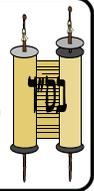




Kinder Torah

Parashas Korach



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). "Ches" is for *charon* (wrath). "Lamed" is for *likuy* (stricken). "Kuf" is for *kellalah* (a curse). "Taf" is for *toeivah* (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) 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).

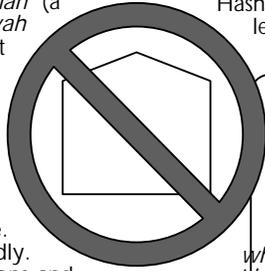
Kinderlach . . .

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.

Don't Mention My Name

"Korach the son of Yitzhar the son of Kehas, the son of Levi" (Bamidbar 16:1). Levi was the son of Yaakov. When the Torah lists Korach's lineage, it stops at Levi and does not mention Yaakov. Why? Korach occupies an infamous place in Jewish history. He was the first Jew to challenge the *Gadol HaDor* (Torah leader

of the generation). Until then it was unthinkable to question the authority of a Torah leader. Then Korach rose against Moshe Rabbeinu. The respect and awe of Torah leadership was breached. The honor accorded to our *Gedolim* would never be the same. Rashi inform us that Yaakov did not want his name mentioned in reference to the terrible *machlokes* of Korach. Therefore, he asked Hashem to have mercy on him and leave his name out of Korach's lineage.



Kinderlach . . . Do you see how far we have to distance ourselves from machlokes? Yaakov Avinu lived four generations before Korach. He was not involved in the machlokes in any way whatsoever. Still, he did not even want his name mentioned in the same breath as that of Korach. That is an indication of how disastrous machlokes is. We must all do our best to avoid needless machlokes at all costs. Especially among our family, neighbors, and classmates. Machlokes can destroy every good thing in your life. Don't let it happen to you.

Tachanun

"Welcome to our Beis HaKineses. Are you new in the neighborhood?"
 "Yes. Thank you so much for the warm welcome."
 "I hope that you settle in well."
 "Amen. May I ask you a question?"
 "Yes, please."
 "Not only am I new in the neighborhood, but I am also a newcomer to Torah observance. I do not have much experience praying. I noticed that after the Shemoneh Esray prayers, everyone sits down and puts their head down on their arm. Which prayer are they saying, and why do they put their head down for that prayer?"

The man thinks for a moment, and then begins to answer the newcomer.

"I also had the same question. I believe that the answer is found in this week's parasha. Come let's look it up together. Korach and his companions started a rebellion against Moshe Rabbeinu. Hashem commanded Moshe and Aharon to separate themselves from the rebels. Then He would destroy them in a moment. Moshe and Aharon did not want to see Korach's congregation die, therefore they 'fell on their faces' in prayer (Bamidbar 16:22).

Rabbeinu Bechaye, in his commentary on the Torah, takes the opportunity to expound on the subject of 'tachanun' - the prayer of supplication when we 'fall on our faces' (i.e. put our heads down and cover our faces). He cites three reasons for falling on our faces.

"The first is the fear of the *Shechina* (Divine Presence). We need to realize that when we are praying, we are standing in front of Hashem Himself. This is quite a humbling experience. Therefore we perform a very humbling action - we put our heads down and cover our faces. Secondly, this action helps us to do *teshuva* (correct our mistakes). One who feels distressed and low puts his head down. This is one of the key factors in doing *teshuva* - feeling distressed and low about your sins. Therefore, we perform an action which demonstrates our regret and desire to correct our ways. Thirdly, we show that our senses and feelings are powerless before The Almighty, Creator of the universe. When we cover our faces, we seal our eyes and mouths. We demonstrate that we can only see what Hashem wants us to see. We can only go in the direction which Hashem allows us to go. We are powerless before the Will of Hashem."

"What a powerful prayer!"

"Yes. We should all appreciate it and say it with great *kavannah* (concentration)."

Kinderlach . . .

Tachanun is a tefillah that summarizes some of the foundations of prayer. We stand before Hashem in tefillah, weigh our deeds, and resolve to submit ourselves to His Will. It is a humbling experience, standing before the Almighty Creator of the universe. We put our heads down and cover our faces to show our fear, humility, distress, and desire to do teshuva. This action arouses our feelings to come closer to our Father in Heaven. Say tachanun with a renewed kavannah, kinderlach. Humble yourselves before Hashem.

Parasha Questions:

- Why was the bris made with salt? (Rashi 18:19)
- Which gifts did the Leviim receive? (18:21)
- Did the Leviim give gifts to the Kohanim? (18:26-29)

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