

## How to Give Rebuke

### Deut., Ch. 1

1. These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on that side of the Jordan in the desert, in the plain opposite the Red Sea, between Paran and Tofel and Lavan and Hazeroth and Di Zahav.
2. "It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea."
3. It came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first of the month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the L-rd had commanded him regarding them;
4. After he had smitten Sihon, king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, and Og, king of the Bashan, who dwelt in Ashtaroth in Edrei.
5. On that side of the Jordan, in the land of Moab, Moses commenced [and] explained this Law, saying....

*These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on the other side of the Jordan, in the desert, in the Arava, opposite Suf, between Paran, and Tofel, and Lavan, and Hazerot, and Di-Zahav (Deuteronomy 1:1)*

#### Sifri; Rashi; Onkelos

The entire book of Deuteronomy was spoken by Moses in the last five weeks of his life. It was his last will and testament. According to the Sifri, the numerous place names listed here are not landmarks indicating where Moses spoke these words -- indeed, some of these places do not even exist as geographical locations. Rather, these are words of rebuke by Moses to the people of Israel. Instead of mentioning their sins outright, he alluded to them with these place names:

"In the desert" -- the time they complained "if only we would have died in the desert" (Exodus 17:3)

"In the Arava (Plain)" -- their worship of Baal Peor in the Plains of Moab (Numbers 25)

"Opposite Suf" -- the trouble they made at the shores of Yam Suf, the Red Sea (see Exodus 14:11 and Rashi on Exodus 15:22) "Paran" -- the sin of the Spies, who were dispatched from Paran (as recounted in Numbers 13 and later in our own Parsha). "Tofel" and "Lavan" (meaning "libel" and "white") -- their libeling the white manna (Numbers 21:5). "Hazerot" -- where Korach's mutiny against Moses took place. "Di Zahav" (literally "too much gold") -- the sin of the Golden Calf.

#### Yalkut Shimoni

It would have been fitting that the rebukes (in the Book of Deuteronomy) be pronounced by Balaam, and that the blessings (in the Parshah of Balak) be said by Moses... But G-d said: Let Moses, who loves them, rebuke them; and let Balaam, who hates them, bless them.

*It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Se'ir to Kadesh-Barnea (1:2)*

#### Rashi

Moses said to them: see what you have caused! There is no shorter way from Horeb (Mount Sinai) to Kadesh-Barnea than by the way of Mount Se'ir, and even that is a journey of eleven days; nevertheless, you traversed it in three days -- for on the 20th of Iyar they set forward from Horeb (as per Numbers 10:11) ... and on the 29th of Sivan they sent the Spies from Kadesh-Barnea (as per Talmud, Taanit



#### פרק א

א. אלה הדברים אשר

דבר משה אל כל

ישראל בעבר הירדן

במדבר בערבה מול

סוף בין פארן ובין תפל ולבן ונחצרות ודי זקב:

ב. אחד עשר יום מחרב דרך הר שעיר עד קדש

ברנע: ג. ויהי בארבעים שנה בעשתי עשר

חדש באחד לחדש דבר משה אל בני ישראל

ככל אשר צנה ה' אתו אלהם: ד. אחרי הכתו

את סיחן מלך האמרי אשר יושב בחשבון ואת

עוג מלך הבשן אשר יושב בעשתרת באדרעי:

ה. בעבר הירדן בארץ מואב הואיל משה באר

את התורה הזאת לאמר

29); deduct from this period the 30 days they spend at the "Graves of Lust" where they ate meat for a "month of days" (Numbers 11:20) and the seven days they spend at Hazerot for the seclusion of Miriam there (ibid.12:15-16); consequently, they traveled that entire way in three days. So much did the Divine Presence trouble itself for your sake to hasten your entry into the Land! And because you acted corruptly [in the incident of the Spies], you were kept going round Mount Se'ir for forty years.

*These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel (1:1)*

### **Chassidic Saying**

It was only to the people of Israel that Moses spoke of their iniquities and failings. To G-d, Moses spoke only of the virtues of Israel, and justified them no matter what they did.

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

When rebuking the Jewish people here, Moses did not mention, or even allude to their sins. Rather, in order to maintain their dignity, he merely mentioned the places where they had sinned. This teaches us how careful we must be not cause distress to another person. While these words of rebuke were absolutely necessary, and were for serious sins, Moses made sure to allude instead of accuse, to gently hint at their misdemeanor, in order to open, the hearts and minds of the people and draw them close with warmth.

*Moses also waited until after he had smitten Sichon (1:4)*

### **The Lubavitcher Rebbe**

A further reason Moses had for waiting to rebuke the Jews until after he had conquered the Amorite kings is the fact that people accept rebuke more readily after having received some material benefit from the person administering the rebuke. The material favor in this case is not an act of hypocrisy. By rebuking someone, we are doing them a spiritual favor, so by preceding this spiritual favor with a material favor, we ensure that both parties relate to the rebuke in the proper light. Otherwise one of the parties might consider the rebuke as an opportunity to fulfill some form of malevolence. The material favor creates an atmosphere of goodwill and neutralizes defense mechanism. By his example, Moses showed us that this principle applies even when the individual or group is in need of rebuke for a sin as grave as the making of the golden calf.

## SUMMARY

- No one is immune to being sensitive or feeling hurt when being admonished. Say rebuke lovingly, hinting to the wrong doing rather than magnifying it.
- Moses, not Balaam said the rebuke. Rebuke should be said by someone who loves the individual, not someone bent on finding his wrong doings.
- Moses said the rebuke directly to the people. Rebuke should be spoken directly to the individual.
- Moses waited to rebuke in order to extend some material favor to the individual being rebuked to ensure good will.
- At all times remember, rebuke or punishment is not an end in itself, rather its purpose is to improve the recipient.

