When you want to convey to someone something unflattering about themselves, the worst way you can do it is by a direct confrontation. The listener will immediately rise against the perceived attack with all manner of self-justification: “I couldn’t help it” “You think you could have done better?”

Better by far is to allude to the matter at hand, subtly planting an inference into the subconscious mind of the listener. In this way, his front-line early-warning defenses aren’t triggered, and the idea lodges in his subconscious to grow like a seed.

This is what Moshe does in the opening lines of the Book of Devarim. The place-names that are mentioned here are locations of various sins and rebellions of the Jewish People: “concerning the wilderness” — i.e., their lusting for the flesh pots of Egypt; “concerning the Aravah” — their immorality with the daughters of Moav; “opposite the Sea of Reeds, between Paran and Tophel and Lavan, and Chatzeros and Di Zavah.” (1:1)

The Parsha opens with Moshe relat- ing what Moshe told the Bnei Yisrael in the last five weeks of his life. He wants to leave them a calf. Korach’s rebellion, “and Di-Zahav” — their lusting for the flesh pots of Egypt; “concerning the Aravah” — their immorality with the daughters of Moav; “opposite the Sea of Reeds; between Paran and Tophel and Lavan, and Chatzeros and Di Zavah.” (1:1)

When a child becomes Bar or Bat Mitzvah — the best present he gets is not a fountain pen, or a computer. The best present he gets is a yetzer tov (positive inclination). For until Bar Mitzvah, the yetzer hara (selfish drive) rules unopposed. (Rashi, Koheles 4:13)

Rabbi Yonasan Ebeshtitz was a child prodigy. Even as a young boy, he overcame his natural desire to go out and play, immersing himself instead in learning Torah. When he became Bar Mitzvah, he was asked how it was that he had been able to ward off the yetzer hara while he was still so young.

The young Reb Yonasan replied “The Torah teaches us that it is forbidden for a judge to hear the testimony of one litigant if the other is not present. So, whenever the yetzer hara would try to entice me away from my learning, I would say to him that I could not possibly listen to his case until I was thirteen when the other litigant — my yetzer tov — would be able to present his side of the case too!”

The Parsha relates what Moshe told the Bnei Yisrael during the last five weeks of his life, as they prepared to cross the Jordan into Eretz Yisrael. Moshe reviews the events that led up to the sin of the spies, and exhorts the Bnei Yisrael to undergo: From the miraculous, supernatural existence of the desert under his guidance, to the apparently natural way of life they will experience under Yehoshua’s leadership in Eretz Yisrael.

Devarim relates what Moshe told the Bnei Yisrael during the last five weeks of his life, as they prepared to cross the Jordan into Eretz Yisrael. Moshe reviews the events that led up to the sin of the spies, and exhorts the Bnei Yisrael to undergo: From the miraculous, supernatural existence of the desert under his guidance, to the apparently natural way of life they will experience under Yehoshua’s leadership in Eretz Yisrael.

The central theme of this week is the sin of the spies, the meraglim. The Parsha opens with Moshe hinting to the sins of the previous generation who have died in the 40 years of wandering in the desert. He gives the Bnei Yisrael a description of what would have happened if they hadn’t sinned by sending spies into Eretz Yisrael. He tells them that Hashem would have given them all of the land from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates including the lands of Ammon, Moav, and Edom without needing to fight. He details the subtle sins that culminate in the sin of the spies, and reviews at length the sin of the spies, and the results of that sin: The entire generation was to die in the desert, and Moshe would not enter Eretz Yisrael, but rather they would be led by Yehoshua Bin Nun. He reminds them that their immediate reaction to Hashem’s decree was to want to “go up and fight” to redress the sin. He recounts how they wouldn’t listen when he told them not to go because they no longer married to vanquish their enemies miraculously. They ignored him and suffered a massive defeat. They were not allowed to fight with the kingdoms of Eissav, Moav or Ammon — these lands were not to be part of the map of Eretz Yisrael in the meantime. When the conquest of Canaan will begin with Sichon and Og, it will need to be in the natural way of warfare.
Can You Stand It?

Dear Mel, 

Why is it customary (or is it?) to remain seated while reciting Sh'ma in the morning and the evening? It would seem that during such an important and central prayer, we should show the utmost respect and attention by standing.

Dear Mel Etra, 

As King Solomon said: “Don’t be too righteous.” It’s perfectly OK to sit during the morning Sh’m’a. In fact, it’s preferable. The Shulchan Aruch says that being strict by standing for the morning Sh’m’a is wrong. It’s like taking the words “when you get up” literally. The verse “You shall speak them [the words of Sh’m’a] when you lie down and when you get up” means that Sh’m’a be said morning and evening. It does not mean you should stand up or lie down to say it.

Accordingly, at night one who is standing shouldn’t try to be strict by sitting/lying down. Before I was married, someone invited my friend and me for the Friday night meal. After the meal he reminded us to repeat the Sh’m’a, suggesting we do so right away. (In many communities, the evening service is held before nightfall, requiring that you repeat Sh’m’a after dark.) He and my friend were already sitting. I began moving toward a chair. “Don’t sit down,” said our host. “Can I sit?” I asked again. “No,” he said. “Can I sit down?” I asked again. He looked at me with disbelief. “No!” “I repeated the Sh’m’a already,” I said, trying not to smile. “I just want to sit down!”

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 63:2
- Ibid. Mishna Berura 7, Aruch HaShulchan 63:3

Yiddle Riddle

Question: Where will the Rabbi be for the next few weeks?

Answer: On Summer-Break with his family, so he can marshal his energy in order to answer your questions year-round!

Brandon Raff <brandon@ElectroCity.com>

Dear Brandon,

Good question. Now I’ll ask you one. How can the verse list Moses’s age when he spoke to Pharaoh? Didn’t he speak to Pharaoh over the course of an entire year? He had a birth-day during that year. How, then, can the verse give a definitive figure for Moses’s age “when he spoke to Pharaoh?”

Obviously, the verse refers to his age either at the beginning of the year or the end. Your question assumes the verse refers to the beginning. But it’s more logical to assume that the verse refers to Moses’s age at the end of the year. After all, the end of his mission was the essential part, including the warning of the ‘death of the first-born.’ And a careful look at the verse’s context reveals it to be part of an overview of the year’s events:

Hashem tells Moses:

“You will say everything I will command you... and I will take out My people, the Children of Israel, from the land of Egypt... And Moses and Aaron did as Hashem commanded them... and Moses was 80 years old and Aaron was 83 in their speaking to Pharaoh.”

Nowadays it’s common to retire at 65. Golfing, lolling, and relaxing are major activities during what are sometimes called the ‘declining years.’ The Torah tells us Moses’s age to show that the great leaders of the Jewish People never lose their zeal for growth and accomplishment. At an age when most are long retired, Moses and Aaron attained their — and history’s — greatest achievements.

Sources:

- Exodus 16:34, Deuteronomy 1:3
- Deuteronomy 34:7, 31:1 and Rashi
- Rashi on Exodus 12:40
- Exodus 7:7, see Moznaim L’Torah
A MITZVAH IN TIME

How beloved is a mitzvah performed in its preferred time!

This is how Rabbi Shimon explains the fact that the flesh and fats of the regular and additional sacrifices offered on Shabbos are placed on the altar to burn on Shabbos itself.

The rule is that once an animal has been slaughtered and its blood applied to the altar during the day the burning of its flesh and fats may be done throughout the following night. If so, the question arises, why do we violate the Shabbos to burn them during the holy day when we could wait until Shabbos is over? After all, Rabbi Akiva has already taught us in regard to circumcision, which the Torah permitted on Shabbos, that we may not carry the circumcision knife through a public thoroughfare in violation of the Shabbos because it was possible to take care of that before Shabbos?

The answer, says Rabbi Shimon, is that there is a special quality to a mitzvah done in the preferred time. It is therefore permissible to place the flesh and fats on the altar even on Shabbos to achieve this special quality. In regard to circumcision, however, there is no special quality to bringing the knife on the day of the circumcision, and since it could have been done before Shabbos it is not permitted to violate the Shabbos by carrying it in prohibited fashion.

**Menachos 72a**

AN EXCEPTIONAL EXCEPTION

“This shall be to you (Aaron and all the kohanim) from the holiest of the sacrifices... and all their sin offerings...” (Bamidbar 18:9)

The sin offering mentioned here includes the fowl offered as an atonement. The Torah stresses that the kohanim may eat the flesh of such a fowl, even though it has not been slaughtered in the regular manner of shechita required for rendering flesh kosher for consumption, but rather by the method of melikah in which the kohen uses his thumbnail to kill the bird.

A similar application of the novelty of melikah to understanding a biblical passage is found earlier in our Mesechta (45a). The Prophet Yechezkel (44:31) warns the kohanim that once an animal is to be slaughtered for atonement. The Torah stresses that the kohanim may eat the flesh of such a fowl, even though it has not been slaughtered in the regular manner of shechita required for rendering flesh kosher for consumption, but rather by the method of melikah in which the kohen uses his thumbnail to kill the bird.

**Menachos 73a**

**SPECIAL TO SCHOLARS**

Rashi (words beginning לא ידוע לי פוגי) states that the binyan av mentioned in the Gemara is not really a binyan av, but a mah matzinu. For elaboration on this point, see the Kitzur Kelalim of the 13 Midos (in the back of Mesechta Berachos in the standard Shass) for his explanation of the third midah — the binyan av.

1. In what location was Devarim taught?
2. Why does the Torah say Moshe spoke “bamidbar” — i.e., in the desert?
3. How much time elapsed between departing from Mt. Sinai and sending the meraglim?
4. Moshe rebuked the Jewish People shortly before his death. From whom did he learn this?
5. In which language did Moshe explain the Torah to the Jewish People?
6. What were some of the achievements that resulted from the Jewish People “dwelling” at Mt. Sinai?
7. Why does the Torah single out the names of the Avos in connection with the giving of the Land?
8. What did Moshe convey to the Jewish People by saying: “You today are like the stars of the Heavens”?
9. Why were the Jewish People happy with Moshe’s decision to appoint judges?
10. Moshe was looking for several qualities in the judges he chose. Which quality couldn’t he find?
11. In verse 1:17, Moshe told the judges, “the case that is too hard for you, bring it to me.” How was he punished for this statement?
12. Which Tribe was not represented among the meraglim?
13. Which city did Kalev ben Yefune inherit?
14. How many kingdoms was Avraham promised that he would receive? How many were conquered by Yehoshua?
15. Why were the Jewish People permitted to provoke Moav but forbidden to provoke Ammon?
16. Why were the Jewish People not permitted to conquer the Philistines?
17. How did Hashem instill the dread of the Jewish People into the nations of the world?
18. What assistance did the Bnei Eisav give to the Jewish People when they passed through their land?
19. Why did Moshe fear Og?
20. Why did the Torah record the names by which the nations referred to Mt. Hermon?

**Parsha QA & I Didn’t Know That!**

“For judgment is Hashem’s” (1:17). Anyone who stubbornly refuses to listen to the words of the judge, is considered as if he refuses to listen to the words of Hashem.

**Ba’al Haturim**

**Bonus Question?**

In verse 1:5, Rashi states that Moshe explained the Torah in the 70 languages of the ancient world. Why did Moshe do this?

Answers on back page
1. 1:1 - It was taught in the plains of Moav.
2. 1:1 - Here the word “bamidbar” does not mean “in the desert” — rather, “on account of the desert.” Devarim contains a rebuke of the Jewish People for the sins committed while in the desert.
3. 1:2 - 40 days.
4. 1:3 - From Yaakov, who rebuked his sons shortly before his death.
5. 1:5 - The 70 languages of the world.
6. 1:6 - They received the Torah, built the Mishkan and all of its vessels, appointed a Sanhedrin, and appointed officers.
7. 1:8 - Each one of the Avos possessed sufficient merit for the Jewish People to inherit the Land.
8. 1:10 - They are an eternal people, just as the sun, the moon, and the stars are eternal.

**Horse Sense**

“The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s trough. “Yisrael does not know, My people do not perceive.” (1:3)

Rabbi Yochanan ben Taulsa once sold an ox to a non-Jew. When Shabbos came, the non-Jew tried to take out the ox to plow his field, but try as he might, the ox refused to budge.

He beat the animal vigorously until Rabbi Yochanan came and whispered in the animal’s ear “Let it be known to you that you are no longer under my jurisdiction. You are now under the domain of the non-Jew. You must work now as and when he desires.”

Immediately, the ox got up and started to work. The non-Jew, seeing what had happened, went and converted. And that’s how Rabbi Yochanan got his name — “ben Taursa” (son of Taurus).

Similarly, our Sages relate the story of an ox that Eliyahu HaNavi gave to the false prophets of baal. The ox refused to be slaughtered in the name of the idol baal until Eliyahu told it that by letting itself be offered on the altar of baal, it too would ultimately be sanctifying the Divine Name. Only then, the ox gave in and allowed itself to be slaughtered.

Our sages also tell of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair who had a donkey which refused to eat food from which maaser (tithe) had not been taken. All of this is hinted to in this verse: “The ox knows its owner” — there is an ox that knows its master — the ox of Eliyahu HaNavi who submitted to being sacrificed to idolatry, or the ox of Rabbi Yochanan ben Taulsa who wouldn’t work on Shabbos. “And the donkey, the feeding trough of its master” — the donkey of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair who wouldn’t eat untithed food. However, you, My people, says Hashem, you have sunk lower than the ox and the donkey, for “Yisrael does not know, My people do not perceive.”

**Bonus Answer!**

There are those who believe that the Torah is limited in scope and doesn’t apply to the modern world. To combat this idea, Moshe taught the Torah in 70 different languages to stress that the Torah is valid at all times and in all situations.

• K’sav Sofer

**HAFTORAH: Yirmiyahu 1:1-27**

Immediately, the ox got up and started to work. The non-Jew, seeing what had happened, went and converted. And that’s how Rabbi Yochanan got his name — “ben Taursa” (son of Taurus).

Similarly, our Sages relate the story of an ox that Eliyahu HaNavi gave to the false prophets of baal. The ox refused to be slaughtered in the name of the idol baal until Eliyahu told it that by letting itself be offered on the altar of baal, it too would ultimately be sanctifying the Divine Name. Only then, the ox gave in and allowed itself to be slaughtered.

Our sages also tell of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair who had a donkey which refused to eat food from which maaser (tithe) had not been taken. All of this is hinted to in this verse: “The ox knows its owner” — there is an ox that knows its master — the ox of Eliyahu HaNavi who submitted to being sacrificed to idolatry, or the ox of Rabbi Yochanan ben Taulsa who wouldn’t work on Shabbos. “And the donkey, the feeding trough of its master” — the donkey of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair who wouldn’t eat untithed food. However, you, My people, says Hashem, you have sunk lower than the ox and the donkey, for “Yisrael does not know, My people do not perceive.”

• Tzoare Shelal in Mayana shel Torah

**Next Year in Jerusalem...at the Center of the Universe**

For information on Yeshiva Year Abroad at the Center for Torah Studies

Contact The CENTER for Torah Studies
POB 18103, Jerusalem, 91180 Israel • Tel: 02-810315 • Fax: 972-2-812890 • Email: center@ohr.israel.net

A DIVISION OF OHR SOMAYACH INSTITUTIONS • TANENBAUM COLLEGE