



A Taste of Torah

A Publication of **Metivta Tiferet Torah**

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The Chinuch of Yaakov Avinu

In Parshas Vayechi, Yaakov is approaching the end of his life and he gathers his children to prepare them for their holy mission of building the future of Klal Yisrael.

It seems that Yaakov rebukes some and blesses others. In fact, he was imparting a message to each of his children, telling them what was necessary for them to fulfill their missions.

When Yaakov speaks to Reuven, he tells him that he acted impulsively by moving the bed of Yaakov from the tent of Bilha into the tent of Leah. As great as Reuven was, and as sound as his calculations for doing this were, he still acted on some level with a sense of impulsivity which needed to be rectified. Therefore, Yaakov rebuked him about this very small sin.

When we think about it, it is perplexing. This event occurred more than 80 years earlier. And in 80 years Yaakov did not say one word to Reuven about the incident. Why did he wait so long?

The Baalei Mussar tell us that Tikkun Hamidos, besides being a Mitzvas Aseh in the Torah, is one of the main purposes of our existence. Would it not have been better to rebuke Reuven earlier to give him the opportunity to rectify this very small deficiency in his Middos?

We can find the answer in Sefer Devarim during another situation of rebuke. When Moshe Rabbeinu was coming up on the end of his life, the Possuk says: "ויהי בארבעים שנה בעשתי" - "It was in the fortieth year in the eleventh month on the first of the month".

Why does the Possuk tell us exactly the year, month and day? Rashi points out that Moshe only wanted to rebuke the people right before he died. He died exactly one week later, on the seventh of Adar.

Where did he learn to do such a thing? From Yaakov. Yaakov did not rebuke his children until right before he died as well.

Rashi explains that Yaakov reasoned that if he rebuked Reuven earlier, he may become alienated and leave him and join Eisav. In other words, Rashi is telling us that Yaakov was afraid that Reuven might become so shaken up, so embarrassed to face his father every day after he was chastised, that he would go so far as to join Eisav, and rebel against his dear father Yaakov.

Therefore, Yaakov waited till the end of his life to rebuke Reuven since he won't be as embarrassed, because he would not have to face Yaakov anymore after his death.

Moshe made the same calculation. He rebuked the people right before he died so the people would accept it in the same way.

This teaches us an amazing lesson in Chinuch.

Even in the most loving relationship between a father and son, as Yaakov and Reuven surely had, and even among greatest of tzaddikim, who Yaakov and Reuven were, rebuke has the power to turn a child off and severely alienate him. No matter how great the person, no matter how gentle the rebuke, no matter how loving the relationship, rebuke is very difficult to accept.

If rebuke could turn the tzaddik Reuven into a rasha, imagine what it could do to our children?

The passuk says "הוכח תוכיח את" - "עמיתך ולא תשא עליו חטא" - "Rebuke your fellow man and do not carry a sin against him", which means you have to rebuke him in a way that you will not carry a sin against him which is not to embarrass him, which can potentially turn him off.

How careful then we have to be as parents, and as Rebbeim, when we deal with our children and our students! We must carefully consider all of our interactions, especially if they involve rebuke. This is how we teach the next generation to come close to Hashem and to grow and strengthen themselves in Torah.

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