

# Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

## The Destructiveness of Constructive Criticism

*based on the weekly Shmuess given by HaRav Shaya Cohen, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Zichron Aryeh*

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנחם | הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר | רפאל חיים דוב בן בן-ציון שלום | ר' ברוך בן ר' יהודה | שרה בת ר' יחזקאל | לרפואה שלמה יהושע דוד בן אלטא יענטא

Rebbe Elazar Ben Azariah said, (ערכין טז) “I would be astounded if there is someone in this generation who knows how to give rebuke.” It is evident from the words of Rebbe Elazar Ben Azariah, that properly correcting someone’s behavior is not an easy task as it requires extreme consideration of one’s dignity. In this week’s Parsha we are taught, that even one who is on the מדרגה of knowing how to give rebuke faces a unique set of challenges when having to rebuke their own child.

פרשת דברים begins with Moshe Rabbeinu listing all of the places that the Jewish people sinned while in the desert, as a way of subtly rebuking them for their prior follies. Rashi (1:3) explains that by Moshe waiting to rebuke them until the end of his life, he was following in the footsteps of Yaakov Avinu, and was employing Yaakov’s method of rebuke. Yaakov delayed his reprimand of the Shevatim until he was on his deathbed, fearing that if done earlier it may be to their detriment. He said to Reuven, “My son I didn’t rebuke you all of these years, so that you should not leave me and join my brother Eisav.” This thought regarding Reuven is echoed by the Ralbag in (פרשת וישלח) תועלת יב. The Ralbag points out, that there is no mention of Yaakov Avinu responding with anger towards Reuven for moving his bed. Only on his deathbed do we find Yaakov rebuking Reuven for this. The Ralbag extracts from here a powerful lesson regarding parenting. He says, “It is appropriate for a father to not be extreme in his anger towards his adult son who acts inappropriately, as it may overwhelm him and he will lose him. Rather the appropriate course of action is to draw him close so that you may guide him in the right path.”

Upon further reflection, even though he deemed it to be fitting and proper on his deathbed, Yaakov’s refrain in reproaching Reuven

earlier requires clarification. Chazal tell us that after sinning, Reuven was not in a state of denial. On the contrary, he was preoccupied with doing Teshuva. Given that he was so receptive to his mistake, why would Yaakov’s criticism overwhelm him? In addition, Chazal teach us that when someone goes into גלות, he must be accompanied by his Rebbe, as one can’t live without his Rebbe. Surely someone as great as Reuven understood the immeasurable value of his Rebbe, Yaakov Avinu, and would not forfeit that relationship. Lastly, Yaakov Avinu knew how to give rebuke with the utmost care and love, ensuring the absence of any slight. Why would such a gentle and thoughtful rebuke have such devastating effects on Yaakov and Reuven’s close relationship? In light of all of this, Yaakov’s concern that rebuking Reuven would drive him away seems extremely puzzling!

We can derive an important insight into father-son dynamics from Yaakov Avinu’s concern. Yaakov recognized that every child has an extreme desire for a relationship with his father that is devoid of any friction. If this need is not satisfied, the child may feel frustrated and pained, to the extent that he may feel forced to sever this relationship completely, in order to avoid feelings of anguish. Yaakov knew that it was possible that Reuven might have been so pained from any rebuke that he might get to the point of leaving him and joining Eisav! Understanding this, Yaakov felt he couldn’t take the chance of placing even the slightest wedge between him and Reuven. Expressing any annoyance or disapproval could be devastating, as it could destroy the totally harmonious relationship that Reuven yearned for. If Yaakov had to be so cautious with his rebuke, with a son like Reuven, how much more so does this apply to our familial relationships.

### Why did Priority-1 initiate the 1-Focus Say Nishmas Campaign?

Priority-1 initiated this campaign because we are passionate about helping people strengthen their emunah and develop a strong connection with Hashem. We have noticed a wonderful increase in awareness of Hashem’s absolute control over the world during the coronavirus pandemic. We want to ensure that the strides we have made on a communal level continue even after the crisis ends. That is the sole purpose of this campaign.





## Shir HaShirim Insights

*In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern*

In this week's Haftorah we read: "And when you lift up your hands, I will turn My eyes away from you; Though you pray at length, I do not hear (Rashi - because) Your hands are filled with blood. (Yeshayah 15:1)

Hashem tells us that when Klal Yisroel's hands are filled with blood He does not simply ignore our prayers. Rather, He turns His eyes away from us so as not to see nor hear us altogether (so to speak). Why can't He simply ignore us?

Perhaps we can explain this based upon the following Pasuk in (Shir HaShirim 6:5 with Rashi) where Hashem says to Klal Yisroel:

**Turn your eyes away from Me for they have made me haughty** - Like a young man whose betrothed is dear and pleasing to him, and her eyes are comely, and he says to her, "Turn away your eyes from me, for when I see you, my heart becomes haughty and proud, and my spirit becomes arrogant, and I cannot resist." The Holy One, Blessed Is He, said, "In this Beis Hamikdosh, it is impossible to restore to you the Ark, the Ark cover, and the Cheruvim, which excessively endeared you to Me in the first Beis Hamikdosh, to show you great affection, until you betrayed Me."

Hashem can not merely ignore our pleas when we call out to Him, as He tells us, "Turn away your eyes from me, for when I see you... I cannot resist," rather, He must, "Turn His eyes away from us," for if not, when He sees His beloved's hand lifted to Him in prayer, His love will overcome Him. For even while those very hands drip with blood, their hearts are, "Dear and pleasing to him, and their eyes (which are reflective of the true nature of the depth of their hearts) are comely." Such is the extent of Hashem's burning love for His children regardless of the depth of depravity they may have currently fallen to.



## ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

*A Westwood Realty Initiative*

*Every time he headed up the path to his son's front door, his heart overflowed with love. Tonight was no different. Yakov was the light of his life and he never hid it from him. Since he was a small child, he always made sure he lacked nothing. Even for the past ten years since Yakov's marriage he signed the monthly check that insured he had everything he needed. As he knocked on the door and let himself into the house his heart sank. There was the apple of his eye, but instead of the usual smile, his face was wet with tears. "Yakov, Yakov, what happened?!" he asked with fright. But Yakov could not manage to get a word out between the sobs. "Please Yakov, what happened? It can't be that bad." "It can't?" Yakov finally managed to say. "What will be with me? How will I feed my wife and kids?!" "What? What are you talking about? What happened?!" he asked. "You didn't hear?" Yakov responded. "The bank! The bank! They closed for good!" "So what?" he asked in shock. "So what?" his son responded, "That was your bank! That was where I cashed your check every month in order to feed my family! Now they'll starve!" "Oh Yakov, Yakov! My whole life I never stopped thinking of you! I make sure to find the money to give you each month so you never know the meaning of need, and you thought it was the bank teller that took care of you!?"*

Sometimes our lives are shaken when a channel through which we have come to expect our sustenance to arrive goes belly up. "What will be!" we cry out. And up in heaven, Someone looks down with tears in His eyes, "My son! Since the day you were born, I never stopped thinking of you! I made sure to supply you with all of your needs every day of your life! And you thought it was the bank teller that took care of you!?"