

"Behold, Bnei Yisrael have not listened to me, how then shall Pharaoh listen to me?" (6:12)

Rashi explains that this is one of the ten instances of *kal v'chomer*, a fortiori argument, in the *Torah*. The commentators ask the obvious question. Does the *Torah* not give a reason for *Bnei Yisrael*'s reluctance to listen to Moshe? The *Torah* clearly states, "And they did not listen to Moshe because of impatience of spirit and cruel bondage (6:9)." This is not a *kal v'chomer*, since the reason that *Bnei Yisrael* did not listen to Moshe evidently does not apply to Pharaoh. Therefore, Pharaoh might even have been impressed with Moshe's words, so that he would have submitted to his request.

We may also question Moshe's desire to speak to *Bnei Yisrael*. Hashem implored him only to go to Pharaoh. What purpose was there in speaking to *Bnei Yisrael*? After all, they were definitely amenable to leaving Egypt!

When Moshe demanded that Pharaoh release *Bnei Yisrael* from slavery, he responded by adding to their workload. He declared, "Let them not have false hopes." *Rashi* interprets this to mean, "Let them not talk idly about leaving, saying, they will go and sacrifice to their G-d." Why was Pharaoh so concerned with the focus of *Bnei Yisrael*'s chatter? They were under his iron fist with no opportunity to escape. What difference did the nature of their conversation make to him?

Horav Eliyahu Shlesinger, Shlita, responds to these questions pedagogically. Only one who sincerely believes in the product he is promoting is ultimately capable of convincing someone to believe in their product. *Am Yisrael* will not succeed in persuading the world about its legitimate claim to *Eretz Yisrael* unless they themselves believe that they have an inalienable right to the land. Similarly, a rabbi/teacher/parent who seeks to inspire and capture the imagination, must first be personally convinced of the validity of his message. Parents will not succeed in educating their children to follow in a prescribed path unless they, too, are convinced this is the only correct course to follow.

We now return to our original questions. Moshe felt it was necessary to speak to *Bnei Yisrael* in order to convince them of their impending release from slavery. If *Bnei Yisrael* were not prevailed upon to believe in their imminent release, how was Moshe to persuade Pharaoh? While Moshe was "interceding" on behalf of the Jews, they could not submit to their misery and affliction, losing sight of their goals. Expressing a solid reason for their lack of conviction did not excuse them. In the long run, their lack of *emunah* would give Pharaoh the opportunity to say no. This is also why Pharaoh loaded the Jews down with added work. As long as they suffered and were overworked, they would have no leisure time in which to talk about freedom.

Pharaoh knew that his success lay in increased strife among the Jews caused by overwork. He employed whatever subversive tactics were available so that the Jews would not be able to speak

with others about liberation. As long as slaves do not believe in freedom, they will continue to remain slaves. You can not free someone who does not believe in his own freedom.