

Vaera

We find in Parshas *Vaera*, as well as in the previous Parsha, *Shmos*, that Moses, in his pleading with G-d to relieve him of the duty of leadership, refers to himself as a "*Kvad Peh*," being "slow of speech." This would make him ineligible as a leader of an emerging Jewish nation. He was referring to his speech impediment as a result of a test that Moses was put through as a child. While still in Pharaoh's house, Moses was known as a wonder child, and all came to Pharaoh's court to test his intelligence. Pharaoh grew jealous and suspicious of him, and feared that some day Moses would usurp his throne. At one such gathering, Pharaoh commanded that his diamond and gold crown be placed in front of Moses next to a glowing red hot coal. Pharaoh had already made up his mind, that if the child Moses would reach for the crown, this would be a sign from his gods that Moses indeed wanted his crown. If so Pharaoh would put him to death. G-d in His infinite wisdom sent down an Angel to guide the hand of Moses to the hot coal. Moses put the hot coal to his mouth to cool the burning pain, and in turn burned his tongue, which left him with a speech defect for the rest of his life. Certainly a sad event, but one that saved his life, albeit unbeknown to Moses. This *Midrash* is well known, but the lesson we learn is one we must review in our daily lives. Things may seem like great tragedies, but who knows what greater tragedy one was spared from. The *Shulchan Aruch* states, "Just as we make a blessing on good tidings, so must we also make a blessing on sad tidings."

This law is observed by anyone who has lost a parent, child, brother or sister. To completely understand this attitude of giving praise to the one who is inflicting pain upon you, we must reach into the treasure of the Magid of Dubna, who gives the following story in his book of parables:

There was once a father who had an only son. He cherished the child and would shower him with affection. Daily he would bring home his son a bag of sweets, which the boy loved. This became a daily ritual. One day the boy became deathly ill. The

doctor told the father that the sickness was caused by sweets and that the child may no longer eat sweets. Failure to heed this order would result in certain death for the child. The father, of course, adhered to the doctor. The child, however, could not understand this change in his father's behavior. One day the child found some candy in his father's jacket and started to eat it. The father caught the boy in time to abstain and beat him. The child began to shout at his father and cried: "Where is the good father I once knew?" Little did he know that this was the very same loving father in a different role, perhaps showing his love in a greater fashion than ever before. So it is with us, a nation who has come to accept and love G-d our Father, when He appears to us with a smiling face, or with a raised hand. Without this concept Israel could never have survived the seemingly endless Holocausts that have befallen her.

Moses, in addition to calling himself "slow of speech," refers to himself as an "*Aral Sfatayim*," as one "with uncontrolled lips." These terminologies are explained by the great Rabbi Samson R. Hirsch. Slow of speech refers to the actual physical impediment as a result of Moses' childhood accident. Moses could not speak clearly. The terminology "one with uncontrolled lips" refers to the inability to find the proper words to motivate the Jewish people. Moses maintained that even if he were the greatest orator in the world, he could not reach the people and the masses. This may be due to the fact that Moses was so far above the people, that he could not come down to their level. Hirsch, however, goes even further. This was precisely the messenger G-d wanted. One who would act as a servant of G-d, so all of the magnificent miracles would be attributed to the wonder of G-d, and not to the oratory and persuasiveness of the spoken word of man.

It is not merely enough to know how to speak, but what to say. To learn Torah for yourself and not be able to teach others is not completely observing the commandment of *Limud Hatorah*. To be able to learn with others, one must first learn himself and be sharp and clear in his knowledge. By organizing your learning, you are at the same time organizing your mind which will, in turn, help you to clarify your Torah to the point where you can teach others. This way you will observe the commandment of "*Lilmod Ullamed*," to learn and to teach others.