

“THE VOICE OF SILENT SUFFERING”

“God heard the voice of the lad” this comment from the Bible speaks of God’s heeding the voice of Ishmael, after he was cast out (Gen. 21:17). But as R. Mendel of Vorki notes, the text never says that Ishmael cried out, so what voice did God hear?

“And she looked and saw a child crying (Ex. 2:6).” This refers to Moshe as a baby in a basket by the river. But why did Pharaoh’s daughter see Moshe, and not hear Moshe crying?

At times silent cries are the most powerful. Ishmael as a child, Moses as a baby, did not cry aloud. The magnitude of human suffering is not measured in decibels. In a fraught silence there is, at times, all the anguish a soul can bear.

Television is a remarkable medium for capturing the images of those whose lives have been swept away. When the Tsunami struck abroad, when Katrina devastated areas here at home, we were witness to the plight of millions of people. But for every person whose story we have heard there are silent sufferers as well. We must react to what we see and hear, but being reactive is not enough.

Let us listen for those whose pleas do not reach our ears, but whose silent suffering must touch our hearts.