



WORDS TO THE WISE

Rabbi Aryeh Dachs

I recently read a tweet by Adam Grant, a popular organizational psychologist, speaker, and professor at Wharton with a huge following. He writes, "How quickly someone answers you is rarely a sign of how much they care about you. Delayed replies to emails, texts, and calls are often symptoms of being overwhelmed." Which I understand to mean, we should be wary before we assume that a person's response, or lack of response represents how they feel. People are very complex, it is nearly impossible to grasp what is going on in a person's head, "under the hood". What we assume to be a snub by a friend or loved one can be entirely inaccurate.

Vaera begins with Hashem telling *Moshe* to give a message to the Jewish people. At long last, after 210 years in Egypt- 86 of which the Jews were brutally enslaved, it was now time for *Moshe* to give the Jewish people the long awaited message of redemption, a message of hope from G-d. *Moshe* told the Jewish people that Hashem would free them and take them out of their bitter servitude. He told them that it was time for Hashem to fulfill the promise He had made to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. The Jews heard this and should have been overwhelmed with joy and hope. Free at last. They should have been ready to heed every word of *Moshe*. Except, this is not what happened. The Torah tells us "*Ve'lo shumu el Moshe mikotzer ruach*" - the Jews did not, could not accept the message of hope. They were despondent, badly burdened with the stresses of their bondage, and they simply could not accept that there was hope.

Hashem then tells *Moshe* to go tell Pharaoh, "Let my People go!" *Moshe* responds with what the *Medrash* (BR, 92:7) says is one of the 10 *kal v'chomer* inferences in the Torah. "*Pharaoh* will not heed my demand. My speech impediment already impeded my ability to talk to the Jewish people [who want freedom and would therefore be inclined to accept my words] it will therefore, certainly impede my ability to talk to *Pharaoh* [who does not want to free the Jews and is inclined to deny my words]."

The problem with this logic is that it is inaccurate. *Moshe* had a speech problem, but that was not the reason the people did not heed his words. Rather, as the Torah says, they were completely dispirited and depressed. The *Sifsei Chachomim* explains, the Torah revealed the real reason the Jews did not listen, however *Moshe* did not know this. *Moshe* assumed it was his own deficiency, his inability to speak clearly, and was therefore reluctant to go to Pharaoh.

One idea we can certainly glean is just how difficult it is to accurately understand why someone responds to us in any specific way. *Moshe*, arguably the most sensitive person ever to walk the earth, seems to misjudge the response of the Jewish people to his message. In our relationships, especially with loved ones, we'd be well served to consider if our understanding of the responses we get from them accurately represents the feelings they have for us.