

"Behold, Bnei Yisrael will not listen to me, how then shall Pharaoh hear me, for I am of uncircumcised lips." (6:12)

Moshe *Rabbeinu* was reluctant to accept the position as spokesman and leader of *Bnei Yisrael*. Moshe's reason is clear. How could Pharaoh accept Moshe, if *Bnei Yisrael*, the people whom he was attempting to rescue, themselves did not believe in him? Much has been discussed by the commentators regarding Moshe's *kal v'chomer*, a 'priori argument. *Bnei Yisrael* had a somewhat justifiable reason for not heading Moshe. They were overwhelmed and dejected. They yearned for freedom, but they were too discouraged to hope for it. On the other hand, Pharaoh had no reason to ignore Moshe's words, other than pure obstinacy. The commentators explain that Moshe was actually making a statement regarding his inability to "reach" *Bnei Yisrael*, his own people.

The *Sfas Emes* explains that as long as *Bnei Yisrael* are reluctant to listen and accede to their leader's instructions, the leaders will be ineffective. A leader derives his power from the people who are his charge. A leader who does not maintain the respect of his congregation can not serve as a spokesman for them. Moshe told Hashem that his mission to Pharaoh would be useless rhetoric. If *Bnei Yisrael* would not listen to him, his lips would be "uncircumcised," closed up. Thus, he would be unable to express himself effectively on their behalf. When a leader does not have the esteem of his flock, it is reflected in his inability to guide them.

Horav Sholom Schwadron, Shlita, offers a homiletic approach to Moshe's words. "*How can Pharaoh listen to me. . . hear my plea on behalf of Bnei Yisrael . . . if they themselves do not listen?*" How can I expect to impress a gentile when I am having difficulty getting through to my co-religionists? *Horav Schwadron* reinforces this idea. How can "I" expect to communicate Hashem's *Torah* and *mitzvos* to the non-observant community, when I am having trouble communicating these matters even within the more committed, orthodox community? I am tongue-tied, at a loss for words to reach the Jews. What can I say to inspire them, to raise them from their lethargy? How can I impress those who desire to remain ignorant and unmoved? *Horav Schwadron* ends with a simple but poignant question. "What will happen, Hashem, if Bnei Yisrael will not be stirred to listening, but, lhtu Pharaoh does listen?" What will be, if vgrp hbgnah? The situation is discomfoting when the *Torah* is esteemed outside of the *Torah* world more than it is venerated within it.

Horav E. M. Shach, Shlita, implies that *Bnei Yisrael* refused to listen to Hashem due to the chagrin from their hard labor. Hashem nonetheless implored Moshe to continue speaking to them. He explains that Hashem's words must register a profound imprint upon a person. It may not be immediately noticeable, but ultimately Hashem's words will accomplish their purpose. "Sacred words" can never be lost on man. This statement should serve as a source of encouragement to anyone who has been ready to give up his mission to teach and imbue *Torah* to others. Although it may appear at times that one is not accomplishing anything, he should remember that *Torah* taught with sincerity will never be taught in vein.