
*A model for
inclusion*

Rabbi Alon Meltzer

A New Page of Talmud

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But Moses appealed to the LORD, saying, "The Israelites would not listen to me; how then should Pharaoh heed me, a man of impeded speech!"— **Shemot 6:12**¹ The very fact that Moses mentioned both these deficiencies of his separately is a clear indication that he had difficulty in formulating certain words which are articulated with the teeth. — **Rabeinu Chananel on Shemot 4:10**² There is certainly room for the question, then, if the Blessed One conferred this supernatural perfection upon Moses, why should He have allowed him to lack from that perfection something [i.e., glibness of speech] which most men possess in great perfection within the framework of nature itself!... But the fact of the matter is that a prophet must possess all of the perfections which gain him esteem in the eyes of the populace, so that they will more readily heed his words and he will more readily secure for them the betterment for which purpose he was sent. If this be so, how could Moses our teacher, may peace be upon him, have been lacking the perfection of speech?... This is the entire import of the exodus from Egypt. The Blessed One willed the origination of the wonders which marked that redemption (beyond a doubt the prelude to the Torah) to demonstrate to all of Israel that what is withheld from nature is not withheld from the Blessed One. — **Derashot haRan 3:6-10**³ History has known other creative geniuses and national leaders, from Demosthenes to

... And I am man of impeded speech!
**וְאֵנִי עֵרֵל שִׁפְתַי...
 Shemot 6:12**

Felix Mendelsohn and Churchill, who worked their effect on humanity despite speech impediments. The bible viewed Moshe as an agent of God whose success owed nothing to his natural endowments, but only to the persuasion worked by the words and deeds he uttered and performed under divine direction. — **Jeffery Tigay**⁴ 'I am not a man of words,' (Exod. 6:12) 'For I have uncircumcised lips (i.e., a speech impediment).'" The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, "But look at the first Adam. Since no creature taught him, where did he [come to] know seventy languages? It is so stated (in Gen. 2:20), 'And he gave names to (them).' 'A name for every beast' is not written here but rather 'names' (in the plural, i.e., a name for each and every beast in seventy languages). And you say, (Exod. 4:10) 'I am not a man of words.'" At the end of forty years [from] when Israel left Egypt, [Moses] began to elucidate the Torah in seventy languages, as stated (in Deut. 1:5), "he elucidated this Torah." The mouth that said (in Exod. 4:10), "I am not a man of words," [then] said (in Deut. 1:1), "These are the words." — **Midrash Tanchuma, Devarim 2:1**⁵

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