

Exodus 6:12 Moshe spoke before YHWH, saying: Here, (if) the Children of Israel do not hearken to me, how will Pharaoh hearken to me?—and I am of foreskinned lips!

Exodus 6:30 Moshe said before YHWH: If I am of foreskinned lips, how will Pharaoh hearken to me?

Exodus 4:10 Moshe said to YHWH: Please, my Lord, no man of words am I, not from yesterday, not from the day-before, not (even) since you have spoken to your servant, for heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue am I!

R' Samson Rafael Hirsch (Germany, 19th c.) on 6:12

“Foreskinned lips” has an additional meaning above “heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue.” The former only refer to heaviness of the speech organs. But “foreskinned” means a person who is not in control of an ability given to him by nature and by his body. That is to say: Even if I overcome the heaviness of my mouth and tongue, I will still lack, for practical purposes, the power of speech.

See also my commentary on Genesis 17:10 (the commandment of circumcision): ...from all these biblical examples, it becomes clear that “foreskinned” is a case of losing control. A person has lost control of a matter which, by its nature, should be under our control. A person is “foreskinned of ear” (Jeremiah 6:10), “foreskinned of lips,” if he has lost control of his ear or his mouth and they do not listen to his will. A person is “foreskinned of heart” (Ezekiel 44:9) if he is not in control of the desires of his heart...

Panim Yafot (R' Zvi Horowitz, Poland/Germany, 18th c.) on 6:12

According to the truth [mysticism]...the Israelites had sunk into their bodies, and their souls were blocked from the holiness of speech, so they were not able to pray. As it says in Psalms, “I was mute, silent; I was very still while my pain was intense.” (39:3) This was said about the harshness of Egyptian slavery, that they vanished/were hidden from the holiness of speech, and they could not hear Moses even when he brought them good news. This is the meaning of “I was very still while my pain was intense.” So it was also when the Egyptians chased them, when God said, “What are you shouting to me for?” Thus it says that because the Israelites couldn’t hear Moses because of their shortened breath/spirit, that caused me to be of impeded speech.

Leon Botstein, “Freedom Means Thinking for Oneself Too” (2020)

And that brings us back to Moses’ speech defect, and indeed to the inadequacy of human language. God explains that Moses, given his inability to use speech, should be seen by Egyptians as if he were God and his brother Aaron, who had the gift of fluent speech, a prophet. (Exodus 4:16) Human language—the vehicle of culture and self-knowledge, the tool of human reason and communication, whose command in the form of eloquence and persuasion (and perhaps manipulation) is required in society and politics may be essential but it cannot be entirely trusted. It can neither represent nor encompass the divine. Converting the speech of God into human speech—as in the exchange with Pharaoh—is flawed, and far harder than translating one language into another. And so God chooses a messenger who is unable to express himself in words, to convince others on his own. Moses remains, in human affairs, dependent on his fellow humans to translate.