

You shall not curse the deaf; and you shall not place a stumbling block before a blind man. (19:14)

The *Torah* concerns itself with our attitude towards the individuals who are unknowing. Although one who is deaf cannot hear our curse, it does not mitigate its evil. We are the ones that are affected by the curse, since we sink to the level of cursing people. We must realize that people are only vehicles. The evil they perpetrate is meant for us to sustain. We would do well to introspect our own deeds and correct them.

Rashi explains that while only a degenerate person would place a stumbling block before the blind, this *pasuk* also has a metaphorical meaning. We are adjured to take extreme care in giving advice to others. Giving bad advice to the unwary, especially if the advisor stands to benefit, is forbidden. We are obliged to look after the welfare of others and certainly not cause them harm.

What if the advisor has some serious reasons, even calculations *l'shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven, which would, in his mind, justify giving inappropriate advice? **Horav M.D. Soloveitchik, Shlita**, comments that regardless of one's *cheshbonos*, calculations, it is forbidden to give advice to someone which will not benefit the individual. Advice must be tailor-made to fit the individual who seeks help. It is not for the advisor to make decisions based upon what he feels is the best course to take.

Horav Soloveitchik relates that once a great scholar sent a letter to the **Brisker Rav, zl**, in which he implored the *Rav* to encourage a certain capable individual to assume a position in the writer's community. Moreover, if this person would accept the leadership of the institution, he would save the school. The *Brisker Rav* declined to offer any advice that was not in the best interest of the individual who was asking. "If someone comes to me for advice, " replied the *Brisker Rav*, "it is incumbent upon me to guide him on the course which will be most beneficial to him. If you want him to take the job, then encourage him to seek advice from someone else."

How far have we digressed from that attitude? Are we careful to render advice in accordance with a person's needs, rather than what is best for us? Do we give blanket advice because that is the standard "party line," regardless of the fact that for this person/student it would be detrimental? Perhaps those of us who render advice should rethink our position and focus upon the sake of those who turn to us for help.