

## Unit 2 – Perek 1:1 - 4:40 – Moshe’s First Speech

### Lesson 3 – Introduction to Moshe’s Speech

**Objective:** For students to understand the first five pesukim according to Ramban and Rashi.

**Background:** These pesukim form an introduction to Sefer Devarim, or to the second speech (Ramban). This introduction presents the historical setting for the speech, where and when it was given. The first two pesukim are particularly difficult because it is not clear how each phrase connects to the next and many of the places mentioned are not familiar. Students should first figure out a peshat explanation along the lines of Ramban and Ibn Ezra. Then they should be introduced to Rashi’s allegorical approach.

**Activity:** (3 periods)

1. Review the basic chronology of BneiYisrael’s travels from יציאת מצרים until their arrival at ערבות מואב.
2. Ask students to write down answers to the following questions which you write on the board:

Where are BneiYisrael at the end of Sefer Bemidbar? See Bemidbar 36:13.

Read פרק א פסוקים א-ה.

Where does Moshe give this speech?

When does Moshe give this speech?

Ask a few students what they wrote down. They will probably come up with a few different answers based on which pasuk they focused on.

Explain that there seems to be at least three different locations named for this speech:

- א. עבר הירדן – This is where they are in year 40
- ב. במדבר בערבה מול סוף – somewhere in the wilderness,  
more specifically, in Arabah near Suf
- ג. בין פארן ובין תפל ולבן וחצרות ודי זהב – A place that is between all of these places

Read parts of Ibn Ezra or Ramban inside or explain their interpretations outside the text. Ibn Ezra and Ramban suggest that the speech (the entire second speech according to Ramban, perakim 12-26 according to Ibn Ezra) was repeated in each of these places. (See source sheet [L03a – Perek 1 – Rishonim on First Pasuk.doc](#).) The present speech was already given to the first generation in those places and is being repeated here for the next generation. Since they were not at Sinai and did not participate in the covenant they now have to reenact the covenant.

3. Look for these places on a large map.

Or, have a few concordances in the room. Split up into groups. One person looks up the places in concordance, another tries to locate them on a map.

The conclusion of this exercise should show that some of these places are difficult to locate on a map and also do not occur anywhere else in Tanakh. (Notice that the places we can identify go from North to South – from current speech backwards in time to Sinai.) פארן is mentioned in Bemidbar 12:16. תפל is not mentioned elsewhere. לבן may be equivalent to לבנה in Bemidbar 33:20. הצרות is found in Bemidbar 11:35. די זהב is not mentioned elsewhere.

Now students should be ready to read Rashi who says that because some of the places mentioned do not occur anywhere else in Tanakh, they must be allegories referring to some of Bnei Yisrael's sins during the forty years. For Rashi on pasuk 2 it is not necessary to get into the details of the travel. Students should focus only on the beginning and end of this *dibbur*.

(ב) אחד עשר יום מחורב - אמר להם משה ראו מה גרמתם, אין לכם דרך קצרה מחורב לקדש ברנע כדרך הר שעיר ואף הוא מהלך אחד עשר יום...ובשביל שקלקלתם הסב אתכם סביבות הר שעיר ארבעים שנה:

Next, read אונקלוס.

אלין פתגמא דמליל משה עם כל ישראל בעברא דירדנא אוכח יתהון על דחבו במדברא ועל דארגיוזו במישרא לקביל ים סוף בפארן אתפלו על מנא ובחצרות ארגיוזו על בשרא ועל דעבדו עיגל דדהב:

Notice that he does not translate word for word but rather inserts the Midrash into the translation. In fact, Rashi often follows the interpretation of אונקלוס.

Quiz – match up or fill-in place name with associated sin.

#### 4. Mini-lesson on rebuke and criticism

Teenagers receive lots of overt and hidden criticism from their parents, teachers, and friends and in turn sometimes give criticism to their friends, siblings, and, once in a while, even teachers. Have a discussion on the following points: How does it feel to be criticized? Does it matter who is criticizing you? Does it matter how they say it? When do you feel a need to criticize others? What's the difference between criticism, poking fun, and putting down?

Use these Midrashim to bring out your message:

<p><b>Perek 1 – Introduction to Moshe's Speech</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u><b>Midrashim on Debarim Perek 1</b></u> <u><b>Giving and Taking Criticism</b></u></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u><b>דברים רבה פרשה א:ד</b></u></p> <p>ד"א אלה הדברים, א"ר אחא ב"ר חנינא ראויין היו התוכחות לומר מפי בלעם והברכות מפי משה אלא אילו הוכיחם בלעם היו ישראל אומרים שונא מוכיחנו ואילו ברכם משה היו אומות העולם אומרים אוהבן ברכן אמר הקב"ה יוכיחן משה שאוהבן ויברכן בלעם ששונאן כדי שיתבררו הברכות והתוכחות ביד ישראל.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u><b>דברים רבה פרשה א:ט</b></u></p> <p>ד"א אלה הדברים רבנין אמרין אמר לו הקב"ה למשה הואיל וקיבלו עליהן תוכחותיך צריך אתה לברכן, מיד חזר וברכן מניין שנאמר ה' אלהיכם הרבה וגו', ומניין שכל המקבל תוכחה זוכה לברכה שכן שלמה מפרש (משלי כד) ולמוכיחים ינעם ועליהם תבא ברכת טוב.</p>
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**L03b Perek 1 - Criticism - Source Sheet.doc (4 pages)**

In the discussion, students may bring up the difference between receiving criticism from someone who loves you and from someone who is looking to deride. As the first Midrash shows, one should only take to heart criticism from a loved one. Also, one should refrain from giving criticism out of hate. The second Midrash shows that criticism should always be joined with a complement – and also gives them a preview of the next few pesukim.

To show that you practice what you preach use this as an opportunity to invite comments and criticisms about your lessons. It's important that students be able to submit comments anonymously. Either set up a "suggestion box" or regularly (weekly, monthly) give out a feedback form.

**Further Reading:** See Rabbi Tawil's Shabbat Table Talks on Parashat Devarim about giving criticism. A copy is included in the file of the source sheet above or go to: <http://www.judaic.org/tabletalk/1tabletalk.html>.