

Insights from the Meshech Chochma

רב מאיר שמחה הכהן מדווינסק זצ"ל

פְּרָשַׁת וַאֲרָא תשפ"ו

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וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לִפְנֵי ה' הֵן אֲנִי עֹרֵל שְׁפָתַיִם וְאֵיךְ יִשְׁמַע אֵלַי פִּרְעֹה. (פרק ו' ל')

Moshe said before Hashem, "Behold! I have sealed lips, so how shall Pharaoh heed me?"

Rashi explains that our pasuk is repeating the same statement that Moshe said earlier, in pasuk וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה לִפְנֵי ה' לֵאמֹר הֵן בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֵלַי וְאֵיךְ יִשְׁמַעַנִי פִּרְעֹה וְאֲנִי עֹרֵל שְׁפָתַיִם: יב *Moshe spoke before Hashem, saying, "Behold the Children of Israel have not listened to me, so how will Pharaoh listen to me? And I have blocked lips!"* Says Rashi, "The Torah repeated it here since it had interrupted the narrative of the matter. This is the pattern in which the Torah is written, like a person who says, 'Let us go back over the initial points.'"

Rav Meir Simcha points out that these two pasukim are extremely unique for *in the entire Torah*, these are the only instances when Moshe Rabbeinu's conversations with Hashem were introduced with the words *לִפְנֵי ה'*. And that requires an explanation-which he, as usual, provides for us.

He begins by telling us that earlier in this Parsha, when Hashem says to Moshe, וַאֲרָא אֶל אַבְרָהָם, וַאֲרָא אֶל יִצְחָק, וַאֲרָא אֶל יַעֲקֹב *I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov as E-I Shaddai, but with My Name Hashem I did not make Myself known to them*, Moshe is in fact being told that his level of prophecy will surpass that which our Avos experienced. (Of note, Ramban comments on this too and presents an entirely different explanation as to what made Moshe's level of prophecy so elevated, עֵינַיִן נֶשֶׁם.) Rav Meir Simcha feels that this pasuk is reinforcing a statement found in יבמות מט: "All of the prophets observed their prophecies *בְּאֶסְפֵּקְלָרְיָא שְׂאִינְהָ מְאִירָה* i.e., an obscure-looking glass, as their prophecies were given as metaphoric visions only but were not a direct perception of the matter. Moshe Rabbeinu observed his prophecies *בְּאֶסְפֵּקְלָרְיָא הַמְאִירָה* i.e., through a clear looking glass since he gained a direct and accurate perception of the subject." A much higher level of נְבוּאָה. And when Moshe realized this, he knew that it required of him a special preparation to be a proper receptacle for such קְדוּשָׁה, and as Rav Meir Simcha puts it, כָּלֵל זָה כָּלֵל. *גְּדוּל שְׁלִפְנֵי הוּא הַרְגָּשָׁת דְּבָר שְׁלִפְנֵי וְעָרְבוּ* i.e., *לִפְנֵי* is used in situations when one appreciates that something special is "before him". Hence, *וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לִפְנֵי ה'*. From now on though, Moshe remained at this elevated spiritual level and did not require that extra special preparation.

He continues: The word *הֵן* is used as part of a negotiation tactic to refuse to do something-in our case, Moshe's disinclination to speak to Pharaoh and the *Mitzrim*. Rav Meir Simcha makes a point of telling us that he uses it twice: *הֵן אֲנִי עֹרֵל שְׁפָתַיִם* and *הֵן בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֵלַי*. Why? To answer this, he takes us to a *מֵאֲמָר חֲזוּ"ל* in ברכות לד: *הוּא הַמְאִירָה* which tells us that "one who is approached *לְעוֹבֵר לִפְנֵי הַתִּיבָה* i.e., to lead the congregation's prayer, for the sake of propriety

should refuse, to avoid creating the impression that he is too eager. And if he does not refuse, but jumps at the opportunity, he is like cooked food without salt, which is to say that he acts in bad taste. However, if he refuses too much this is similarly inappropriate, as he is like cooked food that was ruined by too much salt. So how should he act? The appropriate conduct when approached to serve as communal prayer leader is as follows: When approached the first time, **יִסְרָב**-one should refuse; the second time, **מְהִבֵּה**-one should equivocate like a wick that has just begun to catch a flame but is not yet burning. And the third time, he should stretch his legs and descend before the ark.” From where did **רַי”ל** see this? Rav Meir Simcha feels that it is from Moshe’s behavior in our Parsha. He refused Hashem’s request *twice*. The first time appears to be very emphatic and with a **קל וְחֹמֶר** no less i.e., “I do not want to go to Pharaoh because there is no way he will listen to me!” Moshe was **מִסְרָב**. The second time, Moshe said, **הֵן אֲנִי עֵרֵל שְׂפָתַיִם**, less forceful and more like “I am willing to go *but* I may not be as effective as a more elegant speaker”-**מְהִבֵּה**. And once again, a wonderful example of **נֶשֶׁל מִקְרָא** finding a source from the **פָּה**!

Rav Meir Simcha leaves us with one last pearl: In סט"ז **ג' אורח חיים**, the *Mechaber* tells us, “One who is not an established prayer leader must decline a bit before he goes before the ark, but not too much; rather, the first time he should decline, and when they ask him again he should ready himself as if he wants to go to lead, and on the third time he should stand and go before the ark. *If the one who told him to go before the ark is an important person, he should not decline at all.*” If so, how could Moshe refuse Hashem’s request to begin with? Rav Meir Simcha takes us a little deeper into the *sugya* and tells us that according to the Magen Avraham, and this is based on Tosafos in **פסחים פו:**, if the request involves a **דָּבָר**, **נֶשֶׁל שְׂרָרָה**, an item involving authority, whose acceptance can lead to haughtiness, one can refuse even a very important person. If I might add, Moshe Rabbeinu, the **עֶבְרִי מִכָּל אָדָם**, was especially sensitive to avoid such an activity, and therefore, in this case, was allowed to refuse even HKBH Himself!

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