

## "These are the words which Moshe spoke to all Yisrael." (1:1)

*Rashi* explains that each of the places mentioned by Moshe alludes to one of the sins committed by *Bnei Yisrael*. In an attempt to avoid embarrassing *Bnei Yisrael*, Moshe did not state the sins explicitly. Later on, however, Moshe did openly reprove them for the incident of the spies and the sin of the Golden Calf. We must endeavor to understand this seeming inconsistency. If Moshe was ultimately going to reprimand them overtly, why did he begin his rebuke by couching it in veiled terms ?

*Horav Moshe Feinstein, z.l.*, contends that at the beginning of the *parsha*, Moshe was directing his words to the children of those individuals who had sinned. Because he was referring to their fathers' sins, he used a mild tone and only alluded to the actual sins. Later on, however, when Moshe addressed the actual sinners, he spared no words or emotion in expressing his rebuke. Perhaps in this way they might begin to grasp the seriousness of their travesty, the severity of its punishment, as well as the atonement they had received for it.

The children must be made aware of their fathers' sins, so long as they have not totally eradicated its influence upon their own lives. They need to be reminded of their own lack of immunity to sin.

*Horav Feinstein* suggests that the reason we are adjured to "remember what Amalek did to you/us" is to make us aware of a human being's capacity for doing evil. If we would only realize the severity of the crime and our own proclivity towards it, then we will have the opportunity to protect ourselves from falling prey to the blandishment of sin.

There is another aspect to Moshe's presenting the sins in a mild tone. There is no "*mitzvah*" to destroy a person in the course of reproofing him. If we can achieve the desired effect by mild rebuke, so be it. We should go out of our way to seek to make the desired impression in the least painful manner. Indeed, even when it becomes necessary to reprove one who has erred, it is best to avoid mentioning the sin if the desired effect can be made by simply alluding to it.

If we see that the sinner is resolute in his transgression, however, and indirect rebuke is not effective, then we must criticize openly and at times even condemn publicly. This is the reason that Moshe *Rabbeinu* held nothing back in speaking harshly about the sins of the spies and the Golden Calf. The roots of these sins had regrettably been ingrained in *Bnei Yisrael's* personality, clouding their ability to distinguish between right and wrong. They had to be awakened from their spiritual slumber in order to realize the travesty of their actions.