



THE CHALLENGE OF THE WEEK

(TRANSLATED FROM VEHA'AREV NA 3)

THE RIGHT WAY TO REBUKE

THE CHALLENGE: A young man approached Rav Zilberstein with a troubling question.

“Unfortunately,” he explained, “my father does not drive with the level of caution required by *Halacha*. He drives excessively fast, often ignores traffic signs and lights, and sometimes does not wear a seat belt. I have begged him many times to change his behavior, and I have even asked other people to speak to him, but nothing has helped. His response is always the same: ‘I am an experienced driver. Someone with my expertise knows how to protect himself and others.’

“One day, as I was walking home, I witnessed a terrible accident. A driver who had been driving recklessly was lying injured on the road, bleeding and moaning as rescue workers treated him.

“I immediately ran home and called my father. ‘Please come with me to the next street. There is something there that will be very interesting for you.’

“When we arrived, I pointed to the injured driver and said, ‘Father, look at what happened to this man! This is what can happen when someone drives carelessly. How long will you continue putting your life at risk?’

“Afterward, I began wondering whether I had acted properly. I have two questions:

1. Was I permitted to rebuke my father in this manner?
2. Was I permitted to bring him to look at the injured man, considering how humiliating and painful it is for an injured person to be observed in such a vulnerable state?

THE SOLUTION: The *Midrash* (*Tanchuma*, Shemini 11) relates a fascinating story: There was once a pious man whose father was accustomed to drinking excessive amounts of wine. (continued on next side)

DVAR TORAH – “On That Very Day”

And Hashem spoke to Moshe on that very day, saying: ‘Ascend these heights of Avarim to Mount Nevo... (32:48-49).

The *Mefarshim* ask: Why does the Torah emphasize that Hashem spoke to Moshe “on that very day”? And which day was it referring to?

The *Ibn Ezra* and *Chizkuni* explain that this was the same day that Moshe taught Parshat Ha'azinu to *Klal Yisrael*.

Rashi points out that the expression “on that very day” appears three times in the Torah. By Noach, the Torah says that he entered the *Teivah* “on that very day.” This teaches that Noach entered the Ark in broad daylight, in front of everyone. Although the people had threatened to prevent him from entering, they were powerless to stop him.

Similarly, regarding *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, the Torah says that *Klal Yisrael* left Egypt “on that very day.” Although the Egyptians had sworn that they would never allow the Jews to leave and would kill anyone who attempted to escape, Hashem demonstrated His power by having the Jewish people leave publicly, in the middle of the day, with the Egyptians unable to stop them.

The third occurrence is in our *Parsha*. *Klal Yisrael* had declared that they would not allow Moshe to ascend Har Nevo and die. Hashem therefore told Moshe to ascend in broad daylight, demonstrating that no one could prevent him from fulfilling Hashem’s command.

The *Ohr Hachaim* adds that this also explains why the verse uses the word “*Leimor*” – “saying.” Moshe was commanded to tell *Klal Yisrael* that he would be ascending Har Nevo. Although they knew that Moshe’s death was approaching, they were not prepared to accept that it would happen, and Hashem was emphasizing that nothing could interfere with His decree.

The *Tzror HaMor* combines these explanations and reveals the extraordinary greatness of Moshe Rabbenu. On the seventh of Adar, the day of his passing, Moshe was able to write thirteen *Sifrei Torah* – one for each *Shevet* and one to be placed in the *Aron*. He then called upon Heaven and earth to serve as witnesses to the words of *Ha'azinu* and taught the entire song to *Klal Yisrael*. Afterward, Hashem commanded him to ascend Har Nevo while it was still the middle of the day. Before ascending, Moshe blessed the entire nation.

The ability to accomplish all of this on the very day of his death was itself an extraordinary miracle.

Moshe Rabbenu teaches us that a person’s final day can still be filled with tremendous accomplishment. Even when he knew that his life was coming to an end, Moshe did not withdraw from his mission. He wrote Torah, taught Klal Yisrael, blessed the nation, and fulfilled Hashem’s final command.

We should never think that it is too late to accomplish something meaningful. Every day – and especially every moment – can still be filled with Torah, Mitzvot, and acts that leave a lasting impact.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE WEEK (TRANSLATED FROM VEHA'AREV NA 3)

(continued from previous side) When the father became drunk, he would lie in the street, where children would mock him, throw objects at him, and call out, "Look at this drunkard!"

The son was terribly embarrassed and distressed by his father's behavior. He repeatedly pleaded with him, "Father, please do not go to the wine house. I will bring you the finest wine available and serve it to you at home. You will have everything you want, but please do not go out and disgrace yourself and me."

Eventually, the father agreed. The son kept his promise and provided his father with food and drink every day. When his father became drunk, the son would put him to bed and return home.

One rainy day, the son was on his way to the synagogue when he saw a drunk man lying in a puddle in the marketplace. Water from the gutters was pouring over him, while children were beating him, throwing mud into his face and even into his mouth.

The son thought to himself: "Perhaps if I bring my father here and show him the terrible disgrace that this drunkard is suffering, he will realize what can happen to a person who drinks excessively and will stop."

He therefore went home, brought his father to the marketplace, and pointed to the drunkard.

"Father, look! This is what a drunkard looks like!"

But the father's reaction was completely unexpected. He approached the drunkard and asked him, "Where did you get such excellent wine that you became so drunk? Please tell me where I can buy it!"

The son's attempt at rebuke had achieved precisely the opposite of what he intended.

Rav Zilberstein asked his brother-in-law, Rav Chaim Kanievsky, what lesson the *Midrash* is teaching us. Is it telling us to refrain from rebuking others?

Rav Chaim explained that this is certainly not the message. Rather, the *Midrash* teaches us that before rebuking someone, a person must carefully consider whether his words are likely to have the desired effect. Sometimes a person may deliver a powerful rebuke, but because he has not properly considered the other person's mindset, the rebuke can accomplish nothing – or even produce the opposite result.

This is consistent with the *Gemara* (*Yevamot* 65b), which teaches:

"Just as it is a *Mitzvah* for a person to say something that will be heard, so it is a *Mitzvah* for a person not to say something that will not be heard."

The *Gemara* derives this from the verse, "Do not rebuke a scoffer, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise person, and he will love you" (*Mishlei* 9:8).

Accordingly, Rav Zilberstein explained that the same principle applies to the young man's situation. Before bringing his father to see the accident, he should have considered whether this particular rebuke would actually influence him.

If the son knows that his father is excessively confident in his driving abilities and believes that accidents happen only to inexperienced or careless drivers, then there is little reason to expect the sight of an injured driver to change his behavior. His father might simply think, "That man was injured because he does not know how to drive properly. I am an experienced driver, so this could never happen to me."

In such a case, bringing his father to the scene would not constitute effective rebuke, and therefore the son should not have done so.

There is another important question to address: Was it permissible to bring the father to look at the injured man in the first place?

The *Midrash's* story itself does not necessarily prove that it is always permissible to observe someone in such a humiliating condition. The drunkard described in the *Midrash* was intoxicated to the point that he was not in his right mind and was unaware of the humiliation he was suffering. Furthermore, his own behavior had brought him into that state.

In the case of an injured person, however, the circumstances are entirely different. A person lying wounded and bleeding on the street would certainly prefer not to be watched and examined by others.

Nevertheless, Rav Zilberstein explained that if seeing the injured person would genuinely benefit the careless driver and lead him to drive more safely, the injured man's dignity would not necessarily prevent such an action. The purpose would be to prevent another person from endangering himself and others.

Even so, when possible, it would be preferable to observe the injured person discreetly, perhaps from an angle where he would not notice that he was being watched.

Finally, the young man asked Rav Zilberstein, "What should I do about my father? How can I protect him?"

The Rav advised him that whenever his father travels by car, he should recite *Tehillim* 91 and *Daven* for his father's safety with the requests found in *Tefillat HaDerech*.

SHABBAT SHALOM!