

Dvar Torah

by Rabbi Chanoch Yeres

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

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KI TAVO

This week our children and grandchildren are once again beginning the school year. We wish them all a good, healthy and meaningful year of studies. There are many lessons for teachers and parents alike that we can learn from the Torah, but in this week's parsha there is a particular message that stands out. Parshat Ki Tavo discusses the Rebuke, the TOCHACHA and curses the Jewish people will receive upon failure to follow G-d's word. To give rebuke or criticism is a very sensitive issue. On the one hand, it can teach a person to improve oneself, however, if stated in a wrong fashion, can break a person's motivation.

The Torah hints this to us at the end of Yaakov's life when he is to bless them or in a more correct description, he was to give them a building critique of their personalities. The Rabbis emphasized how Yaakov waited until his deathbed before criticizing his sons, lest they take it the wrong way and accuse of him of having a personal agenda.

In this week's parsha, the Jewish people recite the curses that will befall them if they stray. Rashi

alludes to the question of why there is eleven curses. I would imagine that there should be ten curses to cancel the Ten Commandments, due to failure in keeping the them. I would think maybe there should be twelve curses to correlate with the twelve tribes that will enter into Israel. Why eleven curses?

Rashi, quoting Rabbi Moshe HaDarshan, elaborates on the special message from the Torah. He points out that eleven curses were for all the tribes minus one - excluding the tribe of Shimon. Why exclude one curse for Shimon? He answers that Moshe intended to leave out the tribe of Shimon when he blesses the other tribes at the end of his life; Shimon would not deserve a blessing because of their sinful actions in the desert. Therefore, to avoid further humiliation, the Torah leaves out one curse, one less critical statement for that tribe. Here, once again the Torah alludes to the need to have Derech Eretz, dignity, when being critical of someone, in order to allow the person to be accepting of the criticism to improve himself as oppose to taking it personally with anger and hatred, while being insulted and ignoring the real message.

May we introspect and be accepting of comments from others during this period of Elul to be able to improve ourselves and be sensitive to others

how we make comments or criticism to other people, even family, that may hurt and deflect the whole purpose that was intended.