

So shall you say to Bais Yaakov and relate to Bnei Yisrael. (19:3)

Chazal (Mechilta) teaches that *amirah/somar/say* implies a mild form of speech, while *hagadah/sagid/speak/relate*, implies firmness or even harshness of speech. When Moshe *Rabbeinu* spoke with the women (*Bais Yaakov*), he expressed the commandments in a manner that was compatible with their compassionate, maternal nature. When speaking with the men (*Bnei Yisrael*), the tone changed, because the *mitzvos* had to be transmitted to them with firmness. While this may be true, it is surprising that *pasuk* 6 concludes with the following words, “These are the words that you shall speak (*tidaber*) to *Bnei Yisrael*.” *Rashi* adds – *lo pachos v’lo yoseir* – “no more, no less,” which indicates that, in the end, no difference existed between the manner expressed to the men and to the women. It was all the same.

Horav Yosef Leib Bloch, zl, explains that *lo pachos v’lo yoseir*, no more, no less, refers to the context of what Moshe was to say: *V’ata tiheyhu li mamleches Kohanim v’goi kadosh*, “And you shall be for Me a kingdom of Priests and a holy nation.” That part did not change. Both men and women are obligated to hear and ascribe to the message. It is how the message has been expressed -- the manner in which it has been given over -- that varies between men and women. *Chazal* are teaching us that a lesson must be rendered in such a manner that is most conducive to the student’s ability to learn, accept, and incorporate into his/her life.

Men must hear the harsh, brutal truth: “You saw what I did to Egypt. You were privy to the miracles and wonders that decimated the Egyptians. You saw the destruction of Egypt which I wrought at the Red Sea. Take this lesson and allow it to resonate within you, so that you develop an acute understanding of punishment.”

The message rendered to the women focused, not so much on what Hashem did to the Egyptians, but rather on: how much Hashem loves the Jewish People; and how far He is prepared to go to protect them. In other words, the very same message, “You saw what I did to Egypt,” can be viewed from the negative perspective, the punishment of Egypt, or the positive perspective, the love of the Jews.

Horav Yeruchum Levovitz, zl, offers the same idea, that it is all in the presentation. He adds that the distinctions, which *Chazal* have made between men and women, based upon their nature and individual temperaments, apply equally with regard to the teacher, mentor, and parent. Teachers, mentors and parents are also obligated to be cognizant of the nature of the student or child to whom his message is directed. Some students are unable to handle a lesson imparted without feeling-- in a cold, dispassionate manner. Some require a smile to accompany the lesson. Some must hear how sweet Torah learning is, while others should focus on its profundity. It is all in the packaging. The individual who cares about the nuances of his presentation is the one who is ultimately successful with the wider audience. The individual who insists on maintaining a “one

size fits all” attitude in delivering his lesson will succeed in reaching a select group of students. The question that we must ask ourselves is: May we be selective in teaching Torah?

Horav Yisrael Belsky, zl, distinguishes between explicit and implicit messaging. Moshe related to *Klal Yisrael* that the concept of reward and punishment can be derived from what Hashem did to the Egyptians, thereby demonstrating that Hashem has the power to punish those who do not follow His command. He also told the nation that, if they abide by the covenant, they will be a treasure to Hashem. By accepting the Torah, *Klal Yisrael* committed itself to the responsibility of bringing the world to its goal. They were, in fact, to become the essence of the world’s existence. Hashem promised them that they would become the centerpiece of Creation, giving meaning and purpose to the entire world. Last, Hashem exhorted them to become a kingdom of Priests and a holy nation. They would be people of unparalleled importance and spiritual ascendance. Their goals and thoughts would sanctify their every endeavor, thereby elevating even their worldly pursuits to consecrated status. The entire world will see that *Klal Yisrael* is different as a result of their adherence to the Torah.

Men and women alike heard these three concepts. Yet, *Bais Yaakov*, the women, heard Hashem’s soft words of encouragement, while *Bnei Yisrael*, the men, perceived harsh punishment from “words as tough as sinews.” It was a question of identifying with either the positive essence of the Torah or the implication of the negative punishment for breaking the covenant. Women heard the explicit, the positive, which resonated stronger with them due to their natural affinity for spirituality. Veritably, they recognized the implications of severe punishment, but they did not dwell on it, because they accepted their obligations with extreme and intense commitment.

The men, however, analyzed and probed the consequences implicit in, “You saw what I have done to Egypt.” To them, it was much more than a perfunctory announcement of the potential of punishment for one who missteps. They immediately relived the years of slavery, followed by the Ten Plagues that befell Egypt. As they probed the depth of punishment, they also were extremely cognizant of the heights of reward that one can achieve for acting appropriately.

Two people – same message – varied perceptions. Nothing changed but the listeners, each hearing what he/she was most attuned to hearing.