

GUIDING OTHERS

THE OBLIGATION TO GUIDE

For many years, the holy brothers Reb Elimelech of Lyzhensk and Reb Zusha of Hanipoli traveled through towns and villages across Europe to arouse Yidden to do teshuvah. Whenever they arrived somewhere for the night, one of them would act as a sinner coming to the other, his Rebbe, asking for a tikun. Within earshot of their host, the 'sinner' would list all the aveiros of which the host was guilty. Overhearing this confession, the host would remember that he too had committed such aveiros, and he would be aroused to do teshuvah.

One night, the brothers arrived in the house of a certain Yid, and Reb Zusha began to beg his brother for a tikun for his negligence. He had never had his tefillin checked until recently and the sofer had found that there were no parshiyos inside. All his life, he had never put on real tefillin!

The host, overhearing the conversation, realized that he himself had never had his tefillin checked, so he quickly went to have a look at his tefillin, and to his alarm, he found that they were empty! Sobbing, he begged the visitors to show him how he can do teshuvah. Reb Elimelech instructed Reb Zusha to write a set of parshiyos for their host, and to have the kavana that these tefillin draw down a great light, appropriate for one who has never put on tefillin. Reb Zusha took klaf, quill and ink, wrote the parshiyos required, placed them in the battim (boxes), and returned them to their owner. Many years later, these tefillin were found by the holy tzaddik Reb Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev.

(ספורי חסידים זוין מועדים ע' 66)

We read in the Torah several times about our obligation to guide other Yidden in the right direction. This obligation is included in the mitzvah of ahavas yisroel, and more specifically instructed in the mitzvah of tochacha (rebuke). Additionally, there is an arvus (responsibility) that all of klal yisroel have for one another, and a mitzvah or an aveirah (R"L) done by one Yid affects the others.

(שו"ע אדמו"ר הזקן או"ח סי' קנ"ו, תר"ח, הל' אונאה וגניבת דעת)

Rabbi Yoisi ben Chanina said that rebuke brings love, for love that does not include rebuke is not true love. Reish Lakish said that rebuke brings peace, for any peace that does not incorporate rebuke is not real peace.

(בראשית רבה נ"ד)

Chazal say that one who has the ability to raise objection to a wrongdoing and does not, will be held accountable for that aveirah. Someone in a leadership position, such as the head of the household, community leader, or a person of influence in a city, must speak up and fix that which needs fixing.

The neighbors of Rabbi Elozor ben Azarya were unlearned in the halachos of Shabbos, and sent their cow to graze with a strap between its horns, an act which is *osur*. When the chachomim saw this happen, they ordered Rabbi Elozor to do something about it, or else they would place him in *cherem*. As a *kapara*, Rabbi Elozor later fasted many fasts until his teeth turned black. Since Rabbi Elozor could have rebuked them, he was considered responsible for their actions, to the point that the Mishna refers to it as 'the cow of Rabbi Elzor ben Azarya'.

(שבת נ"ד ע"ב, ירושלמי פ"ה ה"ד)

HOW TO GUIDE

The tzaddik Reb Mendel Barrer was a maggid who traveled from town to town giving mussar and pointing out the deficiencies of the townspeople. However, he would only speak in places where he would be paid. He explained, "When I finish my mission on this earth, Hashem will ask me, 'Who are you to speak like this about my children?' I will answer, 'Since Hashem gave me the job of supporting my family, and my only skill was giving mussar, I had no other choice.'" If he would do this without payment, he would have no excuse...

The Rebbe explained that when rebuking in a manner of chassidus (rather than mussar), this approach is not necessary. For then, one points out to the other what needs to be improved (without highlighting the problems), which can be done in a pleasant manner. This method of rebuke is more successful and influential, and prevents claims from being made above against the one who is rebuking, for he is only bringing the cure for the sickness...

(דרך מצוותיך קצ"ו ע"ב, תו"מ חט"ו ע' 143)

The Alter Rebbe paskens in Shulchan Aruch that if a person sees another doing something wrong, he is obligated to guide him on the correct path and to inform him of his wrongdoing. He must repeatedly remind the other of the proper conduct ("even a hundred times"), until the other is angered and is not willing to listen further.

Lma'an Yishme'u

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לע"נ שרה רבקה בת ר' יוסף ע"ה

When rebuking, one must not cause embarrassment. One should speak softly, explaining that the rebuke is intended for the other person's benefit. In the event of a public aveirah, to avoid a chillul Hashem one may not keep quiet. Even when the other person will not listen to the rebuke, one still has the obligation to speak up one time, so that it does not become his responsibility.

(שו"ע אדמו"ר הזקן או"ח סי' קנ"ו, תר"ח, הל' אונאה וגניבת דעת)

Yeravam merited his kingship over the Yidden because he rebuked Shlomo Hamelech. Nevertheless, he was punished for doing it in public.

(סנהדרין ק"א)

The idea of a farbrengen, where the speakers usually demand improvement from the participants, is fundamental to chassidus. The rebuke at a farbrengen is only regarding matters that will not cause embarrassment to the participants, and since the earliest days it has been done successfully with love and deep affection.

(היום יום כ"ד תשרי)

The chossid Reb Hillel Paritcher once said in the name of the Tzemach Tzedek, that the double expression of rebuke in the Torah ("*hochei'ach tochi'ach*") implies that one must first rebuke oneself and then rebuke another. Reb Hillel explained that rebuke is effective only when it follows self rebuke.

(לקוטי דיבורים חלק א' ע' 182)

The Shaloh explains the possuk in Mishlei, "Do not rebuke a fool for he might hate you; rebuke a wise person and he will love you," that this is an instruction how to give rebuke. When rebuking another, do not call him a fool, by telling him his deficiencies, for then he will hate you and not listen to what you are telling him. Rather, treat him like a wise person, and tell him that his actions are not befitting for someone like him. This way, he will love you and listen to your rebuke.

(שלי"ה פ' דברים דרך חיים)

In the year תרצ"ה, the Friediker Rebbe underwent a medical procedure and learned a lesson in Avodas Hashem from the surgeons. In a letter he writes, "Today the doctors came to inject some medicine, and I watched how cautious they were while preparing for it. They sterilized the tools, dressed in special gowns, washed their hands, checked their nails, and then poured alcohol over my feet. Having just washed myself, I asked why this extra cleaning was necessary. 'No matter,' they answered, 'The policy is that before any injection is given, the area must be washed with alcohol, sterilizing it completely, because if some bacteria remain, the medicine will be ineffective and may even cause additional sickness RL.'

Rebuking another is like giving an injection. The sharp poke brings healing, but causes pain nevertheless. Therefore, it is necessary to make sure that all is clean, to enable the injection to have the desired effect.

(אג"ק מוהרי"צ חלק ג' ע' רצ"א)

In a maamar the Friediker Rebbe explains, when rebuking another one must act humbly and pained that this has happened during his time. He must include himself in the rebuke by finding some measure of the wrongdoing within himself b'dakus, in a slight form.

(ספר המאמרים קונטרסים ח"ב ע' שני"ח ע"ב)

In the year תש"א, the Friediker Rebbe sent Reb Sholom Ber Gordon to open a yeshiva in Newark, New Jersey. A few years later, Reb Sholom Ber was given the position of Rov in a large shul, where he encountered a number of problems. The members of the shul were not observant of Shabbos and the president of the shul owned a movie theatre that was open on Shabbos. Reb Sholom Ber tried to influence them by explaining the importance of Shabbos and stressed its severity by listing the punishments given for desecrating it.

He told the Rebbe of his difficulties, and the Rebbe answered, "You were born in Dokshitz and are familiar with a '*shvitz-bud*' (sauna). In the '*shvitz*', after pouring hot water on a person, they beat him with a leafy branch, and the person being hit pleads for more. Suppose you would take such a branch and hit this fellow in middle of the street, he would be greatly angered and scream at you, but in the bath house, where he is warmed up, he is happy to receive such treatment. Similarly, in the shul, it is necessary to warm them up with stories, and they will then gladly accept the mussar."

(מפי אחיו ר' ישראל שי' גארדאן)

The Rebbe explained, when stopping someone from actually committing an aveirah the obligation is greater (לאפרושי מאיסורא), yet one should still attempt to do so in a pleasant manner.

The Rebbe also points out that in the case that remaining silent will be understood by others as agreement, one must object regardless of its possible success. This can be seen from the torah's teaching to rebuke "a hundred times", even though he already tried ninety nine times without success.

(תו"מ תשמ"ב ח"ד ע' 2126, לקוטי שיחות חכ"א ע' 405)

LISTENING TO GUIDANCE

One should love and accept rebuke, for rebuke brings nachas to Hashem, goodness and bracha to the world, and chases away negativity.

The Rebbe Rashab writes in one of his letters, "Cherish criticism for it will lift you to true heights."

(תמיד כ"ח ע"א, היום יום י"ב סיון)

At a farbrengen the Rebbe said, "The gemara tells of the people who lived in the times of the shoftim. When rebuked about some wrongdoing, they would respond 'You have an even greater problem!' This is no excuse at all, for if the accusation is not true, then just say so, and if it is true, attacking the admonisher with not minimize the accusation..."

(תו"מ חט"ו ע' 143)

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