

## **The Power to Hear**

Alongside the power of speech, the ability and willingness to hear is a cardinal factor in any conversation or connection between humans but also between them and Hashem. This involves two distinct and separate functions, each of them at a different level. First there is the actual hearing of what the other person is saying. But then there has to be an actual understanding of what is wanted and what is given. Chazal saw the discussion about Ma'arat Hamachpeila as the prototype of conversation; to speak and to hear-know. Avraham understood clearly that Efron really meant a sale at market value even while he was talking about the honor of giving a burial place to such a great man as Avraham.

Why was it necessary for Moshe to actually shatter the Luchot? He could have simply not given them to Bnei Yisrael. "It was essential that they should see that it was only their actions which caused him to do so and that only their attitudes necessitated the shattering of the Luchot" (Abarbanel). So too it is important that we always realize that our actions and attitudes are the final determinants of our spiritual and moral development. We should be able to

hear the answers we give to the questions raised by our daily behavior in all the different walks of life. A special and basic difficulty arises because halacha determines so much of the pattern of our behavior and thereby poses a challenge to prevent our answers becoming mechanical and therefore spiritually meaningless.

At the very beginning of the Torah, Adam was taught this lesson of the correct answers to the spiritual questions. After eating of the forbidden fruit, Adam and Chava tried to hide from Hashem and so to escape the penalty of wrong answers. Hashem had said 'not to eat of the fruit', they had ignored His injunction. Then they thought that they could avoid the consequences by hiding from Him, but wrong answers always have to be paid for. So they were banished from Gan Eiden and the sword revolved to prevent their entry; there could be no t'shuva for their wrong answer. The generation of the Flood and the people of S'dom were also taught the penalty for wrong answers. Israel too, has often paid the penalty for its wrong answers. Avraham, however, in his simple faith, knew how to answer correctly, all the questions raised by his various tests. Avraham thereby was transformed from m'erey being AvRam, father of many, merited being the father of faith, of monotheism, of many nations but primarily of the House of Yaakov. 🌹