

# OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

Shabbos Parshas Devarim • For the week ending 4 Av 5756 • July 20, 1996 • Vol. 3 No. 38

## PLANTING SEEDS

*“These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Israel, on the other side of the Jordan, concerning the Wilderness, concerning the Aravah, opposite the Sea of Reeds, between Paran and Tophel and Lavan, and Chatzeros and Di Zahav.” (1:1)*

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” — their lack of trust in Hashem at the crossing of the sea; “between Paran and Tophel and Lavan” — their complaints about the miraculous food, the *Man*; “and Chatzeros” — Korach’s rebellion, “and Di-Zahav” — the golden calf.

Moshe is addressing the Bnei Yisrael in the last five weeks of his life. He wants to leave them a strong and lasting message: To beware of inherent tendencies that have already brought them into trouble.

Rather than tackle them directly and risk rejection, Moshe plants the seeds of self-examination

This Parsha begins the last of the Five Books of The Torah, *Sefer Devarim*. This Book is also called *Mishne Torah*, literally “the Repetition of The Torah” (and hence the Greek/English title of Deuteronomy). *Sefer 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 *mitzvos*, stressing the change of lifestyle they are about 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

## INSIGHTS

into the collective psyche of the Jewish People, so that long after his departure, they will still bear fruit.

• Rashi, Chasam Sofer,  
heard from Rabbi Naftali Falk

## THE ART OF LISTENING

*“...And whatever is too difficult for you, bring it to me and I will hear it.” (1:17)*

‘A problem shared is a problem halved’ runs the adage. It is a well-know psychiatric fact that part of the process of helping people with their problems is to encourage them to verbalize them. Being listened to is in itself a relief, even if the problem itself still remains.

The Rebbe of Gur notes that this idea has its origin in what Moshe says here “*And whatever is too difficult for you, bring it to me and I will hear it.*” Moshe doesn’t say “I’ll solve the problem for you” rather “I will hear it.” Allowing the other person to express his problem is therapeutic in itself and may also help him to find a permanent solution.

• Adapted from Rabbi Abraham J. Twersky

## TODAY, I AM A FOUNTAIN PEN

*“Listen amongst your brethren and you shall judge fairly.” (1:16)*

*A judge may not listen to one litigant in the absence of his opponent. — Sanhedrin 7b*

A little baby. Nothing could be purer. Nothing could be more innocent. Nothing could epitomize goodness more than a baby. Or maybe not...

From the moment a baby opens its mouth in its first cries, it is expressing an unopposed selfishness. ‘I want to eat! ‘I want to sleep! ‘I *don’t* want to sleep!’ ‘I want *more* to eat!’ A baby’s life is noth-

ing more than an unrelieved litany of selfishness. Twenty-four hours a day. Until the age of 12 or 13.

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 Eybeshitz 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!’

## SENDING OUT SPARKS

*“Moshe began explaining this Torah...” (1:5)*

When Moshe began to explain the Torah, he did so in all of the 70 root languages. Why was this necessary? After all, the Children of Israel all knew the Holy Tongue itself, and what possible purpose could there be in Moshe translating the Torah into 70 other languages?

Hashem knew that the Jewish People would have to wander through a long night of exile amongst all the nations of the world. Thus, Moshe explained the Torah in all 70 languages so that in every language and every nation and land there would be a spark of Torah.

• *Chidushei HaRim*

## OVERVIEW

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 merited to vanquish their enemies miraculously. They ignored him and suffered a massive defeat. They were not allowed to fight with the kingdoms of Eisav, 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.



## INSIGHTS INTO THE SHABBOS ZEMIRO'S

ברוך אל עליון  
"BLESSED IS G-D..."

"Fortunate is everyone who looks forward to a double reward"

Everything about the Sabbath, note our Sages, is double. The command for observing the Shabbos in the Ten Commandments heard at Sinai was given in double form — *Zachor* and *Shamor*. Two animals are brought as the additional sacrifice on Shabbos, and we honor each Sabbath meal by making our blessing over two loaves. The reward which awaits the Sabbath observer is certainly due to be a double one as well, and that is why we sing of the good fortune of the one who looks forward to receiving that double reward.



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We can't include all questions submitted in the column, but we do try to respond to everyone personally.

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## CAN YOU STAND IT?

Mel Etra <[meletra@village.ios.com](mailto: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

## 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!

## 80+1+40=120

Brandon Raff <[brandon@ElectroCity.com](mailto:brandon@ElectroCity.com)>

Dear Rabbi,

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 — 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

## TO OUR OHRNET READERS

OhrNet will not be published from Parshas V'eschanan through Parshas Re'eh. The next issue will be published for Parshas Shoftim. However, it will be available electronically on the InterNet and the Web.

Best wishes for a safe and pleasant summer.

**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 circumcising 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

cation is that non-kohanim are not forbidden to do so. Rabbi Yochanan indeed declares that we will have no real understanding of this prophetic chapter until the Prophet Elyahu will arrive to explain it.

But the Sage Ravina offers an explanation. Since kohanim are permitted to eat from the sacrificial fowl which has not been slaughtered in the regular manner but killed by *melikah* we might assume that the Torah exempted kohanim from the ban on eating flesh from an animal not properly slaughtered. It was therefore necessary for Yechezkel to remind them that the exception was limited to sacrifices and that they were similar to all Jews in regard to the laws covering non-sacrificial flesh.

• *Menachos 73a*



Insights, explanations and comments for the seven pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle.

**SPECIAL TO SCHOLARS**

Rashi (words beginning פּרִיךְ וְאִכְתִּי פִרְיָא) 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*.

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 against eating meat of an animal which has not been properly slaughtered. The puzzling impli-

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?



**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.
9. 1:14 - They thought that they would be able to find judges that they could bribe.
10. 1:15 - Men of understanding.
11. 1:17 - When the daughters of Tzlofchad approached him, the law was concealed from him.
12. 1:23 - Levi.
13. 1:36 - Hebron.
14. 2:5 - Avraham was promised the land of 10 kingdoms. Yehoshua conquered 7. The lands of Moav, Ammon, and Eisav, will be received in Messianic times.



15. 2:9 - This was a reward for Lot's younger daughter, the mother of Ammon, for concealing her father's improper conduct.
16. 2:23 - Because Avraham had made a peace treaty with Avimelech, King of the Philistines.
17. 2:25 - During the battle against Og, the sun had stood still for the sake of the Jewish People, and the whole world saw that.
18. 2:29 - They sold food and water to the Jewish People.
19. 3:2 - Og possessed merit for having once helped Avraham.
20. 3:9 - To teach the high regard to which the nations held Eretz Canaan — four nations vied to name Mt. Hermon according to their own names.

Recommended Reading List

<p><b>Ramban</b>                  1:1 Overview of <i>Devarim</i>                  1:12 Judging the Jewish People                  1:25 The <i>Meraglim</i>                  1:37 Moshe's Punishment                  2:4 Brother Esau                  2:7 Blessings                  2:25 Fear of the Jewish People  <b>Sefer Hachinuch</b>                  414 Appointing Judges                  415 Responsibility of Judges</p>	<p><b>Ba'al Haturim</b>                  3:25 a. The 51st <i>Amah</i>                  b. The missing letter "vav"                  c. Order of Prayer  <b>Sforno</b>                  Introduction To <i>Devarim</i>                  1:5 The Reason for Moshe's Rebuke                  1:22 The choice of the <i>Meraglim</i>                  1:23 Moshe's Reason for sending <i>Meraglim</i>                  1:27 The Sin of the <i>Meraglim</i>                  1:37 The Limits of Repentance                  3:11 The <i>Repha'im</i></p>
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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

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 Taurisa 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 Taurisa" (*son of an Ox — 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* (tithes) 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 Taurisa 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."*

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