



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

## What Made Moshe Speak?

Early in his career Moshe says, "I am not a man of words" (Sh'mot 4:10). By the time of the Book of D'varim, we read, "These are the words which Moses spoke."

Tongue-tied Moshe has become a speaker!

What caused the change?

Maybe it is the Torah which made him a speaker - politicians have speech-writers and so did Moshe, except that in his case God was his speech-writer.

Maybe it is leadership that made him a speaker - his experiences, challenges and decisions moved him and gave him the gift of words.

The best answer is suggested by Rashbam in his commentary on Sh'mot 4:10. He says that the problem was not that Moshe had a serious speech defect or a lack of verbal fluency. He simply did not want to be known as a mere orator word spinner but as a worker.

How often have I heard it said about a public figure, including rabbis, "He is wonderful at giving speeches, but what else can he do?"

It is said that at an 1897 conference of Russian Jews, Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever insisted that all speeches be in Yiddish. Some people found that very difficult and would have preferred to speak Russian, Polish or German. Nonetheless Rabbi Mohilever was adamant.

"If you have to speak in Yiddish you will prepare properly, you will weigh your words and be relevant and concise. You won't waste time on rhetoric and we will be able to get on with the practical work", he said.

## Zion Redeemed with Justice

One of the reasons for the tragedy of Tish'a b'Av is said to be SINAT CHINAM, "groundless hatred".

When people were unfair and unjust towards each other, Jewish society disintegrated. It became easier for the enemy to prevail.

The haftara is insistent: if a better future is to be built, says Yeshayahu, the way is that of greater justice in society - "Seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Yeshayahu 1:17).

If Zion is to be restored, the precondition is that "Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and her returning exiles with righteousness" (verse 27).

In many ways, for all its diversity and problems, today's State of Israel has

become a place of justice. People debate and grumble incessantly, but there is so much instinctive "chesed", concern for and kindness to others, that it is breathtaking.

Also breathtaking, in a different sense, is the ferocity of some who should know better, who throw stones to people violating Shabbat. If you ask, "Is it permitted in Jewish law to throw stones on Shabbat?", the right question is, "Is it permitted to throw stones even on weekdays?"

"Chesed" entails "tzedek", justice, listening to the other point of view, seeing the other's position, talking together with love, patience and respect, trying to persuade them if possible - but at all times knowing that they too are God's children and part of B'RIT GORAL, Israel's covenant of destiny. -OZ

**Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH**