

LISTEN, PLEASE

Text:

Miriam and Aaron offer a well-intentioned critique of Moses' actions. God voices His disapproval of their words.

[God] called Aaron and Miriam, and they both went out. And He said, "Please hear my words."

[Numbers 12:6]

He spoke to them gently, for if His words had been [delivered] in anger, His words would not have been heard. This is meant to teach a lesson: how much more so for a human being, that his words should be delivered gently!

[Sifsei Chachamim]

Question:

Would Miriam and Aaron have rejected God's words if they were uttered harshly? How could righteous, sincere, honest people ignore God's rebuke?

Answer:

Regardless of one's sincerity, there is a natural resistance to criticism. Miriam and Aaron would never consciously disagree with God; but a harsh delivery would have compromised their receptivity to His message, albeit on a subconscious level. God knew the way to ensure complete acceptance was to deliver the message gently.

Message:

Human beings are infinitely sensitive, to the form as well as the substance of the message. The greatest people in history are still human; if we want our words to penetrate people's souls, we would do well to respect the delicate mechanism of their hearts.