



KINDER TORAH[®]



For parents to share with children at the Shabbos table - Parshas Korach
Dedicated in Memory of HaRav HaGaon Rav Mordechai Shakovitsky zt"l

It Always Spells Trouble

How do you spell *machlokes* (argument)? The Medrash Rabba (Bamidbar 18:12) relates five points, one for each letter of the word *machlokes*, that show how terrible an argument really is. "Mem" is for *makko* (a beating). "Chof" is for *charon* (wrath). "Lamed" is for *likuy* (stricken). "Kuf" is for *kellalah* (a curse). "Taf" is for *toevah* (abomination). Argument brings beating, anger, plague, curse, and abomination upon a person. Let us use our imagination for a minute. Imagine that you were about to go to a new school. The teachers seemed nice. The building was nice. The students seemed friendly. You asked a few more questions and found out that terrible things were happening in that school. There were beatings, sickness, and curses. Terrible sins were being committed. Would you go to that school? Of course not. You would stay as far away from it as possible. We must stay as far away from *machlokes* as we would from that school.

The commentary of the Maharzav (Rav Zev Wolf Einhorn zt"l) on the Medrash spells the word *machlokes* backward with a word for each letter. "Tachlis kilyon liolam chalukah mavie" (Argument's purpose is to bring destruction to the world).

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Now you see how terrible an argument really is. When you find yourself disagreeing with someone you must ask yourself, "Is this argument really worth it? What are we really arguing about anyway? Is it that important? Even if it is important, is there another way to settle it besides arguing?" You might think that you will win the argument. There is only one winner in an argument. The Yetzer Hara. Everyone else loses.

Pay Attention

Moshe sent to call Dasan and Aviram, the sons of Eliav, but they said, "We will not go up!" (Bamidbar 16:12). Can you imagine that? The Gadol HaDor, the leader of the Jewish nation summons you and you refuse. Did such a thing really happen? The Chofetz Chaim zt"l comments that we see how wide reaching are the effects of *machlokes*. Dasan and Aviram were so caught up in the *machlokes* that they did not even hear what was being said to them. How did Moshe Rabbeinu react to this? "This distressed Moshe greatly" (Bamidbar 16:15). The Medrash Rabba (Bamidbar 18:10) explains more precisely why Moshe was distressed. When a person has a discussion with his friend, each one expresses his opinion. The other one listens and answers him. This makes each one feel good. He is being heard and his opinion is being considered. Even if his friend disagrees, he is still considering his opinion important enough to listen to, think about, and answer. If, however, the other one does not answer, it distresses the person. The other side is not even listening. There is no one to talk with.

Kinderlach . . .

Everyone wants to be heard. Everyone wants to be listened to. People crave attention. One of the biggest chasodim (acts of kindness) that you can do for a person is to listen to him. You will make him so happy. On the other hand ignoring a person will cause him tsar (distress). What if no one paid attention to you? None of your friends or neighbors said "hello". You said "hello" to them and they did not answer. You tried to ask your teacher a question and he did not call on you. Imagine how terrible you would feel. People are talking to you. Listen to them.

Directly to the Source

Korach did not take his complaint directly to Moshe Rabbeinu. Rather, he gathered 250 people and voiced his opinions to them. He did this in a way that made a mockery of Moshe Rabbeinu and the Torah. Contrast this with Moshe Rabbeinu's actions. He went privately to Korach, careful not to embarrass him in public. Moshe explained to him that the selection of Aharon for Kohen Godol was a command from Hashem. Similarly, the Torah laws that Korach questioned were directly from Hashem. An argument that is *lishaim shamayim* (for the sake of Heaven) strives for the truth. Moshe Rabbeinu was a man of truth who sought peace. Korach was not interested in truth. He wanted to satisfy his own desires by creating and increasing an unjustified argument.

Kinderlach . . .

Moshe Rabbeinu teaches us how to make peace. Go to the other person directly and privately. Explain yourself and your point of view in a soft tone of voice. If you are honest, then you have done your part. With Hashem's help, the other person will also be honest and the matter will be settled.



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