



## Parshas Devarim 2019, the art of Rebuke

*This week's Parsha Perspective is dedicated to Edward Ben Efraim. May his soul be uplifted and his memory a blessing.*

Our Parsha begins with Moshe gathering the Jewish people for his final speech just thirty-seven days before his passing. He rebukes them for their numerous past misdeeds and their lack of trust in Hashem.

Moshe expresses to them the burden of leadership and how he had alleviated the pressure by appointing leaders over each tribe. He recounts the spies' frightening reports of the land of Cana'an and the drastic consequences that arose from it. He also describes their journey through the desert, battling wars with the nations of Bashon, Sichon, and Emor along the way.

However, a question comes to mind: the Torah does not actually detail Moshe's rebuke. Rashi explains that the reason for this is because Moshe was being respectful towards the nation. However, whenever the Jews do something wrong in the Torah, it openly and harshly reprimands them and even details the wrongdoings of our greatest leaders! Why do we find that suddenly, Moshe is rebuking the Jewish people through subtleties instead of telling them outright? What happened to being respectful throughout the rest of the Torah?!

Furthermore, Rashi writes that his rebuke was said deliberately in the presence of the entire Jewish people so that no one could later say, *"If had I been there, I would have been able to respond to it!"* If this was the case, then shouldn't the critique have been given clearly and concisely?!

The Rambam in Hilches Da'os (*Chapter Six*) explains the mitzvah of rebuke. He writes that not only must the person receiving the rebuke be open to positive feedback, but the person giving it must convey that it is only for their well-being.

One of the prerequisites of the commandment of rebuke is that it should only be done when necessary. G-d does not allow us ever to vent our frustration at another person. We must do so when we offer constructive criticism out of genuine care for our fellow Jew.

The reason for the explicit descriptions of the Jewish peoples' sins is to serve as a reminder for the rest of time. When we read about their mistakes in the Torah, we're meant to learn lessons that we can apply today. The Torah is speaking not only to the people who lived at the time it was written but to the Jewish nation as a whole for all eternity.

In our case, Moshe speaks directly to the Jewish people, giving a personal and intimate rebuke. But he also sends a clear message of his concern for their dignity and respect by rebuking them through hints. He shows them that his mission is to help them — not attack them — and to ensure they achieve their full potential and capabilities.

In our daily life, we must understand that it is human nature to become defensive when we feel we are being patronized. When we feel threatened, we become protective, shutting down any possibility of reconciliation or improvement.

Therefore, if you offer constructive criticism, it should be done benevolently. You must clearly convey that the reason you're critiquing someone is for their benefit, and you only want to see them grow to achieve their utmost potential.

This is especially important for us during this period of mourning for the Beis Hamikdash. The primary cause of its destruction was *sinas chinam*, baseless hatred. To reach the ultimate redemption, we must have *avas chinam*, which is loving our fellow Jews unconditionally.

**"Words that come from the heart enter the heart."**

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,  
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*