



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד **מרדכי מלכא שליט"א**
נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
שיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
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Parashat Va'eira

Everyone is Required to Benefit the Congregation

Questions:

- 1- Our *parasha* teaches us (4:10-12) that Hashem told Moshe to speak to Pharaoh on behalf of the Jewish people. Moshe, however, refused to do so, claiming that he was *kvad peh*, it was difficult for him to speak. How could Moshe offer this response? Hashem knows that Moshe had a speech impediment, and He still asked him to be an emissary for the Jews?**
- 2- We furthermore find that even Hashem answered him, by telling Moshe that He was the one who gave man a mouth, and Moshe acquiesced, setting out on his mission. So how then did he return and claim that he has "uncircumcised lips"?**
- 3- Lastly, why did Moshe add "And how will Pharaoh listen to me?" Once he stated that because of blemish on his mouth his speech was inhibited, it seems redundant to say that Pharaoh could not listen to him! Why did Moshe say this?**

Erroneous Way of Thinking

People generally think that in order to be a servant of the public or leader of a congregation and the like, a person must have all the "necessary qualifications" that leaders have. He must have a certain look and appearance and be talented and of superior intellectual acumen. Only then will he even be granted an interview to decide on whether or not he will be chosen for the position. Sadly, in today's media generation, any name that is mentioned is immediately subject to a thorough investigation by those who are not in favor of him, searching for all possible "dirt" that could ruin his chances of getting the position. This way of acting stems from the faulty belief that it is man – due to his strength and wisdom, oratory skills, and appearance - who takes credit for his accomplishments in this world. He believes that it is because of these features that he is worthy of a position of power. But the truth is that only when man believes that even after a person possesses all these gifts and does all that he can that he is still entirely dependent on the Will of Hashem and that only **He** gives man the power to achieve anything in life, will he realize that there are no preexisting conditions necessary to make him a leader or benefiter of the public. Man's job is to put in the effort, and then Hashem will help him.

Moshe Wanted to Know if Appearance Has Any Impact Whatsoever

Now we can begin to explain our *parasha*. Moshe claimed to Hashem that since there needed to be an emissary sent to Pharaoh, it was better to send someone with the ability to speak clearly; this way Pharaoh would heed his words. But since Moshe was of "uncircumcised lips" and stuttered – even



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though there was no doubt in his mind whatsoever that it was Hashem who gave man his mouth – still as far as being able to influence others was concerned, Moshe felt he was not the logical choice for this task. Of course, Hashem responded that this was an incorrect perspective, saying, "Who gave man his mouth?" This meant that that man's efforts are not at all the deciding factor whether or not his words will be heeded. He was therefore telling Moshe, "Even though your speech is the way it is, go; for everything depends on Me and not on human efforts." Moshe accepted this. But he accepted it only so far as the Jewish people were concerned; they believed in Hashem and would not be deterred by Moshe's inability to speak well. But the second time, after he went to Egypt, he started thinking that he was now going to present the Jewish people's case before Pharaoh. Pharaoh was a heretic, and therefore it seemingly did not make sense to send someone with a speech impediment to him. Pharaoh would scoff at him and refuse to listen to them. This is why Moshe stressed, "And how will Pharaoh listen to me?" For people generally lack the patience to listen to a stutterer, since it takes a while for him to say what he needs to say. Hashem therefore told him that he should do what is incumbent upon him, and Aharon would explain his intentions clearly.

We see then that Hashem is teaching us that it is man's job to do all that is in his ability, even though it does not seem that he has the talents or makes the necessary good impression. Just like Moshe Rabbeinu, who stuttered - how was it possible for him to be leader and speaker for his people before powerful rulers? The answer is that success in this area was not in his hands; rather, it was the hands of the One standing behind him all the time - Hashem. Furthermore, we must add that there is no doubt that when Moshe brought the burning hot coals to his lips, resulting in his speech impediment – this too was from Heaven. For one might ask: since in the future Hashem was going to make Moshe the leader of the Jewish Nation, it would have made sense to prevent him from scalding his mouth and impairing his speech. This way, he would have possessed the oratory skills fitting for a leader! We can answer that, on the contrary, Hashem specifically did this in order for us to learn that a leader does not become a leader because of his talents abilities and appearance; rather he becomes a leader because it is the Will of Hashem. Therefore, Hashem specifically caused Moshe to get this speech impediment to show that despite this he was able to be the leader of the Jews and was the one to receive the Torah from Har Sinai and give it to the Jewish Nation. This way, people would understand that they too were capable of benefitting the public without worrying over the fact that they may not possess physical acumen and the like. Interestingly enough, we actually see an example of this with Pharaoh. He was the most powerful king in the world, yet our Sages teach us that he was only about two feet tall and two feet wide – like a square of beef! But despite his strange appearance he succeeded in ruling Egypt and reigning over his kingdom with an iron fist. This teaches us that everything depends upon the Will of Hashem and that man should not be lax when it comes to acting on behalf of the people. Because the deciding factor is not his talents and abilities – it is the Hand of Hashem.

Story About the Iben Ezra

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The following story is an example of this: It is well known the Rabbeinu Avraham Iben Ezra was an extremely wise and sagacious man. However, he was a destitute pauper, and despite all of his great Torah wisdom, he was unable to receive a rabbinical position that would enable him to earn a decent living. He once went to a city that did not have a rav, hoping to land a position. The heads of the city asked him several questions in *halacha*, which he answered well. The Iben Ezra offered them his services and said he was willing to be their rav. But they refused, explaining that he was not distinguished enough to be the rav of such a distinguished city. Such a city needed a rav on the caliber of the Iben Ezra! So he duly told them that he *was* the Iben Ezra! This just amused them all the more – they thought him to a fool, Heaven forbid, since due to his poverty he was wearing tattered clothing – how could he be the great Iben Ezra? They therefore ushered him out of the city. The Iben Ezra contemplated the matter and walked to a different place, meeting an elderly, impressive looking fellow. He was also totally ignorant in Torah knowledge. However, his external appearance was something else. So the Iben Ezra told him to accompany him to the previously mentioned city and that he would be able to get him a position as rav of the city. "After all," he said, "they are looking for a man of pleasing appearance, and no one has a more pleasing appearance than you." But the man replied that he is a total ignoramus; they will certainly ask him questions in *halacha*, and he will be unable to answer them – then he will be publicly humiliated! The Iben Ezra told him not to worry; he would accompany him and serve as his apprentice. He should not answer any question immediately; rather he should tell them that he must investigate the question. He would then go and ask the Iben Ezra, and he would give him the answer. He would also prepare his *drashot* and the like. The man agreed and then the Iben Ezra went to the heads of the city and told them that he would bring them the Iben Ezra to be their rav. Seeing the man with the impressive appearance, they rejoiced and hired him on the spot. The Iben Ezra served as his apprentice and they divided the salary equally. Every question he was asked he responded that he needed to look into it. He would then ask the Iben Ezra, who would answer for him. The city's inhabitants did not even notice this since they were so taken with their new "rav," who boasted such an impressive outward appearance. On one occasion, the Iben Ezra had to travel somewhere, and the rav asked him how and what he should answer the people if they would ask him halachic questions. The Iben Ezra assuaged his concerns saying that the questions he generally received were concerning the laws of salting; how much time to soak the meat in salt and water for example. "To that question," said the Iben Ezra, "you should answer a half an hour." If they would ask him a question in *hilchot Shabbat*, said the Iben Ezra, he should answer that they should be stringent. If they ask him a question on the *Halachot* regarding *Sifrei Torah*, *tefillin*, and *mezuzot*, he should tell them to ask a young child. If a question regarding a woman's status of purity should arise, he should answer to perform an examination. Happy at having received a quick overview of the general *halachot*, he was ready to answer questions. First he was asked about a woman's status of purity, so he responded that they should ask a small child. He was then asked about the *kashrus* of a *sefer Torah*, and he answered that they should soak it in water for half an hour. They asked him about *hilchot Shabbat*, and he told them to



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perform an examination. They asked him how long to leave the meat in water and he responded that they must act stringently. In short, he switched all the answers, and no one understood what was going on. They investigated further and realized that he did know anything at all. The Iben Ezra returned and saw that the city was up in arms about the rav. So the Iben Ezra said to them, "You wanted an impressive appearance, and that is what I gave you." The people then threw them both out of the city. This story illustrates the pitfalls of appointing someone based on his outward impression.

Words of Mussar

Our Torah has taught us that each and every man and woman must desire to benefit the masses and to act on behalf of the congregation. He must wish to spark a transformation both among the Jewish Nation as well as his community, or congregation – or however much he could. He should not be led to despondency by his *yetzer hara*, who tries to convince him that he is not worthy of the task and that he lacks the abilities to succeed. Rather he must know that everything is in the Hands of Hashem and not man. When man does his part, Hashem will help him to succeed more than he ever imagined. Each and every individual is capable of "changing the world" on some level. He simply needs the desire, dedication, and prayer, and he will be successful in honoring Hashem.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rav Mordechai Malka