

FOOD FOR
THOUGHT
TO SPARK
CONVERSATION

SHABBOS MENU

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HE CAN'T HEAR IT

You see someone commit a sin. He doesn't seem bothered by it, but you're sure that if he understood the repercussions a little better, he might change. However, you know one thing for certain: he would never accept advice from you. May you solicit someone else?

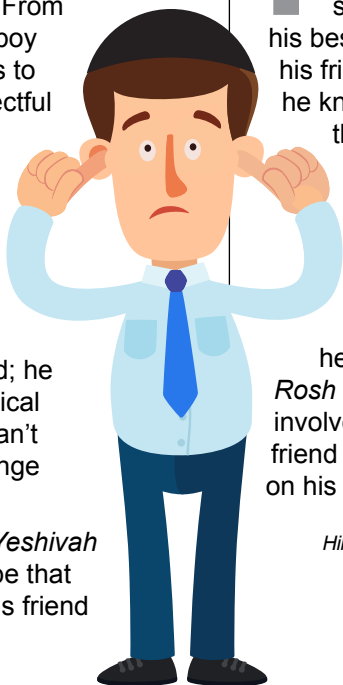
THE DILEMMA

Ayeshivah boy accepts his friend's invitation to spend an off-Shabbos at his family's home. From the moment they arrive, the boy notices that his friend speaks to his mother in a very disrespectful way.

This goes on all Shabbos. The visitor wants to bring it up, knowing that this habit will certainly harm his friend's future and his *Olam Haba* as well.

However, he knows his friend; he has a brilliant mind but a cynical edge. He has often said, "I can't stand *mussar*. It doesn't change anything."

May this boy tell their *Rosh Yeshivah* about the situation in the hope that he will be able to convince his friend to change his ways?



THE HALACHAH

The first step, even in this situation, is to try his best to speak to his friend directly. If he knows for sure that his own rebuke won't be accepted (or he tried talking to him directly and was not successful), he can ask his *Rosh Yeshivah* to get involved so that his friend will not continue on his dangerous path.

*Sefer Chofetz Chaim,
Hilchos Loshon Hora 4:5*

WEEKLY WISDOM

Parashas Mishpatim is full of mitzvos between man and his fellow.

There is even a mitzvah to help unload your enemy's donkey, and another to return your enemy's lost ox. Hashem wants us to live in peace, and when you help your enemy—even your enemy's animal—by doing something for your enemy you will come to love him. This is a strategy to employ with people you might be having a difficult relationship with: do something beneficial for them.

FOR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS, EMAIL

Shabbosmenu@cchfglobal.org

"How great is

peace —

for all blessings
and prayers

end with
'peace!'

— Maseches Derech Eretz 19

Many people want peace, but few want it badly enough to pay for it. This story, told by Rabbi Nachman Seltzer, illustrates that when a Jew pursues the mitzvah of making peace, he can strike the deal of the century.

In Yerushalayim, a community of Chassidim was embroiled in a *machlokes*. At the root of it was four families who had gone to war against each other and dragged the rest of the community into it. The situation became so dire that the Rebbe gave the four families an ultimatum: make peace or be expelled from the community. This would mean that schools, shuls, *shidduchim* – everything within the community – would be closed to them. Essentially, they would lose their entire world.

Rav Nissan Kaplan heard about the situation. Although he had no connection to the Chassidim, he was distraught at the thought of four families destroying themselves. The night before the Rebbe was due to make his decision, Rabbi Kaplan called the home of one of the parties to the quarrel. After several failed efforts to get the wife to connect him with her husband, he spoke directly to her.

"I'm an international businessman," he told her. "I make investments all over the world. I want to buy your *machlokes*. Ask your husband how much he wants for it." Although the woman claimed that the issue could not be solved by money, Rabbi Kaplan finally convinced her to consult her husband. She called back with a price – a far lower price than the "investor" expected. He quickly went to work raising the money, and finally received it from a generous American donor who wanted a share in this unusual *mitzvah*.

"I want you to invite both sides to your home tonight and set up a *l'chaim*," Rabbi Kaplan told the wife. When he arrived that night, the leading parties in the quarrel were there, stonily eyeing each other across a table set with cake and *schnapps*. They quickly recognized that the "international businessman" was

not who he claimed to be, but when he laid the money on the table and urged the men to shake hands, they took up his offer. Soon they were holding hands, dancing around the table. And that is how one Jew who cared – and did something about it –

WHAT WOULD YOU GIVE FOR SOME PEACE?

saved four families from following Korach into the abyss of *machlokes*.

As heard from Rabbi Nachman Seltzer

sage advice

MACHLOKES: A RABBI'S VIEW #2 IT TELLS YOU WHAT IT IS

No matter what it's about and who started it, *machlokes* follows a well-worn path that always leads to the same ending. The letters themselves tell the story:

Start with the מ – It's almost completely closed, all connected, except for a small gap at the bottom. This is the small distance that has opened up between the two sides, which can still easily be reconnected.

Go to the נ – Now the gap has widened. The bottom is completely separated. The sides of the conflict have pulled further apart.

Next, the ל – The differences have turned into anger, and the anger into fire. The ascending neck of the *lamed* tells us that this fire shoots upward, towering over the people who are involved in the *machlokes*. Now it is bigger than they are.

Then, the ק – Like the descending stroke of the *kuf*, the *machlokes* takes everyone down. Those who were right, those who were wrong, those who started it, those who joined it, all of them are carried in one downward direction.

Finally, the נ – This final letter stands solid and secure on its two legs, because now the *machlokes* has become an established fact, standing solidly in the participants' lives. Like a sturdy brick building, it won't be easy to demolish.

The growing distance between ourselves and others; the out-of-control fire of anger; the descent into our lowest instincts, and finally, the constant presence of negativity in our lives; put it all together and it spells *machlokes*. We can never say, "How could I have known it would lead to so much trouble?" because the word itself tells us just where it will take us. Our question to ourselves must be, "Is that where I want to go?"

Heard from Rabbi Eli Mansour
at a CCHF Tishah B'Av lecture

TALK ABOUT IT

If you find yourself already involved in a *machlokes*, how can you avoid following the path all the way to the end?

TALK ABOUT IT

What does this story teach you about your role in someone else's *machlokes*?

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