

BILVAVI

**48 WAYS
LOVING REBUKE
ENCOURAGING
YOURSELF**

Divrei Chizuk Given in Mordy's Shteebel in Lakewood

שיעורים בארה"ב אייר תשפ"ג 018

משנה ו' מ"ח קנייני תורה - אוהב את התוכחות

REBUKING OURSELVES FROM WITHIN

One of the 48 ways to acquire the Torah, the Mishnah (*Avos 6:6*) says, is to love *tochachah* - rebuke.

Certainly most people do not love to get rebuked. The Gemara says that almost no one in the generation can handle rebuke, and likewise, almost no one in the generation is eligible to give it.

Simply we understand that “rebuke” is when a person does something forbidden, and someone else comes and rebukes him: “You did something that was *assur* (*forbidden*)” Or, “You did something that was inappropriate.” But there is also a way to get rebuke from within ourselves, without needing another person to come keep us on track.

ACCESSING NOT-YET-UTILIZED POTENTIAL

Tochachah is from the words *toch koach* – “within, there is power.” In the *Asher Yatzar* blessing we say that Hashem created every person with wisdom. So every person has wisdom within him, which he needs to bring to the fore. And, the Maharal says that a person is called *adam* from the word *adamah*, earth, just like we plant seeds in the earth and it produces plants and fruits, so does a person have potential which he needs to utilize.

So what is rebuke? It really means the clarity of knowing and being clear about “What

powers do I have? What potential do I have which I haven’t yet utilized?”

So – this is how a person can rebuke himself [he can keep himself on track when he becomes aware of his abilities and he is making sure to try to use them], without needing others to come and set him back on track.

The first step one must know is: “What are my capabilities?” The second step, after that, is: “What abilities am I using and which abilities are still in my potential which I haven’t yet learned?”

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING WHAT YOUR BEST ABILITY IS

First, a person must become very clear about the unique potential that Hashem has given him. Certainly Hashem gave each of us many different abilities. In order for a person to utilize his potential properly, one cannot do

it all at once in one shot. What then is the proper way to do it?

Hashem gave each person one special quality among the many abilities that he has. It is unique, and no one else has it. That unique

ability within each of us is the ability that we have to mainly be using more than any other ability.

Certainly we need to try to use all our abilities as much as we can, but we must know what the main one is and make sure that we are mainly using it.

For example if you want to renovate your house. You can't do it all at once because it's too expensive, so you pick one part of the house to renovate first. Are you first going to renovate the storage space of your house?

Or the garage? It makes most sense to begin renovating the house with the room that's more central to living, like the dining room or living room, or maybe the focal point of the house which you see right where you walk in. The point is that you first have to focus on the most important part of the house.

So it is with our abilities of our soul. We have many abilities and it's good to use all of them. But we need to prioritize. We must know what our greatest ability is, and we have to make sure that we are using it often.

HOW WE CAN KNOW WHAT OUR BEST ABILITY IS

There are two ways how we can know it.

The first way to know it is, by seeing what value each ability has, and seeing which is the most valuable to you.

Every person grows up with a certain value system, so he places more value on one thing more than another. In some homes, the focus was on *chessed*. In other houses, the focus was *hakaras hatov* - to always say "thank you" and express gratitude. In other homes, the focus was *davening*. And understandably, there are homes where the main focus is on learning Torah. Certainly all of these ways are right - but the question is: What do you, personally, excel in? Where is your main strength?

Chazal say that no person is equal, we all have different faces, personalities, *middos*,

and ways of thinking (Talmud Bavli Berachos 58a). A person has to know: What is currently my greatest unique ability? This shouldn't be determined by what you want to be, or what you wish you were, but by knowing: "What is actually my unique ability that I have right now?"

But there is a subtle point to understand here. Sometimes a person says, "My whole family focuses on a certain thing, so I have to focus on it too." But that's not necessarily your uniqueness, it's just the way you grew up and the way you were raised. It's not necessarily your main strength.

For example, in some homes where the father in a successful lawyer, and he may decide that his children should all become lawyers just like him. This happens many times.

Just because the parent excels at a certain job - everyone in the family has to do that thing? Can we say that each of the children have the talent to become a lawyer just like their father? Perhaps this is what he was born into and this is what he hears about all day in his house, so maybe it should just stay that way with him too...? It is almost certain that at least one of the children has a different talent than the parents, and he will have to do something else that the parents didn't do. The child has difficulty when he grows up and is now an adult pursuing a job, because he feels pressured to do the same thing his father did, when this is not for him at all to do, and there is really something else much more appropriate for him.

Each of our three *Avos* had their main quality which each of them excelled in. Avraham Avinu's special trait was *chessed* - love and kindness, and Yitzchok Avinu's special trait was *yirah*, strictness and fear of Hashem, and Yaakov Avinu's main trait was diligence in Torah study. Avraham Avinu pursued kindness, he taught people about Hashem, and he hosted guests all the time. Imagine Yitzchok Avinu is seeing all this - what does he need to think? Does Yitzchok Avinu have to say, "I have to do the same exact thing that my father did - I also have to host guests all the time, I also have to pursue kindness, and I also have to convert people to believing in

G-d, just like my great father did?" Clearly, Yitzchok Avinu was aware of how great his father was, but he also knew that he had his own *avodah* to do, his own personal share on this world, and it was very different than his father's.

One of the Chassidic *Rebbes* was *niftar*, and his son went to go sit in his father's seat. One of the older Chassidim there went over to him and said, "I knew a long time ago that you would do differently than what your father did." He answered, "I am continuing exactly what my father did, I didn't change anything. My father did his *avodah*, and I am doing mine. I am continuing his legacy of *avodah*, but I am doing it in my own way." They said to him, "But you are doing different things that your father didn't do." He answered, "I am doing my *avodah*, and he had to do his."

Yitzchok didn't have to continue the exact *chessed* his father Avraham did, because that wasn't his purpose on the world. Yitzchok Avinu had his own *avodah* to do which was very different from his father's.

Every person grows up in a certain family where he is drawn after certain kinds of personalities and interests based on the environment he grew up in and which influenced him until today. If a person would be born into a different community or family, would he act the same way he acts now, or is

he always a product of his environment? Most people when they grow up, they act according to the way they grew up in the society they were born into. So most people as adults are continuing how they grew up as children. Certainly everything is run by *Hashgachah Peratis* (Hashem's Divine Providence) and Hashem's Divine Providence arranges which home or environment a person is born into, but each person is deciding if he wants to continue or not in the same exact way he grew with and was raised with.

Let us sharpen the concept. Let's say we have a *goy*, but he believes in Hashem and he's thinking of converting to become a Jew. Perhaps he should think to himself: "Why should I convert to the Jewish religion? If Hashem in His Divine Providence made me born as a *goy* and not a Jew, then why should I go against His plan and convert into Judaism?" But the answer to this is that the concept of Divine Providence doesn't mean that you must remain your entire life the way you were born. Divine Providence arranged for you to be born in a certain family and environment, to bring you to a point of free will where you will decide if you want to continue on that exact path or not.

There were many Gedolim who grew up in homes and environments that were very different from what they ended up becoming.

Everyone has to believe that Hashem decided which home and environment he was born into, and every person must honor his parents with the greatest respect. But after one is doing that, he must think: What does Hashem want me to do with my life? Does he want me to just continue in the exact way I was born in or does He want me to utilize any potential I didn't use yet?

If a father is Rosh Yeshivah or a Rav, that doesn't mean that the child must think I have to become a Rosh Yeshivah or a Rav. Though it's true that the father is doing what Hashem wants from him, that doesn't mean that his son has to serve Hashem in the same exact way that his father did. Yitzchok Avinu was very different than his father, though he recognized that his father was the greatest in *chessed*, he knew what his *avodah* was and he knew that he had his own personal share on the world that was very different than his father's. Avraham made the prayer of *Shacharis* - and Yitzchok made the prayer of *Minchah*. It's not that Yitzchok was looking to take the easy route and take a more comfortable path than his father's, nor was he seeking to be different than his father. It is just that he was focused on revealing his unique potential.

This is the meaning of how "to love rebuke". It means that one has to know his own personal share, to know how much of his abilities he

has so far utilized, and how he can continue to utilize his abilities better.

Therefore, every person - no matter what place or society or family he was born into

- must know that Hashem decided that this is the best possible place for him to be born into, and he must also know that Hashem wants him to utilize his own unique potential.

HOW TO SEE RESULTS FROM ALL OUR EFFORTS

The more that a person is *zocheh* to do his unique *avodah* and utilize his own potential, he will see the fruits of his efforts, as well as the fruits of those fruits. Just like seeds produce fruit, so too if a person is utilizing his unique potential, he will keep seeing the results of it.

Now we can say, with Hashem's help, a very clear definition. If a person sees that he has been working for many years at something and he sees no results from it or he's not seeing that much success at it, it is very possible that the reason for this is because these aren't his real talents and capabilities. He's not using his true talents, and instead he's trying so hard to become talented and successful at something that's not really 'for him' to do. He's working so hard at something for so many years at something that's just not for him. No matter how much he works at it, he's not going to see that much results from it.

Rav Naftali Trop said that there are three types of fields mentioned in the Gemara – *ziburis*, *beinonis*, and *idyos* – the bad, so-so, and good kinds of fields. Simply speaking, there is poor quality soil and there is better quality soil. But the Gemara says that some

kinds of plants grow better in the 'bad' kinds of fields, while some things grow better in the so-so fields, and some plants grow better in the high-quality soil. So really, there are certain seeds and produce that will grow better in the 'bad' fields. Based upon this, Rav Naftoli Trop explained: Our problem is that we don't know which of our 'fields' – our capabilities – are which. We don't know if a certain ability is really our highest quality and we don't know what our weakest spot is, and we don't know which of our abilities we should be using more than others. They are all good abilities that we are given - just we don't know how to use them, we don't know which abilities are central to us personally, and which are not as needed.

If we would know what our best abilities are, everyone would be investing in their best abilities and then we would see a lot more results. When a person wants to work hard at everything he has heard about and what he wishes he could be, but he's not working according to his actual capabilities, that's the root that leads to failure. They're working from the outside, not from the inside.

SUCCESSFUL CHINUCH

A common example of is that a person gets married and has all kinds of children, each with different personalities. Some people make a rule for their house, “This is what we do in our house.” Hashem gave him 5 children, and he wants all of them to follow the same exact recipe and he wants to educate them all with the same exact method of *chinuch*.

Now we shall say a sharp statement about this: This is similar to what happened in Sodom. Chazal said about Sodom that if someone came to Sodom and he needed a bed to sleep in but he didn't fit the bed, if he was too tall they would cut him down to size until he fit the bed, and if he was too short they would stretch him out. The attitude of Sodom is when a person wants everyone to do exactly what he thinks needs to be done. Chazal in Avos discuss one who says, “What's for me is for me, and what is for you is for you”, which is the trait of Sodom. There are many explanations what this means, but some explain it to mean that it's when a person says, “Everyone has to think exactly like how I think, everyone has to do the way I do.”

It is written, “*Educate a child according to his path.*” So if a person has 5 children, he must know *at least* 5 ways of *chinuch* - he cannot only learn one approach of *chinuch* and apply

it to all of them.

Often parents will say to a child, “Why are you doing that, if your brother doesn't do that?” Or, “Our neighbor's child doesn't do that, so why are you doing this?” But Chazal say that every person is created unique (Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 38). Whether in regards to yourself, or with regards to how you deal with your family and children and others, you must be unique with yourself and serve Hashem according to your unique abilities and not according to what you heard and picked up, and you must see the uniqueness of each person and not try to make everyone fit the same mold.

This is how you need to raise your family - with this very attitude. In many cases, not being aware of this is what creates difficulty for so many children, and many of them struggle and abandon religion, all because they were told that they must to go in a certain way which wasn't tailored to their souls and abilities.

A father has to tell his children: “We must all do the will of Hashem - completely. And we also must use our unique abilities that Hashem gave us.” Each of these factors is no less important than the other. In your unique way, that is how you must do the

will of Hashem. A sensible father will tell his children, "You will make me proud of you, as long as you do Hashem's will - even if you do very differently than me. I will be just as happy with you, as long as you do Hashem's will, even if it's totally not what I did."

Avraham was very proud of Yitzchok, even though Yitzchok didn't do what his father did and didn't continue the exact legacy

of his father. But if a person has a *chessed* organization, many times the children are pressured to do the same thing and the father tells the children "You will make me proud of you only if you do this too." But Yitzchok didn't pursue *chessed* like Avraham did, and he didn't obligate himself out of gratitude to his father to do what his father did.

KLAL YISRAEL, MITZVOS & YOUR OWN INDIVIDUALITY

It's very clear. Hashem created 600,000 souls in the Jewish people. When it comes to keeping the Torah and following the *halachah*, we all keep the same Torah and the same *halachah*, and there's no uniqueness. We are all the same in that aspect. But when it comes to serving Hashem, each person has their unique way. Each person must wonder deeply: "What's my unique share, what's my

unique way, what's my unique power that Hashem gave me? How can I use it more?"

This is the inner way to utilize your potential, and to be happy, with your personal portion that you have been given.

May we be *zocheh* to receive a semblance of what we got at Har Sinai, and that each one of us should utilize our unique potential.

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שיעורים. בארה"ב אייר תשפ"ג 018 משנה 1 תורה קניית - אוהב את

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