

28 July, 2001

* Due to it being Erev Tisha B'Av, there will not be a speaker in the Youth Minyan.

* Due to it being Erev Tisha B'Av, there will not be a shiur at Mark Franck's house on Shabbos.

* May this year see the transformation of Tisha B'Av into a truly festive occasion.

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Caulfield
Beth Hamedrash Weekly Newsletter

D'var Torah

TELL HIM OFF...

by Rabbi Shraga Simmons

Much of this week's Parsha consists of Moses rebuking the people for a variety of mistakes, including the Golden Calf, Korach's rebellion, the complaints about meat and water, and more. Why did Moses choose now - the final days before his death - to deliver 40 years worth of pent-up rebuke?

Rebuke is fine, but not if the effect will be negative. If the other person will get defensive, angry, or not accept the criticism, then it is better left unsaid. If a person feels you have your own self-interest at heart - and not his - he won't listen to what you're saying. Rebuke must clearly be for the benefit of the other person. He has to know that you care about him, are on his side, and want what's best for him.

That is why Moses specifically delivers the rebuke after defeating Sichon and Og in battle (see Deut. 1:4). He had just reaffirmed his dedication to the people. So they knew that if Moses had criticism, it was only coming from a place of love.

A look at the original Hebrew clarifies this concept. The Torah says: "You should give *toch'acha* to your neighbor." *Toch'acha* is from the same word as *hoch'acha*, meaning "proof."

The Torah is telling us that the way to get our neighbor to change is not through harsh rebuke, argumentation, or clever persuasion. The only way to convince anyone of anything is by way of a clear and obvious proof. As the Talmud (Brachot 7a) says: "It is better for a person to realize the truth for himself, than to have it beaten into him with 100 lashes." *Toch'acha* is not harsh. Rather, *toch'acha* is the beauty of reality staring us squarely in the face.

One of the paths to self-growth, is to "Love *Tochacha*." When we recognize that the purpose of *toch'acha* is to wake us up and get us on the right path, then we're thankful!

Of course, nobody likes to be on the receiving end. But do you think you're perfect? Of course not! If you want to reach your potential, look for constructive criticism. Go ask for help to get rid of your mistakes. When a person is committed to reaching a goal, he'll accept incredible doses of nagging, harassments and insults. Think of what an Olympic athlete willingly endures from coaches!

No doubt this is what King Solomon meant when he said, "Give *toch'acha* to a wise person - and he'll love you!" (Proverbs 9:8)

One final point: Giving *toch'acha* is everyone's obligation. That is why the verse just prior in the Torah says "Don't stand by your brother's blood" (Leviticus 19:16). One may not stand idly by while another is in need.

If you really love someone, you can't stand to see him living a misguided life. Who gives you the most criticism? Those who love you the most - your parents. It's because they love you that they can't simply ignore you by saying, "He's wasting time but I don't care." Similarly, the Jewish people are one. If one Jew hurts, all Jews feel it.

We must reach out and find a way to help. The Talmud (Shabbat 119) says that Jerusalem was destroyed because people didn't correct each other. Today, the Jewish people are haemorrhaging from assimilation. We have to make a pro-active effort to bring Jews closer to Torah. How?

By being better role models.

Giving *toch'acha* does not mean criticising, throwing stones, or shouting louder than the next guy. Real *toch'acha* is demonstrating through action and deed. If secular Israelis do not appreciate the beauty and sanctity of Shabbat, it is because observant Jews are not keeping Shabbos in the right way. If observant Jews were truly projecting and radiating a warmth and glow, then the truth of Shabbat would be obvious to all. No arguments, no conflicts. The Talmud says that Moses was able to instruct the people only because he exemplified what he preached.

The Sages ask the question: When the Messiah arrives, how will we know it's really him? The answer: It will be obvious. Of course, there are some technical qualifications, but his basic identity as the Messiah will be self-evident. He will speak words of Torah so sweet and clear, that no one will need to question his identity. It will be a pure outpouring of positive energy that overwhelms everything in its path. That is the beauty of true *toch'acha*.



Thoughts for the week:

"It is your attitude, not your aptitude, that determines your altitude."

"There are no foolish questions and no man is foolish until he stops asking questions."
(Charles Steimatz)

"A diamond is a chunk of coal that made good under pressure."

"Success is that peace of mind that comes from knowing you've done everything in your power to become the very best you're capable of becoming."
(John Wooden)

"He who laughs last thinks slowest!"

Other Developments

* Last shabbos after shule, Danny Karp spoke about the fact that Bilaam's involvement in the subversion of Israel was only mentioned two weeks after the the incident with the Midianites was first recounted. Danny suggested that the lesson the Torah teaches, is that regardless of provocation, we are still responsible for our actions - hence when Bnei Yisroel sinned, the provocateur for the sin was not mentioned. Yasher Koach.

* Ari Bergman spoke at Shalosh Seudos last week about Moshe's criticism of Gad and Reuven's request to remain on the East side of the Jordan while the rest of the Jews fought to conquer the land of Israel. The importance of not standing idly by when a fellow Jew is in pain is particularly relevant during the three weeks. Ari quoted the Tiferes Yonason who paraphrases Moshe saying "Do you really think its possible for you to stay here in Galus (Diaspora) in peace while your fellow Jews are fighting in Eretz Yisrael?" When there is no peace in Eretz Yisrael, there will not be peace in the Diaspora. Yasher Koach.

Tisha B'Av

by Rabbi Kalman Packouz & Rabbi Becher

July 28th, Saturday evening starting at sunset, begins Tisha B'Av (9th day of Av). It is the saddest day in the Jewish year. On this same day throughout history many tragedies befell the Jewish people, including:

1. The incident of the spies slandering the land of Israel with the subsequent decree to wander the desert for 40 years.
2. The destruction of the first Temple in Jerusalem by Nevuchadnetzar, King of Babylon.
3. The destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE.
4. The fall of Betar and the end of the Bar Kochba revolt against the Romans 62 years later, 132 CE.
5. First Crusade declared by Pope Urban II. 10,000 Jews killed in first month of Crusade. Crusades bring death and destruction to thousands of Jews, totally obliterate many communities in Rhineland and France in 1095.
6. The expulsion of the Jews of England in 1290.
7. The expulsion of the Jews of Spain in 1492.
8. Britain and Russia declare war on Germany in 1914. First World War begins. First World War issues unresolved, ultimately causing Second World War and Holocaust. 75% of all Jews in war zones. Jews in armies of all sides - 120,000 Jewish casualties in armies. Over 400 pogroms immediately following war in Hungary, Ukraine, Poland and Russia.
9. Deportations from Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka concentration camp begin in 1942.

Parsha Overview – Devarim

This week we begin the last of the Five Books of the Torah - Devarim. The Book is the oration of Moshe before he died. It is the preparation of the Jewish people for entering and living in the Land of Israel. Moshe reviews the history of the 40 years of wandering the desert and gives rebuke so that the Jewish people will learn from their mistakes. Moshe recalls what happened at Mt. Sinai, the appointment of judges and administrators, the story of the spies, the prohibition to attack Edom and Moav, the defeat of the Kings Sichon and Og, and how the land of Gilad was given to the tribes of Reuven, Gad and half of the tribe of Menashe.

Tisha B'Av is a fast day (like Yom Kippur, from one evening until the next evening) which culminates a three week mourning period by the Jewish people. One is forbidden to eat or drink, bathe, use moisturizing creams or oils, wear leather shoes or have marital relations. The idea is to minimize pleasure and to let the body feel the distress the soul should feel over these tragedies. Like all fast days, the object is introspection, making a spiritual accounting and correcting our ways - Teshuva, returning, to the path of good and righteousness.

On the night of Tisha B'Av we read Eicha, the book of Lamentations, written by the prophet Yirmiyahu. We also say Kinot, special poems recounting the tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people. On Tisha B'Av we are forbidden to learn Torah except those parts dealing with the calamities which the Jewish people have suffered.

Announcements

- Minyanim times for Erev Tisha B'Av. Shacharis on Shabbos in the Main Minyan @ 10:00am and in the Youth Minyan @ 9:45am. Two minyanim for Mincha at 12:50pm and 3:45pm. Ma'ariv (followed by Eicha) will be after the conclusion of Shabbos at 6:30pm.

- The fast of Tisha B'Av begins at 5:28pm on Shabbat and ends at 5:57pm on Sunday evening.

Wishing everyone well over the fast

- Shacharis on Tisha B'Av (Sunday) @ 8am, Micha (followed by Ma'ariv) @ 5pm. Following Shacharis and kinos in the morning and between Mincha – Mariv in the afternoon there will be special Tisha B'Av Shiurim.

- Last week the Youth Minyan enjoyed a Rosh Chodesh Av kiddush organised by Ari & Esther Bergman.

Join together with shules in over 110 cities worldwide in viewing 'A Time to Heal'. The video will focus on the creation of peace and harmony amongst Klal Yisroel, a prerequisite for the end of our Galus. Speakers include: Rabbi Aaron Dunner of London and Rabbi Yissochor Frand of Baltimore. The video will be shown on Tisha B'Av evening (Motzei Shabbat) following Eicha.

- This Shabbat is called Shabbat Chazon – named after the beginning of the Haftarah, "Chazon Yeshayahu." In this third shabbos of the three weeks we read the third Haftarah of 'punishment'. The Hafotrah ends off positively, with words of the future redemption of Zion - the ultimate consolation and purpose to the woes administered.

- Welcome back to Mendi Slodowitz after his recent visit to America, and to Moshe & Shani Shimon after Moshe's extended trip to Israel. Sholom Aleichem and Bruchim Atem Bevoiachem.

Suggestions or comments regarding our website or newsletter? Email us – we would love to hear from you.



Shabbat Shalom & Gut Shabbos to all!
"The Editors"