

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Korach



Torah WELLSPRINGS

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Torah Wellsprings - Korach

Bitachon

During the First World War, the Chofetz Chaim escaped with his students from Radin to Sambilovitz. (Like many Yidden at that time, they were trying to keep away from the front, where the war was being fought.) When the front reached Sambilovitz, the Chofetz Chaim and his students had to escape further away, and they settled in Shumietz, which is in the Mohilev region of Russia.

In Shumietz, Cossacks would routinely come to the yeshiva to search for bachurim who had evaded the draft to the army. Since there were many such bachurim, it caused much tension and fear whenever the Cossacks came. In the sefer *החפץ חיים הייו ופועלו* (p.113), it states the following: Once, when they were searching for the bachurim who evaded the draft, the Chofetz Chaim became very afraid, and he was worried the entire day. He fasted that day, and by nighttime, the Chofetz Chaim felt very happy and optimistic. He called for his son-in-law, Reb Tzvi, and told him that he found chizuk from the Torah. When the people of Sodom asked Lot to send out the guests so they could harm them, Lot pleaded with them not to harm his guests. He said (Bereishis 19:9) *רַב, לְאִנְשֵׁים הָאֵלֵּל אֵל תַּעֲשׂוּ דְבָר בִּי עַל כֵּן בָּאוּ בְּצֵל כִּרְתִּי*, "to these men do nothing, because they have come under the shadow of my roof." Lot felt responsible for taking care of them because they had come to his home. The Chofetz Chaim said that Lot wasn't the greatest tzaddik when he lived in Sodom, but he understood the principle of taking care of his guests. They came to him, relied on him, and he had to protect them. Certainly, if we go under Hashem's shade and rely on His protection, Hashem will not abandon us!

Indeed, throughout the period they were there, not one student was drafted into the army. Initially, the Cossacks brought some of the bachurim to their commander. But when the commander heard about the

greatness of the Chofetz Chaim, he freed all the bachurim.

There is a *marshal* of someone helping an old man walk across the street. The old man can't walk on his own and can hardly stand on his own, so he leans on the young man as they cross the street. Then the young man suddenly slips from under the old man's arms and rushes off to where he must go. The old man falls to the floor.

Everyone understands that something terrible happened. How could one be so callous and allow the old man to fall to the ground?

Similarly, when we trust in Hashem, Hashem will help us. Hashem won't allow the people who trust in Him to fall. This is alluded to in the pasuk (Devarim 32:4) *אֵל-אֱמוּנָה* (Devarim 32:4) *וְאֵין עֹל צְדִיק וְיֵשֶׁר הוּא צְדִיק*, "a faithful G-d, without injustice He is righteous and upright." *וְיֵשֶׁר הוּא*, "Hashem is righteous and upright," and He won't allow those who rely on Him to fall.

Tefillah

The Kobriner zt'l (Toras Avos, Emunah u'Bitachon 37) says that the tefillah of each Yid has the strength to grant him all his needs, and the salvation *will come immediately* - *תיכף ומיד*. The reason that sometimes we see that tefillos aren't helping is that we lack emunah in tefillah. When a person believes that his tefillah will break open the heavens, and that he will attain everything he needs, then, indeed, immediately, his tefillos will be answered.

The Ramban (בהשגתיו על ספר הרמב"ם מ"ע ה) explains the pasuk (Devarim 11:13) *וְלִעֲבֹדוֹ כָּל לְבַבְכֶם*, "To serve Him with all your heart". He writes, "We should learn His Torah, and we should daven to Him when there are tzaros. Our eyes and our hearts should be to Hashem, like the eyes and the hearts of slaves are to

their masters. As it states (Bamidbar 10:9), וְכִי תִבְאוּ מִלְחָמָה בְּאֹרְצְכֶם עַל הַצָּר הַצָּר אֶתְכֶם וְהִרְעַתְם בְּחַצְצֹת אֶלְקֵיכֶם, וְנִזְבַּרְתֶּם לְפָנַי ה' אֶלְקֵיכֶם, 'If you go to war in your land against an adversary that oppresses you, you shall blow a *teruah* with the trumpets and be remembered before Hashem your G-d...' This is a mitzvah for every tzarah – may it not come to our community. We must shout before Him with tefillos and with *teruos*."

It states (Yeshayah 41:14) אַל תִּירָאֵי תוֹלַעַת יַעֲקֹב, "Fear not, the worm of Yaakov..." The Midrash (Tanchuma Bishalach 9) writes, "Why is Yisrael compared to a worm? A worm smites mighty trees (אֲרָזִים) only with its mouth. It is weak, and it smites the mighty. So, too, Yisrael, their strength is their tefillos... As it states (Bereishis 48:22) וְאֶנִּי נָתַתִּי לְךָ שָׂכָם אֶחָד עַל אַחֶיךָ, 'I have given you one portion over your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.' Did Yaakov take it with his sword and bow? Behold it states (Tehillim 44:7) כִּי לֹא בְקִשְׁתִּי אֶבְטָח וְחַרְבִּי לֹא תוֹשִׁיעֵנִי, 'For I do not trust in my bow, neither will my sword save me.' Rather, חַרְבִּי means my tefillos, and בְּקִשׁוֹתִי means my requests." The sword and bow of the Jewish nation are their tefillos. That is their strength.

Similarly, it is written (Tehillim 149:6) רוֹמְמוֹת אֶל-לִבֵּי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְחַרְבֵי בְּיָדָם, "Lofty praises of Hashem in their throats and a double-edged sword in their hands". The Midrash (Shochoer Tov, Tehillim 149) writes, "It states בְּיָדָם רוֹמְמוֹת אֶל-לִבֵּי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְחַרְבֵי בְּיָדָם, "Lofty praises of Hashem in their throats and a double-edged sword in their hands". The Midrash (Shochoer Tov, Tehillim 149) writes, "It states

Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, 'You are מְרוֹמְמִים, elevating Me [and praising Me], therefore, I will fight wars for you to save you from the galus and from its hardships. The sword of Yisrael is their mouths, as it states וְחַרְבֵי בְּיָדָם.' (This means their sword is בְּיָדָם, their mouths).

It states in this week's parashah (16:15) וַיֹּאמֶר [Moshe] said to Hashem, אֵל ה' אֵל תִּפְּוֹן אֶל מִנְחָתָם, '[Moshe] said to Hashem, 'Do not accept their offering.' The Ramban says that מִנְחָתָם can be translated as "their tefillos". Moshe davened that when Korach and his community daven to be the kohen gadol, Hashem shouldn't accept their tefillos. We see from this explanation the greatness of tefillah. Apparently, even Korach's tefillos had the potential to be answered.

Behold, Korach wanted to ruin the emunah that Klal Yisrael has in Moshe Rabbeinu, and he wanted to make a machlokes against Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon (קְדוֹשׁ ה') and to destroy the foundations of the Torah. Nevertheless, Moshe was concerned that perhaps Hakadosh Baruch Hu would accept his tefillos and he would become the kohen gadol, even though Hashem had already chosen and decreed that Aharon should be the kohen gadol. How great is tefillah and how much it can accomplish! Even if a person sinned very much, he still has the strength of tefillah. Even if he davens for matters that are contrary to Hashem's will, he has the power of tefillah. (See Or Yechezkel vol.5, p.280).¹

1. It states (Devarim 4:41) וְאֵן יִבְדְּלֵי מִשָּׁה שְׁלֹשׁ עָרִים, "Then Moshe set aside three cities..." The three cities were עָרֵי מִקְלַת, cities of refuge and protection. The Shach al HaTorah writes that the tefillos of Bnei Yisrael are their עָרֵי מִקְלַת, salvation; the three arei miklat represent the three tefillos we daven daily. It is through these three tefillos that Hashem saves us from our tzaros.

In particular, the eighteen brachos of Shemonah Esrei are our protection. The Shach explains that, therefore, it states (ibid. pasuk 42) וְנָס אֶל אַחַת מִן הָעָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְחָי, "He may flee to one of these cities, so that he might live." וְחָי hints to ח"ה, the eighteen brachos of Shemonah Esrei. They protect us.

Similarly, in parashas Shoftim, where the arei miklat are discussed again, it states (19:2) שְׁלוֹשׁ עָרִים תִּבְדְּלֵי לָךְ, "you shall set aside three cities..." The word שְׁלוֹשׁ means three, and it is spelled here with an extra ו"ו in the word. The letter ו"ו is gematria 6, and שלוש, means 3 x 6 = 18, alluding once again to the 18 brachos of Shemonah Esrei. Tefilla is our arei miklat and our protection from all tzaros.

The Gemara Brachos (32b) states, אַרְבַּעָה דְּבָרִים צָרִיכִים חַיּוּק, וְאֵלּוּ הֵם: תּוֹרָה וּמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים, תְּפִלָּה וְדָרֵךְ אֲרִץ, "Four things need

Reb Chaim Vital (Eitz HaDaas Tov, Tehillim 124) explains at length the chapter in Tehillim שִׁיר הַשְּׁהִיָּה לְנוּ הַמְּעֻלֹת לְדָוִד לִילֵי ה' שְׁהִיָּה לְנוּ, which means "... If it wasn't for Hashem Who was with us..." If it weren't for Hashem's aid, we would be destroyed by the goyim. This chapter was written with ruach hakodesh in reference to the galus we are in now – galus Yishmael. We quote some excerpts from Reb Chaim Vital's lengthy lesson:

"לִילֵי ה' שְׁהִיָּה לְנוּ", refers to the four galuyos, Bavel, Maday, Yavan, and Edom. "There is also a fifth galus, the last one, which is harder than all the others. This is galus Yishmael, who was called (Bereishis 16:12) פָּרָא אֶדְמִי, 'a wild donkey of a man.' ... Chazal say that he is called יִשְׁמַעֵאל because Klal Yisrael will shout many times in his galus, and then לִישְׁמַעֵאל, Hashem will listen to their shouts and answer them... (Tehillim 124:3) אָזְיֵי הַיָּמִים בְּלַעֲיוֹנוֹ,

"They would have swallowed us alive, which means that during the fifth galus, they want to swallow us alive. בְּחִרְוֹת אַפָּם בָּנוּ, 'their anger was kindled against us.' They want to wipe us off the face of the earth... We don't know what we can do, and we don't have any hope other than to trust in Hashem that He will save us from them. This is the meaning of the pasuk (ibid. pasuk 8) עֲזָרְנוּ בְּשֵׁם ה' עֲשֵׂה שְׁמִיּוֹם וְאֶרֶץ, 'Our help is in the name of Hashem, Who made heaven and earth.' We are saying that we trust in Hashem because Hashem created heaven and earth. And it is known that Hashem created heaven and earth for Yisrael so that they can keep the Torah. Therefore, Hashem must save them and redeem them with a complete redemption, speedily in our days, so heaven and earth will have their continued existence, because they only exist because of Yisrael.²

chizuk: They are, Torah, good deeds, tefillah, and *derech erez*." The question is that it should state "For four things, a person needs chizuk." Because it isn't Torah, good deeds, tefillah, and *derech erez* that need chizuk. They are strong without our chizuk. We need the chizuk to perform these deeds properly!

We can answer that when we say that they need chizuk, it means that we must view them in a stronger and more powerful manner. We must give them chizuk in how we perceive them. They should become more essential in our eyes than what we previously thought them to be. We should do the same with how we relate to Torah, good deeds, tefillah, and *derech erez*.

We are now discussing tefillah, so we will express that giving chizuk to tefillah means to recognize the amazing strength of tefillah. We shouldn't think that tefillah is something one does a few times a day, but isn't so important, chalilah. We must recognize how powerful tefillah is. How much we can gain from it. This is the definition of "tefillah needs chizuk". We should give tefillah greater importance and strength. We should understand how much we can gain from each Shemonah Esrei and from each tefillah that we say.

2. The Gemara (Pesachim 56a) states that Yaakov Avinu instructed his children to gather around him, because he wanted to reveal to them when Moshiach would come. When they gathered, the Shechinah left him. Yaakov said, "Perhaps, chas v'shalom, one of my children aren't worthy (שמא חס ושלום יש במטתי פסול)?" His children replied, שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד.

They were saying that just as Yaakov believes in one G-d, so do they. They all believe in Hashem. They are all worthy and righteous.

Hearing that, Yaakov replied, ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד, "Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever."

The Chasam Sofer (Vayechi) writes that Yaakov was explaining the reason the Shechinah left him. It obviously wasn't that they weren't worthy, because behold, they all proclaimed שמע ישראל, and they all believed in Hashem. Rather, the reason the Shechinah left Yaakov was because ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד, "Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever." Hashem wants the Jewish nation to always believe in Hashem, in all generations, "forever and ever". Therefore, the Shechinah left Yaakov, and he couldn't tell them when Moshiach would come. Hashem didn't want them to know when Moshiach would come because this knowledge would weaken their emunah and devotion to Hashem.

Hashem Accepts Our Teshuvah

It states (16:5) וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל קִרְחָה וְאֶל כָּל עֲדָתוֹ לֵאמֹר בֹּקֶר וַיִּדַע ה' אֶת אֲשֶׁר לוֹ and to his entire assembly, saying, 'In the morning Hashem will make known the one

who is His own..." Two hundred and fifty people, heads of the Sanhedrin, joined with Korach, and they all said that they wanted to be the Kohen Gadol. Moshe told them that בֹּקֶר, tomorrow, they should bring מַחֲתוֹת, firepans. In these pans there should be fire

The explanation is as follows:

Whenever Yidden suffer hard times in galus, they strengthen themselves with their hope and emunah that perhaps "Moshiach will come today!" They say, "Moshiach is coming soon, and will save us from these troubles!" This emunah helps them endure the difficult times and remain with their emunah.

However, if Klal Yisrael knew the exact date of the coming of Moshiach – and it might be hundreds of years in the future – they won't be able to strengthen themselves with the belief that Moshiach is around the corner.

This is why Hashem prevented him from divulging this secret, ensuring that Hashem's name be blessed "forever and ever".

A person is stuck in a traffic jam, crawling along the highway. He sees some drivers taking side roads or turning back. They think that they will reach their destination more quickly by taking another route. But this person's GPS recommends that he stay in the traffic jam. The road will open soon, and he will get to his destination if he remains where he is.

This is because the GPS receives information from a satellite, which sees the entire picture *from above*. In the end, the person will see that this was the wiser path, and the others, who tried to avoid the traffic, were stuck for longer.

The nimshal is that there are times when the going gets tough. He wishes he could take another route, avoiding his difficulties and roadblocks. But he doesn't realize that specifically from these situations will come his salvation.

There was a wealthy Yid, Reb Yechiel Pick z"l, who was renowned for his generosity. He gave abundantly to Gur, to Ponevezh, and to many other worthy causes. He would often recount how he became wealthy. On the day of his *chasunah*, he had to travel by train to the city where the chasunah would take place. It was the last stop on the train. The problem was that when he got off at the last stop, he discovered that he had traveled in the wrong direction! He was supposed to take the train on the other side of the tracks. He traveled in the opposite direction!

The bigger problem was that he didn't have money to take another train back to where he needed to be. He stood at the train station, crying. The Sifsei Tzaddik of Piltz zt'l saw him and said, "Bachur'l, why are you crying?"

He replied that it is true that he is a bachur, but his chasunah was scheduled for that evening, and he didn't have money for the train. The Sifsei Tzaddik gave him the money he needed and added, "You will never have to worry again about money. You will have enough money all your life because you cried for parnassah on the day of your chuppah."

So, we see that a problem can be a salvation. It is certainly quite unnerving to be very distant from the place of your own chasunah, without money to get there, but think about how much he gained from it. The problem was his salvation.

The same can be said to chasanim who go to their chasunah without having received any grand promises from their parents or in-laws of support. They feel that they are losing out, but that "problem" can be the root of their success. They will daven for parnassah, and that helps much more than any promises from parents. We are short-sighted, and we don't always see the good we receive. Let us remember that those matters that seem to be problems can all be for our good.

and ketores. Those who are chosen to be the kohen gadol will live, and the rest will die. The pasuk (16:35) says, וְאֵשׁ יִצָּעֶה מֵאֵת ה' וְתֹאכַל אֶת הַחֲמִשִּׁים וְהָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַמְּשִׁימִים וְהַמְּקַרְבִּי הַקְּטָרֶת, "A flame came forth from Hashem and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the ketores."

Korach, Doston v'Aviram, and their families were swallowed up into the earth, and the 250 people were burned by the fire.

This all occurred the next day, the day after their protests. As it states in the pasuk (16:5) בֶּקֶר וַיֵּדַע ה' אֶת אֲשֶׁר לוֹ וְאֵת הַקְּדוֹשׁ וְהַקְּרִיב אֵלָיו (16:5), "In the morning Hashem will make known the one who is His..."

Why did Moshe tell them to wait until the next day?

Rashi explains that Moshe told them, עתה עת שכרות הוא לנו ולא נכון להראות לפניו, והוא היה מתכוין לדחותם שמה יחזרו בהם, "Now it is a time of drinking for us, and it isn't proper to be seen before Him." He was intending to push them off. Perhaps they will change their minds."

The Arugas HaBosem zt'l explains that these two hundred and fifty people were great people, ראשי סנהדריות, heads of the Sanhedrin. Moshe was certain that before they went to sleep at night, they would review their deeds and make a *cheshbon hanefesh*. For this is what everyone should do when they lie in bed at night, and certainly great people do so. Moshe figured that they would contemplate their deeds at night, realize their severe aveirah, and do teshuvah.

They indeed did so and realized that they had sinned gravely. They were very ashamed of what they did, and they felt unworthy of improving their ways and returning to Hashem. They were so depressed that they chose to die. In their minds, it was a better option for them, rather than to bear the shame and guilt before Hashem.

Their error was that they didn't know that Hashem is compassionate, and His arm is outstretched to accept those who return to Him with teshuvah. In fact, their bitter

feelings were a teshuvah, as Chazal (Brachos 7a) say, טובה מרדות אחת בלבו של אדם, "It is better one smite on the heart of man". Their broken hearts, the realization that they did something wrong, was their teshuvah. But they didn't realize this, and they felt that they could never face Hashem again.

Therefore, it states (17:3) אֵת מִחְתּוֹת הַחַטָּאִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּנִפְשֵׁיהֶם, "The firepans of these sinners against their souls." This means they committed suicide, r'l. They knew they would die if they brought the ketores, and they brought it anyway. As Rashi (16:7) writes, ולא טפשים היו, שכך התרה בהם וקבלו עליהם לקרב, אלא הם חטאו על נפשותם, שנאמר את מחתות החטאים האלה, "They were not fools, they knew that Moshe had warned them [that they would die when they bring the מחתות], but they sinned against their souls, as it states אֵת מִחְתּוֹת הַחַטָּאִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּנִפְשֵׁיהֶם, "The firepans of these sinners against their souls."

People see this Rashi and wonder why they chose to die? But the Arugas HaBosem explains their intention. They felt very broken and distant from Hashem. They knew that they had sinned severely, and they thought there was no hope for them. But if they knew of Hashem's love and compassion for Bnei Yisrael, and if they would know that no matter what they do, Hashem will accept their teshuvah, they would have remained alive and completed their teshuvah before Hashem.

The Torah says (17:3, 5) אֵת מִחְתּוֹת הַחַטָּאִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּנִפְשֵׁיהֶם וַעֲשׂוּ אֹתָם רִקְעֵי פָחִים צְפוּי לַמְּוֵבָח... וְזָרוֹן לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, "The firepans of these sinners against their souls - they shall make them hammered-out sheets as a covering for the mizbeiach... as a reminder for Bnei Yisrael." The firepans were used to cover the mizbeiach, to remind Bnei Yisrael of the power of teshuvah. Even those who sin gravely can repent, and their teshuvah will be accepted.

Included, in the meaning of וְזָרוֹן לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, "A reminder for Bnei Yisrael," is that we are reminded to make a *cheshbon hanefesh*. We should think over our deeds, each night, before going to sleep (and once again at the end of

the week, and at the end of the month, and at the end of the year, as the sefarim teach us). However, the cheshbon hanefesh shouldn't cause us to fall into *atzvus*. Even if we find aveiros, r'l, we should believe in the strength of teshuvah.³

The Severity of Machlokes

Rashi, at the beginning of the *parashah* writes, *פרשה זו יפה נדרשת במדרש רבי תנחומא*, "This *parashah* is taught beautifully in the Midrash Tanchuma."

It is rare for Rashi to provide references. What is Rashi telling us?

The Pri Megadim (תיבת גומא עה"ת ד"ה קהלת) writes, *אומרים הלצה*, "people say a hint to explain this Rashi. It states (*Mishlei* 15:23), *ודבר בעתו מה טוב*, 'How good is a word in its time.' [This means that a person should say things that are fitting for the times.] When it isn't the right time, it isn't nice. For example, during Pesach, it isn't the right time to discuss *hilchos Succos* or *hilchos Yom Kippur*. Rashi writes, *פרשה זו יפה נדרשת*, it is always the right

time to speak about *parashas Korach*. This is because *machlokes* can happen at any time, so it is always appropriate to discuss this topic."

The Rambam (in a letter) describes the severity of *machlokes*. He writes, "Don't contaminate your souls with *machlokes* that destroy the body, *neshamah*, and wealth. I saw families perish; cities destroyed, communities dispersed, chassidim lost, honored people disgraced, all because of *machlokes*. The *nevi'im* foretold prophecies, and scholars spoke wisdom regarding the severity of *machlokes*, but they haven't fully described just how bad it is. Therefore, hate *machlokes*, run away from it, and keep away from all those who love *machlokes*, lest you be punished with them."⁴

The Shlah (*Shaar HaOsiyos* י"ד, ט"ז אות כ' בריות) writes, "Why do I need to elaborate on the ugliness of *machlokes*? All *sefarim* are filled with this subject! The sin of *machlokes* is worse than *avodah zarah*. The lowest Yid would certainly

3. The Beis Aharon Zt'l met a friend whom he hadn't seen since his youth. The friend asked him, "How did it happen that you rose to such high levels, and I stayed where I am?" The Beis Aharon replied, "The reason is simple. When you made a cheshbon hanefesh, you thought about what you did wrong. You thought about your *ירידות* (falls). I did the opposite. When I made a cheshbon hanefesh, I focused on my good, on my *עלייות* (successes and ascents). That gave me strength to do the same the next day..."

A bachur made kabbalos to utilize the days of Shovavim properly, and indeed, he succeeded for the first few weeks. But in the third week, he fell from his resolve. He took out a paper and started jotting. At the top of the paper, he wrote about the kabbalos he made and hoped to keep. Then he wrote about how he succeeded during the first couple of weeks. Then he wrote about how he fell in the third week, and how bitter he felt. He expressed that he feels there is no hope for him. He brought this paper to his rebbe, the Nesivos Shalom, and asked him to read it.

The Nesivos Shalom read the paper, and then the Nesivos Shalom took a paper that was on the table, folded it in half, and ripped it at the fold. The bachur watched as the rebbe did this, not understanding what it was about. The Nesivos Shalom gave him one of the ripped pieces, and that was the end of this meeting.

The bachur left confused, but then he began reading the paper. He realized that the paper the rebbe gave him was the paper that he had just written. The rebbe gave him the top half of the paper, the part that detailed his successes and good kabbalos. His rebbe was telling him, "Focus on your successes. Don't think about your faults and descent. Think about what you did right, and that will give you the strength to continue in your good ways."

4. Reb Chaim Palagi zt'l writes, "I have seen several times that any man or woman, family, country, or city involved in a *machlokes*, neither of the sides come out clean. They were smitten in their bodies and money, *rachmanah litzlan*. Someone who has wisdom will think about this and be *mevater*..."

be *moser nefesh* rather than worship *avodah zarah*. So, how could a person not be *moser nefesh* to avoid *machlokes*, for it is worse than *avodah zarah*! Even a drop of *machlokes* is too much! One spark of *machlokes* can create a fire that destroys everything."

From where does the Shlah know that *machlokes* is worse than *avodah zarah*? The Shlah quotes the following Midrash.

The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni* 218) states: "[Nearly] everyone in Achav's generation worshiped idols, yet they succeeded in their battles. This is because they didn't speak

lashon hara. On the other hand, in David HaMelech's generation, even young children knew much Torah...but they went to war and lost because there was *lashon hara*." The Shlah quotes this Midrash as a source that *machlokes* and *lashon hara* are worse than *avodah zarah*.

The Shevet Mussar (37:22) points out that the *manna* fell every day in the desert. It even fell on the day Bnei Yisrael made the *egel*. But it didn't fall on the day Korach made a *machlokes* because *machlokes* is worse than *avodah zarah*. This is another source that *machlokes* is worse than *avodah zarah*.⁵

5. The *Afrakasta d'Anyah* (165) writes that the community of Kempna hired a Shimon to be their *chazan*. Reb Yosef Shmuel *zt'l*, the Rav of Kempna, was very against this choice. He shouted, "How can Shimon be our *chazan*? He is a *baal aveirah*!"

Some sided with the Rav, while others sided with Shimon. The Kempna community was divided into two. Reb Yosef Shmuel sent a letter to Reb Yosef of Posen, seeking his counsel. The rav of Posen wrote back, "A *tzelem* [cross] in the Beis HaMikdosh is preferred over a *machlokes* in *klal Yisrael*."

Before World War Two, there was a massive *machlokes* between two Chasidic courts in a city in Romania. Each *kehillah* had its own *shochet*, and each claimed that the meat of the other *shochet* was *treif*. A bitter *machlokes* broke out, lasting two years, until the Nazis came, *r'l*, and the city was destroyed.

A righteous Jew, Reb Yitzchak Wertzberger *zt'l*, lived in this city but refused to participate in the *machlokes*. He ate from both *shechitos* because both *shochtim* were *yirei Hashem*. He firmly resolved that he would leave town the day he became involved in the *machlokes*.

One day, someone asked Reb Yitzchak, "Why doesn't your rebbe speak up in favor of our *shochet*?"

Reb Yitzchak replied, "It is because of *machlokes* that all the troubles began, and you want my rebbe to have a part in this?" (He was referring to the troubles of the Holocaust -attributing it to *machlokes*.)

Suddenly, Reb Yitzchak put his hands to his head and shouted, "Oy. What did I just do? I just spoke about the *machlokes*!" He came home and told his wife that they must leave immediately. "We can't stay in this city anymore."

It was Thursday - not an easy day to pick up and leave. But she was a loyal wife (an *אשה כשרה העושה רצון בעלה*), and they packed up and left the city that day. They moved to Arad, Romania.

This move saved their lives. Soon afterward, the Germans entered the city where the *machlokes* raged, and almost no one survived. Today, Reb Yitzchak has grandchildren who are *erlicher* Yidden, some of them *poskim* and *magidei shiur*. They all owe a debt of gratitude to Reb Yitzchak, who fled from the *machlokes*, saving their lives.

In Shechetz, Poland, there were two *shochtim*, and it was debated who was the primary *shochet*, and this resulted in a *machlokes*. The Piltzer Rav *zt'l* (author of *Sifsei Tzaddik*) wrote to one of the *shochtim*, "*Machlokes* is fire, and one must run away from fire. Pick yourself up and leave Shechetz immediately." Unfortunately, the *shochet* never received the letter. The letter got into the hands of someone who wanted him to remain the *shochet* in Shechetz, so he didn't deliver the letter. The *shochet* was *niftar* shortly afterward. The fire of the *machlokes* consumed him.

The family never forgave the person who withheld the letter.

The Chasam Sofer zt'l explains that Aharon HaKohen agreed with the nation and helped them make the egel because he understood that if he refused, there would be machlokes. Aharon preferred the sin of avodah zarah over the even greater sin of machlokes.

We are surprised that *machlokes* is worse than *avodah zarah*. But that is what the Torah tells us, so we must be vigilant to avoid it.

We add that every *machlokes* contains an element of disbelief in Hashem. If one believed in Hashem, he wouldn't stir up a *machlokes*. Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa zt'l teaches, "*Emunah* means that one believes that he has everything he needs, and if he needs more, Hashem will give him more. So, there is no reason to be jealous [or to fight to get more]. If you suffer from jealousy, work to remove it from your heart with all your strength and attach yourself to the *emunah* in Hashem's *hashgachah pratis*" (*Beis Yaakov, Korach*).⁶

Korach's Mistake

Rebbe Dovid Lelover zt'l said: Had Korach known that he could serve Hashem from behind the oven [where the simple Yidden used to sit] and his avodah would be as precious as the *avodah* of the *kohen gadol*, he wouldn't have started a *machlokes*."

Korach wanted to serve Hashem in the best possible way, which is why he wanted to be the *kohen gadol*. But he didn't realize that everyone could serve Hashem in his own unique way. There is no reason to be jealous of others. Do the avodah that Hashem expects from *you*, and it will be as precious to Hashem as the service of the *kohen gadol*.⁷

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 50.) tells that Rav Yosef, the son of Reb Yehoshua Ben Levi, was *niftar* and then returned to life. His father asked him what he saw in heaven. He replied, "I saw an upside-down world. Those on top here were at the bottom there, and vice versa."

His father corrected him, עולם ברור ראית, "You saw a true world."

Rashi explains that in this world, people honor wealth, but in heaven, honor is accorded to those who study Torah.

The Mabit (introduction to *Beis Elokim*) disagrees with this explanation because Rav Yosef wouldn't have been surprised to see that only Torah study is important in heaven. Therefore, the Mabit explains that Rav Yosef was referring to the way we perceive the servants of Hashem in this world. There are *ovdei Hashem* who are very respected in this world but less so in *Olam HaBa* and vice versa. People whom we think are mediocre (or less) in their spiritual practices might be very honored in heaven. This is because Hashem measures each person according to his abilities and the level of *mesirus nefesh* he has in serving Him.

This was Korach's error. He thought he must have the most prestigious position in this world to earn the highest place in *Gan Eden*, but it isn't so. With the position, challenges, and services that Hashem arranges for everyone in this world, he can attain the highest place in *Gan Eden*.

The Arugos HaBosem (*Chayei Sarah*) quotes the Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 11.) "Everything in creation was created according to their agreement and consent." This means that the

6. On a similar note, the Divrei Yisrael zt'l said that Korach's error was ויקח קרה, that he tried to take authority on his own. He thought it was in his hands to accomplish his desires and become the *Kohen Gadol*. But one doesn't take on his own. Hashem gives, we receive, and everything is Hashem's decision.

7. Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zt'l (quoted in *Sifsei Tzaddik, Korach* 8) explains that Korach was upset that he couldn't daven in the *Kodesh HaKadoshim* like Aharon HaKohen. He didn't know that one can attain the same perfect *tefillah* wherever he is in the world.

times, those fights were indeed important, and thanks to those disputes, our adherence to Torah and mitzvos continues to the present day. However, sometimes, people think they are fighting *leshem shamayim*, but it is actually inspired by the *yetzer hara*.

Korach thought his ambitions were altruistic, fighting for Klal Yisrael's honor or his spiritual growth. However, had he looked closer, he would have discovered that behind his *machlokes* was jealousy and a drive for glory.

The Baal HaTanya writes, "Most *tzaros* come from *machlokes* '*leshem shamayim*.' May Hashem save us from them."⁹

Reb Yohonasan Eibshitz, *zy'a*, (*Yaaras Dvash*, *drush* 8) writes, "In every *machlokes*, the *yetzer hara* assures us that our intentions are purely *leshem shamayim*, and *chas veshalom* even to suggest otherwise! So, how can we recognize whether a *machlokes* is *leshem shamayim*? This is the test: If both parties love each other with all their heart and soul aside from the issue they are arguing about, that is a sign that their argument is *leshem shamayim*. However, if they hate each other, the *machlokes* isn't *leshem shamayim*. The Mishnah hints at this when it states, *אי זו היא מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים*, which can mean, how do we know that a *machlokes* is *leshem shamayim*? The answer is *זו מחלוקת הלל ושמאי*, if it is similar to the *machlokes* of Shamai and Hillel, for Shamai and Hillel loved and honored each other.¹⁰ This proves that their *machlokes* was *leshem shamayim*. But Korach and his followers harbored animosity towards Moshe. They nearly stoned him. This proves that their dispute wasn't *leshem shamayim*.

With this test, one can know whether his intentions are *leshem shamayim* or not."

The Bnei Yissaschar *zt'l* gives us another sign to help determine whether your motivation is *leshem shamayim* or jealousy. Generally, when fighting with "religious indignation," one's emotions are passionate. He feels like an exploding volcano, ready to knock down all people who are going against Hashem. Therefore, he should gauge himself and see whether he possesses such furor when performing a mitzvah, such as tallis and tefillin, *succah*, helping the poor, etc. If this passion surfaces only during *machlokes*, that's an indication that it is inspired by the *yetzer hara*, not the *yetzer tov*.

The Imrei Noam *zt'l* taught that the worst sins can be committed when one thinks he's motivated by spirituality. No G-d-fearing person would think of destroying someone's life or *parnassah*. But when the *yetzer hara* convinces a person that he must take a stand to avenge Hashem's honor or to preserve *Yiddishkeit*, and so on, and that he must fight with an individual or a community, he becomes liable to do sins he would never consider doing otherwise. If he is wrong, and Hashem doesn't want the *machlokes*, he is taking Hashem's name and using it as a powerful weapon to do terrible things.

The Imrei Noam writes that this is hinted at by the words, *יצרו של אדם מתגבר עליו כל יום* and *ואלמלא הקב"ה עוזרו לא יכל לו* (*Succah* 52:). This can be translated as, *אלמלא הקב"ה עוזרו*, if it weren't for the *yetzer hara*'s claim that it must be done for Hakadosh Baruch Hu's honor, *לא יכל לו*, the *yetzer hara* couldn't have convinced the person to do such awful deeds.

9. The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* says that false peace is preferred over true *machlokes*. This means it is better to pretend there is peace, even when there isn't. In this case, this is more important than being truthful.

10. The Gemara (*Yevamos* 14) says, "Although Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel argued... Beis Shamai didn't refrain from marrying into Beis Hillel, and Beis Hillel didn't refrain from marrying into Beis Shamai. *חיבה וריעות נוהגים*. *זיה ביה*; they treated each other with love and friendship. As it states, *האמת והשלום אהבו*, 'You shall love truth and peace'" (*Zechariah* 8:19). As Reb Yohonoson Eibshitz taught, this proved that their *machlokes* was *leshem Shamayim*.

Another problem with a *machlokes* "leshem Shamayim" is that such a *machlokes* can last a very long time. This is because the instigators don't repent, for they think they're acting righteously. A dispute over mundane matters can be resolved over time, but a *machlokes* l'shem Shamayim can last forever. This is hinted at in the following Mishnah (Avos 5:17): כל מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים סופה להתקיים: "A dispute that's *leshem shamayim* will last." ושאינה לשם שמים אין סופה להתקיים, "but a dispute that isn't *leshem shamayim* won't last."

Avoid Machlokes

The Torah commands us (17:5), ולא יהיה כקרח, וכעדתו, "Don't be like Korach and his congregation." We must do everything possible to avoid *machlokes*.

The Chazon Ish zt'l said, "When one is in the wrong and doesn't have a valid reason to make a *machlokes*, of course, he shouldn't make a *machlokes*. The Torah refers to when there is a legitimate reason to be angry. Nevertheless, the Torah says, ולא יהיה כקרח, don't be like Korach. Seek ways to avoid *machlokes*."

Aharon was the exact opposite of Korach; he was a man of peace. Pirkei Avos (1:12) states, "Be among Aharon's students: Pursue peace, love people, and draw them to Torah."

The Ramban (16:4) writes, "Aharon, following his path of mussar and kedushah,

remained silent during this *machlokes*. He was quiet as though he agreed that Korach was greater than him [and more suitable for the position of kohen gadol], and was merely acting upon Moshe's command, and was keeping the king's decrees."¹¹ This is an amazing level. The *machlokes* was against Aharon, but he didn't partake in it.

Pirkei Avos (5:17) says that an example of a *machlokes* l'shem shamayim is the *machlokes* between Hillel and Shamai. "A *machlokes* that isn't l'shem shamayim is the *machlokes* of Korach and his community." Notice that the Mishnah doesn't state "Korach and Aharon." This is because Aharon was never part of the *machlokes*. Korach was running the *machlokes* on his own, and Aharon completely removed himself from the dispute.

Moshe Rabbeinu sought peace with all his strength, and he tried to end the *machlokes*. As we see, (16:12, and 16:25), וישלח משה לקרא לדתן ולאבירם... ויקם משה וילך אל דתן ואבירם. Moshe was trying to make peace with Dasan v'Aviram. Rashi (16:22) writes, מכאן שאין מחזיקין במחלוקת, "We learn from here that one shouldn't persist in *machlokes*." We should try to make amends and end *machlokes* as quickly as possible.

Rashi (*Sanhedrin* 110.) writes, "We must learn from Moshe Rabbeinu. He forgave Dasan and Aviram for disgracing him, and he went to them to end the *machlokes*."¹²

11. Moshe said (16:11) ואהרן מה הוא כי תלנו עליו, "Who is Aaron that you should complain against him?" Reb Wosner zt'l heard from Reb Meir Shapiro zt'l who heard from Reb Meir Arik zt'l that we can explain this pasuk according to the Gemara (Eiruvim 65), which says, "A person's nature can be recognized through three things: בכיסו בכוסו בכעסו, how he acts with his money, with his drinking, and his anger. As we will explain, Aharon couldn't be tested with money or drinking, only with how he responds to anger.

He couldn't be tested with drinking because Aharon served in the Beis HaMikdash, and it was forbidden for him to drink wine. He couldn't be tested with money because he was very wealthy. (The halachah is that the Jewish nation must make the kohen gadol rich, as Chazal say, (גדלוהו משל אהויו). So, the only test possible is in regards to anger. This is the meaning of the pasuk, אהרן מה הוא, if you want to know who Aharon is, כי תלנו עליו, you can try to get him angry and to see how he reacts. As we know, he passed this test perfectly.

12. The Or HaChaim (16:25) asks why the pasuk states ויקם משה וילך אל דתן ואבירם, "Moshe arose and went to Dasan v'Aviram." "Why does the Torah need to tell us ויקם, that Moshe stood up?

The Or HaChaim replies, "ויקם משה" meant that Moshe rose to a higher level when he went to Dasan and

The Shlah (Korach, Derech Chaim Tochachas Mussar, 26) writes, "Whatever a person can do to increase peace and to extinguish the fires of machlokes, he should do so. Moshe Rabbeinu was a king and the greatest navi, but that didn't stop him from reaching out to Dasan

and Aviram to make peace. When Dasan and Aviram refused to speak to him (they said Bamidbar 16:14) *לא נעלה*, 'We will not go up,' Moshe went to the elders of Yisrael, all for the sake of restoring peace."

Aviram. " The Or HaChaim bases this on the pasuk (Mishlei 18:12) *לפני כבוד ענוה*, "Before honor there is humility." Moshe humbled himself to go to Dasan v'Aviram to end the machlokes, and therefore, he attained honor.

In contrast, about Dasan and Aviram, the pasuk (Mishlei 16:18) states *לפני שבר גאון*, "before destruction comes pride." Their pride led to their downfall.

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l asks why Dasan v'Aviram's names are mentioned explicitly, while we don't know the names of the 250 people who joined Korach's machlokes.

The Chidushei HaRim answers that Dasan v'Aviram were worse (so we shame them by mentioning their names) because they had nothing to gain from this machlokes. They weren't from shevet Levi and couldn't become the Kohen Gadol, so why did they get involved? The 250 men were hoping to become the Kohen Gadol somehow, so there is at least a limud zechus for them to be involved in the machlokes.