

Fill Your Own Cup 5786 – Omer Series – Interpersonal Relationships

Session Two – Tochecha - How Constructive Confrontation Builds Stronger Relationships

1) Leviticus 19:17-18

(17) You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart. Reprove your kinsfolk but incur no guilt because of them. (18) You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. Love your fellow as yourself: I am the LORD. .

ויקרא יט:יז-יח

(יז) לֹא־תִשְׂנֵא אֶת־אֶחִיךָ בְּלִבְּךָ
הוֹכַח תּוֹכִיחַ אֶת־עַמִּיתְךָ וְלֹא־
תִשָּׂא עָלָיו חֲטָא: (יח) לֹא־תִקֹּם
וְלֹא־תִטּוֹר אֶת־בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ וְאָהַבְתָּ
לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה:

2) Brené Brown, The Gifts of Imperfection (2010)

We cultivate love when we allow our most vulnerable and powerful selves to be deeply seen and known, and when we honor the spiritual connection that grows from that offering with trust, respect, kindness and affection.

Love is not something we give or get; it is something that we nurture and grow, a connection that can only be cultivated between two people when it exists within each one of them – we can only love others as much as we love ourselves.

Shame, blame, disrespect, betrayal, and the withholding of affection damage the roots from which love grows. Love can only survive these injuries if they are acknowledged, healed, and rare.

3) Rashi on Leviticus 19:17

"And you shall not bear sin on his account" – that is, when you rebuke him, do not embarrass him in public, such that you would bear sin on his account.

רש"י על ויקרא יט:יז

"וְלֹא תִשָּׂא עָלָיו חֲטָא" — לא
תִּלְבִּינּוּ אֶת פְּנֵי רֵבִיבִים, וְתִהְיֶה
וְתִשָּׂא עָלָיו חֲטָא בְּעִבּוּר כָּךְ.

4) Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot De'ot 6:6

When one person wrongs another, the wronged party should not remain silent and hate him, as it is said of the wicked: "And Avshalom did not speak to Amnon either good or bad, for Avshalom hated Amnon" (II Samuel 13:22).

Rather, it is a mitzvah upon him to inform him and to say to him: "Why did you do such-and-such to me? Why did you sin against me in this matter?" – as it is said, "Reprove, yes, reprove your kinsman" (Leviticus 19:17).

And if he returns and asks him to forgive him, he must forgive. And the forgiver should not be cruel.

רמב"ם, משנה תורה, הלכות דעות

ו':
כְּשֵׁיחֲטָא אִישׁ לְאִישׁ, לֹא יִשְׁטַמְנוּ
וְיִשְׁתַּקּוּ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בְּרִשְׁעִים: "וְלֹא
דַּבֵּר אֲבָשָׁלוֹם עִם אַמְנוֹן לְמַרְעֵוֹ וְעַד
טוֹב כִּי שָׁנֵא אֲבָשָׁלוֹם אֶת אַמְנוֹן."
אֲלֵא מִצְוָה עָלָיו לְהוֹדִיעֵוֹ וְלֹמַר לוֹ:
לָמָּה עָשִׂיתָ לִּי כֹךָ וְכָךְ, וְלָמָּה חֲטָאתָ
לִּי בְּדַבֵּר פְּלוֹנִי, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "הוֹכַח
תּוֹכִיחַ אֶת עַמִּיתְךָ."
וְאִם חָזַר וּבִקֵּשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ לְמַחֵל לוֹ,
צָרִיךְ לְמַחֵל. וְלֹא יִהְיֶה הַמּוֹחֵל
אֲכֹרֵז.

5) Babylonian Talmud, Bava Metzia 31a

"Reprove, yes reprove" – this teaches that even a hundred times. "Reprove" – I would only know [that this applies to] a master with a student; from where [do we know] even a student to his master? The verse teaches: "reprove, yes reprove" – in any case.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת בבא מציעא ל"א.

"הוֹכַח תּוֹכִיחַ" — מִלְּמִד שֶׁאֶפְלוּ מֵאֵה
פְּעָמִים.
"הוֹכַח" — אֵין לִי אֵלֹא הָרַב לְתַלְמִיד,
תַּלְמִיד לְרַב מִנֵּן? תַּלְמוּד לֹמַר: "הוֹכַח
תּוֹכִיחַ" — מִכָּל מְקוֹם.

<p>6) Babylonian Talmud Tractate Shabbat 54b Everyone who can protest the sin of their household and does not is responsible for the people of their household. (Who can protest the sin of) the people of their city, (and does not) is responsible for the people of their city. (Who can protest the sin of) the whole world, (and does not) is responsible for the whole world.</p>	<p>תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת נד : כל מי שאפשר למחות לאנשי ביתו ולא מיחה נתפס על אנשי ביתו באנשי עירו נתפס על אנשי עירו בכל העולם כולו נתפס על כל העולם כולו.</p>
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<p>7) Babylonian Talmud Tractate Arachin 16b § The Sages taught in a <i>baraita</i>: “You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall rebuke [<i>hokhe’ah tokhiah</i>] your neighbor, and do not bear sin because of him” (Leviticus 19:17). Why does the verse specify “in your heart”? One might have thought that the verse means: Do not hit him, do not slap him, and do not ruin him due to hatred. Therefore the verse states “in your heart.” This teaches that the verse speaks of hatred in the heart. From where is it derived with regard to one who sees an unseemly matter in another that he is obligated to rebuke him? As it is stated: “You shall rebuke [<i>hokhe’ah tokhiah</i>] your neighbor.” If one rebuked him for his action but he did not accept the rebuke, from where is it derived that he must rebuke him again? The verse states: “You shall rebuke [<i>hokhe’ah tokhiah</i>],” and the double language indicates he must rebuke in any case. One might have thought that one should continue rebuking him even if his face changes due to humiliation. Therefore, the verse states: “Do not bear sin because of him”; the one giving rebuke may not sin by embarrassing the other person. It is taught in a <i>baraita</i> that Rabbi Tarfon says: I would be surprised if there is anyone in this generation who can receive rebuke. Why? Because if the one rebuking says to him: Remove the splinter from between your eyes, i.e., rid yourself of a minor infraction, the other says to him: Remove the beam from between your eyes, i.e., you have committed far more severe sins. Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria says: I would be surprised if there is anyone in this generation who knows how to rebuke correctly, without embarrassing the person he is rebuking. And Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Nuri says: I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses before me that Akiva was lashed, i.e., punished, many times on my account, as I would complain about him before Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel the Great. And all the more so I thereby increased his love for me. This incident serves to affirm that which is stated: “Do not rebuke a scorner lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you” (Proverbs 9:8). A wise man wants to improve himself and loves those who assist him in that task. ... The Gemara asks: Until where does the obligation of rebuke extend? Rav says: Until his rebuke is met by hitting, i.e., until the person being rebuked hits the person rebuking him. And Shmuel says: Until his rebuke is met by cursing, i.e., he curses the one rebuking him. And Rabbi Yoḥanan says: Until his rebuke is met by reprimand.</p>	<p>תלמוד בבלי מסכת ערכין טז : תנו רבנן: "לא תשנא את אחיך בלבבך" — יכול לא יכפו, לא יסטרנו, ולא יקללנו? תלמוד לומר: "בלבבך" — שנאה שבלב הכתוב מדבר. מנין לרואה בחבירו דבר מגונה שחייב להוכיחו? שנאמר: "הוכח תוכיח". הוכיחו ולא קבל, מנין שחוזר ויוכיחו? תלמוד לומר: "תוכיח", מפל מקום. יכול אפילו משתנים פניו? תלמוד לומר: "לא תשא עליו חטא". תנא, אמר רבי טרפון: תמיהני אני אם יש בדור הזה שמקבל תוכחה, אפילו אמר לו "טול קיסם מבין עיניך", אומר לו "טול קורה מבין עיניך". אמר רבי אלעזר בן עזריה: תמיהני אם יש בדור הזה שיודע להוכיח. ואמר רבי יוחנן בן נורי: מעיד אני עלי שמים וארץ שהרבה פעמים לקה עקיבא על ידי, שהייתי קובל עליו לפני רבו שמעון בריבי, וכל שכן שהוספתיו בו אהבה, לקיים מה שנאמר: "אל תוכח לץ פן ישנאך הוכח לחכם ויאהבך". עד היכן תוכחה? רב אמר: עד הכאה, ושמואל אמר: עד קללה, ורבי יוחנן אמר: עד נזיפה.</p>
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8) Babylonian Talmud Tractate Yevamot 65b

The Gemara cites other statements made by Rabbi Ile'a in the name of Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon. And Rabbi Ile'a said in the name of Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon: Just as it is a mitzva for a person to say that which will be heeded, so is it a mitzva for a person not to say that which will not be heeded. One should not rebuke those who will be unreceptive to his message. Rabbi Abba says: It is obligatory for him to refrain from speaking, as it is stated: "Do not reprove a scorner lest he hate you; reprove a wise man and he will love you "

תלמוד בבלי מסכת יבמות

סה:
 וְאָמַר רַבִּי אֵילְעָא מְשׁוּם רַבִּי
 אֵלְעָזָר בְּרַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן : כְּשֶׁם
 שְׁמַצְוָה עַל אָדָם לומר דָּבָר
 הַנִּשְׁמָע — כִּדְּ מַצְוָה עַל
 אָדָם שֶׁלֹּא לומר דָּבָר שֶׁאֵינוֹ
 נִשְׁמָע. רַבִּי אַבָּא אָמַר :
 חוֹבָה, שְׁנֹאֵמַר : "אַל תּוֹכַח
 לְךָ פֶּן יִשְׁנֹאֵךְ הוֹכַח לְחֻקֶּם
 וַיִּתְּבַדְּ".

9) Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, Likutei Moharan I, 282 ("Azamra")

(1) Know, a person must judge everyone favorably (Avot 1:6). Even someone who is completely wicked, it is necessary to search and find in him some modicum of good – that in that little bit he is not wicked. And by finding in him a modicum of good and judging him favorably, one genuinely elevates him to the scale of merit, and can bring him to repent.

(2) And so too, a person must find [some good point] within himself. It is known that a person must take care to be joyful always, and to keep very far away from sadness... Even when a person begins examining himself and sees that he possesses no good whatsoever and is filled with sin – and the Evil One wants to push him into depression and sadness, God forbid – even so, it is forbidden to fall on account of this.

Rather, he must search and find in himself some bit of good. For how is it possible that in his whole life he never did a single mitzvah or a good deed? And even if that good thing he finds is also mixed with much dross, nevertheless, how can it be that there is not in him some good point (נִקְדָּה טוֹבָה)?

**ליקוטי מוהר"ן תורה רפ"ב
 ("אזמרה")**

(א) דַּע, כִּי צְרִיךְ לְדוֹן אֶת כָּל אָדָם לְכַף
 זְכוּת, וְאֵפְלוּ מִי שֶׁהוּא רָשָׁע גָּמוּר, צְרִיךְ
 לְחַפֵּשׁ וְלִמְצֵא בּוֹ אֵיזָה מְעַט טוֹב,
 שֶׁבְּאוֹתוֹ הַמְעַט אֵינוֹ רָשָׁע, וְעַל יְדֵי זֶה
 שְׂמוּצָא בּוֹ מְעַט טוֹב, וְדָן אוֹתוֹ לְכַף
 זְכוּת, עַל־יְדֵי־זֶה מַעֲלָה אוֹתוֹ בְּאִמַּת לְכַף
 זְכוּת, וַיּוֹכַל לְהַשִּׁיבוּ בְּתַשׁוּבָה.
 (ב) וְכֵן צְרִיךְ הָאָדָם לִמְצֵא גַם בְּעַצְמוֹ. כִּי
 יְדוּעַ שֶׁצְּרִיךְ הָאָדָם לְזַהֵר מֵאֵד לַהֲיוֹת
 בְּשִׂמְחָה תָּמִיד, וּלְהִרְחִיק הַעֲצָבוֹת מֵאֵד
 מֵאֵד ... וְאֵפְלוּ כְּשִׂמְחָתְחִיל לְהִסְתַּבֵּל
 בְּעַצְמוֹ וְרוּאָה שְׂאִין בּוֹ טוֹב, וְהוּא מְלֵא
 עוֹנוֹת, וְרוּצָה הַבַּעַל דָּבָר לְהַפִּילוֹ בִּיגוֹן
 וְעֲצָבוֹת חֵס וְשָׁלוֹם — אֶף־עַל־פִּיכֹן
 אִסוּר לוֹ לִפְל מְזָה.
 רַק צְרִיךְ לְחַפֵּשׁ וְלִמְצֵא בְּעַצְמוֹ אֵיזָה
 מְעַט טוֹב. כִּי אִיךְ אֶפְשֶׁר שֶׁלֹּא עָשָׂה
 מִקְּמִי אֵיזָה מַצְוָה אוֹ דָּבָר טוֹב? וְאֶף
 שְׂאוֹתוֹ הַדָּבָר הַטּוֹב שֶׁהוּא מוּצָא בְּעַצְמוֹ,
 הוּא גַם־כֵּן מַעֲרָב בְּפִסְלֵת הַרְבֵּה — אֶף־
 עַל־פִּיכֹן אִיךְ אֶפְשֶׁר שְׂאִין בּוֹ אֵיזוֹ נִקְדָּה
 טוֹבָה?

10) The Art of Rebuke, Estelle Frankel from Sh'ma Now

Tochecha – the art of giving and receiving honest feedback or rebuke – is part of the biblical formula for sustaining friendships and relationships. According to the talmudic rabbis, it is an integral part of love; without tochecha, love cannot endure. (Bereshit Raba 54:3) I see evidence of this every day in my psychotherapy practice and personal life. **Those who are skilled at giving and receiving feedback are able to sustain healthy relationships over the long term, while those who lack such skills are ill-equipped to deal with relationship challenges when they arise.**

Tochecha requires great integrity and impeccable communication skills. It also requires the use of an array of psychological capacities and virtues, including humility, empathy, mindfulness, courage, non-defensiveness, and integration. While highly evolved individuals welcome tochecha as an opportunity for self-improvement, most people defend against having their shortcomings pointed out to them, and they will employ a range of psychological defenses, including denial and projection, to protect

themselves from the pain of reproof. We increase the likelihood that our words will be heard by paying attention to our timing, tone, and intention.

Timing: The rabbis teach that just as it is a mitzvah to offer words of tochecha when our words are likely to be heard, it is a mitzvah to stay silent when our words will not be heard. (Yevamot 65) Before speaking, we need to be mindful of our own emotional state as well as that of the listener. If we are emotionally triggered or angry, or notice that the listener is in a state of agitation, it is better to wait for a more opportune time – one that is mutually agreed upon.

Tone: A voice that is angry, disdainful, blaming, or judgmental can undermine our message. It is better to communicate tochecha with humility and empathy. Remembering that we are all flawed and that we all possess the capacity for wrongdoing is key. When possible, offer feedback and insight as an equally imperfect individual – no better or worse than anyone else. In Pirkei Avot (Chapter 2, Mishnah 5), we are instructed: “Do not judge your neighbors until you have stood in their place.” The Ba’al Shem Tov, the eighteenth-century founder of Hasidism (known as the BeShT), offers a novel, psychologically insightful interpretation of this Mishnah. He suggests that if we find ourselves judging others, it may be because we actually do stand in the exact same place! Their misdeeds bother us because they remind us of our own failings. Our judgments are often a sign that we are projecting our disavowed flaws onto others. The BeShT’s teaching admonishes us to fix ourselves before attempting to fix others and to give tochecha only after doing our own inner work of self-rectification.

Intention: Tochecha is not simply a matter of venting; rather, it involves a conscious effort to heal a breach in a relationship or to help others to awaken to their spiritual and moral deficits. Tochecha is most effective when we make use of our psychological capacity for integration – the ability to see ourselves and others as whole beings with strengths and weaknesses, virtues and vices. With integration, we do not define people by their mistakes and flaws; rather, we point out specific criticisms at the same time that we remember the person’s essential goodness. When giving tochecha, it is helpful to express our loving concern, respect, and appreciation alongside any critique. Doing so reduces defensiveness and any sense that the criticism is an assault on the individual’s character.

Estelle Frankel is a practicing psychotherapist, spiritual director, and Jewish educator. She is the author of Sacred Therapy: Jewish Spiritual Teachings on Emotional Healing and Inner Wholeness and The Wisdom of Not Knowing: Discovering a Life of Wonder by Embracing Uncertainty (2017).