

ספר שמות פרק ו

(יב) וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה לְפָנֵי יְדֹנָדֵן לְאֹמֶר הֲיִשְׁרָאֵל לֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֵלַי וְאֵיךְ יִשְׁמְעֵנִי פַרְעֹה וְאֲנִי עֶרְל שְׂפָתַיִם

And Moshe spoke in front of HASHEM saying, “The Jewish Nation didn’t listen to me; how will Pharaoh listen to me when I have blocked lips?”

רש"י על שמות פרק ו פסוק יב

(יב) וַאֲיךְ יִשְׁמְעֵנִי פַרְעֹה - זה אחד מעשרה ק"ו שבתורה (ב"ר פ' ל"ב)
עֶרְל שְׂפָתַיִם - אטום שפתים

How will Pharaoh listen to me: - This is one of the ten Kal VaChomers (logically based arguments) in the Torah.

Blocked Lips - the words עֶרְל שְׂפָתַיִם here means - sealed, blocked

Background:

Moshe Rabbenu was charged with the ultimate mission: to take the Jewish Nation out of Egypt. Yet he hesitated. This pasuk clearly shows his reason: he felt he would make a poor emissary. “I have blocked lips,” he said, referring to his speech impediment. Rashi explains why Moshe was so certain this would be a problem. If the Jewish people, who had a vested interest in accepting his message, did not accept it because of his inability to speak eloquently, surely Pharaoh, for whom the message spelled disaster, would not accept his unclear words.

Question:

Whether or not Pharaoh should free the Jewish Nation is a decision that ought to be based on the logic presented. The only relevant issues are: 1) Is Moshe the representative of G-d? and 2) Does G-d have the power to destroy the entire Egyptian nation?

Whether or not Moshe is articulate is completely irrelevant. He wasn’t being chosen as an orator. The only pertinent question is whether or not the message he would deliver was true. Why did Moshe Rabbenu assume that just because he wasn’t an internationally noted speaker, Pharaoh would not accept his words?

