

“I am not a man of words... for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of speech.” (4:10)

Moshe Rabbeinu implored Hashem to send someone else to Pharaoh. He claimed that his speech impediment would make it very difficult for him to express himself effectively and to articulate his demands. It is interesting to note that Moshe felt that his impediment would only be problematic in his dialogue with Pharaoh. What about Klal Yisrael? How would they react to a leader who could not communicate in a clear and effective manner? Apparently, Moshe Rabbeinu was not concerned about the Jews. They were not so vacuous and shallow to judge a person only according to his external qualities. They surely were more interested in his inner qualities and virtues than in his proficiency as a speaker.

Yet, one cannot ignore the fact that one's external characteristics weigh heavily on the average person. It takes a rare individual to overlook outward appearances and to focus upon one's inner essence. Our gedolim, Torah giants, were very concerned with another person's feelings. Their sensitivity towards a fellow Jew was paramount. Indeed, the greater and more illustrious the gadol, the more sensitive he was to the needs and emotions of his fellow Jew.

Horav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, z.l., was one of the greatest Torah leaders of the past generation. His broad scope of Torah knowledge was matched only by his love and sensitivity towards his fellow Jews. As the leader of pre-World War II Europe, his concern for his People, from the great to the simple Jew, was legendary. He was once walking down the street accompanied by a number of his students when he met a man who asked him directions to a given street. Although this street was at the other end of town, totally out of Rav Chaim Ozer's way, the gadol ha'dor took the man by the arm and together they walked a half-hour to the man's destination.

Afterwards, his students asked Rav Chaim Ozer why he went out of his way, especially in light of the rav's weakened physical state. He could just as well have given him the directions. At worst, the man would have asked someone else along the way to guide him.

Rav Chaim Ozer turned to his students and said, “Did you not notice that this man had a speech impediment? Did you not notice his embarrassment when he asked me for directions? If I had not gone with him, he would have been forced to stop elsewhere and once again ask directions. I would then have been the cause for him to once again be self-conscious and humiliated. In order to circumvent a Jew's humiliation, I was willing to go out of my way.” It is such incredible little sensitivities that form the cornerstone of such a great man.