

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Korach



בס"ד

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Torah Wellsprings

Korach

The Appropriate Time

At the beginning of the *parashah*, Rashi writes, פרשה זו יפה נדרשת במדרש רבי תנחומא. Literally, this means, "The *parashah* of Korach is taught beautifully in the Midrash Tanchuma." But why does Rashi tell us where to look this up? It is unusual for Rashi to do this. The Pri Megadim (תיבת גומא עה"ת ד"ה קהלת) answers *b'derech tzachus* with the *pasuk* (*Mishlei* 15:23), ודבר בעתו מה טוב, "How good is a word in its time." It is ideal to speak words that are related to the times.

For example, if you are giving a *drashah* on Pesach, how good it is when you speak about matzah, the issur of chametz, the yom tov of Pesach, *hilchos chol hamoed*, and so on. Since you are discussing matters relevant to that specific time, it is proper, good, and

beautiful. But if your *drashah* isn't about Pesach, you are not connected with the season and the happenings, which is generally a negative thing.

About this it states דבר טוב בעתו מה טוב, how fortunate and how good it is when a person discusses matters that the listeners need to hear now and doesn't give *drashos* about issues that the listeners of the moment have no significant need to hear.

Rashi writes, פרשה זו יפה נדרשת, which can be translated as, "It is always the right time to give a *drashah* about *parashas Korach*." *Machlokes* happen often, so it is always an appropriate time to discuss this topic of the severity of *machlokes*. If you give a *drashah* about *machlokes*, you are always

speaking דבר בעתו, a word, at an appropriate time.

Eemunah Ends All Machlokes

There is another topic that is always the right time to speak about it, and that is the topic of emunah. There are many levels of emunah, and this topic always needs chizuk, so if you talk about emunah, you spoke דבר בעתו, a word at its proper time. Many tzaddikim have said that the test of this generation is *emunah*. So, if you talked about emunah, you spoke

about matters that the listeners need to hear. Additionally, as we wrote, it is always the right time to give a drashah about the problems of machlokes, and when there is emunah, there are no machlokes.

Machlokes occurs when people feel that someone harmed them, insulted them, or did something wrong to them. But if they had emunah that everything that occurred was bashert, they would understand there is no reason to be angry at their fellow man.¹

1. On the topic that everything is from Hashem, we share the following story:

Someone purchased an expensive building intending to rent it out for residences and offices. However, despite several promising showings, not a single deal was done. This slowness of the rental market was a residual effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, as people were hesitant to commit during that time.

Rosh chodesh Tamuz was approaching. A friend told him, "Rosh chodesh is the yahrtzeit of the Maor v'Shemesh. I advise you to light a candle l'iluy nishmas this tzaddik, he will daven for you in heaven, and you will b'ezras Hashem have a yeshua."

Not only did he follow his friend's advice, but he decided that before he lit the candle, he would first study a section of Maor v'Shemesh.

He opened the sefer randomly and came upon the pasuk (Shemos 23:25) *ועבדתם את ה' אלקיכם וברך את לחמך ואת מימך* "You shall serve Hashem, your G-d, and He will bless your food and your drink..." Miforshim ask why the pasuk begins in lashon rabim, plural, *ועבדתם*, and then it states *לחמך*, in lashon yachid, singular. The Maor v'Shemesh explains that the pasuk wants to teach us the great benefit of davening with a minyan. We quote:

The main avodas Hashem is to perform all aspects of avodas Hashem, both Torah and tefillah, together with the community. And when a person davens with the community, he can be certain that he will have parnassah each day, in abundance, and there will be a blessing in the work of his hands. With tefillah b'tzibur, one can annul all harsh decrees. This is the meaning of the pasuk *ועבדתם את ה' אלקיכם*, and it is written in the plural tense. Chazal say, what is the *עבודה שבלב*, the service of the heart? It is prayer. The pasuk is saying that if you will serve Hashem by davening with a minyan. *וברך את לחמך ואת מימך*, Hashem will bless your parnassah, that you will have parnassah in abundance."

He immediately made a kabbalah that he would always daven with a minyan. His friends tried to convince him to do it slowly, "Start by davening one tefillah daily with a minyan," but he didn't heed their warning. He made a kabbalah, and he was extremely cautious about davening tefillah b'tzibur, three tefillos daily. He was once in chutz l'aretz and traveled a long distance to daven with a minyan.

We can be confident that the promise of the tzaddik, the Maor v'Shemesh, was fulfilled. Since he was cautious to daven with a minyan, he was blessed with abundant parnassah. Within a few weeks, he succeeded in renting out some of the units. Gradually, throughout the year, he leased more and more units, and by the following year, on rosh chodesh Tamuz, the *yahrzeit* of the Maor v'Shemesh, he signed the rental contract for the final two units of the building. Today, he earns a nice living from this business venture, and he publicizes this story so that people should learn from it the importance of davening with a minyan.

This is because parnassah isn't the product of a person's cleverness and talent. Instead, it is Hashem's blessings. In this story, an

Machlokes occurs when people are jealous, but when one believes that every person gets the portion destined for him and no one is taking anything away from him, there will be no jealousy.

Rashi (beginning of Parashah) says, "Why did Korach choose to make a machlokes with Moshe? He was jealous because Elitzafon became the nasi." The machlokes occurred because Korach

lacked perfection in the emunah that everything happens from above. If he had believed it was from Hashem, he wouldn't have started a machlokes against Moshe.²

Beis Yaakov writes in the name of Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zt'l, "The root of avodas Hashem is to be very distant from jealousy because jealousy leads to taavah and kavod. The foundation of emunah in

experienced businessperson ended up with a property he couldn't rent. Each month, he had to pay an exorbitant mortgage without any income. His wisdom and his experience in business didn't help him. But when he tapped into Hashem's blessings, the wellsprings of parnassah opened for him.

2. Rashi writes, "Korach claimed, 'My father and his brothers were four [in number]. Amram was the oldest, and his two sons received greatness - one the king and one the *kohen gadol*. [This refers to Moshe and Aharon.] Who is entitled to receive the next position of honor? Is it not I, the son of Yitzhar, who was the second brother to Amram? And yet, Moshe appointed [Elitzafon], the youngest brother's son, to be the nasi! I hereby oppose him and invalidate his word."

Divrei Yisrael zt'l says that Korach's error was ויקח קרה, that he tried to take prestige and honor on his own. He thought it was in his hands to achieve his desire to become the *kohen gadol*. But one doesn't take on his own. Hashem gives, we receive, all according to Hashem's calculations.

Hashem is to believe that the Creator has the strength to do as He chooses and that He watches over all his creations with hashgachah pratis. He sustains all creatures, from large rams to the eggs of lice, providing each creature with its needs. Everyone receives what they deserve. If it would be right for him to receive more, Hashem would give him more. Chazal (Yomah 38:) say, 'No one can take away what belongs to his fellow man, not even a hairsbreadth.' Therefore, if a person is jealous, he should try with all his might to remove the jealousy from his heart and attach himself to believe in Hashem's hashgachah."

Beis Yaakov writes, "Moshe didn't have any jealousy, as he said (Bamidbar 11:29) *המקנא אתה לי*, 'Are you jealous for my sake?'" He also writes that *איש* represents Moshe Rabbeinu because it states *והאיש משה* (see Bamidbar 12:3). With this information (that Moshe didn't have jealousy and that he is called *איש*), Beis Yaakov

explains the tefillah we say in Musaf of Rosh Hashanah (*Zichronos*) *אשרי איש שלא ישכחך וכן* (Zichronos) *אדם יתאמץ בך*, "Fortunate is the person who doesn't forget You and the person who finds strength in You."

אשרי איש שלא ישכחך means fortunate are those who are on the level of Moshe Rabbeinu, who was called *איש*. Fortunate are the people who have no jealousy, like Moshe Rabbeinu. Because when a person doesn't forget Hashem and always believes in Him, he will have no jealousy. Why should he be jealous if Hashem gives each person their portion? However, if a person hasn't yet reached this level, and he is only on the level of *בן* *אדם*, he should still *יתאמץ בך*, strong to connect with Hashem, and thereby he will remove jealousy from his heart.

Zera Shimshon (Korach) teaches, "When someone is involved in a machlokes because another man disgraced him, it is certainly because he feels that he

didn't deserve this disgrace. If he would believe that there is a Judge and there is judgment, and a person doesn't harm his finger if it weren't decreed from Above, he wouldn't take revenge against the person who disgraced him. He understands that the disgrace was Hashem's will and the person was just Hashem's messenger. This is as Dovid said (Shmuel 2, 16:10) 'ה אמר לו קלל, 'Hashem told him to curse.' If he wants to take revenge, this means he feels that Hashem left the earth,

as these were the thoughts of the fools of ancient times. He doesn't believe in Hashem."

The Shlah (Shaar HaOsiyos, Emunah 48) writes, "Whatever happens to a person, he should believe that it was from Hashem. If he meets a bad person who disgraces him, embarrasses him, and curses him, he should accept it with love because 'ה אמר לו קלל, Hashem told him to curse. The person is merely Hashem's messenger to do so, due to his sins.³ He

3. Reb Asher Freund zt'l was famously very active in performing deeds of tzedakah and chesed, and his organization Yad Ezra continues to operate today. Once, he ordered a large quantity of chickens. He planned to distribute them to struggling, poor families. At the time, he didn't have money to pay for the chickens, so he had to borrow money.

The chickens had to be loaded onto a freezer container and delivered to the needy people's homes. Volunteers worked hard, loading the container with all the chickens. The container was a freezer, but someone got angry about something – it is unnecessary to elaborate on the details here – and unplugged the freezer. It was summer then, and all the chickens were spoiled within a couple of hours.

When Reb Asher heard what had happened, he immediately asked his driver to take him to a forest. When they arrived, he told

the driver to wait for him, and he walked into the depths of the forest.

The driver, curious about Reb Asher's actions, edged closer. From a concealed place, he heard Reb Asher say, "Ribono Shel Olam! It isn't him. It is You! It isn't Him. It is You!"

He was saying, "I shouldn't be angry with the person who shut the freezer. He isn't the one who caused me the loss. It was from You, my Father in Heaven, and it was for my good."

Reb Asher returned to the car and suddenly said, "I have to go back. I forgot something."

They returned, and Reb Asher repeated, "It wasn't Him. It was You. Yasher Koach."

A student of the mussar yeshiva Novardok came home one day, and a family member informed him that a cat had eaten up his portion of butter.

"The cat didn't eat my portion," he replied.

The family thought he was saying that the cat ate someone else's portion, so they showed him that the other people in the family had placed their portions of butter at a certain location, and their portions were still there. The cat got to the place where he had left his butter.

"The cat didn't eat my portion," he repeated.

He explained, "If it were my portion, the cat couldn't eat it. It must be that it wasn't destined for me; it wasn't my portion."

A person came home after a long day at work, thirsty for a cup of cold water. He entered the kitchen and turned on the sink, but nothing came out. "There must be something wrong with the plumbing," he told himself. He climbed under the sink and replaced parts, but still, no water came forth.

Someone told him, "Just pay the water bill, and the water will flow again.

The nimshal is that people have complaints; they think that this person took away their parnassah, that person ruined a shidduch,

should have this emunah for everything that occurs to him, the good and the bad. He should say that it was from Hashem."

Worse than Avodah Zarah

The Shlah (*Shaar HaOsiyos* אורח חיים) writes, "Why do I need to elaborate on the

and a third person stole their place in line at the bank. They end up fighting with the entire world. But just like the sink, it wasn't the plumbing that was the problem. So, too, the root of the problem has nothing to do with the people who harmed him. What was decreed in heaven is what happened.

This is the meaning of the pasuk (Mishlei 16:7) *ברצות ה' דרכי איש גם אויביו ישלים אתו*. Literally, the pasuk is saying, "When Hashem is pleased with a person's ways, Hashem will cause even his enemies to make peace with him." But we can also explain the pasuk as follows: When a person has the emunah that no one can harm him if it wasn't decreed, he will be at peace with everyone, including those who seemed to have hurt him because he knows it wasn't them.

Reb Zalman Brizel zt'l was visiting one of his sons-in-law. When he was ready to go home, someone ordered a taxi, and his grandson helped him walk to the cab. Reb Zalman was old, and every step was a great effort for him. Due to a misunderstanding, the taxi arrived at the other side of the building. The grandson helped Reb Zalman shuffle over to the other side, but the driver had already come around to get them from their original spot by the time they got there. As they edged back, Reb Zalman turned to his grandson and said, "Let's not be apikorsim, chalilah. Is it the taxi driver that is making us go back and forth? Heaven destined it, and the taxi driver is just the shaliach. So, it is Hashem's will that we go back and forth, and we must do Hashem's will with joy. At this moment, Reb Zalman began to sing and dance (to the best of his limited abilities). He was doing Hashem's will, so he would do it happily, although the ordeal wasn't easy. The lesson is that even when difficult things happen, we must remember that it is Hashem's will and accept it with joy.

ugliness of *machlokes*? All *sefarim* are filled with this subject! The sin of *machlokes* is worse than *avodah zarah*. The simplest Yid would certainly be *moser nefesh* rather than worship *avodah zarah*. So how could a person not be *moser nefesh* to avoid *machlokes*, which is worse than *avodah zarah*! Even a drop of *machlokes* is too much! One spark of *machlokes* can create a fire that destroys everything."

The Shlah's proves that *machlokes* is worse from the following Midrash:

Yalkut Shimoni (218) states, "[Nearly] everyone in Achav's generation worshiped idols, yet they succeeded in their battles because they didn't speak *lashon hara*. In David HaMelech's generation, even young children knew much Torah... but they went to war and lost, and this is because there was *lashon hara*."

The Shevet Mussar (37:22) points out that the *manna*

fell almost 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*.

The *Afrakasta d'Anyah* (165) writes that the community of Kempna hired "Shimon" to be their *chazan*. Reb Yosef Shmuel *zt'l*, the Rav of Kempna, was very against his appointment. He shouted, "How can Shimon be our *chazan*? He is a *baal aveirah*!" He was a severe *baal aveirah*. He didn't even keep *kashrus*, and who knows what else.

Some sided with the Rav, while others wanted to hire Shimon, and the Kempna community was divided in 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 HaMikdash is preferred over a *machlokes* in *klal Yisrael*."

Many are surprised when they study parashas Ki Sisa and discover that Aharon HaKohen helped the nation make the egel. It states (Shemos 32:1) וירא העם כי בשש משה לרדת מן ההר ויקהל העם על אהרן ויאמרו אליו קום עשה לנו אלהים אשר ילכו לפנינו, "When the nation saw that Moshe was late in coming down from the mountain, the people gathered against Aharon and they said to him: "Come on! Make us gods that will go before us..." ויאמר אלהם אהרן פרקו נזמי הזהב אשר באזני נשיכם בניכם ובנותיכם, והביאו אלי, Aharon said to them, "Remove the golden earrings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them [those earrings] to me." Rashi writes, "Aharon said to himself, 'The women and children are fond of their jewelry. Perhaps the matter will be delayed, and in the meantime, Moshe will arrive,'" but it appears that he helped them make the egel.

Indeed, Moshe rebuked him for this. As it states (32:21)

ויאמר משה אל אהרן מה עשה לך העם הזה כי הבאת עליו חטאה גדלה, "Moshe said to Aharon: "What did this people do to you that you brought such a grave sin upon them?"

Aharon excused himself as it is written in the pasukim there, but this remains very surprising. How could it be that Aharon helped the nation make the egel?

The Chasam Sofer zt'l answers that Aharon understood that if he refused the nation and didn't help them make the egel, there would be machlokes. Aharon preferred the sin of avodah zarah over the even greater sin of machlokes.

Punishments for Machlokes

The Shlah (Korach, Derech Chaim Tochachas Mussar, 26) writes, "From the story of Korach's dispute, we learn mussar to avoid machlokes. Think about the severe punishment that came to Korach... Dasan and Aviram also died, together with their infants,

although the court in heaven doesn't punish people below twenty (Shabbos 89:). But this time, even children perished. Such is the severity of machlokes (Tanchuma, Korach 3). Let us learn from this always to embrace peace."

The Rambam (in a letter) 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 due to *machlokes*. The *nevi'im* told prophecies, and scholars spoke wisdom regarding the severity of *machlokes*, but even they haven't fully described just how bad it is. Therefore, hate it, run away from it, and keep away from all those who love machlokes,

lest you be punished with them."

Reb Chaim Palagi *zt'l* writes, "I have seen several instances where any man or woman, family, country, or city involved in a *machlokes*, both sides didn't come out clean. They were smitten on their bodies, and with their money, *rachmanah litzlan*. Someone who has wisdom will think about this and be *mevater*."

The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 7.) says that one is punished with one hundred punishments for making *machlokes*. This is learned from the *pasuk* (*Mishlei* 17:14), פוטר מים ראשית מדון, which discusses the severity of machlokes, and מדון is *gematriya* one hundred. Furthermore, מדון implies מאה דיני, a hundred punishments, *r'l* (see *Rashi*).⁴

4. A rosh kollel of a large kollel in Yerushalayim brought the youngerleit to the Steipler Gaon *zt'l* to be tested on the sugya they were learning.

When their Torah discussion concluded, and the kollel youngerleit

were leaving, the Steipler asked the rosh kollel to stay behind because he wanted to speak to him.

The Steipler asked the rosh kollel for his name. The rosh kollel wrote his name on a piece of paper and showed it to the Steipler (the Steipler was hard of hearing).

The Steipler asked again, "What is your name?"

He wrote his name a second time. "My name is Yankel."

"Your name is Yankel? Why do I see Shlomo written on your forehead?"

The confused rosh kollel replied, "I don't know why the Steipler sees Shlomo on my forehead. However, I just remembered a story and perhaps it will explain why the Steipler sees Shlomo on my forehead.

"Some years ago, I arrived at a community in chutz l'aretz to collect funds for the kollel. My first meeting was with the president of the community, a wealthy man whom everyone called President Shlomo. Unfortunately, I have a loose tongue and said something that angered the president. He demanded that I leave the community and warned me not to fundraise in his city. I answered that he doesn't own the town and that I would fundraise without his consent.

"It won't be worth your while," President Shlomo retorted, and he was right. Everyone feared President Shlomo, and when he warned the community members that they mustn't give me money, they all obeyed.

"I left in humiliation and went to another community. I met a person there who loved to support Torah. He gave me a check for five hundred dollars. (This story occurred fifty years ago, when five hundred dollars was a considerable sum.)

"The problem was that this kind man was President Shlomo's brother-in-law, and President Shlomo somehow found out that his brother-in-law gave me five hundred dollars. He told his brother-in-law to stop the check, and he did so. Then something dreadful occurred. The moment he stopped the check, President Shlomo died!"

Before World War Two, there was a massive

The rosh kollel concluded, "I don't know if this story has anything to do with why the Steipler sees Shlomo on my forehead, but since I just remembered the story, I repeated it."

"The story explains everything," the Steipler said. "It explains why Shlomo is written on your forehead."

The Steipler explained, "You were destined to die on this trip. Your quota of years was over. But then President Shlomo humiliated you and caused others not to help you. Even after you had a check in your hands, he convinced his brother-in-law to cancel it. Heaven decreed that Shlomo must die, and you will take his years. This is why I see the name Shlomo on your forehead. You are now living President Shlomo's years."

I heard this story from Reb Eliezer Zusya Stern Shlita, who heard it on the day of his chuppah from his grandfather, the previous Skulener Rebbe zt'l, who heard it from the rosh kollel. The Skulener Rebbe told Reb Eliezer Zusya Stern, "I will tell you why I am telling you this story now, on the day of your chuppah: The Arizal teaches that all one's aveiros and all one's mitzvos are written on the forehead. Perhaps you thought this doesn't apply in our times, so I told you this story. The Steipler lived in our days and he was able to see what's written on the forehead. So, be aware that it is true even today. All your mitzvos and chas v'shalom, the opposite, are written on the forehead. Tonight, when you are under the chuppah, if you cry, rub those tears on your forehead because it is written in sefarim that tears can erase all the sins written on the forehead."

This story also demonstrates the severity of machlokes. President Shlomo's life was cut short because he engaged in machlokes.

This story has other lessons. It reminds us that everything is for the good. Reb Yankel, the rosh kollel, was very upset when President Shlomo caused him financial loss, but these disappointments granted him life. Similarly, all situations we perceive as unfavorable are really for our good.

machlokes between two Chasidic courts in a Romanian city. Each kehillah had its *shochet*, and each community claimed that the meat of the other *shochet* was *treif*. A bitter *machlokes* broke out, lasting for 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 told himself he would leave the 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 (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* reigned, 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* and saved their lives.

In Shechetz, Poland, there were two *shochtim*, and it was debated who was the main *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 came into the hands of someone who wanted him to remain the *shochet* in *Shechetz*, and 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.

Rewards for Avoiding Machlokes

The rewards of avoiding *machlokes* are undoubtedly enormous. From the pasuk (Tehillim 147:14) השם גבוֹלֵךְ שְׁלוֹם חֶלֶב, חֲטִיִּים יִשְׁבִּיעֶךָ, "Within your borders He makes peace; with the best of the wheat, He will sate you." The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* teaches that avoiding *machlokes* is *mesugal* for *parnassah*.

Peace and avoiding *machlokes* are immensely rewarded in this world and the next, but let us not forget that avoiding *machlokes*, in itself, is a reward. Living in tranquility, with no fights, peace with the neighbors, and peace within the family is a blessing. This, in itself, is the reward for those who avoid *machlokes*.

Chazal (*Sanhedrin* 7.) say, "Fortunate is the person who is accustomed to hearing his disgrace and remains silent. Remaining silent saves him from a hundred punishments that come from *machlokes*" (see Rashi).

The Iyun Yaakov on this Gemara explains that the court on earth punishes with forty lashes, and the court in heaven punishes with שִׁשִּׁים, *ששים*, sixty whips of fire, as stated several times in Chazal (see Yuma 77). Forty plus sixty is one hundred. He is saved from troubles from above and below when he is cautious and avoids *machlokes*.

Reb Shmuel Wosner *zt'l* was once asked which good deed enabled him to live a long life. He answered that it was because he avoided *machlokes*.

He repeated the following *mashal* from the Imrei Noam:

A lion asked a sheep to smell his breath and to tell him how it smelled. The sheep sniffed the lion's breath and told the lion the truth: "Your breath smells terrible."

The lion angrily replied, "Where is your respect for the king of all animals?" and devoured the sheep.

Next, the lion asked a wolf for his opinion. Having witnessed the sheep's fate, the wolf replied, "My master, your breath smells lovely."

"How dare you lie to me!" the lion roared and devoured the wolf.

Then the king went to the fox and said, "Smell my breath and tell me how it is."

The fox pointed to his nose and said, "My nose is stuffed. I can't smell anything."

The Imrei Noam says this is what one should do when a *machlokes* is brewing: Stay away because getting involved will only cause trouble.

Reb Wosner *zt'l* explained, "I have been a rav in Bnei Brak for the last seventy years, and I always avoided *machlokes*. Someone who has a stuffed nose and doesn't smell will live long. שומר פיו ולשונו שומר מצרות נפשו, by guarding your speech, you save yourself a lot of heartache and trouble."

Korach's Mistake

Rebbe Dovid Lelover *zt'l* said: Had Korach known that he can serve Hashem from behind the oven [the spot where simple Yidden used to sit in the beis medresh] and his *avodah* will be just as precious as the *avodah* of the *kohen gadol*, he

wouldn't have started the *machlokes*.¹⁵

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 11.) states, "Everything in

creation was created according to their agreement and consent." The Arugas HaBosem (*Chayei Sarah*) writes that this means that the

5. 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.

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 are at the bottom there, and vice versa."

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

Rashi explains that he was referring to the wealthy. They are at the top of our world, and people honor the wealthy. But they may be at the bottom in heaven because wealth isn't what makes someone honored in heaven, only Torah and mitzvos.

The Mabit (introduction to Beis Elokim) disagrees with this explanation because Rav Yosef wouldn't have been surprised by seeing that only Torah study and mitzvos count in heaven. Therefore, the Mabit explains that Rav Yosef was referring to *ovdei Hashem*, people who serve Hashem. There are *ovdei Hashem* who are very respected in this world but less so in *Olam HaBa* and *visa-versa*, because there are people who we think are mediocre or even less than that in their spiritual practices, but they are extremely honored in heaven. He discovered that things aren't always the way they seem.

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.

earth also agreed to be created in its shape and form. Compare the coarse earth to the divinity of heaven, and we struggle to understand why indeed the earth would agree to be created in its lowly form.

The answer is that the earth also has a mission in the world, and its mission isn't less important than that of the heavenly creations. Indeed, it is the tests that Hashem presents to mankind who live on and are drawn to earthly desires that make life worthwhile and give meaning to our avodas Hashem. The earth understood that and agreed to be created in this manner. It is called ארץ, from the word רצה, want, because the earth wanted to do Hashem's will and it wanted to be created this way.

The Arugas HaBosem explains that no one should complain, "Why can't I be like that person? If I were like him, with a sharper mind and brought up under better circumstances, I

would also be a genius in Torah!" Don't say that, because Hashem created you the way you are because this is the only way you can reach perfection."

It states (*Tehillim* 101:6), עיני בנאמני ארץ. The Arugas HaBosem explains that Hashem's eyes are with those who have *emunah* like the earth and are prepared to do Hashem's will, even when it seems that there are more prestigious services to perform for Hashem.

Korach was on a high spiritual level. As a Levi, Korach was bestowed with the honor of carrying the *aron*. Arizal taught that in the era of *techiyas hameisim*, Korach will be the *kohen gadol*. The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* says that if it weren't for this *machlokes*, Korach would have become the *levi gadol* – an extremely great honor that no one has ever received so far.

But he wanted more. He wanted to serve Hashem in the most perfect way. His

error was that he failed to understand that, with the portion Hashem gave him, he had the potential to be the greatest tzaddik.

The Arugas HaBosem explains that the earth swallowed Korach because it was the earth that understood that one should only desire and focus on the task Hashem set out for him.

Shalom in Shul

The Mishnah (*Gitten* 59.) states, "The *Kohen* receives the first *aliyah*, a *Levi* gets the second, and then comes the *Yisrael*. This was established [by Chazal] for the sake of peace."

Rashi explains, "The *chachamim* established this order to prevent fights. Because, now a person [a *Yisrael* or a *Levi*] can't say, 'I want the first *aliyah*!'" The *kohen* gets the first *aliyah*; there is nothing to debate.

Chazal established a hierarchy, so there should be peace in the beis medresh.

Reb Yosef Shaul Nathanson *zt'l* (the Shoel u'Meishiv) was the Rav of Lemberg, and in his beis medresh, they davened *nusach Ashkanez*. In the summer, the Lemberger Rav would go with his community to the Carpathian mountains to spend the summer in Skolia.

In Skolia, the *nusach* was *Sefard*, as the residents of Skolia were chassidim.

One Friday night, the *chazan* was a chassid from Skolia. He davened *nusach Sefard*, and the Lemberg summer guests complained.

The first uproar came when the *chazan* said ויצמה פורקניה in *kaddish*. The Lemberg congregants heckled and protested. Reb Yosef Shaul Nathanson raised his hand, signaling they should remain silent.

The *tefillah* continued, and it was peaceful until they reached the end of *Kabalas Shabbos*. At this point, chassidim say כוונת

and the Ashkenazic custom is to say במה מדליקין. The *chazan* began כגוונא and the summer guests from Lemberg protested.

The people of Skolia replied, "This is our beis medresh. Every week we say כגוונא. Why should this week be different?"

The Lemberg community responded, "We are the majority in the summer. There are more people from Lemberg here than Skolia. Furthermore, your *parnassah* comes from us because we rent your summer houses. And don't forget that we donated much money to build this beis medresh. What you do the entire year is your business, but in the summer, it should be Ashkenaz."

Reb Yosef Shaul silenced the community once again and ruled that תדיר ושאינו תדיר תדיר קודם, the more common custom prevails. Throughout the year, this beis medresh davens *nusach Sefard*, so that

is how they should daven in the summer, too.

After the tefillah, Reb Yosef Shaul spoke with the community to teach them the halachos of these matters and the *hashkafah*, the correct outlook.

He said, "A beis medresh is a place where we gather to give honor to Hashem. The *yetzer hara* tries to instigate *machlokes* to ruin this holy atmosphere. He tells the Lemberg community to demand that the shul say במה מדליקין. Thereby, he is מדליק, he ignites the flames of *machlokes* in the beis medresh. The community of Skolia responds in the same, bickering way because the *yetzer hara* incites them to insist that we say כגוונא. (The translation of כגוונא is "in the same way," and the people of Skolia answered back in the same bickering tone as the Lemberger guests that it must be their way.) But you can be sure, my brothers, that this wasn't the intention of the early *chachamim* who established these tefillos. The goal is peace, not *machlokes*.

"But what can we do? We have been in *galus* for a long time, and disputes like these happen. We should daven for Moshiach because when Moshiach comes, we won't say ויצמה פורקניה anymore. And Moshiach will tell us whether to say כגוונא or במה מדליקין. If he tells us to say כגוונא, it will be as we say in this prayer: כגוונא דיליה למהוויא אחד באחד that there will be complete unity among Yidden. And if Moshiach tells us to say במה מדליקין, we will be מדליק, ignite the fire of *hislahavus* and the fire of love, not the fire of *machlokes*."

Reb Yosef Shaul concluded, "We are in Skolia, a chassidische city, so I said a chassidic *vort*. But now I will approach the matter from a halachic perspective: When someone from Skolia comes to Lemberg, he should say כגוונא silently to himself, as he is accustomed to say at home. And when the people of Lemberg visit Skolia for the summer, they should say במה מדליקין silently

to themselves. That's what I do. When I'm in Skolia, I say במה מדליקין silently. And if someone from Skolia is in Lemberg and he wants to say במה מדליקין together with the congregation, he can do so. And if someone from Lemberg wants to say כגוונא together with the congregation of Skolia, he can do so. I accept "these sins" on my shoulders. The main thing, dear brothers, is that there be peace among you. If there will be peace, the *nusach* isn't so important, and the Satan (the *yetzer hara*) will be silenced."

Some years later, in 1908, a similar *machlokes* broke out in Hamburg, Germany. For many years, the Hamburg beis medresh davened *nusach Ashkenaz*, but as the demographics of the city changed due to the migration of many Polish Yidden, the community was now primarily chasidim, and they wanted to change the *nusach* to *Sefard*.

The question was, should the beis medresh continue

in *nusach Ashkenez*, as this was how the *beis medresh* was established, and there were still members of the *beis medresh* who preferred *nusach Ashkenaz*, or should they adjust to the new reality, and since the majority wanted to daven *Sefard*, they should change the *nusach* to *Sefard*.

The *gabaim*, representatives of both sides of the debate, came to the Berzhaner Rav *zt'l* (the Maharasham) and asked him to rule on this matter.

The Berzhaner Rav told them the story of the Lemberger Rav (stated above) and that the emphasis must be on peace because that is more important than the *nusach*.

And then, the Berzhaner Rav helped them reach a compromise that satisfied both sides. The *gaba'im* made a *kinyan*, expressing a promise that they accept the conditions of the compromise. This is how the Berzhaner Rav

maintained peace in the Hamburg *kehillah*.

Tachanun

The Tur (*Orach Chaim* 131) writes, "We daven in every position: sitting, standing, and fallen on the face. Moshe Rabbeinu did that, as it states (*Devarim* 9:9), ואשב בהר, 'I sat on the mountain,' and it states (*ibid.* 10:10), ואנכי עמדתי בהר, 'I stood on the mountain,' and it states (*ibid.* 9:25), ואתנפל ואתנפל, 'I fell before Hashem.'"

The Bach explains that first, we daven sitting down [when we say *Shema* with its *brachos*], then we stand up for *Shemonah Esrei*, and then we fall on our faces for *tachanun*, because we want to daven in these three ways. Afterward, we say, ואנחנו לא נדע מזה נעשה, which means we don't know of any other form of *tefillah*. If we did, we would daven in those ways, too, as we seek to pray and beseech Hashem in every possible way. Maybe we will find a way to arouse

Hashem's compassion and answer our tefillos.

In this week's *parashah*, Moshe and Aharon fell on their faces and prayed that Hashem not destroy the Jewish nation (see 16:22), ויפלו על פניהם ויאמרו... האיש אחד יהטא ועל כל פניהם, העדה יקצוף, "Moshe and Aharon fell on their faces and said... 'If one person sins, will You be angry at the entire community?'"

Hashem accepted their tefillah, which was said uniquely, by falling on their faces.

נפילת אפיים, to daven fallen on the face, is considered a very special tefillah and is *mesugal* for the tefillos to be answered. After we conclude Shemonah Esrei, we ask some requests with Tachanun, and it is a *mesugal* time and mode of tefillah for the tefillos to be answered.

Rabbeinu b'Chaya (16:22) explains:

"Moshe and Aharon prayed fallen on their faces,

and this is the source of נפילת אפיים (*tachanun*) when people fall on their faces to pray."

Rabbeinu b'Chaya says that praying while falling on the face expresses (a) *yiras Shamayim*, that one is afraid to look at Hashem, Who is before him. (b) It expresses distress and agony because when a person is sad, he often falls on his face. We pray this way to show that we are so upset with our *aveiros* that we can't even raise our faces. (c) Fallen on the face demonstrates that we depend entirely on Hashem's aid. We can't sit up straight, we can't move, and we can't do anything without Hashem's help. We are entirely dependent on Him.

"When one falls on his face, closing his eyes and mouth, this demonstrates that he cannot see what can help or harm him, and he doesn't know how to take care of himself. He is helpless without Hakadosh Baruch Hu's aid. It is like his senses are muted, tied, his

eyes and mouth closed, and he can't see or speak unless it is Hashem's will.

"This is also why we pray with our feet together, as though they are tied. This shows that a person can't attain his needs on his own. The gentile nations do something similar; they put their hands together when they pray. They don't know why they pray that way. But this is the reason. It demonstrates that they don't have any strength. It is like their hands are tied, and they are giving themselves over to the one they are praying to. To receive one's needs and be protected from harm, feet play a greater

role than hands. Therefore, we put our feet together, and not our hands."

More Benefits of Tachanun

Tachanun begins with *viduy* (אשמונו בגדנו). The Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* teaches (*Bereishis* 22:24), וואת מעכה, *is roshei teivos* of ודוי אחר תפילה מגיע עד כסא הכבוד, "*Viduy* after *Shemonah Esrei* reaches Hashem's throne."⁶

A chassid told the Rebbe of Radishitz *zt'l* that he had lost most of his money. The Radishitzer asked, "Do you say *tachanun*?"

Ashamed, he admitted that he hadn't said *tachanun* for many years.

6. Reb Yeruchem was one of the primary *chazanim* in the beis medresh of the Beis Aharon *zt'l* of Stolin.

Another chassid desired to be the *chazan*, too, so he said to the Beis Aharon, "Just because my name isn't ירוחם, I can't daven before the *amud*?"

The Beis Aharon replied, "If you will say *viduy*, admit your sins, and leave them, then you will also be ירוחם. As it states (*Mishlei* 25:13), מכסה פשעיו לא יצליח ומודה ועווב ירוחם, 'A person who conceals his sins, won't succeed. But if one says *viduy* and abandons his *aveiros*, ירוחם, he receives Hashem's compassion.'"

"How many *tachanuns* are you missing?"

Together, they calculated and realized that he was missing thousands of *tachanuns*. The Rebbe told him, "From now on, you must be cautious and say *tachanun*. Additionally, you must say all those *tachanuns* that you missed. If you do that, your *mazal* will come back to you. But if you miss even just one *tachanun* you owe, you won't get your *yeshuah*."

The man followed the Rebbe's instructions. It took a few weeks, but he said all the *tachanuns* he owed and was cautious about saying *tachanun* in the tefillos.

His *mazal* improved, and he became wealthy. He came several times to Radshitz and generously gave to the Rebbe's household.

The Radshitzer Rebbe's son, Reb Hillel, repeated this story and added that his father's counsel was very

logical. Because the Mishnah (*Kiddushin* 82:) states that people don't have *parnassah* due to *aveiros*. As it states, "Reb Shimon ben Elazar said, 'Did you ever see animals or birds with a profession? Yet they have *parnassah* easily, without hardship. They [the animals] were created to serve me, and I was created to serve Hashem. Shouldn't I have *parnassah* without hardships? Rather, it is because I did bad deeds. Therefore, I lost my *parnassah*.'"

Aveiros is the root that lessens *parnassah*; therefore, saying *viduy*, which removes *aveiros*, helps restore one's *parnassah*.

Rava said to his students (*Brachos* 35:), "Please, don't come to me [to learn Torah] during the months Nisan and Tishrei so that you won't be busy with your *parnassah* the entire year."

According to its simple meaning, Tishrei and Nisan are the primary months to work in the field. He told

them to work in their fields those months, so they would have the entire year free to study Torah.

According to our discussion, we can explain according to our discussion, we can explain בדרך צחות what Rava was telling them: Parnassah comes from tachanun and viduy. In the months of Tishrei and Nisan, we don't say tachanun. Rava told his students that on those days, the only way to get *parnassah* was to work—literally. But for the rest of the year, they can earn their *parnassah* via *tachanun*.

The Arizal instituted saying (Tehillim chapter 86) תפילה לדוד on weekdays, before the שיר של יום, and he urges us to say it with a lot of *kavanah*.

Someone told the Shinover Rav about his financial problems. The Rebbe asked him whether he says תפילה לדוד every morning. The man answered that he didn't. The Shinover Rav told him to say that chapter the amount of times he skipped it, and then he

would have *parnassah*. And that is what happened.

There was a *mageifah* (epidemic) in a town near Stolín, and many young people were dying, *r'l*. The Beis Aharon knew that this community was lax with *tachanun*. The Beis Aharon sent them a telegram stating they should accept on themselves to be cautious with *tachanun*. They did so, and the plague ended.

Rebbe Shlomke Zvhiller *zt'l* said to the renowned Karliner chassid Reb Yehoshua Hershel Halutovsky, "I saw the Beis Aharon *zt'l* in a dream, and he asked me why people are lenient with *tachanun* and skip it."

Reb Yehoshua Hershel asked, "How do you know it was the Beis Aharon?"

Rebbe Shlomoke replied, "I saw the Beis Aharon when I was three years old."

Saying ודוּא רחום, the longer *tachanun*, on Mondays and

Thursdays, has an extraordinary power.

The Yaavatz teaches, "It is tested and proven, and it is known to the elders of the generation, that saying יהוה רחום [Mondays and Thursdays] with a minyan annuls bad decrees."

Students of the Chasam Sofer *zt'l* said, "The *hisorerus*, the tears, and the *teshuva* that can be seen by the great *rabbanim* at the highest moments of the *yomim nora'im* (like by *tekiyas shofar* and *kol nidrei*) was seen every Monday and Thursday when the Chasam Sofer said *tachanun*."

In a village near Belz, there was a Yid who ran a bar (a *kretchmer*). His routine was to close the store at one o'clock a.m. One night, at one a.m., he told everyone to leave, which they did, except for one person who was drunk like Lot. The tavern owner went over to him and told him to leave. The drunk got up and stumbled towards the door but tripped over a table leg,

hit his head on the floor, and died.

The tavern owner was terrified. If people find out that a goy died in his shop, he would be held responsible. His life was in grave danger.

He quickly left his shop, locked it outside, and rushed to Belz to speak with Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l*. The Belzer Rebbe told him, "Go next to the corpse and say the יהוה רחום (the long *tachanun* said on Mondays and Thursdays)."

He said יהוה רחום tearfully and with immense *kavanah*. When he finished, the goy stood up and left the store. The goy went to the place where he worked and lived. As soon as he entered his workshop, he fell to the ground, dead.

The tavern owner returned to Belz to thank the Rebbe. He asked, "If *tachanun* is so precious and powerful, why are Yidden lenient with it? Why do they seek opportunities to avoid saying it?"

The Rebbe replied, "Do you want all goyim to come back to life?" Such is the power of *tachanun*!