



## A Command Concerning How to Speak

Let us say it openly: Moshe Rabeinu had a hard time convincing both his people and Pharaoh that Hashem was about to bring wonders upon Egypt and manifest Himself in this pagan, idol-worshiping society, thus to redeem the unfortunate slaves from their bondage.

Despite the divine revelations replete with promises of redemption, the forlorn Moshe appeals to G-d, his confidence at an all-time low. For, as Nechama Leibowitz remarks, Moshe's hands were weakened. For all the eloquence of Hashem's address to Moshe, Moshe's message to Bnei Yisrael fell on deaf ears. It aroused neither faith nor trust. Nor did the people display any opposition, argument, or hesitation due to their "impatience and cruel bondage".

Following this setback, Moshe complained to Hashem, and in this Parsha, Hashem now "commanded them [Moshe and Aharon] to the Children of Israel and Pharaoh... [and gave them a charge] to bring the Children of Israel out of Egypt" (Sh'mot 6:13). What were the brothers

actually being asked to do?

- For surely it was the Egyptian king who was to release the slaves, not Moshe and Aharon.

For Rashi, the plain meaning of the verse is that it serves as an introduction to the forthcoming narrative. Or, perhaps, this was a directive to Moshe and Aharon to pave the way of the redemption by persuading the recalcitrant people of the truth of G-d's message of deliverance.

The Abarbanel and Akeidat Yitzchak, note, however, that the term "commanded" appears in conjunction with the Hebrew word EL, thus to be understood as "commanded to, or concerning, the Children of Israel."

Homiletically, the Midrash teaches that this was Hashem's way of empowering Moshe (and Aharon). In response to Moshe's despondency, G-d now advises Moshe how to address the people: They were to speak to Bnei Yisrael gently and to Pharaoh with respect. Notably, Rambam codified this notion, expressing that it is forbidden to lord over the community in a domineering manner, even if they are ignorant.

Leaders should rather "bear publically the cumbrance of the community and their burden."

What a powerful message for today's leaders, rabbis, teachers, and politicians **MP**