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PARSHAS  
DEVORIM 5777

# בְּחִיבָה

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RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS

Next issue will be H be beginning of Elul - Parshas Shoftim

## The Depth of our Soul

Prior to his death, Moshe Rabbeinu calls together the entire Bnei Yisrael to give them a final message. Every word Moshe spoke was from Hashem, yet the *Pasuk*<sup>1</sup> here states, "These are the words that Moshe spoke to all of Klal Yisrael," as if Hashem C'V had nothing to do with it.

The *Medrash*<sup>2</sup> explains that while it is true that Hashem is invoked in every message that Moshe Rabbeinu has given to Klal Yisrael, this message starts with words of *Tochacha*, rebuke for the *Aviros* that they did while in the desert, and Hashem does not want to be associated with anything that can be perceived as bad. Therefore, His name is left out when Moshe addresses the nation.

At first glance, this makes a lot of sense. Hashem is totally good, and won't even have the appearance of being associated with something that is not good. However, this explanation doesn't suffice, when we appreciate the value of *Tochacha*.

Many people identify *Tochacha* as harsh words, sometimes said in anger, as condemnation for immorality and crime. However, the Torah perspective is that there is true and pure purpose in *Tochacha*. The goal of all *Tochacha* is to help the recipient understand where they have gone wrong, and how they can serve Hashem in a better fashion. In short, *Tochacha* is meant to help a person achieve the ultimate goal of *Dveykus B'Hashem*, and being an *Eved Hashem*.<sup>3</sup>

With that perspective, *Tochacha* isn't bad at all, it's actually very good. Much like any business would welcome the opportunity to spend lower expenses, and raise revenue, every individual should appreciate the opportunity to lessen the *Aveiros* that we do, and expand our *Mitzvos*.

Yet, human nature is such that we don't appreciate *Tochacha*, and we are indeed hurt by it, and don't want to hear it. It may be good, but we perceive it as bad.

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### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

What can we do to be sensitive to others? Is this really something that we can work at, or is simply something that you either have or you don't?

Like all *Middos*, some people are created with certain challenges that others don't have. And indeed, some people are more aware of hurt they cause, or help they can offer, than others. But our biases and traits can be changed.

One way to become more aware of possible hurt that we cause is to focus on ourselves. Much like the *Pasuk*<sup>1</sup> states *ואהבת לרעך כמוך* and Hillel echoed that in his statement, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your friend,"<sup>2</sup> we can focus on what would hurt us, or make us happy. By understanding what we ourselves are sensitive to, we can then anticipate what would hurt or help our friends. By simply taking a moment before responding, and thinking, "Will this help or hurt?" we can save ourselves and our friends a lot of grief and misery.

1 Devarim 1:1

2 Yalkut Shimoni Sefer Shoftim 247:62

3 Ohr HaTzafun Sefer 1 Pages 55-56

*continued on next page*

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L'iluy Nishmas Shmuel ben Pinchas Dovid

1 Vayikra 19:18

2 Shabbos 31a

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Nevertheless, there is another matter to contend with. *Rashi*<sup>4</sup> explains that the *Tochacha* of Moshe was extremely subtle – he only referred to their *Aveiros* in an indirect fashion. The shame Klal Yisrael must have felt could not have been very great. In summary, *Tochacha* is only 'bad' because Klal Yisrael doesn't appreciate it, and even with their incorrect perspective, their hurt must have been almost trivial.

Be that as it may, Hashem is sensitive to any hurt caused, proper or improper, perceived or real. And therefore it is not befitting to place His name near something that may conceivably cause us hurt, as groundless as the pain may be. We see how far reaching one's sensitivity should be, as we strive to emulate the ways of Hashem.

## A Severe Lesson in Sensitivity

*Adapted from Kids Speak Volume 8*

Tons of snow had fallen and we decided to build the largest snowman in Eretz Yisrael. My friends and I spent two entire days working on it but at the end we were very satisfied with how it looked. People from far and wide came to see this three meter towering snowman and I felt very proud of my accomplishment. Another group of children did not like all the attention and first started making snide remarks at us and at the snowman. Seeing that it didn't bother us they came back later that day and proceeded to break apart our snowman. Hearing about what was happening we ran back to our snowman.

Before we got close we were horrified to see a bus spinning out of control and skidding in the direction of our snowman. Worse than that, it was headed towards the children breaking the snowman, and all that stood between them and the bus was the snowman. We closed our eyes, and heard the sound of the impact as the bus smashed into our snowman and spun around, skidding to a stop, leaving behind a deathly silence. We quickly ran over, fearing the worst, and were amazed to find the other children safe behind the snowman.

The very thing that they ridiculed and attempted to demolish is what actually saved their life.

<sup>4</sup> *Devarim* 1:1 *Rashi* s.v. אלה הדברים

### DID YOU KNOW?

- It is better to allow one self to be killed than to embarrass someone else publicly.<sup>1</sup>
- Embarrassing someone else is tantamount to killing them since the face initially reddens when the blood collects there and then becomes white when the blood drains from the face.<sup>2</sup>
- When the 1<sup>st</sup> *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed, only Rachel *Imeinu*, and her *Zechus* for protecting Leah's shame was able to elicit a promise from Hashem that Klal Yisrael will return to Eretz Yisrael. This *Zechus* was more powerful than the *Zechusim* of any of the *Avos* or Moshe Rabbeinu<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Bereishis* 38:25 *Rashi* s.v. והיא שלחה. See *Shaarei Teshuvah* 3:139 who says it's an obligation!

<sup>2</sup> *Baba Metziah* 58b, *Tosafos* s.v. דאזיל סומקא

<sup>3</sup> *Psichta* in *Eicha Rabah* 24

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