

# Uncircumcised Lips

It is so wonderful to have my parents and siblings here for my daughter's special *Simhat Bat* weekend.

Last week we discussed Moses going outside his comfort zone but not without challenging G-d. In Parshat Shemot Moses described himself as כבד-פה וכבד לשון, “heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue.”<sup>1</sup> In Parshat VaEra, he took things to another level. He said ואיך ישמעני פרעה, “How will Pharaoh listen to me for I am of uncircumcised lips.”<sup>2</sup> Aaron becomes his spokesman and G-d replies בנתתיך אלקים לפרעה, “I have placed you in the role of G-d to Pharaoh.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, **your perceived weakness is really your strength**. It is through Moses repeating G-ds words, and Aaron translating them to Pharaoh, that the plagues will occur.

In life there are plenty of things we wish we did not have yet the fortunate person views them as gifts from G-d. When other kids were going to soccer practice or dance, I was going to speech lessons two to

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 4:10

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 6:12

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 7:1

three days a week. I had trouble with many different letters, including “s,” “r” and “th.” There were periods in my life where I thought I would never get the letters right. However, I kept going, and eventually three days turned into two, then one and finally zero. At that stage in my life I would have never imagined that I would be giving public speeches every week. Nor would I have envisioned going to nationals in Forensics (Speech and Debate) in Student Congress in High School, winning First Place in, among all things, Catholic Forensics League National Qualifiers. Without taking small steps, day after day, I would never have made it to a point where most people could not tell that I have had speech therapy and where my speaking has become my strength.

By the end of the Torah, Moses goes from having “uncircumcised lips” to becoming our people’s greatest teacher, so much so that he was referred to as מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּנוּ, Moses our teacher. As G-d said in a rebuke to Moses in last week’s parsha, מִי שֶׁם פֹּה לְאָדָם, “Who gives man speech?”<sup>4</sup> Often in life, rather than wishing things were otherwise, we need to

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<sup>4</sup> Exodus 4:11

appreciate both our perceived strengths and weaknesses as gifts from G-d.

Another lesson from our reading is that when we have a weakness we work together with others as a team to overcome it. Moses was given his brother Aaron as his spokesman. As we know from Ecclesiastes, “Two are better than one for they have good reward through their labors.”<sup>5</sup>

In a similar vein to Moses and Aaron working together, Karina and my hope and prayer is that Ariela and Leora will do the same. Each of our daughters will have strengths which will shine forth in the world as well as challenges to overcome and one way to help do that is to have a support, a friend for life, a sibling. Moses' weakness, his uncircumcised lips, was Aaron's strength. Looking at what Moses and Aaron accomplished together, we see the power of siblings: both were needed to blaze the trail forward and get our ancestors out of Egypt. So too may it be the case for us and for our family members and life partners.

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<sup>5</sup> Ecclesiastes 4:9