



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem



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Parshas Shoftim

This Issue Contains:

1. Can You Stand It?
2. $80 + 1 + 40 = 120$
3. Yiddle Riddle

Mel Etra < meletra@village.ios.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

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'ma*. In fact, it's preferable.

The Shulchan Aruch says that being strict by standing for the morning *Sh'ma* is wrong. It's like taking the words "**when you get up**" literally. The verse "You shall speak them [the words of *Sh'ma*] ... when you lie down and **when you get up**" means that *Sh'ma* 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'ma*, suggesting we do so right away. (In many communities, the evening service is held before nightfall, requiring that you repeat *Sh'ma* after dark.) He and my friend were already sitting. I began moving toward a chair.

"Don't sit down," said our host.

"Can I?" I asked.

"No," he said.

"Can I sit down?" I asked again.

He looked at me with disbelief. "No!"

"I **repeated** the *Sh'ma* 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

If you have E-Mail and a question, you can submit it to Ask The Rabbi for possible inclusion in a future edition. Just write your question using your E-Mail program, set the subject to "Ask The Rabbi" and send it to ohr@jer1.co.il. We can't include all questions submitted, but we do try to respond to everyone.

Ask The Rabbi is written by Rabbi Moshe Lazerus, Rabbi Reuven Subar, Rabbi Avrohom Lefkowitz and other Rabbis at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel.

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This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Do not let this land on a garbage heap.

Brandon Raff < brandon@ElectroCity.com >

How long did the Jews wander in the Desert? Silly question, 40 years, as the Torah says. It also says that at the end of these 40 years Moses died at age 120. That makes Moses **80** when he led the people out of Egypt.

Now my question: At the **beginning** of Moses's mission, the verse says "And Moses was 80 years old, and Aaron was 83 years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh." But didn't the plagues take place over the course of an entire year? Moses must have had a birthday some time during that year. That would make him **81** when he led the Jews out of Egypt. So back to my original "silly" question: How long did the Jews wander in the desert?

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 birthday 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 history's greatest achievements.

Sources:

- *Exodus* 16:34, *Deuteronomy* 1:3
- *Deuteronomy* 34:7, 31:1 and Rashi
- *Exodus* 7:7, see *Moznaim L'Torah*

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!