

The Lecture Series With Reb T (Biweekly): *The show where we talk a topic per session with some practical lessons*, Tonight's topic is "**Of Criticism & Cynicism**"

Sources from Sefaria (unless noted otherwise); Lookout for the *Points To Carryover (PTC's)*

All Shiurum on shiurenjoyment.com/shiurim/shiurim-reb-t/ -Shoutout to Jake W.!

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Tonight's Shiur is Lilu'y Nishmas Yaakov Ben Yehuda Leib, my wife's grandfather, and the learning of the Shiur should serve as an Aliyah for his neshama

-The Shiur should serve as a zechus for the refuah sheleimah of Yehuda Ben Rivkah Leah (Rabbi Kelemer, Rabbi of our community), Yisrael Yitzchak ben Rivka Leah, Shlomo Ben Sarah Dina, for the continued health and nachat of Livia Margalit bat Ilana Devorah to her family, and for anyone sick or needing a yeshuah or refuah

Can't you do anything right? I asked you to take out the garbage already! Why is the dish still on the couch, put it in the sink right now! Do your homework already! Get dressed this very instant! Why can't you just pull your weight already??? You are no help!! Uch, I could have done it myself ten times already! What's the matter/What's wrong with you???

These might be just some of the ways we address others, especially our spouses, kids/families, and friends. However, when listening to how this sounds, it feels quite harsh. Contrary to the famous phrase "Sticks and stone may break my bones but words will never hurt me", words **really can hurt** especially when used to be sharply critical and condescending to someone else.

Let's first define what these terms in tonight's topic officially mean, from a dictionary standpoint. "Criticism" is seen as "to find fault with, to judge the merits and faults of, to analyze and evaluate," as well as "to find what's wrong with something or someone."

"Cynical" can be defined as "Believing or showing the belief that people are motivated chiefly by base or selfish concerns; skeptical of the motives of others," as well as "selfishly or callously calculating" and "negative or pessimistic as from world-weariness." It can also be seen as "distrustful of the motives of others." Further, when think of one who is a scoffer, which builds on the idea of "Cynicism" and relates to it, the idea of a scoffer can be seen as "Someone who makes fun of someone or something often of religious or moral values, to show or express derision or scorn" as well.

It's so easy, unfortunately, to criticize others. It is so easy, sadly, to criticize our shuls, our schools, our governments, our lands of exile, and even the land of Israel in its modern state of how it's run.

But, how easy is it to accept criticism? How easy is it to take in all the mussar to lessons others want to tell us? And how easy is it really to do criticism in the right way, or to hold back and not do it at all, especially when it is burning within us to come out?

If someone must criticize, make sure to do so in a warm and loving manner, with soft spoken demeanor and words used. I can't tell you how much of a difference it makes when an administrator or boss or supervisor tells me something in **a harsh, coarse, mean, manner,** versus when it is done in a **warm, loving, kind manner with nice words and demeanor.** If someone has to let someone go from a job, it could be done in a calm, nice, respectful manner, versus the opposite, g-d forbid.

Think about how people who let others go, and how they can phrase it. Think about the following (made up) situation.

Yankel has been in your business advertising company for ten months. Although the company has been around ten plus years, recent competition and economic problems have put the company in serious financial trouble. You have cut costs in every manner possible, and as a last resort to use money from a salary to save the company, you had to make the terrible decision of letting someone go to get back that money to save the company. The company has ten employees, most of which have been with you since the beginning, all of them putting in ten plus years, except for Yankel. So the decision to have to let him go was inevitable in some way—and as a preemptive measure (which I believe is a nice thing to give a heads up from the start) you had told him a few months ago to start looking around in the job market as the company was not in its top manner and not everyone will be able to stay, unfortunately.

In this scenario, what can be done to soften the blow? If you tell Yankel to come in, how do you summon him to begin with? Let's look at version A and B of the summons. Think about version A of the summons:

“Hi Yankel, It's Shmeryl here. Would you be at all possible to please come to my office when you have a minute? I need to talk to you when you have time.”

This might be less anxiety provoking than version B of the summons:

“Yankel, come to my office immediately. We need to talk.”

That latter phrase is a terrifying way to be told to come to the boss. Obviously in the summons case here, **Version A is much better.**

Sometimes, people have to be let go, but unfortunately, it is done in a harsh, critical, and abrupt manner. Let's look at two versions, of A and B. Here is Version A:

“Hi Yankel, We need to talk. We’re sorry but we need to let you go to save the company. You have been here the least time and your work is not as good and as lasting or helpful as everyone else.”

That is an abrupt, critical, mean, and harsh way to let the employee go. It feels terrible to the employee, shatters his esteem, and his life in general.

Here’s another way to phrase it, exerting more words and more time to explain in Version B:

“Hi Yankel, I wanted to talk to you for a bit. Unfortunately the economy has hit us really hard, and we are not able to hold on to all of our amazing workers. The company can only keep those who have been with us 10 plus years with many years of seniority, especially since the beginning, due to our constraints. We wanted to let you know that you are superbly talented and have made a wonderful difference at this company. As a token of our appreciation, here is a severance package, and a list of our competitors and other companies to work at. I also wrote a letter of recommendation for you, that I hope will help land you another job soon. I wish you much success in the future, and am terribly sorry to have to see you go. Good luck with everything and be well.”

Even though the same message is conveyed, that the employee had to have been let go, the recipient can feel much better about the outcome, and the boss as well. His dignity of the worker is intact, and he can feel good that he made a difference in the company, and has some wiggle room to look for new jobs thanks to the severance and options the boss gave him to take with him.

Obviously in this case, Version B is the way to go.

Not only is this avoiding criticism, but major Chessed to help the worker find a job, as the highest level of tzedakah the Rambam explains is that of giving someone or helping one to find a job (not to need tzedakah is the best level to help someone), as pointed out by chabad.org from the

[Rambam in the Mishneh Torah, Laws of Charity, 10:7–14](#)

*[1] The greatest level, above which there is no greater, is to support a fellow Jew by endowing him with a gift or loan, or entering into a partnership with him, **or finding employment for him, in order to strengthen his hand so that he will not need to be dependent upon others . . .***

Helping someone find a job is therefore the highest level of charity, a major Chessed.

As the phrase LHAVDIL goes (which I think is from a Chinese proverb), **“Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.”** The idea being that teaching someone how to do something is more helpful to them in the long run than

just doing it for them—or giving or helping someone find a job is more helpful than giving charity, as they lean to do and to support themselves rather than rely on others.

Using our words in the right ways can really help and is so important for so many factors. We learn from the example of Yaakov Avinu and Moshe Rabbeinu that they didn't criticize until the ends of their lives, and even so, they chose their words carefully. For example, Yaakov cursed the **anger** of Shimon and Levin but not them themselves, and Yaakov mentioned the act of Reuven and its disgrace but not punishing Reuven from being part of the tribes.

Even when Yaakov criticized these three of his children for their conduct, he did so at the end of his life, and said it in a simple manner:

[Genesis 49](#)

Unstable as water, you shall excel no longer; For when you mounted your father's bed, You brought disgrace—my couch he mounted!

And for Shimon and Levi, he focused on their rage not them themselves:

Simeon and Levi are a pair; Their weapons are tools of lawlessness. Let not my person be included in their council, Let not my being be counted in their assembly. For when angry they slay men, And when pleased they maim oxen. Cursed be their anger so fierce, And their wrath so relentless. I will divide them in Jacob, Scatter them in Israel.

Thus even when criticizing, Yaakov made sure to do so in a manner that would be productive and careful. Even by Moshe Rabbeinu, he also chose to criticize at an exact point and location and with specific words.

For Moshe it is explained:

[Rashi on Devarim 1:1,1:3, & 1:4](#)

אלה הדברים THESE ARE THE WORDS — Because these are words of reproof and he is enumerating here all the places where they provoked God to anger, therefore he suppresses all mention of the matters in which they sinned and refers to them only by a mere allusion contained in the names of these places out of regard for Israel

אל כל ישראל [THE WORDS WHICH HE SPAKE] TO ALL ISRAEL — If he had reproved only some of them, those who were then in the street (i.e. those who were absent) might have said, "You heard from the son of Amram, and did not answer a single word regarding this and that; had we been there, we would have given him an answer!". On this account he assembled all of them, and said to them, "See, you are all here: he who has anything to say in reply, let him reply!" ([Sifrei Devarim 1:6-7](#)).

ויהי בארבעים שנה בעשתי עשר חודש באחד לחודש AND IT CAME TO PASS IN THE FORTIETH YEAR, IN THE ELEVENTH MONTH, ON THE FIRST OF THE MONTH, [MOSES SPAKE] — This tells us that he reproved them only shortly before his death (Jewish tradition holds that Moses died on the seventh day of the twelfth month; cf. [Megillah 13b](#)). From whom did he learn this? From Jacob, who reproved his sons only shortly before his death. He said, “Reuben, my son, I will tell you why I have not reproved you for your unfitful conduct during all these years: it was in order that you should not leave me and go and join Esau, my wicked brother”. — And on account of four things one should not reprove a person except shortly before one's death: that one should not reprove him and again have to reprove him; and that his fellow whom he reproves should not, when he afterwards happens to see him, feel ashamed before him, etc.; as it is set forth in Siphre. And similarly, Joshua reproved Israel only shortly before his death (cf. [Joshua 24:1–29](#)), and so, too, Samuel, as it is said, ([1 Samuel 12:3](#)) “Behold, testify against me”, and so, also, David reproved his son Solomon only shortly before his death (cf. [1 Kings 2:1–9](#)).

אחרי הכתו AFTER HE HAD SMITTEN [SIHON] — Moses said: If I reprove them before they enter at least a part of the land, they will say, “What claim has this man upon us? What good has he ever conferred upon us? He only comes (his purpose is only) to vex us and to discover some pretext for leaving us in the wilderness, for he really has not the power to bring us into the land” On this account he waited until he had defeated Sihon and Og before them and had given them possession of their land — and only after that did he reprove them ([Sifrei Devarim 3:2](#)).

So Moshe figured out how to criticize in the best way, **only at the end of his live, in front of everyone, subtitled hinting at different sins.**

Criticism in general is really something that is best to avoid.

[As aish.com points out with Author Sara Yocheved Rigler \(ADAPTED\)](#)

Is there one thing a person can do to prevent most of the ills of life? Is there a single practice that will eliminate the fever/chill cycles that plague most aspects of life, especially relationships?

Indeed, there is. However, “one shot” is not enough. Even two or three injections won't suffice. This is a practice that must be undertaken daily, perhaps several times a day. But its effectiveness has been proven, and the results are impressive beyond expectation.

What is this practice? Stop criticizing!

Criticism destroys so much. *It whittles away at the bond between people, feeds the negativity of the criticizer, and undermines the self-esteem of the criticized.*

Studies have shown that the human brain is hard-wired to negativity. Psychologists call this, “the negativity bias,” the congenital tendency to notice and remember the negative more than the positive. It's why a wife will remember the times her husband forgot her birthday more than the times he actually gave her a card or gift. It's why a husband will focus on his wife's one

extravagant expenditure in a credit card bill filled with her necessary, no-fun purchases of food and supplies for the family.

Spouses criticize because they see their husband or wife doing something wrong, and they want to stop the egregious behavior. Never are intelligent people more prone to folly than when they criticize in an effort to improve their spouse, because no one ever improves from criticism. Husbands still leave their socks on the floor after decades of nagging. Wives still spend too much time talking on the phone despite their husbands' repeatedly pointing out what they should be doing instead.

Repeated criticism proves the adage, "Insanity is doing something over again and thinking you'll have a different result." Wives complain, "For thirty years I've been telling my diabetic husband what he shouldn't eat." For thirty years you've been telling him? And you expect a different result this time? Insanity!

Criticism is worse than merely being ineffective to change your partner. Criticism creates a toxic atmosphere in the home. No one likes to be criticized. Criticism estranges the criticized party, who is likely to retreat emotionally or even physically, finding manifold excuses not to come home. Criticism also harms the criticizer, who gets caught in a vicious cycle of focusing on the negative, of finding endless reasons to be unhappy and angry.

*Criticism is a violation of the Torah's prohibition of *onaas devorim*, speaking words that hurt another person.*

*So how do you stop criticizing? Simply stop criticizing. Go on a "criticism fast." Every time you are about to criticize your spouse, stop and say to yourself, "**Criticism never helps and always hurts.**"*

The Mussar masters advise using a chart to change ingrained behavior patterns. Make yourself a chart with a box for each day. Every time you are tempted to criticize your spouse and you stop yourself, give yourself a check on the chart. When you get 10 checks, buy yourself a small reward that you'll enjoy, like a yummy cup of coffee. When you get 25 checks, buy yourself a big reward—like that coffee machine you really wanted.

Aish also points out with Author Sarah Yocheved Rigler

*The Torah actually prohibits negative speech, even if it is true. Speaking about another person (*lashon hara*) alienates both the speaker and the listener from the person being spoken about. Speaking words that hurt the person you are speaking to (*onaat devorim*) alienates the criticizer from the criticized and vice versa. There is indeed a commandment to "rebuke your fellow Jew" rather than hold a grudge in your heart. However, the parameters of giving proper rebuke are carefully delineated by the sages. Rebuke must be given privately, and be specific (not, "You never..." or "You always..."). The person rebuked must feel helped rather than criticized. But already 1,500 years ago, the sages said no one knows any longer how to rebuke properly, so the mitzvah of rebuke can be rarely properly fulfilled.*

A male commenter on the above site quoted a statement attributed to the Chofetz Chaim, "More than we have lost the ability to hear criticism, we have lost the ability to deliver it."

...

Every person must first be aware of his/her feelings. Repression is physically and psychologically harmful.

Next, every person must take responsibility for his/her feelings. As any cognitive therapist will explain, your feelings are the result of how you frame the situation. If you frame the situation differently, you will feel differently...

Next, one must introspect and question one's motive for expressing negative feelings to one's spouse...

It is crucial to control the words that come out of our mouths, and to be careful in what we say to another person.

The idea then is to just throw away the idea of criticizing, and just stop what you were about to say. Hold it in, swallow the comment, let it go, and see what happens. Peace and serenity can then reign, which is greater than any words you could have said that you thought would help but indeed instead would have greatly hurt.

aish.com also points out with [Author Rabbi Shraga Simmons](#)

The Midrash (Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu, Eliyahu Zuta 14, Pa'am) tells the story of Elijah the Prophet meeting up with a fisherman.

"Do you study Torah?" Elijah asked.

"No," replied the fisherman, "I'm just a simple man, not endowed with any measure of talent or intelligence."

"Tell me," said Elijah, "how do you prepare your fishing net?"

"Well," said the man, "It's actually quite complicated. First I have to select the proper gauge rope, and then I weave the net in a particular pattern to ensure the proper balance of strength and flexibility."

"How do you go about actually catching the fish?" inquired Elijah.

"Oh," said the man, "that involves many complex factors like water depth, temperature, speed of the current, season of the year, time of day, type of fish and location. I've spent years mastering these techniques, and I'm able to earn a good living from fishing."

"When you get to heaven," said Elijah, "you said you plan to testify that you didn't study Torah study because you're just a simple man, not endowed with any talent or intelligence. But your expertise as a fisherman refutes your very own claim!"

Did you ever hear someone say he doesn't have time to study wisdom, visit his mother, or do volunteer work? Yet what about all the hours of TV he watched?

This is toch'acha -- incontrovertible proof....

Look at this story that [aish.com points out with Rabbi Efreim Goldberg](#)

In the early 1970s, Maryland was one of the first states that came out with vanity license plates. You could choose up to 6 letters and personalize your license plate. My friend's father had a great idea. He was working as a director for NCSY at the time so he got a license plate with the word, "Torah." He was so proud of that license plate. Driving around, every so often someone Jewish would pull up beside him and honk and wave to show or take pride in their Jewish identity. And of course, sometimes others would honk and give a different gesture to demonstrate their lack of support for Torah or Jews.

One hectic Friday the man had an order waiting for him at a restaurant. The hour was late, Shabbat was coming, and there was no place to park. He circled around the block once and finally he double-parked, turned on his hazard lights and ran in to pick up his orders, which were not completely ready. A few moments later he returned to his car to find not one, but two notes on the windshield which essentially said the same thing: For a Torah Jew, illegally double-parking and blocking traffic is not a mitzvah. Message received.

Just one week later, my friend's father was driving and found himself stuck behind a driver who seemed to be moving in slow motion. He sped up to pass him and stared down the slow driver as he did. Sure enough, half a mile later, he stopped at a traffic light and the other driver pulled up next to him, rolled down his window, and said, "You know, a person representing Torah should have a little more patience."

That night my friend's mother saw her husband removing the license plates from his car and asked him what he's doing. "I'm going back to number plates."

"But why? You love these plates!" his wife said.

He related the recent events to his wife and shared his frustration but instead of offering comfort or support, she challenged him: "So what you're saying is you would rather change your license plate than change your behavior?"

He kept the license plates and he worked on changing himself.

We can point out to others how to better themselves with using subtle maneuvers or hints, or pointing out their strengths and building on them. Focus on the positive not the negative.

Even psychology has learned this over the years. I remember learning as a psych major in Y.U. about *positive versus negative reinforcers and punishments*. The field of psychology has studied that positive reinforcement (to give something to see more of good behavior; i.e. verbal praises or primary reinforcers {of snacks/foods} or secondary {of tokens or money or gifts etc.} **is better than any negative reinforcement** (i.e. remove something to see more of the good behavior, i.e. less chores in house because did well on a test) and **better than any punishment, good or bad** (i.e. giving more homework to decrease tantruming—positive punishment—or losing tv privileges to decrease tantrums—negative punishment). Punishments or negative reinforcements don't really work nearly as well as positive reinforcement. Being positive is always better, and this works with talking to others, praising what they do instead of criticizing what they don't do. For example, instead of saying "Honey why can you ever help me in the morning? It's so hard for me, you never help out and it ruins my day.", which is very negative,

harsh, and full of criticism, if they ever do end up helping day “Honey, thank you so much for helping me get the kids ready today. I can’t tell you how much it helped and made my day so much easier.” How much more likely is the spouse to help again after getting such lavish praise? A lot more, you better believe it. The same would go for kids and others at work, as positive reinforcement really works better than anything else.

There are other examples throughout Tanach of how criticism was done, if it was necessary. Let’s Look How Nathan the prophet figures out a way to “criticize” King David, by way of a parable, regarding the uriah and batsheva episode.

[Samuel II:12](#)

and the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said, “There were two men in the same city, one rich and one poor. The rich man had very large flocks and herds, but the poor man had only one little ewe lamb that he had bought. He tended it and it grew up together with him and his children: it used to share his morsel of bread, drink from his cup, and nestle in his bosom; it was like a daughter to him. One day, a traveler came to the rich man, but he was loath to take anything from his own flocks or herds to prepare a meal for the guest who had come to him; so he took the poor man’s lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.” David flew into a rage against the man, and said to Nathan, “As the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He shall pay for the lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and showed no pity.” And Nathan said to David, “That man is you! Thus said the LORD, the God of Israel: ‘It was I who anointed you king over Israel and it was I who rescued you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master’s house and possession of your master’s wives; and I gave you the House of Israel and Judah; and if that were not enough, I would give you twice as much more. Why then have you flouted the command of the LORD and done what displeases Him? You have put Uriah the Hittite to the sword; you took his wife and made her your wife and had him killed by the sword of the Ammonites. Therefore the sword shall never depart from your House—because you spurned Me by taking the wife of Uriah the Hittite and making her your wife.’ Thus said the LORD: ‘I will make a calamity rise against you from within your own house; I will take your wives and give them to another man before your very eyes and he shall sleep with your wives under this very sun. You acted in secret, but I will make this happen in the sight of all Israel and in broad daylight.’” David said to Nathan, “I stand guilty before the LORD!” And Nathan replied to David, “The LORD has remitted your sin; you shall not die. However, since you have spurned the enemies of the LORD by this deed, even the child about to be born to you shall die.”

—Nathan the prophet thus figured out a way to rebuke David in a creative, but effective way, using a marshal, a parable. Let’s look at what Shmuel said when he heard about Shaul not fulfilling the command of Hashem to wipe out Amalek in their war.

[Shmuel Aleph: 15](#)

When Samuel came to Saul, Saul said to him, “Blessed are you of the LORD! I have fulfilled the LORD’s command.”

“Then what,” demanded Samuel, “is this bleating of sheep in my ears, and the lowing of oxen that I hear?”

—Shmuel in this case with one line was able to shoot down what King Shaul did, without intensely rebuking him to his face.

We can also see how to help others by laying out the facts. Look at what happens in this chapter of King I:I regarding King David’s son Adoniyah trying to usurp the throne.

[King I:I](#)

(Nathan the prophet tells Batsheba)... Go immediately to King David and say to him, ‘Did not you, O lord king, swear to your maidservant: “Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit upon my throne”? Then why has Adonijah become king?’ While you are still there talking with the king, I will come in after you and confirm your words.” So Bathsheba went to the king in his chamber.—The king was very old, and Abishag the Shunammite was waiting on the king.—Bathsheba bowed low in homage to the king; and the king asked, “What troubles you?” She answered him, “My lord, you yourself swore to your maidservant by the LORD your God: ‘Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit upon my throne.’ Yet now Adonijah has become king, and you, my lord the king, know nothing about it. He has prepared a sacrificial feast of a great many oxen, fatlings, and sheep, and he has invited all the king’s sons and Abiathar the priest and Joab commander of the army; but he has not invited your servant Solomon. And so the eyes of all Israel are upon you, O lord king, to tell them who shall succeed my lord the king on the throne. Otherwise, when my lord the king lies down with his fathers, my son Solomon and I will be regarded as traitors.”...And the king took an oath, saying, “As the LORD lives, who has rescued me from every trouble: The oath I swore to you by the LORD, the God of Israel, that your son Solomon should succeed me as king and that he should sit upon my throne in my stead, I will fulfill this very day!”

—King David’s Wife and Nathan the prophet (again) stand up to point out to King David what to do, not criticizing him but seeking his guidance and assistance, especially as he lay helpless, old, and cold, through showing the situation to him and laying it out.

Sometimes, one key message, one key idea can spark the action and can be better than any intense criticism in mind. Look at What Mordechai tells Esther in the famous Purim story of the Megillah:

[Esther 4](#)

Mordecai had this message delivered to Esther: “Do not imagine that you, of all the Jews, will escape with your life by being in the king’s palace.

On the contrary, if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter, while you and your father's house will perish. And who knows, perhaps you have attained to royal position for just such a crisis."

—One key message spurs Esther to act on behalf of her people, and save them.

Hashem himself teaches us how to open conversation with others to help them do better. Look what Hashem says early on in Bereshis:

[Rashi on Bereshis 3:11](#)

איכה WHERE ART THOU — *He knew where he was, but He asked this in order to open up a conversation with him that he should not become confused in his reply, if He were to pronounce punishment against him all of a sudden. Similarly in the case of Cain, He said to him, (4:9) "where is Abel thy brother?" Similarly with Balaam, ([Numbers 22:9](#)) "what men are these with thee?" — to open up a conversation with them; so, also, in the case of Hezekiah with reference to the messengers of Merodach-baladan ([Isaiah 39:3](#)).*

—Using specific terms can help direct others in many ways to turn to the right path.

Rabbeinu Bachya points out the virtue of criticism if done right:

[Rabbeinu Bahya, Shemot 1:1:2:ב'י:א:א: שמות](#)

...King Solomon, of blessed memory, teaches the virtue of accepting reproof and criticism. Torah depends on one's ability to accept reproof....The highest virtue is found in the one who accepts criticism and listens to the one who rebukes him. It is the basis for the fulfillment of the Torah....To reject criticism causes one to reject the yoke of the commandments. Regarding this, Solomon wrote: "Discipline is worse than the one who abandons God's way; he who hates rebuke will die."...When a wise person presents criticism to a person who is receptive to the criticism, the criticism is compared to an earring or an adornment which beautifies the soul of the individual....While they are still adolescents and their nature is malleable, young people are in need of criticism to rein in their behavior and to help them come under the control of their good inclination.

Accept the criticism, if done right, to make you better to follow in the right way of Torah and avodat Hashem.

In addition, we should make sure not to be a cynical person or a cynic, but to have an optimistic upbeat outlook on life. A positive person is better to be around and better to be in general as it will make life feel more pleasant. A positive person can be a role model to everyone they come in contact with. A cynical person is always negative, looking for the ill in everything and trying to find things wrong with everything they see. It is much better to be someone who looks for the good in everything, which is possible to find if we look hard enough.

Additionally, Real criticism works by being better role models.

Giving toch'acha does not mean we have to criticizing, throwing stones, or shouting louder than the next guy. Real toch'acha is demonstrating through action and deed.

The best solution then is to now even have the negative comments, not even have to swallow them, but to actually be that person to inspire others, be that role model that people can live up to and learn from.

aish.com points out with Author Rabbi Jay Goldmintz

if you want to be a spiritual role model, you need to put those things into effect.

First, for example, get their attention. It's not enough that you are doing something; you need to draw it to one's attention.

A family member signed up to help cook meals whenever someone in the shul gave birth. Women banded together to help the newborn's family get through the first week without having to worry about meals for the rest of the family. However, it could be a mistake to not draw it to the kids' or others' attention sooner. People can't learn what they don't know they're supposed to learn.

Additionally, A person needs to remember what they see and hear and the only way for that to happen is if the actions and behaviors are repeated over and over again.... it would also apply to singing songs at the Shabbat table every week until the songs are memorized, or repeating aloud the blessing one is supposed to say when one hears thunder,...Behaviors, feelings, stories, experiences need to be repeated and internalized until they are a part of the fabric of one's being if there is going to be any long-term impact.

Further, an action must be felt by the person himself or herself. It's not enough to see someone else doing it; the person needs to feel what it's like and needs feedback about whether it is being done correctly.

Tasks and ideas needs practice and, like any skill, be it playing an instrument or a sport, they need trainers and coaches, and, when it comes to spiritual skills and practices, people in life are the ones most likely to provide that feedback...or not.

*Lastly, **there needs to be motivation, some inherent system of reward that energizes the person** and tells him or her that this activity is worth doing.*

Thus, if we become active doers and chessed-goers in our life, it could really be the best "criticism" to those around us. By us becoming our own best selves, it can lead to us being the best people we can, inspiring those around us, and have them learn what they need to in order to better themselves.

In these ways, hopefully we can better ourselves and all those around us to be the best people we can possibly be in order to elevate the world to an even better place, every single day.

Let's talk about some more sources.

[משלי ט"ו:י"ב](#) Proverbs 15:12

The **scoffer** dislikes being reproved; He will not resort to the wise.

[משלי כ"ב:י"א](#) Proverbs 22:10

Expel the **scoffer** and contention departs, Quarrel and contumely cease.

[משלי כ"ד:ט"ז](#) Proverbs 24:9

The schemes of folly are sin. And a **scoffer** is an abomination to men.

[אורחות צדיקים ט"ח:ח"ט](#) Orchos Tzadikim 9:8

Then it is clear that the **scoffer** does not only hold back his fellow from the great good that is treasured up for the righteous but thrusts him down into the lowest pit....This **scoffer** falls within the guilt category of those who cause others to sin.

[אורחות צדיקים ט"ב:י"ב](#) Orchos Tzadikim 9:12

Behold, wine causes one to become a **scoffer** and a mocker and to be riotous and quarrelsome. And everyone who transgresses through it is not very wise.

PTC. Be careful with our words/actions that they be positive and helpful to those around us

[עבודה זרה י"ח ב"ט"ז](#) Avodah Zarah 18b:16

Rabbi Eliezer says: **Scoffing** is a severe sin, as at first one is punished with suffering, and ultimately one is punished with extermination...

[חושן משפט ח'א'1](#) Shulchan Arukh, Choshen Mishpat 8:1

San. 63b: 'All **scoffing** is forbidden except the ridiculing of idols .' Hence, just as idolators may be treated irreverently, so also Judges who are appointed through the power of money.

[שערי תשובה ג'קע"ז](#) Shaarei Teshuvah 3:177

And the Sages would warn their students against **scoffing** even occasionally and by chance. And about this section they had to warn, since many have stumbled on it in an occasional way.

PTC. Cynicism and Scoffing never helps and only hurts, make sure to avoid it in life

[רבנו בחיי שמות א'א'ב'2](#) Rabbeinu Bahya, Shemot 1:1:2

Regarding scoffers, we are taught, "Do not rebuke the **scoffer** for he will hate you." ... Regarding fools, it is written, "Do not speak to the fool for he will disdain your sensible words."...The **scoffer** hates the person who criticizes him while the fool makes light of the words of reproof and mocks the person who is wiser than they are.

[עקידת יצחק ס"ה:א'י"ג:13:1 אקידת Yitzchak 65:1:13](#)

Rebuking people is reserved for the intelligent and responsible, He who is a scoffer, will not respond to lectures etc; on the contrary, efforts in this direction can be counterproductive....The true reason for not rebuking the scoffer is to avoid burdening him with the additional sin of hating the preacher.

[שמירת הלשון, חלק ראשון, שער התבונה 13:12 שמיירת הלשון, חלק ראשון, שער התבונה 13:12](#)
[י"ג:י"ב](#)

And also, all the world is punished because of the scoffer. As stated there: "All who scoff bring destruction to the world."

PTC. Scoffing and cynicism leads to much negativity and destruction in the world, make sure to rid it from around you

[מנחת עני על הגדה של פסח, מגיד, כנגד 1:2 מנחת עני על הגדה של פסח, מגיד, כנגד 1:2](#)
[ארבעה בנים א'ב' ארבעה בנים א'ב'](#)

To answer these questions, we must begin with the following from Proverbs, "Do not rebuke the **scoffer** for he will hate you; reprove the wise person and he will love you."...Alshikh explains that one should be gentle when criticizing the scoffer and not too harsh....If one finds oneself in the presence of a scoffer who rejects the Torah and a wise person, it is better to criticize the wise person rather than the scoffer, as the verse says, "Do not rebuke the **scoffer**...This is a fitting answer in the spirit of Proverbs for the wicked child who is a **scoffer**....But in the Haggadah, the wise son comes first in fulfillment of the verse, "Do not rebuke the **scoffer** ... reprove the wise person."

[רש"י על משלי ג'ל"ד:א'1:34:1 רש"י על משלי ג'ל"ד:א'1:34:1](#)

If [one goes] to the scoffers If a person is attracted to them, he too will scoff with them.

[ערכין ט"ז ב:7:16 ארַכְיִן ערכין ט"ז ב:7:16](#)

This incident serves to affirm that which is stated: "Do not rebuke a scorners lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you".

[סנהדרין צ' ב:א'1:90b:1 סנהדרין צ' ב:א'1:90b:1](#)

It was for the cynical dismissal of the prophecy of Elisha that the officer voiced at the city gate that he was punished measure for measure and was trampled at the city gate.

[ישמח ישראל על הגדה של פסח, מגיד, 3:1 ישמח ישראל על הגדה של פסח, מגיד, 3:1](#)
[כנגד ארבעה בנים ג'א' כנגד ארבעה בנים ג'א'](#)

...unlike the wicked person described in the Haggadah who is too cynical to trust God. That is why he is unworthy of redemption.

[מבחר הפנינים כ"ז:ט'9:27 מבחר הפנינים כ"ז:ט'9:27](#)

He who has incurred suspicion, dares not complain of harsh **criticism**.

PTC. Be careful with whom and how you criticize; use loving gentle words in a loving manner

[Rashi on Genesis 6:9:2'ב'ט'י על בראשית ו'ט'ב'י'2](#)

(Regarding Noach) And there are those who interpret it as **criticism**, meaning, if he had been in Abraham's generation, he would not have been thought of as anything special.

[Daat Zkenim on Numbers 12:3:1'ג'א'1 דעת זקנים על במדבר י"ב:ג'א'1](#)

Even at this point, he remained humble by not responding to unwarranted **criticism** of him, until G-d acted as his advocate.

[Mishneh Torah, Repentance 4:2'ב'י'2 הלכות תשובה ד'ב'י'2](#)

and being repudiated he will not find a teacher to guide him to the path of truth; He who despises **criticism** for he, indeed, left no path open for repentance, as it is **criticism** that begets repentance.. But he who despises **criticism** does not come to hear the preacher and does not pay attention to his words, he, therefore, holds on to his sins, which to his eyes appear to be good.

[Tur HaAroch, Leviticus 4:2:1'ב'א'1 הטור הארוך, ויקרא ד'ב'א'1](#)

Perhaps the Torah here hints at a **criticism** directed at the High Priest concerned, who, in spite of his stature, could become guilty of a sin caused by negligence.

PTC. Realize we are held up to a high standard especially with great people around us; try to internalize lessons people teach you even if others use harshness in words to you

[Rabbeinu Bahya, Bamidbar 25:1:3'ג'א'3 רבנו בחיי, במדבר כ"ה:א'ג'3](#)

Whenever the Torah refers to the Israelites simply as העם, this term implies a **criticism** of their spiritual level.

[Rabbeinu Bahya, Devarim 32:15:1'ט'א'1 רבנו בחיי, דברים ל"ב:ט'א'1](#)

All this is really part of this song which is a collection of **criticism**, rebuke, during which Moses argues with the people concerning their conduct in the future.

[Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Torah Shebikhtav, Vayeshev, Miketz, Vayigash, Derekh Chayim, Vayeshev 8](#)

ולא יכלו דברו לשלום. Rashi comments that we can learn the praiseworthy character traits of the brothers from the very criticism the Torah directs at them. The brothers were no hypocrites, fawning on Joseph to his face and cursing him behind his back. They were candid and frank. We have a parallel to this frankness in [Samuel I 25,3](#), where Naval is described. Our sages say that he was just as evil as is implied by his very name [hardly a name given to him by his father at birth. Ed.], i.e. he did not bother to conceal his הרע, ill-will. The difference between Naval and the brothers was that whereas Naval was offensive to everybody, the brothers refrained from speaking to Joseph altogether. They did not want to be guilty of hypocrisy by speaking to him

peacefully, hiding what was in their hearts; they also did not want to be guilty of hateful behavior towards him.

[Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Torah Shebikhtav, Beshalach, Torah Ohr 40](#), שני לוחות הברית, תורה שבכתב, בשלח, תורה אור מ'

G-d's question in 14,15: מה תצעק אלי, which Rashi had understood as a **criticism of Moses who engaged in lengthy prayer when the need of the hour was action...**

[Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Torah Shebikhtav, Sefer Vayikra, Derekh Chayim, Kedoshim 34](#) **ולא תשא** . **עליו הטא** . The gist of the prohibition is not to shame your fellow Jew, for you might bring about his death by causing his face first to blush and then turn white. On the other hand, if you fail to reprove someone who commits transgressions you will have to bear the burden of his sin on your own shoulders. It follows that the key to correct behavior is the way you reprove. You must do so with a friendly mien in order that he will accept your constructive criticism. Should you have been guilty of a similar offence you must first reprove yourself before you take it upon yourself to criticize someone else. This teaches us an important rule. If one may not shame a person who has committed sins and is subject to being reprovved, how much less may one contribute to the embarrassment of a person who has not been guilty of such sins! When there is quarreling going on one must be especially careful not to become guilty of unprovoked hatred.

PTC. If you need to criticize someone, make sure to do it in the right manner and that yourself are not guilty of the same problem

[Or HaChaim on Genesis 37:2:1'א:ב:א'](#) אור החיים על בראשית ל"ז:ב:א'

Our sages in Bereshit Rabbah 12,3 say that wherever a paragraph commences with the word אלה this represents a contrast to and criticism of what has been reported previously.

[Or HaChaim on Numbers 12:11:3'ג:א:ג'](#) אור החיים על במדבר י"ב:א:ג'

If G'd had not rebuked and disciplined them it would have given them the impression that G'd Himself condoned and agreed with their criticism of Moses... We cannot imagine how much more severe the punishment would have been if Moses had indeed felt offended by Miriam and Aaron's **criticism** of his conduct vis-a-vis Tziporah.

[From David to Destruction, The Rise and Fall of Shlomo HaMelech, Shlomo HaMelech Marries Bat Paroh 27](#) מדוד ועד לחורבן, עלייתו ונפילתו של שלמה המלך, שלמה מתחתן עם בת פרעה כ"ז

Chizkiyahu HaMelech who has Yeshayahu to reprimand him, and Yoshiyahu HaMelech who has Yirmiyahu HaNavi to scold him, nowhere in Tanach is it recorded that Shlomo HaMelech has a Navi on hand to offer him criticism...

[From David to Destruction, Yarav'am ben Nevat and the Splitting of the Kingdom,](#)

[Underappreciated Asa 19](#) מדוד ועד לחורבן, ירבעם בן נבט וחלוקת הממלכה, אסא הבלתי מוערך דיו י"ט

We suggest that the Navi hints at some criticism of Yehoshafat since it was ripe in his time to remove the Bamot from Yehudah.

PTC. It's always important to have leaders/rabbis/mentors in our lives who can guide us and lead us in the right ways with the right words and guidance for proper criticism; make sure to "asei licee Rav" as Pirkei Avot teaches

[The Jewish Spiritual Heroes, Volume I; The Creators of the Mishna, Rabbi Simeon ben Yochai](#)
[ענקי הרוח שלנו, חלק א; חכמי המשנה, רבי שמעון בן יוחאי ב'2'](#)

When the scholars returned during the reign of Antoninus Pius and resumed their scholarly labors, Rabbi Simeon ben Yochai gained the disfavor of the authorities because of his **criticism** of the Roman government

[The Jewish Spiritual Heroes, Volume I; The Creators of the Mishna, Rabbi Simeon ben Yochai](#)
[ענקי הרוח שלנו, חלק א; חכמי המשנה, רבי שמעון בן יוחאי כ"ט29](#)

When Rabbi Simeon expressed **criticism** of the Romans he was forced to hide in a cave.

[The Jewish Spiritual Heroes, Volume I; The Creators of the Mishna, Rabbi Jehudah the Nasi](#)
[ענקי הרוח שלנו, חלק א; חכמי המשנה, רבי יהודה הנשיא ח'8](#)

When certain activities of other people were being judged and **criticism** was leveled against them, Rabbi Jehudah carefully weighed his opinions before passing judgment.

[The Jewish Spiritual Heroes, Volume II; The Amoraim of Palestine and the Jerusalem Talmud, Rabbi Jehudah N'siah the First and His Successors](#)
[ענקי הרוח שלנו, חלק ב; אמוראי ארץ ישראל7](#)
[והתלמוד הירושלמי, רבי יהודה נשיאה הראשון, ועד אחרון הנשיאים ז'](#)

When Rabbi Jehudah realized that his household was the talk of the country he commanded that a stricter religious discipline be applied in order to avoid **criticism**.

[The Jewish Spiritual Heroes, Volume II; The Amoraim of Palestine and the Jerusalem Talmud, Rabbi Jehudah N'siah the First and His Successors](#)
[ענקי הרוח שלנו, חלק ב; אמוראי ארץ ישראל8](#)
[והתלמוד הירושלמי, רבי יהודה נשיאה הראשון, ועד אחרון הנשיאים ח'](#)

...and when Rabbi Jehudah heard the people murmuring against him, Hillel immediately left the bath house to avoid all cause of **criticism**.

PTC. Be careful of being too critical and too outspoken of those around you, especially government, even if done in a "proper" manner, as it could be dangerous and damaging in many ways

[ברכות י"ט א:6'19a: Berakhot](#)

... If thou seest a scholar committing an offence at night, do not **criticise** him for it by day : perhaps he has repented by then. Dost thou imagine perhaps he has repented?

[Towards Historic Judaism, IV; Healing the Breach 1:3'ג:א' הקרע של איחויי של היסטורית, ד. לקראת יהדות היסטורית,](#)
Rather than **criticise** let us try to understand.

[Or HaChaim on Leviticus 10:20:3](#)

Moses became angry at the surviving sons of Aaron and spoke harshly with them as reported in our verse. In fact he was also angry at Aaron but he expressed this by speaking to Aaron's sons; he did not criticise Aaron to his face.

[Or HaChaim on Genesis על בראשית Chapter 28:14](#)

The Torah continues: "He took from the stones of that site;" this is analogous to the statement by Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish in *Berachot* 5 that a person should constantly strive to provoke his good urge i.e. criticise himself by struggling against the evil urge. Should he fail to overcome his evil urge he should busy himself with Torah study as suggested by David in [Psalms 4,5](#). When the Torah refers to מאבני המקום, that Jacob took from the stones of that site, this refers to the בנינו של עולם the building blocks by means of which the world is built, i.e. Torah. These words may also relate to the stones used to kill the evil urge and its representatives. This is what the Talmud means in *Sotah* 21 when we are told that Torah saves one from the evil urge not only when one is actively engaged in its study but even when one is temporarily not busy with Torah.

PTC. Realize before criticizing we should try to be dan lekaf zechus/judge favorably (the only good type of judging in my opinion), and use it through a Torah lens, with Torah by our side to decrease our urge to criticize or judge to begin with

[Tractate Derekh Eretz Zuta 2:6:זוטא ב'ו'ר'6: מסכת דרך ארץ](#)

Accustom yourself to end on an auspicious note. I.e. if you must **criticize** or predict misfortune, your last words should inspire confidence and comfort.

[Rabbeinu Bahya, Shemot 1:1:2:ב'י'2: שמות א'א'ב'1:2: רבנו בחיי](#)

There are two types of people with regard to reproof: those whom we are obligated to **criticize** and those whom we should avoid criticizing.... There are three types of people whom one is obligated to **criticize**: the wise, the simple and the youth.

[Sefer HaIkkarim, Maamar 2, Observation 2:הערה ב'2: ספר העקרims, מאמר ב'2: הערה ב'2:](#)

...the reader of a book must be careful, and not be too hasty to **criticize** the words of the author, until he becomes familiar with the style and method of the book, and has read all that is.

[Kav HaYashar 78:7:קב הישר ע"ח:7:78: קב הישר](#)

For the Holy One Blessed is He is not pleased with those who **criticize** His people Israel or the souls of the righteous. The Torah displays concern even for the dignity of the wicked.

PTC. Realize if we do need to criticize do it in a manner that lessens the blow besides using loving manner and words, try the sandwich method (start with good, put criticism in middle, and end with good—i.e. You're such a good spouse, I just need a little more help with the kids in the morning, but I really appreciate all you do as you're a great spouse)

Points To Carryover:

- Be careful with our words/actions that they be positive and helpful to those around us**
- Cynicism and Scoffing never helps and only hurts, make sure to avoid it in life**
- Scoffing and cynicism leads to much negativity and destruction in the world, make sure to rid it from around you**
- Be careful with whom and how you criticize; use loving gentle words in a loving manner**
- Realize we are held up to a high standard especially with great people around us; try to internalize lessons people teach you even if others use harshness in words to you**
- If you need to criticize someone, make sure to do it in the right manner and that yourself are not guilty of the same problem**
- It's always important to have leaders/rabbis/mentors in our lives who can guide us and lead us in the right ways with the right words and guidance for proper criticism; make sure to "asei lichee Rav" as Pirkei Avot teaches**
- Be careful of being too critical and too outspoken of those around you, especially government, even if done in a "proper" manner, as it could be dangerous and damaging in many ways**
- Realize before criticizing we should try to be dan lekaf zechus/judge favorably (the only good type of judging in my opinion), and use it through a Torah lens, with Torah by our side to decrease our urge to criticize or judge to begin with**
- Realize if we do need to criticize do it in a manner to lessen the blow, besides using loving manner and words, try the sandwich method (first good, then criticism, then end with good)**