

"These (are) the words which Moshe spoke unto all Yisrael... and it was in the fortieth year... (that) Moshe spoke unto t Bnei Yisrael according to all that Hashem had commanded him unto them." (1:1,3)

Citing the *Sifri*, *Rashi* explains that these "words" were actually words of rebuke which Moshe spoke to *Bnei Yisrael*, reminding them of past offenses committed during their forty year trek in the desert. Moshe *Rabbeinu* veiled his words. He did not state *Bnei Yisrael's* transgression overtly for the sake of preserving their dignity.

Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz z.l. infers that even when rebuke must be delivered, it should be expressed in a manner that will not degrade the offender more than necessary. There is no "*mitzvah*" to humiliate someone in the course of reproof. All too often, those that admonish feel that humiliating the other person will "expiate" his sins. This attitude is not *Torah* oriented. *Kavod ha'brios*, preserving human dignity, is essential, since each person is created *b'tzelem Elokim*, in the image of Hashem.

Horav Zalmen Sorotzkin z.l. questions the redundancy of the text. The *Torah* states, "These are the words which Moshe spoke" and summarizes the idea once again by repeating "that Moshe spoke unto *Bnei Yisrael*." Is there a difference between the two "*diburim*," spoken words? *Horav Sorotzkin* cites *Horav Aharon Walkin z.l.*, who explains the maxim of *Chazal*, "A member of the rabbinate who is well liked by the community, does not necessarily demonstrate that he is better than others." It is because he does not reprove them with "*mili dishmaya*," words of Heaven (*Talmud Kesubos 105b*). Why does the *Talmud* choose the phrase "words of Heaven"? It should simply have said, "He does not reprove them at all!"

Horav Walkin explains that there are two distinct methods of rebuke. The first is represented by the individual who rebukes in "people's language." He is careful not to mention the actual sin, but subtly alludes to it. This does not indicate a sensitivity on his part. Rather, it demonstrates his concern not to upset those whom he is admonishing. The second, more desirable method is to use "words of Heaven," which means to clearly delineate the sin, sparing no words and leaving nothing to the imagination. This is the correct manner of rebuke.

This is the *Talmud's* message: A city that loves its rabbinic leadership does not necessarily treasure the rabbi's achievement. Rather, the people cherish his method of reproof when he admonishes the community; he is careful not to openly articulate their various misdeeds. He only alludes to their shortcomings, passing over blatant sin as if it were a simple failing. This is the essential manner of rebuke, if the community or generation is one that can not tolerate being admonished. To listen to *mussar*, rebuke, to accept it, without finding every cause either to excuse oneself to dismiss the rebuke is truly an achievement!

This, explains *Horav Sorotzkin*, is the reason for the redundancy of our text. Originally, when Moshe rebuked *Klal Yisrael*, he "burned his fingers" when he became angry at them, calling them rebels and fools, at Merivah. He subsequently, began the rebuke stated in this *parsha* with allusion, suggesting various sins by cryptically mentioning the city in which they took place. Then Hashem told Moshe that in his final rebuke to *Klal Yisrael* prior to his death, he must be specific. He was taking leave of his flock and needed to prepare them for entry into *Eretz Yisrael*. Moshe, in response, "switched over" to a different tone, clearly defining and explaining the sin. Thus, *Bnei Yisrael* were able to enter *Eretz Yisrael* on the proper spiritual plane and continue to thrive there in spiritual purity.