



Yitro

Essential Ingredients in Constructive Criticism.

Many parshiyot in the Torah commence with the word “וַיֹּאמֶר” - “and he spoke”. Or the word “וַיֹּאמֶר” - “and he said”. Yitro starts with the word “וַיִּשְׁמַע” “he listened”.

“וַיִּשְׁמַע יִתְרוּ” - Yitro was somebody who listened to everything and everyone around him. That's the first reason why he was such a good adviser.

Being able to give constructive criticism to Moshe and to others, Yitro ensured he had a positive impact on his environment. He did not impose his own conclusions, but rather would listen properly to everything that people had to say. As a result, he was a good adviser and a good leader.

The second ingredient of constructive criticism is learned later on in the Parsha. Rashi reminds us that one of Yitro's seven names was “יִתְגַּר” which means “additional”. Thanks to Yitro, we have an additional portion in the Torah which we read this Shabbat.

When Yitro was giving advice to Moshe, Rashi begins commenting on the words: “וְאַתָּה תִּחְזֹה מִכֶּל־הָעָם” “You shall also [support] from among all the people”

However, the Likutei Yehoshua tells us that the passage about Yitro giving advice starts four versus earlier when Yitro said to Moshe: “לֹא־טוֹב הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֲשָׂה” - “the thing that you are doing is not good”.

So why didn't Rashi start earlier?

The Likutei Yehoshua explains beautifully. There are many people who can say: “what you are doing is not good.” That's easy. But what Yitro were added was: “I've got a solution for you.”

That's what made him into such a great adviser. Somebody who could identify what's wrong and also, together with the person concerned, work out a solution.

And it was because of Yitro's constructive criticism that Moshe had the solution, which worked so well for him and the entire nation. Therefore, let us be like Yitro. Let us strive towards giving good advice, enhancing the lives of others, being there to help them.

But never forget: We need to listen, and we shouldn't just criticise - we should also provide a solution to the problem.

Shabbat Shalom.