**Criticism: Poison or Elixir?**



**Pirkei Avos 6:6**

*...but the Torah is acquired by means of forty-eight qualities... loving reproofs...*

**Talmud, Arachin 16b**

*From where do we know that one who sees in one’s friend something repulsive [for example, a transgression] is obligated to give reproof [so that he can correct it]? As it is said: “Do not hate your brother in your heart. You must reprove your fellow, and do not bear a sin because of him.” [Vayikra 19:17].*

The Hebrew word for reproof, positive criticism, “tochachah” is derived from the root which means “to prove” or “to demonstrate.”

**Talmud, Yevamos 65b**

*And Rabbi Ilai said in the name of Rabbi Elazar the son of Rabbi Shimon: “Just as there is a Mitzvah for a person to say words of reproof that will be accepted, so too there is a Mitzvah for a person not to say words [of reproof] that will not be accepted.”*

*Rabbi Abba said: “It is not only a Mitzvah to refrain from speaking words of reproof that will be ignored, it is an obligation not to offer such words. As it says, ‘Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you’ [Mishlei 9:8].”*

**Talmud, Arachin 16b**

*R’ Tarfon said: “I wonder if there exists anyone in this generation who knows how to accept reproof. For if one says to [his fellow nowadays], ‘Remove the splinter from between your eyes,’ [i.e. refrain from a minor infraction, his fellow] can retort, ‘Remove the beam from between your eyes’ [i.e. refrain from a major transgression]”*

*R’ Elazar ben Azaryah said: “I wonder if there exists anyone in this generation who knows how to give reproof.”*

**#1 Question: Why do people feel a need/urge to criticize, to try and improve others?**

**#2 Questions:**

**(a) Since people usually get offended when receiving criticism – should one refrain from it?**

**(b) Under which circumstances would it make sense to reprove someone?**

**(c) Is there a way to do it in a way that the person actually will want to improve?**

**#3 Question: How do you feel when you are getting positive criticism/ feedback?**

**Why?**

**#4**

**Talmud, Arachin 16b**

*Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri said: “I call heaven and earth as my witness that many times [Rabbi] Akiva was rebuked harshly on account of me, for I used to complain about him to Rabban Shimon B’Rabbi and it only caused him to love me all the more, thereby fulfilling the verse, “Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you” [Mishlei 9:8].*

**Pirkei Avos 6:6**

*...but the Torah is acquired by means of forty-eight qualities... loving reproofs...*

**Questions:**

**(a) What could be the reason for the Mishnah to say “reproofs” in plural?**

**(b) Why would someone love reproofs? Are we dealing with masochists? :)**

**(c) How can a person learn to not be offended by reproof, but to like and even love it?**



**#5 Question: What's your takeaway from today's discussion?**