



# Likkutei Sichos

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Your Lips, Hashem's Speech

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Translated by Rabbi Y. Eliezer Danzinger

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## 1.

### RASHI'S COMMENTARY ON "YOU SHALL SPEAK"

Following Moshe's complaint to Hashem,<sup>1</sup> "Behold, I am of closed lips; so how will Pharaoh hearken to me?" the Torah says,<sup>2</sup> "Hashem said to Moses, "See! I have made you a master over Pharaoh, and Aaron, your brother, will be your spokesman. You shall speak all that I command you, and Aaron, your brother, shall speak to Pharaoh {that he let the children of Israel out of his land}." Rashi quotes the opening words,<sup>3</sup> "You shall speak," and comments, "{State the message of} every mission, one time {to Pharaoh}, as<sup>4</sup> you have heard it from My mouth; and Aaron, your brother, will interpret it and explain it {the message} in the ears of Pharaoh."

In other words, Rashi maintains that the verse, "You shall speak... and Aaron, your brother, shall speak to Pharaoh," doesn't mean that Moshe should speak (just) to Aaron, and that only *Aaron* should speak to Pharaoh –

– similar to what happened in *parshas Shemos*, where after Moshe complained to Hashem, "I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue,"<sup>5</sup> "send now [Your message] with whom You would send,"<sup>6</sup> Hashem replied,<sup>7</sup> "You shall speak *to him* (to Aaron)... And *he* will speak for you to the people..." –

– rather that Moshe, too, should speak to *Pharaoh*; except that Moshe should speak only *once*, and Aaron "will interpret and explain the message in the ears of Pharaoh," until Pharaoh is influenced to "let the children of Israel out of his land."

[Therefore, Rashi says "*in the ears* (of Pharaoh)," even though the Torah simply says, "to Pharaoh," without qualification. Meaning, as Rashi comments at

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<sup>1</sup> Ex. 6:30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 7:1-2.

<sup>3</sup> Although Rashi explains the entire verse (not just the words, "You shall speak"), he quotes only these three opening words. This is consistent with Rashi's interpretative style in several places, where he quotes only the words beginning the verse (or the subject), even though his commentary covers the entire verse (or subject). See *Likkutei Sichot*, vol. 17, p. 242.

<sup>4</sup> {In the Heb, original, כפי.} In the first and second printed editions of Rashi, and in a number of manuscripts of Rashi's commentary, it says, לפי, *because*. Similarly, in the *Tur HaAruch* on our *parsha*, 6:12, (an in a number of editions of the *Ramban*, on 6:13). See *infra*, fn. 26.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 4:10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* v. 13.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* v. 15-16.

the beginning of *parshas VaYigash*,<sup>8</sup> {on the verse,} “speak something into my lord’s ears” — “let my words *penetrate* your ears.”]

Although his interpretation differs from the account in *parshas Shemos* and also differs from the interpretation of other straight-forward-Torah commentators<sup>9</sup> here,<sup>10</sup> Rashi is compelled to interpret the words “You shall speak” as meaning that Moshe should speak to Pharaoh, and *not* to Aaron, for the following reasons: 1) Since the previous verse already stated, “and Aaron, your brother, will be your spokesman,” what purpose is served by the Torah reiterating, “You shall speak... and Aaron, your brother, shall speak...”? 2) A (prior) passage explicitly says,<sup>11</sup> “*They are the ones* who spoke to Pharaoh,” implying that Moshe, too, spoke directly to Pharaoh.

Consequently, Rashi deduces that Moshe was to speak to Pharaoh—but only one time. Aaron, afterwards, would “interpret and explain it....”

## 2.

### QUESTIONS ON THIS INTERPRETATION

Still, the following difficulties remain:

- 1) In *parshas Shemos*, after Moshe and Aaron gather the seventy elders, the Torah relates,<sup>12</sup> “And afterwards, Moses and Aaron came and *they* said to Pharaoh... And *they* said, “The Hashem of the Hebrews...,” using the plural {form *they*}. In other words, already then, *both* Moshe and Aaron addressed Pharaoh.<sup>13</sup> (This is especially clear considering that the Torah uses a *different* choice of words: When all the elders were addressed, the Torah says, “And Aaron spoke all the words that Hashem had spoken to Moses,” whereas when Pharaoh is addressed, the Torah says, “And *they* spoke.”)

Ostensibly, it makes sense to posit that there, too, considering Moshe’s poor elocution—for which reason Hashem had appointed Aaron as

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<sup>8</sup> Gen. 44:18.

<sup>9</sup> Targum Yonatan ben Uziel and ibn Ezra, *ad loc.* Ramban (on Ex. 6:13), and *et al.*

<sup>10</sup> See also the supra-commentators on Rashi (*Mizrachi, Gur Aryeh, Devek Tov, Maskil LeDovid, et al.*).

<sup>11</sup> Ex. 6:27. This is also evident from several other verses—see *Gur Aryeh, Maskil LeDovid.*

<sup>12</sup> Ex. 5:1, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Ramban (6:12) comments, “At the outset, Moshe was not commanded to address Pharaoh. Rather Moshe was told to approach Pharaoh together with the elders, and that they were to address Pharaoh. Quite possibly, the elders were to do the speaking, and Moshe would remain silent.” This explanation would suggest that Ramban understands our present verse similarly (i.e., that only one of them would speak). Nonetheless, the simple meaning of the words, “and they spoke,” (and likewise, in our *parsha*, the wording, המדברים, *who spoke* {plural}) is that Moshe would also address Pharaoh. (See, too, Ramban on Ex.4:15.)

Moshe's spokesman—Moshe neither elaborated nor repeated himself. Rather, Moshe communicated the main message, and relied upon Aaron to elaborate, similar to Hashem's instruction in the present *parsha*.

If so, the question arises: If there is a need to explain the procedure—that Moshe was to address Pharaoh only once, and then Aaron was to elaborate—the Torah should have related this the first time that Moshe and Aaron spoke to Pharaoh, in *parshas Shemos*. And if this procedure is self-understood—that whenever they both spoke to Pharaoh, Moshe communicated the main idea briefly, and Aaron elucidated—why then does the Torah specify the procedure now? The Torah could have said, in short, that Moshe should take Aaron with him, just as Rashi explained (and the Torah said) earlier, on the verse,<sup>14</sup> “And Hashem spoke to Moses and to Aaron”—“Because Moses had said, ‘I am of closed lips,’ Hashem sent Aaron together with him”?

- 2) A stronger {more basic} question:<sup>15</sup> Moshe already pleaded,<sup>5</sup> “I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue,” and Hashem had replied,<sup>16</sup> “he {Aaron} will be your mouth.” Why, then, does Moshe make the same objection again (seemingly),<sup>1</sup> “I am of closed lips”?

On the other hand, if his second objection was not identical to the first, but included a new point, which the concession that “Aaron will be your mouth” did not solve, how was this new objection resolved by Hashem's reply, “Aaron, your brother, will be your spokesman”? Apparently, this is the same rejoinder as before?

### 3.

#### THE PROFFERED SOLUTION AND ITS DIFFICULTIES

Some commentaries answer the second question as follows: The first time Moshe had complained, it was in response to Hashem's command to speak to the people. Now, Moshe was given the new mission of addressing Pharaoh. That's why Moshe protested again, “I am of closed lips.” To this, Hashem replied that *also* on this mission to speak to *Pharaoh*, “Aaron, your brother, will be your spokesman.”

But this explanation is hard to accept, because:

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<sup>14</sup> *Ex.* 6:13.

<sup>15</sup> A difficulty that the *Ramban* (on 6:12) raises; also, the *Abrarbanel* and the *Alshich*, *ad loc*; *et al.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 4:16.

1) Immediately after Hashem told Moshe that he would serve as Hashem's messenger, both missions are mentioned:<sup>17</sup> "Go and assemble the elders of Israel...," and also,<sup>18</sup> "and I will send you to *Pharaoh*." From this {sequence of events}, it is understood that Hashem's reply, "{And he will speak for you to the people, and it will be that} he will be your mouth" was said concerning both missions.<sup>19</sup>

2) The main problem with the proposed answer: Several verses later, after it says that Hashem agreed that "he will be your mouth," the Torah relates that Hashem explicitly told Moshe,<sup>20</sup> "When you go to return to Egypt, {see all the signs that I have placed in your hand} and perform them before Pharaoh.... And you shall *say* to Pharaoh...." At that time, Moshe did not protest that he was an inept speaker.<sup>21</sup>

We must say, therefore, that Moshe had understood that although {in the future} he, himself, too, would be required to address Pharaoh—unlike in the case of the Jewish people, when *only* Aaron spoke—Moshe would *also*, then, bring Aaron to serve as Moshe's speaker.

#### 4.

#### PECULIARITIES IN RASHI'S DICTION

In addition to the above difficulties, there are a number of notable peculiarities in Rashi's diction. Among them:

1. It is understood {why Rashi needs to tell us} that Moshe spoke succinctly and that Aaron elaborated. But why is it important to specify that Moshe spoke only "*one* time," and not more?

2. Why does Rashi say specifically, "{state the message of} every *mission*, one time"? Seemingly, it would be more suitable to say "{the message of} every *command*," consistent with the Torah's phraseology, "all that I command you."

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<sup>17</sup> Ex. 3:16.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 10.

<sup>19</sup> Although the verse here seems to qualify Aaron's role, "he will speak for you *to the people*," this is only because the mission *at that time* was to speak with the people, as the continuation of the passage indicates. In contrast, Moshe's mission to speak to Pharaoh was only later.

<sup>20</sup> Ex. 4:21-22.

<sup>21</sup> It would be strained to suggest that Moshe didn't complain then because the mission to speak to Pharaoh would take place only later.

3. The clause, “as you have heard it from My mouth,” seems superfluous. Would Moshe say something that he had *not* heard from Hashem?

4. Why does Rashi use two verbs, “interpret and explain it”?

5.

BEING APPOINTED BY G-D, ENABLED MOSHE TO SPEAK

The solution to these difficulties will be understood by prefacing with an explanation as to the difference between Moshe’s complaint *here*, and his previous complaint. In *parshas Shemos*, Moshe says,<sup>5</sup> “I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue.” Here he says,<sup>1</sup> “I am of closed lips.” Particularly, in light of Rashi’s commentary, the difference is not merely stylistic, but substantive:

On the phrase, ““I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue,” Rashi comments, “I {Moshe} speak laboriously.” In other words, Moshe was capable of speaking, but only “laboriously,” and with effort. In contrast, on the phrase, “I am of closed lips,” Rashi comments,<sup>22</sup> “Sealed lips.” That is, Moshe’s lips were sealed, which precluded speech.

This was the point of Moshe’s second objection. At first, Moshe thought that he was capable of speaking, albeit with a great deal of difficulty. As such, {to counteract this limitation} it would suffice to bring along Aaron, to explain and to “interpret” Moshe’s terse message to Pharaoh.

But now Moshe reached the conclusion that “I am of closed lips”—that *speaking was altogether impossible for him*; it was as if his lips were sealed. Consequently, Moshe maintained that it made no sense for *him* to go to Pharaoh. On the contrary, if Moshe were to appear before Pharaoh and remain silent, not only would Moshe’s presence be unproductive, but it would also be harmful.<sup>23</sup> Pharaoh would likely interpret Moshe’s silence as tacit agreement to increase the workload.<sup>24</sup>

To this new complaint, Hashem responded, “You shall speak.” This was not only a *command* (obligating him to speak), but a promise, “*You shall {be able to} speak.*” Although Moshe had “closed lips,” Hashem would enable him to speak.

Therefore, choosing his words with precision, Rashi comments, “every *mission.*” {By using the word *mission*} Rashi emphasizes that Moshe’s ability to

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<sup>22</sup> Ex. 6:12.

<sup>23</sup> See *Midrash Sechel Tov*, *ad loc*; and *Abrabanel*, *ad loc*.

<sup>24</sup> Ex. 5:9.

speak was not innate, but was a result of his carrying out Hashem's *mission*. This emphasis is clear considering Rashi's earlier comments.<sup>25</sup> {On the verse, "Hashem spoke to Moses, saying *I am Hashem. Speak to Pharaoh everything that I speak to you,*"} Rashi says, "*I am Hashem* – I possess the power, כדא, to send you, and to fulfill the words of My mission." Meaning, it suffices, ׳, that I am the sender to enable you to fulfill "the words of My *mission*." So, too, this was true regarding the delivery of the message of his mission.

## 6.

### MOSHE CONVEYS HASHEM'S MESSAGE

In light of the above, the apparent verbosity of Rashi's comment is understood. "{State the message of} *every mission, one time* {to Pharaoh}, *as you have heard it from My mouth*": The purpose of Moshe's mission to Pharaoh was not to persuade him with explanations and reasons. Rather, Moshe's mission was simply to *relay* the message that Hashem had given him. Moshe was acting as Hashem's emissary, and addressed Pharaoh as Hashem's representative. Therefore, Moshe was required to transmit the message *exactly* in the language in which it given to him by the sender. Only "one time," and "as you have heard it from My mouth" – *using the same language precisely*.<sup>26</sup>

This being the case, the question arises: Since Hashem spoke to Moshe in Hebrew,<sup>27</sup> Moshe, therefore, must have spoken to Pharaoh in Hebrew<sup>28</sup>—"as you have heard from *My mouth*." This, though, presents a difficulty. In *parshas*

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:29.

<sup>26</sup> This explanation dovetails with the variant edition of Rashi (*supra*, fn. 4), "*because*, לפי, you have heard it from My mouth." That is, Moshe was to convey the message of every mission only once *because* this was what he had heard from Hashem's mouth. Moshe was the emissary who had heard the message directly from Hashem (for the purpose of *relaying* Hashem's words to Pharaoh.) See *Gur Aryeh* on Ex. 12:3.

<sup>27</sup> See Rashi's commentary on *Gen* 2:23.

<sup>28</sup> See also, *Levush HaOrah*, on Rashi 6:12. See *Michilta D'Rashbi, ad loc.*: "You will speak in Hebrew, as an angel; and Aaron your brother will speak in Egyptian, etc." See, too, *Tzafach Paneach* (Rogerchover) on *Ex.* 4:10.

*VaYechi*,<sup>29</sup> Rashi already noted that Pharaoh did not understand Hebrew.<sup>30</sup> How, then, could Pharaoh have understood Moshe's message?

Therefore, Rashi continues and says, “and Aaron, your brother, will *interpret it* and explain it.” The term *interpret*, ימליצנו, also<sup>31</sup> includes the connotation of translating from one language to another. As Rashi explained earlier, in *parshas Mikeitz*, on the verse,<sup>32</sup> “[They did not know that Joseph understood] for the interpreter, המליץ, was between them”: “For whenever they {Joseph's brothers} spoke with him, the interpreter, who knew both Hebrew and Egyptian, was between them; and he would interpret, מליץ, their words for Joseph....”

In other words, Aaron was charged with a two-fold role, to: a) *interpret it*—translate the message from the *language* in which Moshe delivered it; b) *explain it*—elucidate the *substance* of the message, so that “Pharaoh's ears” would be receptive to it.

## 7.

### MOSHE'S ROLE—A JUDGE AND A RULER

Apparently, all is still not clear. If Pharaoh could not understand Moshe, what was the benefit of Moshe speaking? A benefit deemed so important that Moshe was granted a special ability to carry it out?

The explanation: Rashi's explanation here {on Ex. 7:2}, follows Rashi's comments on the previous passage,<sup>33</sup> “[Hashem said to Moses, "See!] I have made you a master over Pharaoh”—“a judge and a ruler, to inflict upon him {Pharaoh} plagues and suffering.” Meaning, the purpose of Moshe speaking to Pharaoh was not to persuade him with logic, or the like. (This was Aaron's

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<sup>29</sup> Gen. 50:6. However, the above-referenced *Levush HaOrah* is problematic in this respect. For the author writes, “And if this Pharaoh was the same as the first one, then you know that he had already learned Hebrew from Joseph, as Rashi explains in *parshas VaYechi*.”

<sup>30</sup> Even according to the opinion that this Pharaoh was indeed, actually a new and different Pharaoh than the one who had known Joseph (see Rashi on Ex. 1:8)—it is difficult to posit that this Pharaoh did understand Hebrew, considering that the former Pharaoh had been unable to learn Hebrew from Joseph the entire time that Joseph had served as his viceroy (for some 80 years). See Pn"Y on Ex. 6:12.

With regards to the interpretation of the *Levush* there, “If this was a different Pharaoh, then the following teaching of the sages applies: No king was crowned in Egypt unless he was able to speak all of the 70 {principal} languages {of the world}”—this interpretation is problematic and requires analysis. For Rashi says explicitly, there in *parshas VaYechi* {that Joseph threatened Pharaoh that he would disclose their secret, i.e.} “that I speak Hebrew, *in addition to* knowing all the 70 languages {that you, Pharaoh, know}.” See also, Rashi on Deut. 32:8.

<sup>31</sup> However, this is not necessarily Rashi's understanding of this term in all contexts. See, for (a germane) example, Ex. 4:16.

<sup>32</sup> Gen. 42:23.

<sup>33</sup> Ex. 7:1.



job—“and Aaron, your brother, will be your spokesman.”) Rather, Moshe’s role was to judge Pharaoh, “to inflict upon him plagues and suffering.”

So, too, concerning this matter: Moshe was required to tell Pharaoh forcefully, “Send my people.” Moshe’s elocution and facial expression would make it clear that Pharaoh was listening to harsh words – {auguring} plagues and suffering.

## 8.

ONLY HASHEM CAN BREAK THE WICKED

From the “wine of Torah” evident in Rashi’s commentary here:

Regarding the underlying concept expressed in the verse, “I have made you a master over Pharaoh”: In Chasidic literature<sup>34</sup> it is explained that when the forces of impurity (*klipot*) are especially strong (because they siphon {sustenance}, etc.), then even a *tzaddik* lacks the power to subdue them. As our sages taught,<sup>35</sup> “If you see that fortune is smiling upon the wicked, do not provoke him.” Then, only Hashem, who is all-powerful, can subdue a wicked person, even one who is arrogant. As it says,<sup>36</sup> “[Scatter your raging anger, see] any haughty man and humble him. See any haughty man and subdue him, and crush the wicked in their place.”

This is what the verse implies: “See! (suggesting something novel and wondrous) I have made you a master over Pharaoh” Although Pharaoh still wielded full power, to the extent that he capable of ensuring that “not a single slave could flee from Egypt,”<sup>37</sup> nonetheless, Hashem conferred Moshe with “actual *arm-like-Hashem*<sup>38</sup> control over Pharaoh,”<sup>39</sup> to the degree that Moshe could afflict Pharaoh with plagues and suffering.<sup>40</sup>

This power was given specifically to Moshe, since he was the leader of the generation—“I stood between Hashem and you... to tell you the word of

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<sup>34</sup> *Ohr HaTorah*, on our *parsha*, p. 231. See, too, *Maamarim 5631, 5677, 5714*, s.v. “*Re’eh Netaticha*”; *Pelech Rimon*, on our *parsha*, p. 64.

<sup>35</sup> *Brachot 7b*; *Megillah 6b*. Whether the degree of forcefulness is exactly the same in these two scenarios requires further study to clarify.

<sup>36</sup> *Job 40:11-12*.

<sup>37</sup> Rashi on *Ex. 18:9*; *Mechilta, ad loc.*, 19.

<sup>38</sup> *Job 40:9*.

<sup>39</sup> *Ohr HaTorah, ibid. Maamarim 5631*, s.v., “*Re’eh Netaticha*.”

<sup>40</sup> See *Torat Chaim*, on *parshas VaEirah*, p. 119b, *et passim*, s.v., “*Heim Ha’medabrim*,” where it is explained at length that Pharaoh was the paradigm of tenacious *klipah*, the epitome of ego and arrogance, whose downfall could come about only through Moshe.

Hashem<sup>41</sup>—an intermediary through whom “the actual word of Hashem<sup>42</sup> was conveyed. Therefore, it was through Moshe that Hashem’s power to afflict Pharaoh with “plagues and suffering” was expressed. [On this basis, it is understood why Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai maintains that “it is permissible to provoke the wicked, (even when ‘fortune smiles upon them’).”<sup>35</sup> Since Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai’s soul was a spark of Moshe’s, as is known,<sup>43</sup> he was able to subdue the wicked even at their peak strength.<sup>44</sup>]

From a deeper, mystical perspective, this explains why it was necessary for Moshe to address Pharaoh, (a) and why it did not suffice for Aaron to speak; – (b) despite the fact that Moshe spoke in a language that Pharaoh did not understand –

Because it was necessary to break Pharaoh and to subdue him, while he was at the apex of his power. Consequently, achieving this objective a) was possible only through the power of Moshe; and, b) was not intended to reform Pharaoh, but to break him (*to punish him*) and so it was not important for Pharaoh to *understand* the words.

## 9.

### CLOSED LIPS – A PRECONDITION TO CHANNELING HASHEM’S POWER

In light of the above, it is understood why Rashi points out that Moshe needed to convey Hashem’s words only “as you have heard from My mouth.” The power to break the unclean *klipah* at the peak of its strength was conferred to Moshe in his capacity as *Hashem’s messenger*, acting as the medium through which Hashem’s power was revealed – “arm like Hashem.” Therefore, Moshe’s elocution reflected {how he had heard Hashem speak to him – as Rashi puts it} “You shall speak... as you have heard it from My mouth,” similar to what it says, “the *Shechinah* spoke out of the throat of Moshe.”<sup>45</sup>

On this basis, we can now explain {the sequence of events, i.e.,} why Hashem told Moshe, “You shall speak – every mission, one time, as you have heard it from My mouth...” only after Moshe had pleaded, “I am of closed lips”:

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<sup>41</sup> Deut. 5:5.

<sup>42</sup> See *Maamarim 5659*, s.v. “*Panim be’panim*,” p. 194-195; *Torat Chaim, ibid.*, p. 116a; and elsewhere.

<sup>43</sup> *Siddur, Shaar Lag B’Omer*, near the end (citing the writings of the Arizal).

<sup>44</sup> Although in *Ohr HaTorah* (cited in fn. 34) it says, “and possibly, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, mentioned in the first chapter of tractate *Brachot*, was also of this same category...,” in the aforementioned discourses s.v. “*Re’eh netaticha*,” the similarity between them is stated without reservation, as presented in the main text.

<sup>45</sup> See *Zohar* vol. 3, p. 232a; *ibid.*, 7a, 265a; *Shemos Rabbah*, 3:15’ *Va’yikrah Rabbah* 2:3; *Mechilta Shemos* 18:19.

Chassidic literature explains that Moshe was “heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue” as a consequence of his self-effacement (*bitul*) to Hashem. Because of his intense *bitul*, Moshe was incapable of exerting influence, along the lines of “while busy absorbing, it cannot secrete.”<sup>46</sup>

From this it is understood that Moshe being of “closed lips” was indicative of his tremendous *bitul* – a *bitul* that surpassed the *bitul* indicated by “heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue.” Being “heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue” did not prevent Moshe from speaking (influencing) altogether. For at this level, he was still able to speak, albeit with difficulty – and so, this was still not a state of absolute *bitul*. In contrast, “closed lips” alludes to a state *absolute bitul*, which precluded Moshe from speaking altogether.

Therefore, it was specifically the *bitul* of “closed lips” that served as the *arousal from below* – the preparation for, and prelude – to, “See! I have made you a master over Pharaoh.” By achieving a *bitul* in which there was “no sense of self whatsoever,”<sup>47</sup> Moshe attained {a level at which he heard, and was able to communicate} “the actual word of Hashem”<sup>48</sup> (similar to the idea expressed by the dictum “the Shechinah spoke out of the throat of Moshe”). And to quash Pharaoh, this “word of Hashem” was required.

## 10.

### WHY MOSHE DID NOT ADDRESS THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Seemingly, one might still ask: How was it possible that Pharaoh, specifically, heard Hashem’s message from Moshe himself, but the Jewish nation heard it only from Aaron (“And he will speak for you to the people”)?<sup>49</sup>

True, the Jewish people didn’t need to hear the message from Moshe himself, whereas the subdual of Pharaoh (*klipah* at its peak) had to happen through the power of Moshe.<sup>50</sup>

[The *simple* reason {as to why Moshe spoke directly to Pharaoh} can be explained in a similar fashion: The Jewish people are believers, descendents of

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<sup>46</sup> This is how the dictum is phrased in several places in Chassidic literature. Cf. *Chulin* 108b.

<sup>47</sup> *Maamarim* 5659, s.v. “*Panim be’panim*”; see *Torat Chaim, ibid.*, beg. p. 120b, where it says that because Moshe had attained “actual *bitul be’mitsiut* {a state in which there is no sense of having an independent existence, or an independent selfhood}”, he was able “to subdue... the powerful *klipah* of Pharaoh...” See there.

<sup>48</sup> Note the comment of *Midrash HaGadol* here: “Because Moshe had said ‘I am of closed lips,’ he merited to say, ultimately, ‘I stood between Hashem and yourselves.’”

<sup>49</sup> Ex. 4:16.

<sup>50</sup> As explained at length in *Torat Chaim*, loc. cit.

believers.<sup>51</sup> For them, it sufficed to hear the message from Aaron, who conveyed to them, as Moshe's emissary, the message that Moshe had heard from Hashem. And immediately upon hearing the message,<sup>52</sup> "the nation *believed*...." For Pharaoh, however, it would not have sufficed to hear the message indirectly; therefore, Moshe himself had to speak to Pharaoh.]

Nevertheless, the explanation is still not entirely smooth: Why should the Jewish people be denied the lofty experience of being addressed directly by Moshe?

The explanation is this: When Aaron related Moshe's message to the Jewish people, he did so acting as a "channel."<sup>53</sup> The Jewish people thus received Moshe's message without it being changed or diluted, despite it having been conveyed through an *intermediary*. This is comparable to the idea expressed in the teaching,<sup>54</sup> "Moshe received the Torah at Sinai, and passed it on to Joshua; and Joshua, to the Elders..." – although the Torah was transmitted through a number of intermediaries; nonetheless, it remains "Torah at *Sinai*." As our sages taught,<sup>55</sup> "Any new {Torah} insight conceived by a diligent student was already given to Moshe at Sinai." In contrast, had Pharaoh heard Moshe's message only through the agency of Aaron, the message would have changed—changed because the message would have been "enclothed" {in Aaron, before it could be communicated to Pharaoh}. As a result, the power of *Moshe*, which was crucial to subduing Pharaoh, would have been lost.

On this basis, we can also understand the variation in the verses—With regards to the Jewish people, it says,<sup>56</sup> "he {Aaron} will be your *mouth*"; with regards to Pharaoh, though, it says, "and Aaron, your brother, will be your *spokesman*." When relating to the Jewish people, Aaron served as *Moshe's mouthpiece* ("your mouth"). The words of Aaron were on the same spiritual plane of Moshe's, since Aaron served as a channel. When relating to Pharaoh, however, Aaron served merely as "your spokesman," which Rashi comments, means "your interpreter." When a message is communicated through a

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<sup>51</sup> *Shabbat* 97a.

<sup>52</sup> Ex. 4:31.

<sup>53</sup> For the difference between something being *channeled* through an intermediary or being *enclothed* in an intermediary, see *Tanya*, "*Kuntres Achron*," s.v. "To understand what is written in the *Pri Eitz Chaim*," p. 158a; *Likutei Torah*, "*Masai*," p. 89c; and elsewhere.

<sup>54</sup> *Ethics of our Fathers*, at the beginning.

<sup>55</sup> See *Megillah* 19b; Jerusalem *Talmud*, "Peah," 13a (ch. 2, *halacha* 4); *Shemos Rabbah* 47:1; *VaYikrah Rabbah* 22:1.

<sup>56</sup> Ex. 4:16.

translator, the message is altered to suit the level of the listeners, as explained in several places.<sup>57</sup>

## 11.

### THE ABILITY TO SUBDUCE THE EVIL IMPULSE—VIA THE LEADER OF THE GENERATION

The lesson that can be learnt from the above, and applied by every person in their own particular service of Hashem:

Occasionally, the divine soul finds itself exiled within the animal soul – at times, even to the extent that “fortune is smiling” on the animal soul: The *klipah* is such that its “arrogance... exalts itself above the light of holiness of the divine soul...”<sup>58</sup>

The cure for this – “I have made you a master over Pharaoh... to inflict upon him plagues and suffering”: A person needs to “*incite* the good impulse against the evil impulse,”<sup>59</sup> “He should also thunder against it with a strong and raging voice in order to humble it... saying to it: ‘Indeed, you are truly evil.’”<sup>60</sup> In this way, a person can break the arrogance of the animal soul’s *klipah*, as explain in *Tanya* at length.<sup>61</sup>

Possibly, one can posit that the ability to accomplish this task comes via Moshe, whom Hashem told: “See! I have made you a master over Pharaoh”—“a judge and a ruler, to inflict upon him plagues and suffering.” As a result, every Jew possesses this ability, since “each and every soul of the House of Israel comprises within it something of the quality of our teacher Moses, peace unto him.”<sup>62</sup>

How much more so is this true for Jews as a people, and for the leader of the people, since the leader is everything.<sup>63</sup> Just as Moshe, in his time, had the power to punish Pharaoh “with plagues and suffering,” even when “fortune smiled upon him,” so, too, in every generation, the leader of the generation, who embodies

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<sup>57</sup> S.v. “*Panim be’panim*,” *loc cit.*; *Maamarim 5666*, p. 102a, and in numerous places.

<sup>58</sup> *Tanya*, ch. 29 (p. 36a).

<sup>59</sup> *Brachot 5a*.

<sup>60</sup> *Tanya*, *loc cit.*, (p. 37a).

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* (37a, *et passim*); see also *Tanya* ch. 31 (p. 39b, *et passim*).

<sup>62</sup> *Tanya*, beg. ch. 42).

<sup>63</sup> Rashi on Num. 21:21, “Moses is Israel, and Israel is Moses, to teach you that the leader of the generation is equal to the entire generation, because the leader is everything”; based on *Midrash Tanchuma*, “*Chukkat*”23; *Bamidbar. Rabbah* 19:28. See *Rambam*, “Laws of Kings,” ch. 3, par. 6.

“the extension of Moshe in every generation,”<sup>64</sup> has the force to overcome all the concealments and impediments to holiness, even when they are formidable.

## 12.

### CONNECTING WITH THE LEADER HELPS TO OVERTURN THE EXILE

This is also the retort to the oft-heard complaint: Since we find ourselves in the “doubled, and redoubled darkness” associated with the generation that immediately precedes Mashiach’s arrival, the generation in which we are confronted with so many concealments and impediments, how can we possibly fulfill the demand of the previous Chabad Rebbes—that in all places, we promote the study of Chassidut and the observance of Chassidic conduct? Especially, in those places where the situation is so depressed that there are those who would prevent and impede this goal?

One must keep in mind, however, that the extension of Moshe is found in every generation – including the generation preceding Mashiach’s arrival. Moreover, since the souls of those living in this generation—the generation immediately preceding the advent of Mashiach—are reincarnations of the souls of those Jews who wandered in the desert {in Moshe’s times}, as is known,<sup>65</sup> then certainly in our era there exists these same spiritual dynamics that existed then.

By attaching ourselves to the leader of our generation, my mentor and father-in-law, there is no reason to get anxious about, or dismayed by, the concealments and the impediments. Through the power of Moshe, we can overcome them—“inflicting upon him plagues and suffering.”

Certainly, we must conduct ourselves pleasantly and peacefully, as my eminent mentor and father-in-law wanted; and in accordance with his request to his father, the Rebbe Rashab—that his leadership should be characterized by kindness and compassion.<sup>66</sup>

Yet a person must realize that when one is bound to the leader of the generation, by studying the Torah he taught, and by meticulously adhering to the regulations that he instituted,<sup>67</sup> “following in his ways forever more”<sup>68</sup>—then one needn’t dread the concealments and impediments.

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<sup>64</sup> *Tikunei Zohar* 469, p. 114a; cf. *Bereishit Rabbah* 56:7.

<sup>65</sup> *Likutei Torah* and *Sefer Likutim*, by the Arizal, on Ex. 3:4; *Shaar HaGilgulim*, “Introduction.”

<sup>66</sup> *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 2, p. 502.

<sup>67</sup> *HaYom Yom.*, p. 65 (Sivan 24).

<sup>68</sup> Cf. *Tanya*, “*Iggeret HaKodesh*,” Epistle 27.

Just as in his times, Moshe subdued the *klipah* of Pharaoh, taking the Jewish people out of the Egyptian exile “with an uplifted hand,”<sup>69</sup> so, too, in our times: despite the hardships of exile, the Moshe of the generation<sup>70</sup> will bring us all out of exile, and lead us to the true and complete redemption, “with an uplifted hand,” surely, in the imminent future.

**From talks delivered on *Shabbat parshas VaEirah*, 5729 and 5715**

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<sup>69</sup> Ex. 14:8.

<sup>70</sup> For “Moshe was the first redeemer, and he will be the final redeemer,” referenced and explained in *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 11, p. 8, *et passim*.