
From Rebuke to Redemption

Dignity, Devarim, and the Story of Arnon Yogv

A retelling of a shiur by Mi K'amcha Yisroel

There is a question worth sitting with before we go any further: when someone we love disappoints us, when they make a mistake so glaring it cannot be ignored, what do we reach for first — the urge to prove our point, or the instinct to protect their dignity? It is the question the speaker opens with in this week's message from Mi K'amcha Yisroel, and it turns out to be the question sitting quietly beneath the entire Torah portion of Devarim.

Devarim is often called the book of rebuke, and for good reason. It opens with Moshe, forty years into his leadership, standing before the nation to deliver his final address before his death. This would seem the moment to speak plainly — to name every failure, every rebellion, every place the people fell short. And yet Moshe does almost the opposite. Instead of naming the Golden Calf or the sin of the Spies outright, he speaks in riddles, hiding those memories behind obscure place names like Dahab and Pan Katro, locations that meant everything to the people standing there and nothing to anyone listening from outside.

Citing Rashi and Rabbi Moshe Sternbach, the speaker explains why. Everyone present already knew exactly what they had done wrong; Moshe wasn't telling them anything new. He spoke in code precisely so that an outsider listening in would never be able to piece together what those places meant. His goal was never to expose the nation's past. It was to shape their future. And that, the speaker suggests, is the whole lesson in miniature: humiliation might succeed in pointing out what went wrong, but if the goal is to actually help someone become better, dignity has to come first. People grow when they are reminded of what they're capable of — not when they are reminded of how they failed. It is no accident, we're told, that Parashat Devarim is always read on the Shabbos just before Tisha B'Av. Before the Beit HaMikdash — the Temple — can be rebuilt, something more foundational has to be rebuilt first: the way we treat one another.



To make that idea impossible to forget, the speaker turns to a story — the story of an Israeli taxi driver named Arnon Yogv. Arnon drove the way some people always seem to: too fast, too

aggressively, too sure that nothing bad would ever actually happen to him. His wife warned him. His friends warned him. He kept driving the same way anyhow.

Then, one ordinary afternoon, it did happen. Arnon struck and killed an eleven-year-old boy named Ruain. In the panic of the moment he fled the scene — and it was only later, alone and listening to the police manhunt unfold over the radio, that the weight of what he'd done caught up with him. He collapsed into an empty field, undone by remorse, and turned himself in to the police the next day.

Prison followed, and with it, a second kind of disaster. Arnon's wife, Hana, was left alone with their two young children and no income at all. The electricity was cut off. The fridge was empty. Hana searched the house for spare coins just to buy bread and milk, and when she found nothing, she looked up and asked, simply, “What do I do now?”

Almost immediately, delivery men began arriving — groceries, baby formula, diapers, envelopes of cash — from helpers Hana never saw. She came to call them, smiling through it all, her ‘elves.’

It wasn't a one-time act of kindness. For months, these anonymous deliveries kept coming, quietly covering bills, quietly showing up before every holiday, never once announcing themselves. When Arnon was finally released from prison, one last envelope arrived — clothing vouchers, and a note simply wishing him success. There was no name attached, no explanation, nothing to trace it back to anyone. And it was precisely that unexplainable, undeserved kindness that moved something in Arnon's family. Without anyone ever preaching to them, without a single sermon, they grew spiritually and became sincere Baalei Teshuva — returnees to a life of faith.

Years passed before Arnon worked up the courage to do what he'd long known he needed to do: he and his family went to visit the parents of the boy he had killed. He didn't know what to expect — anger would have been fair, a closed door would have been understandable. Instead, the parents welcomed them inside, sat them down, and served coffee and cake. When Arnon finally broke down, begging for forgiveness, their answer was quiet and immediate: “We forgive you. Life and death is in the hands of Hashem.”

The truth about the ‘elves’ stayed hidden for fifteen years, until, almost by accident, a city clerk let it slip. The anonymous benefactor — the one who had spent years quietly feeding, clothing, and sustaining Arnon's family from the shadows — was Rabbi Shimshon. The father of the eleven-year-old boy Arnon had killed.

Sit with that for a moment, because the speaker asks us to. Every Friday night, Rabbi Shimshon looked across his Shabbos table at his son's empty chair. And yet on Sunday mornings, that same man was quietly making sure the family responsible for that empty chair had food on their table too.

When Arnon's family finally asked the boy's mother why — why they would do this, why they would give anything at all to the family that shattered theirs — her answer was simple. Yes, their hearts were broken. But they made a decision to rise above themselves, because they understood something most people miss in the middle of their own pain: another broken family didn't need more shame. They needed help finding a way to stand again.

They hoped, she said, that Arnon's family's growth would stand as a merit for their own lost son. They never pressured. They simply loved them, and watched them grow.

— the boy's mother, in substance, as recounted in the shiur



And so the two stories fold into one. Moshe, choosing riddles over rebuke so that his people's future would not be chained to their past. Rabbi Shimshon, choosing quiet kindness over the anger he had every right to feel. Both of them understood the same thing from two very different centuries: lasting change is never built on humiliation. It's built on dignity. You don't rebuild a shattered person by shaming them — you rebuild them by continuing to believe, long before they believe it themselves, that they are still worth saving.

May we all become people who speak the truth with compassion, who correct with sensitivity, and who never sacrifice another person's dignity — and in that merit, may we merit to see the rebuilding of the Temple.

Video Reference

<https://youtu.be/AGtS6hC1eaM?is=86aOAcVns3f2Z5Br>