



Kinder Torah[®]

For parents to share with children at the Shabbos table
Parshas Devarim



Because They Love You

The book of Devarim is the book of *tochacha* (constructive criticism). Moshe Rabbeinu, shortly before his death, gathered the Jewish people together and reviewed their mistakes of the past forty years. He also taught and reviewed the fundamentals of Jewish thought and service to Hashem. Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch zt"l comments that the first eleven chapters of the book of Devarim contain the foundations of love, fear, and cleaving to Hashem. Not only for that generation, but for all time.

Does anyone like to hear *tochacha* (constructive criticism)? We usually try to avoid it and surely are not happy with the person who criticizes us. The "Daas Zekanim MiBaalei HaTosfos", in their commentary on the Torah, have a different outlook. "One who criticizes a person will later find favor in his eyes; more so than the one who unjustly praises him." Moshe Rabbeinu criticized the Jewish people, and Bilaam praised them. This is comparable to the son of a king who had two officers, one who loved him and one who hated him. The one who loved him told him that he must obey the word of the king. If not, his father would have no mercy upon him. The other officer told him to do whatever he liked. After all, his father is the king. Nothing will happen to him. The first officer is like Moshe Rabbeinu, who spoke these words of *tochacha*. They have protected and guarded us for thousands of years. The second officer is like Bilaam who said, "How good are your tents Yaakov". Do whatever you like. You are Hashem's favorite nation and He will never punish you.

The commentary concludes by stating that one who accepts *tochacha* will be blessed. The Jewish people were certainly willing to accept *tochacha*. How do we know that? Rav Leib Chasman zt"l in his sefer "Ohr Yohel" points out that just a word of hint was enough. The *tochacha* consisted of the name of the place where the sin occurred. Nothing

more was necessary. The Medrash Rabba (Devarim 1:9) states, "Hashem said to Moshe, 'Since the Jewish people accepted the *tochacha*, you must bless them.' Immediately Moshe Rabbeinu blessed them. All who accept *tochacha* merit blessings."

Kinderlach . . .

When we make mistakes, Abba and Imma must correct us. Sometimes a word is enough, but other times we need to hear more. It is not always pleasant to be criticized. When you think about it, you will realize that they are doing it because they love you. If not, they would just let you continue making mistakes.

However, they love you and want the best for you. You also want the best for yourself. You also want the bercho reserved for those who accept criticism. Now doesn't that make it much easier to listen?

Run or Walk?

"You all approached me saying, let us send men ahead of us to spy out the land" (Devarim 1:22). Rashi comments that everyone approached at once in a disorganized mass. However, when the Torah describes the scene at Har Sinai (Devarim 5:20) the procession was much more orderly. The young people showed deference to the old, who in turn allowed the leaders to go before them. The Keli Yakar points out that this too was part of the *tochacha* (constructive criticism). At the time of *Matan Torah* (the giving of the Torah on Har Sinai) Moshe Rabbeinu looked favorably upon the *derech erez* of the nation, as evidenced by their honoring each other. However, now, when sending out the spies, which was the beginning of the possession of the Land of Israel, the lack of *derech erez* revealed a fault in their value system. When it came to receiving the Torah, no one was running. Everyone was very polite. "Please, you go first. I am in no rush. Let the older people go first. They have more free time to sit and learn Torah. We are young and have other things to do." However, the scene

was completely different when it came time to inherit the Land of Israel, which was full of all of the good things in the world. "Me first! No me! Get out of my way, old man. I want to be the first to get my portion of the land." The Keli Yakar is very sharp in his criticism. When gathering for spiritual acquisitions, everyone is very polite and respectful because they have no real desire for it. But a gathering for material things, is the opposite. People push their way in to be first because of their strong desire.

Kinderlach . . .

Do you run to be the first one to class in the morning? Are you the first one to finish your homework? Do you hurry to bring your guest a drink just as Avraham Avinu did? Do you rush to do Imma a favor? On the other hand, do you wait politely and allow the adults to sit down first at a kiddush? Do you wait calmly for Imma to prepare lunch for you when you come home? Are you patient in line while waiting to enter the Yeshiva's dining room. If you do all of these things, then you have your priorities in the right place. You have learned from the words of the Keli Yakar to value spiritual acquisitions and run to them. However, you are calm and courteous when awaiting to receive material things. You see the opportunity to honor others by allowing them to go first.

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Simcha Groffman

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