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פרשת דברים PARSHAT DEVARIM

DVAR TORAH REBUKE THE WISE MAN

Our Parshah opens with Moshe rebuking the People of Israel, and the People of Israel accepting the rebuke. Rebuke is a major part of the entire book of Devarim. Rebuke is also a mitzvah, and a common part of human interactions. How can we prepare ourselves to positively respond to rebuke – like the People of Israel – and how – like Moshe – can we give rebuke in a way that it won't be rejected?

There is a verse in Mishlei whose simple meaning can help us receive rebuke. The verse says, "אל תוכח לץ פן ישנאך הוכח לחכם ויאהבך" (Mishlei 9:8). "Do not rebuke the scoffer lest he hate you; rebuke the wise man and he will love you" (Mishlei 9:8).

Why will the wise man love you for rebuking him? It is because he is more concerned with becoming a better person than preserving his image. To receive rebuke properly the listener must realize that the person rebuking or criticizing him is helping him, and he'll benefit by listening. (Note that professionals often hire trainers, consultants, or coaches to criticize them to help them improve.)

Harav Yishayah Horowitz, זצ"ל (1565-1630, known as the Shelah Hakadosh), has a creative reading of this verse that teaches us how to give rebuke. Here's how he reads it:

אל תוכח לץ - Don't rebuke by calling the person a לץ, by calling him a scoffer, by telling him how terrible he is.

פן ישנאך - He's only going to hate you because of that.

הוכח לחכם - Rather, give rebuke by telling him that he's wise, but that his behavior isn't fitting for his high status, for who he really is.

ויאהבך - Then he'll love you and be much more willing to listen.

Harav Yair Bacharach, זצ"ל (1639-1702, known as the Chavot Yair, quoted in Harav Alexander Zushia Friedman's Ma'ayanah Shel Torah, Vayikra, p. 116-117) makes a similar creative reading of the Torah's formulation of the mitzvah of rebuke:

הוכח תוכיח את עמיתך - Surely rebuke your friend (amitecha – colleague, friend). "Relate to him as an equal, a friend, as an essentially good person with a lofty soul who has temporarily erred.

ולא תשא עליו חטא - Do not look down on him as an evil person. "Do not heap sin upon him." Do not deem him a sinner.

The greatest rebuke combination is like that of Moshe and the People of Israel. Those receiving rebuke were only interested in bettering themselves and eager to listen; and the one giving rebuke appreciated and communicated the greatness and potential of his listeners.

SOURCE GUIDE: CHILDREN OF THE ALMIGHTY

The word **הואיל** appears three times in the Tanach: once in our Parshah; once in the Book of Shmuel; and a third time in the Book of Hoshea. The Baal Haturim explains the special message this teaches us. This source guide follows the Baal Haturim's lead and ends up with an important message for these days leading up to and including Tisha B'Av.

A. Devarim, Shmuel, and Hoshea

The word **הואיל** appears three places in Tanach: in the Torah's introduction to our Parshah; in the prophet Shmuel's last speech to the People of Israel; and in Hoshea's prophecy about the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel because of their many sins (note that commentators work with three possible meanings of **הואיל** – begin, want, and swear – the translations below follow Rashi's):

<p>1. Devarim 1:5 On the [eastern] side of the Yarden in the Land of Moav, Moshe began to explain this Torah, saying ...</p> <p>2. 1 Shmuel 12:22 For Hashem will not desert His nation, for the sake of His great Name. For He swore to make you His nation.</p> <p>3. Hoshea 5:11 Efraim is taken advantage of; they are justly crushed; for they desired to go after the command [of idolatrous false prophets].</p>	<p>דברים א:ה בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב הוֹאִיל מֹשֶׁה בְּאֶרֶץ אֶת הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת לְאָמֹר.</p> <p>שמואל א' יב:כב כִּי לֹא יִטַּשׁ ה' אֶת עַמּוֹ בְּעֵבֹר שְׂמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל כִּי הוֹאִיל ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת אֲתָכֶם לֹו לְעַם.</p> <p>הושע ה:יא עֲשׂוּק אֶפְרַיִם רְצוּץ מִשִּׁפְט כִּי הוֹאִיל הַלֵּךְ אַחֲרַי צוּ.</p>
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The expression "going after the command" is cryptic. The Gemara assumes that it refers to following the directives of idolatrous false prophets. The Gemara quotes our verse as support that the prohibition against idolatry is one of the seven Noachide laws:

<p>4. Sanhedrin 56b Hashem, G-d, commanded [Adam] (Bereishit 2:16) – This refers to the command against idolatry. How does "He commanded" imply idolatry? Rav Chisda and Rav Yitzchak bar Avdimi [cited different sources]. One said [it is based on the verse]: "They have quickly strayed from the path I have commanded them, and they made [a molten image of a calf]" (Shemot 32:8). The other said, "Efraim is taken advantage of; they are justly crushed; for he desired to go after the command (Rashi – he desired to go after the command of the prophets of the Ba'al)" (Hoshea 5:11).</p>	<p>סנהדרין נו: "ויצו" (בראשית ב:טז) – זו עבודה זרה. מאי משמע? רב חסדא ורב יצחק בר אבדימי חד אמר "סרו מהר מן הדרך אשר צויתם עשו להם וגו'", " (שמות לב:ח). וחד אמר "עשוק אפרים רצוץ משפט כי הואיל הלך אחרי צו (רש"י - מפני שנותרצה ללכת אחרי צווי של נביאי הבעל)" (הושע ה:יא).</p>
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B. Baal Haturim, Kiddushin, Divrei Yatziv, and Rashba

Harav Yaakov ben Asher, זצ"ל (1269-1340), known as the Baal Haturim, builds on the connection between these three verses:

<p>5. Baal Haturim on Devarim 1:5 The Mesorah records that "הואיל" appears three times in Tanach. One is "Moshe began" (Devarim 1:5). Another is "Hashem swore to make them His nation" (1 Shmuel 12:22). Another is "They desired to go after the command" (Hoshea 5:11). This is connected with what they said (in Kiddushin 36a), "No matter what, they are called the children of the All-Present One – whether they do the will of G-d through keeping the Torah – as in the verse "Moshe began [to explain the Torah]" – or whether they worship idols – as in the verse, "They went after the command."</p>	<p>בעל הטורים על דברים א:ה "הואיל" – ג' במסורה. "הואיל משה" (דברים א:ה). ואידך "כי הואיל ה' לעשות אתכם לו לעם" (שמואל א' יב:כב). "הואיל הלך אחרי צו" (הושע ה:יא). היינו דאמרו (קידושין לו). "בין כך ובין כך קרויים בניו של מקום, בין עושין רצונו של מקום שמקיימין את התורה – דהיינו "הואיל משה" – ובין שהם עובדין ע"ז – דהיינו "הלך אחרי צו."</p>
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The Baal Haturim here refers to the following dispute recorded in the Gemara:

<p>6. Kiddushin 36a</p>	<p>קידושין לו.</p>
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"You are sons of Hashem your G-d" (Devarim 14:1) – when you act like His sons you are called sons, but if you do not act like sons you are not called sons. These are the words of Rabbi Yehudah. Rabbi Meir says: No matter what (whether you act like sons or not), you are called sons. For it says, "They are foolish sons" (Yirmiyahu 4:22), and it says, "[They are] sons who are not trustworthy" (Devarim 32:20), and it says, "Bad offspring, destructive sons" (Yishayahu 1:4), and it says, "Instead of Him saying 'You are not My nation,' it will be said of you, 'Sons of the living G-d'" (Hoshea 2:1).

"בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם" (דברים יד:א) – בזמן שאתם נוהגים מנהג בנים אתם קרוים בנים, אין אתם נוהגים מנהג בנים אין אתם קרוים בנים, דברי ר' יהודה. רבי מאיר אומר: בין כך ובין כך אתם קרוים בנים שנאמר, "בְּנֵי סְכָלִים הֵמָּה" (ירמיה ד:כב), ואומר, "בנים לא אמון בם" (דברים לב:כ), ואומר "זרע מרעים בנים משחיתים" (ישעיהו א:ד), ואומר "וְהָיָה בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יֵאמָר לָהֶם לֹא עַמִּי אַתֶּם יֵאמָר לָהֶם בְּנֵי אֵל חַי" (הושע ב:א).

The Klausenberger Rebbe, Harav Yekusiel Yehudah Halberstam, זצ"ל (1905-1994), explains what is at the core of the dispute between Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Meir:

7. Divrei Yatziv 4, Yoreh Dei'ah 244
 For according to Rabbi Yehudah the reason they are called children is because they accepted the Torah from Him, may He be blessed (and talmidim [students] are referred to as children – see Sifrei Vaetchanan 9). It follows that when they do not keep the Torah they are not referred to as children. But Rabbi Meir holds that they are called children because the Holy One, blessed be He, formed and created us, as it says in Kiddushin 30b and Niddah 31b, "There are three partners in a person: the Holy One, blessed be He, his father, and his mother. Rashi comments that the Holy One, blessed be He blows a soul into him. Therefore the Children of Israel, who have a Divine soul from above, are called children. This is why whether they keep the Torah or not they are still called His children.

דברי יציב ד' – יורה דעה רמ"ד
 שלדעת רבי יהודה הטעם שקרוים בנים הוא לפי שקבלו תורה ממנו יתברך, וממילא כשאין שומרים את התורה אין קרויים בנים, ור"מ ס"ל דקרויים בנים משום שהקב"ה יצר אותנו ובראנו, וכמ"ש בקידושין ל' ע"ב ובנדה לא ע"ב שלשה שותפין באדם הקב"ה ואביו ואמו, וברש"י שהקב"ה נופח בו נשמה וכו' עיי"ש, ולזה בבני ישראל שיש בהם נשמת אלוקי ממעל קרויים בנים ואשר בין כך ובין כך קרויים בנים.

The Rashba (Harav Shlomo ben Avraham ibn Adret, זצ"ל, 1235-1310, in Teshuvot Harashba 1:194 and 1:242) says that, even though, in general, we rule according to Rabbi Yehudah in disputes against Rabbi Meir; in this case Rabbi Meir's opinion is based on such compelling evidence that we rule according to Rabbi Meir.

C. Tisha B'Av

Perhaps Rabbi Meir's approach gains special significance around Tisha B'Av, when we find ourselves focusing on Israel's sins and the destruction that came in their wake. Rabbi Meir reminds us that our status as children of the Almighty never wavered. The Divrei Yatziv explains why – because our relationship with Him, like our status as children of our physical parents, is independent of our behavior. We are not only His students because He taught us the Torah; we are His children because he formed us and our souls are eternally connected to Him.

HALF OF SHEVET MENASHEH BY RABBI YITZCHAK HIRSHFELD

The Tribes of Gad and Reuven held protracted negotiations with Moshe Rabbeinu over the right to secure their portion of the Land on the East Bank of the Jordan River. Finally, an arrangement was reached, conditions were made. If they would join the other tribes in the conquest of Eretz Canaan their request would be fulfilled. And then we read at the end of Parashat Matot (32:33), "Moshe gave the Sons of Gad and the Sons of Reuven and to half the Tribe of Menashe, the kingdom of Sichon the King of the Emori and the the kingdom of Og the King of the Bashan..." How did the Menashites enter into the picture?

The Netziv (Harav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, זצ"ל, 1816-1893), in his Haamek Davar at the end of Parashat Devarim (3:16), notes that in Chapter 3, verses 12-16 follow a peculiar order. Verse 12 describes how Moshe gave the Land of Sichon and Og to Reuven and Gad; verses 13-15 tell how Moshe gave a section to half of the tribe of Menasheh; and then verse 16 returns to the giving of portions of the Land to Reuven and Gad. Why the jump back and forth?

The Netziv answers: Contrary to Gad and Reuven who requested Ever HaYarden, it was Moshe who asked Menasheh to agree to join Gad and Reuven there. Eretz Yisrael carries within it a powerful receptiveness towards Torah. The Land is fertile ground for spirituality. But, as can be seen from Chazal's teachings, the spiritual energy of Ever HaYarden was much weaker than that of Eretz Yisrael proper. And let us not forget that Gad and Reuven themselves were not bnei Torah. Moshe feared that without an actual Torah presence in their midst, their connection to Torah and the spiritual center of Am Yisrael would ultimately be weakened. Enter the Bnei Menasheh who, as the Netziv outlines, were connected to great Torah scholars. They would provide the Soul for the physical endeavors of Gad and Reuven. Menasheh's Torah would be the spiritual life force which would ensure that the inhabitants of Ever HaYarden would remain connected to Torah and mitzvot.

So, Moshe is telling us that as he was talking to Gad and Reuven he realized that he would have to pause to speak with Menasheh. Would they agree to be his "kollel" in Ever HaYarden? Only if they would agree could Moshe go on to finish his discussions with Gad and Reuven. Very artfully, by interrupting the flow of the narrative of Gad and Reuven, Moshe Rabbeinu lets us know how crucial it was that Menasheh join the other two tribes. And this is one of the cardinal lessons of Jewish history. No community has been able to endure without being connected to a Torah center.

But this is true not only on the communal level. Pirkei Avot teaches that any essentially physical activity is "dead" unless vitalized by words of Torah. Eating food without divrei Torah is tantamount to זבחי מתים – offerings to "dead" idols. For the same reason, the Rosh (Harav Asher ben Yechiel, זצ"ל, 1259 – 1327), in Orchot Chayim, exhorts us to speak words of Torah before going to sleep. Even concerning תפילה, prayer, the verse (Mishlei 28:9) reads, "If one turns aside his ear from hearing Torah, his prayer will be an abomination."

Let us strive that there not be even a small corner of our lives which is not infused with the life giving force of Torah.

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