

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



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Va'era, Sicha 3

The Verse:

After G-d conveyed to Moshe what he should say to Pharaoh, Moshe protested that "I am of uncircumcised lips; how will Pharaoh listen to me?" (Shemos 6:30) G-d responded: "See! I have made you a lord over Pharaoh, and Aharon, your brother, will be your speaker. You shall speak all that I command you, and Aharon, your brother, shall speak to Pharaoh, that he let the children of Israel out of his land." (Ibid 7:1-2)

The Rashi:

Rashi comments on the nature of Moshe and Aharon's collaboration:

"You shall speak every message once, as you have heard it from My mouth, and Aharon, your brother, will interpret it and explain it in Pharaoh's ears."

Rashi understands the arrangement to be that Moshe would speak directly to Pharaoh once, and then Aharon would clarify and explain Moshe's words. This is a departure from other commentators, who maintain that Moshe would speak to Aharon, and Aharon would speak to Pharaoh.

The Questions:

1. Moshe and Aharon already spoke to Pharaoh in the previous chapter. (Shemos 5:1-3) If G-d needed to spell out Moshe and Aharon's respective roles, why did He not do so earlier, before their first conversation with Pharaoh?
2. At the Burning Bush, Moshe already expressed a similar reservation to G-d, "I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue," and G-d responded as He does here, "And he [Aharon] will speak for you to the people, and it will be that he will be your speaker...." (Shemos 4:10, 16) What is the difference between these two exchanges?

The Explanation:

Rashi explains the difference between Moshe's two reservations about his speech. In chapter 4, Moshe said, "I am heavy of mouth," which Rashi explained as, "I speak with difficulty." Rashi interpreted the phrase "uncircumcised lips," used in our verse, as "closed lips." (Rashi to Shemos 6:12)

This implies that, originally, Moshe felt that it was "difficult," but not impossible, for him to talk. In response, G-d appointed Aharon to elaborate on Moshe's message to Pharaoh. But when Moshe and Aharon actually did confront Pharaoh, Moshe realized that his speech impediment was worse than he had thought; he quite literally could not talk — "I am of closed lips." In his second complaint to G-d, Moshe was speaking from experience and asking G-d to withdraw any speaking responsibility from him.

G-d responded by saying, "You shall speak," which reads not only as a command but as a promise: "I guarantee that you will speak, because I will miraculously give you the fluency to speak My words to Pharaoh."

Rashi expresses this by saying, "every message once, as you have heard it from My mouth." G-d will miraculously give Moshe the ability to speak only for the purpose of conveying His message to Pharaoh. Thus, Moshe will relay G-d's words once, and exactly as they were spoken to

him. G-d spoke to Moshe in Hebrew, thus Moshe would relate G-d's exact Hebrew words to Pharaoh. Aharon would then, "interpret it and explain it in Pharaoh's ears." He would serve the dual role of translating and explaining Moshe's words.

But if Moshe's words were unintelligible to Pharaoh, why send Moshe at all? Rashi anticipated this question with his commentary on the opening words of this verse, "See! I have made you a lord over Pharaoh — a judge and a chastiser, to chastise him with plagues and torments." Moshe's role was not to persuade Pharaoh with eloquent arguments. It was to frighten Pharaoh with his stern and authoritative communication of G-d's word. When Moshe delivered G-d's words just once, as they were said, in the original Hebrew, with finality and an imposing demeanor, it casted Moshe as an intimidating figure in Pharaoh's eye.

The Inner Dimension:

Chassidus explains that when the forces of negativity are their strongest, the righteous are powerless to contend with them. Only G-d can break them. At the time, Pharaoh was the most powerful person in the world. Therefore, G-d had to empower Moshe to face Pharaoh, "See! I have made you a lord over Pharaoh."

This explains why Moshe had to speak to Pharaoh directly even though he wouldn't

understand Moshe's Hebrew speech, and it also explains why this arrangement was only made after Moshe said, "I am of closed lips." Moshe was empowered by G-d to subdue Pharaoh with G-d's power. Thus, Moshe had to be the one to communicate G-d's words to Pharaoh. Once he did, Aharon could explain what was being said. But to serve as a channel for G-d's power, Moshe had to be emptied of his own ego. When he revealed that he "was of closed lips," he was alluding to the fact that his

own ego was empty of "speech," and he could relay G-d's words in their purest state.

The Lesson:

Whenever we feel overwhelmed by our inner Pharaoh, we must remember that we have a spark of Moshe within ourselves, and that by being connected to the Moshe of our generation, we will have the strength to overcome any internal or external opposition to our Divine mission.
