psalmist had previously taught.

*For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would hear His voice, ... **Psalm 95:7***

Saul of Tarsus was a man who was very devout and religious as a Pharisee, but he had never heard the voice of God until he was on the way to Damascus one day.

*...⁷and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” ⁹And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me. **Acts 22:7, 9***

Since the days of Yeshua and the Apostles, there are many who would say that they have heard the voice of God. I would not be quick to dismiss their testimonies. There is nothing in the Word of God to say that God cannot or does not speak with any of us at His choosing.

For myself, I heard the voice of God in the desert of Arizona as a young man. I was in the Navy and returning to San Diego from leave. I was driving through the night near Tucson, but I fell asleep while driving. The voice was loud and very strong. It was in the tone of my earthly father’s voice. He said, “Bud! Bud! Wake-up!” I immediately awoke and steered the car back onto the road. Then I pulled over to the side of the road. I wanted to get out of the car, move around, drink some water, and fully wake-up. It was then that I marveled at the sound of the voice. It was the sound of my father; He used a “nickname” that only my father used. His voice was firm, commanding, and yet very loving. That is when I made my mistake—I looked up. It was very dark. There were no city lights anywhere. The brightness of the heavens was glorious. The fear and presence of the Lord struck me and I fell to the ground. I had heard the voice of the Lord and He had preserved my life. To this day, I can still hear His voice. I can still feel how I felt that night.

I have had the privilege of hearing other testimonies of others who have heard the voice of God. They are similar to mine and the accounts given to us in the Bible.

Maybe you have never heard the voice of God in this manner. Don’t be concerned about that. I have both good news for you and some bad news about hearing the voice of God. First, the good news.

According to the prophets, we are expecting to hear the voice of God once more, on the order of when Moses

and the children of Israel heard it from Mount Sinai. The writer of Hebrews says the following:

And His voice shook the earth then [MOUNT SINAI], but now He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN." Hebrews 12:26

The Psalmist speaks of the return of the Messiah on a horse in the heavens who will speak again to us from the heavens.

To Him who rides upon the highest heavens, which are from ancient times; behold, He speaks forth with His voice, a mighty voice. Psalm 68:33

The Book of The Revelation speaks of this event in ever greater detail. It is referred to as the Seven Thunders. God will speak again (seven thunderous statements) before His return. It will be more difficult than what Moses and the children of Israel experienced.

...and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices. Revelation 10:3

The Apostle John was not permitted to repeat what those statements were. They were profound enough that he wanted to record them. But, he was told that they would not be heard by us until the days of the seventh trumpet angel (the days immediately after the tribulation).

...but in the days of the voice of the seventh [Trumpet] angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets. Revelation 10:7

So, what is the bad news? The Tribulation saints will endure hearing the voice of God as the children of Israel did. But this time, God will shake the heavens instead of just Mount Sinai.

Hearing the voice of God is essential to our faith. It is essential that we recognize the voice of our God so as not to be deceived by others, just as a sheep who will only follow his shepherd. It is necessary that we hear Him (as we profess in the Shema) and that we understand and obey Him. If we turn away and refuse to listen, we are subject to those elements that will harm us. The testimonies of the past clearly show that God does speak with men—from Adam to Noah, from Abraham to Jacob, from Moses to the children of Israel, from the disciples of Yeshua's day to the testimonies of believers today. However, the day is coming when all men will hear the voice of God from heaven. There won't be any question about who is speaking. The sound of His voice will identify Him, but it won't be the small quiet voice most of us know. He will be Almighty God. He will be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Yeshua will be riding on a horse and coming with all power and glory. Everyone will fall down and know that they have heard the voice of God.



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