

## AVOIDING STRIFE

### THE TRAGEDY OF MACHLOIKES

The Torah forbids us to behave like Korach and his group, by causing and continuing *machloikes*, controversy. Indeed, the *Gemara* says that a person who continues a *machloikes* actually transgresses a 'lav', a prohibitive commandment, which some *Rishonim* count as one of the *taryag mitzvos*.

(סנהדרין קי ע"א, ס' חרדים פכ"ד מ"ב)

Only *HaShem's* work on the second day of Creation is not crowned with the phrase, *...ki tov* – "and *HaShem* saw that it was good." Why?

The *Midrash* gives the reason: there was *machloikes* on that day, when the waters that filled the earth were split. Now, if *machloikes* that ultimately was of benefit to the world is undeserving of that phrase, how much more so regarding *machloikes* that brings *confusion* to the world.

(בראשית רבה ד, ה)

The *chachomim* warn that a home split by controversy will eventually be destroyed, and a *shul* torn by controversy will eventually be transformed into a place of idolatry. Once, an angry dispute broke out among the *chachomim* in a *shul* in Tveria, and reached such a peak that a *sefer Torah* was accidentally torn. Reb Yosei ben Kisma, who was present at the time, said, "I would be surprised if one day this *shul* doesn't turn into a place of *avoda zara!*"

And indeed, in due course this actually happened.

(מס' דרך ארץ פ"ט, יבמות צו ע"ב, וראה חרדים פ"ז)

Reb Berachia said: So severe is *machloikes*, that although the Heavenly *beis din* punishes only those who are over twenty and a worldly *beis din* holds thirteen-year-olds responsible, during the *machloikes* of Korach even day-old infants were burned and swallowed into the earth.

(במדבר רבה יח, ג)

The Shelah HaKadosh writes that one

*machloikes* chases away a hundred possibilities for *parnasa*.

(אג"ק מוהרש"ב ח"א ע' קע)

The *tzaddik*, Reb Simcha Bunem of Pshis'cha, once told his *chassidim*: Just look at the sheer power of the *tum'a* found within *machloikes!* Korach and his followers claimed that Moshe Rabbeinu, the humblest of all people, was trying to raise himself over others. Such a senseless claim can be caused only by *machloikes*. It can even dim the vision of great men and rob them of their common sense.

(פרפראות לתורה)

### DISPUTING A LEADER

*Machloikes* is always repulsive, loathsome and forbidden; as the Torah instructs, "You shall not be like Korach." The Me'iri adds that a person who quarrels with someone whom he is obligated to respect is even more despised.

(מאירי סנהדרין קי ע"ב)

In the year תקק"ה (1765), a longstanding *machloikes* was seething in the city of Smargon. It had once boasted a large *yeshiva*, and many of its learned *bochurim* had married into local families and settled near them. Now, every city of course has to have a *rov*, but these young men were such impressive *lomdim* that they were unable to tolerate any newly-appointed *rov* for more than a short time. Hearing of this, the Alter Rebbe stopped over in the town on his way home from Mezritch, and delivered a *maamar*. Its theme: the supreme value of peace.

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 19)

Some *chassidim* once complained to the *gaon*, Reb Avraham of Sochatchov, the *Avnei Nezer*, that the *rov* in their town had ruled too leniently in a certain question of *kashrus*. Unwilling to accept any more of his rulings regarding *kashrus* issues, they asked their Rebbe to send them a different *rov*.

The *tzaddik* replied, "Even according to your claim, this *rov* has at most transgressed an *issur deRabbanan*. However, what you want to do is an *issur deOraysa*, for the Torah explicitly forbids *machloikes*. Furthermore, since *machloikes* causes people to make mistakes, it would cause many to transgress other *issurim*."

(סיפורי חסידים זוין תורה, ע' 557)

### THE POWER OF PEACE

Rav Il'a taught: The world continues to exist in the merit of whoever closes his mouth in the midst of a *machloikes*.

(חולין פ"ט)

Peace is so powerful that regarding those who serve *avoda zara* but live peacefully, *HaShem* says that it is as if He has no control over them. The *Midrash* illustrates this by the following example: Although in the generation of Dovid HaMelech there were many men of stature, many would fall in battle because of their *machloikes*. Yet in the time of Ach'av, when many people were serving *avoda zara*, they succeeded in battle.

(בראשית רבה לח, ו, ויקרא רבה כו, ב)

When Yaakov Avinu was about to take leave of his children for the last time, he said, "*Gather together* and I will tell you what will happen to you at the End of Days." As the *Midrash* points out, he was telling the Children of Israel that the way to prepare themselves for the *Geula* was – by *togetherness*.

(בראשית רבה פ' צח)

## CONSIDER THIS!

- How can *machloikes* be avoided? Isn't it inevitable that disputes will arise between people?
- What value is there to avoiding *machloikes*, if one doesn't really feel *Ahavas Yisroel*?

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**STANDING FOR BIRKAS HATORAH**

**May one sit whilst reciting *birkas hatorah*?**

- The general rule is that *brochos* on *mitzvos* (in contrast to *brochos* on food for example) must be recited whilst standing<sup>1</sup>. *Chazal*<sup>2</sup> derive this from a play on the words in the *pesukim* regarding *sefiras ho'omer*<sup>3</sup>: "*mehocheil chermesh bakomo*" – which literally means: count the *omer* from when the sickle begins felling the standing grain. The word "*bakomo*" is understood to mean "while standing". There is a further *gezeira shava* to all other *mitzvos* where the word "*lochem*" is used. However *Chazal* use the inclusive expression "all *brochos* on *mitzvos* need to be recited whilst standing". This leads to a discussion to determine exactly which *brochos* on *mitzvos* the *Chazal* had in mind.
- Many *achronim*<sup>4</sup> are of the opinion that the *brocha* on *mitzvos* which may be performed whilst sitting may also be recited whilst sitting. Based on this many *poskim*<sup>5</sup> permit sitting during *birkas hatorah*, since Torah may be (and indeed usually is) studied whilst sitting.
- It appears<sup>6</sup>, however, from the *Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch*<sup>7</sup> that the *brocha* for *mitzvos* that are performed whilst sitting should be recited whilst standing. Hence<sup>8</sup> it would follow that *birkas hatorah* must be recited whilst standing.
- Other *poskim*<sup>9</sup> state that according to *Kabbala* one should stand for *birkas hatorah*, whilst others<sup>10</sup> say the reason to stand is since one ought<sup>11</sup> to reenact in one's mind the experience at *Har Sinai* whilst reciting *birkas hatorah*, we therefore stand as we stood then to receive the Torah.
- In summary: the common practice is to stand, some say that it is merely a custom but not mandatory, however it would seem that according to the *Alter Rebbe* it is obligatory.

1. ב"י או"ח ריש סי' ח' מאורחות חיים בשם הרושלמי, הו"ד בשו"ע אדה"ז שם ס"ג.  
 2. הובא בראשונים בשם חז"ל אף שאינו מופיע בתלמודים שלנו, ראה המצויין בפסקי תשובות סי' ה' הע' 30.  
 3. דברים טז  
 4. אל"י רבה סי' ח ס"ק ב, פני יהושע מגילה כא ע"א, מור וקציעה סי' ח, חכמת שלמה להגרש"ק שם.  
 5. כן מפורש בשו"ת רמ"ע מפאנו סי' קב לענין ברכת התורה, ערוה"ש סי' מז סע"ג, שו"ת יחוה דעת ח"ה סי' ד, באר משה ח"ה סי' יז תשובות והנהגות ח"ב סי' לו ועוד.  
 6. כ"כ בחקרי הלכות ח"ט יא, ב. וכן נראה דעת המג"א סי' ח ס"ק ב', ופמ"ג בא"א שם, וכ"ד העמודי אש סי' ב אות לו הו"ד ביהו"ד שם.  
 7. שם  
 8. כן נלע"ד ע"פ דברי חקרי הלכות הנ"ל, ולכ"כ ביהו"ד שם בדעת המג"א.  
 9. שו"ת ישכיל עבדי (ח"ח האו"ח סי' ג), שו"ת ציץ אליעזר חט"ז סי' ב.  
 10. שו"ת מראה כהן הו"ד בפסקי תשובות סי' מז, ד.  
 11. טור סי' מז.

**לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה**

ליכות הרה"ת מנחם מענדל ניסן וזוגתו מושקא שיחיו בראנשטיין לרגל התנתם ביום ח"י אייר - ל"ג בעומר

ליכות הרה"ת לוי יצחק וזוגתו דבורה לאה שיחיו יעקבסאהן לרגל התנתם ביום ח"י אייר - ל"ג בעומר

ליכות הילדה מלכה מרים תחיי - נולדה ט' ניסן שיגדלוה הוריי לתורה לחופה ולמע"ט נדבת הוריי ר' מאיר וזוגתו חנה שיחיו פערעלשטיין

**REB AIZIK HOMILER**

Reb Yitzchak Aizik of Homil, Reb Aizik Homiler, was one of the most famous and greatest Chabad chassidim ever to live. As a young man, he came to the Alter Rebbe, and after the Rebbe's *histalkus*, he became a great *chossid* of the Mittlerer Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek. He was an incredible *gaon* in *nigleh* and *maskil* in Chassidus, and wrote many *seforim* in Chassidus, namely "Chana Ariel", "Shnei Hameoros" and others. Reb Aizik served as the Rov in Homil for 58 years, and passed away on the 26<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, תרי"ז (1857).

A very simple wagon driver, who would drive people from Homil to Paritch, once approached Reb Aizik with a *shaaloh*, "I am a *kohen*; am I allowed to take a divorcee?" (He obviously knew that a *kohen* may not "take" a divorcee for marriage, but he was concerned that he may be prohibited from taking such a woman in his wagon as well). Reb Aizik went to a box of *seforim*, pulled out a "Smeh", looked in it for fifteen minutes, and then turned to the man and said, "Where? To Paritch? Yes, you may."

The Friediker Rebbe said, "Fifteen minutes was a lot for Reb Aizik. During that time, he could have been contemplating deep concepts in Chassidus, but since one may not laugh at an *am haaretz* who asks a *shaaloh* (to avoid causing him to stumble on another occasion), Reb Aizik disregarded his time."

(סה"ש תרפ"ד ע' 53)

In one letter Reb Aizik describes his intense yearning to recognize the oneness of Hashem and his journey to reach it:

"I exerted myself tremendously to comprehend this *emunah*, until finally, with the help of the [Alter] Rebbe's son, [the Mittlerer Rebbe], my understanding began to increase. However, I was unable to maintain this perception, and I would write many *tzetzlach* to the [Alter] Rebbe begging him to explain the matter to me in a clear and lucid manner. The Rebbe, however, kept on pushing me off, causing me tremendous pain.

"Finally on one occasion, the Rebbe acquiesced and said he would recite Chassidus for me privately, and a crowd of about ten people gathered in the room. Hearing the words of the Rebbe, I stood trembling, oblivious of whether it was night or day. As soon as the Rebbe finished speaking, a bright shining powerful *emunah* shot into my heart like an arrow, and I had a strong desire to run in the streets and shout out this great revelation, but for whatever reason, I decided against it.

"By Hashem's name, I tell you that I am not exaggerating even one bit..."

(תולדות יצחק אייזיק ע' 176)

**ליכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שי' בן רבקה**

**A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE**

**THE FINE LINE**

In a special *sicha* to the *Kinnus Hashluchim 5744*, the Rebbe noted that the word *shlich* has the same numerical value as *שמחה*, which means happy. In other words, the *shlich* is not being forced to fulfill his *shlichus*; he is genuinely glad to be a *Shlich* of the Rebbe.

As the *sicha* continued, the Rebbe reminded the *shluchim*, that this happiness must also be monitored:

"On the other hand, *shlich* is only *b'gimatria* happy, which means that the happiness should not always be readily apparent, only concealed happiness. The *shlich's* happiness should be something personal, which he is well aware of, but with regard to his surroundings, he must be careful not to step on anyone.

His happiness to be the *shlich* of the *Nassi Hador*, should not cause him to feel that he may do as he wishes; to demean other organizations, even those which were there before him, to step on anyone and everyone, or to cause *machlokes*... Such behavior is certainly not the will of the one who is sending him *meshalei'ach*..."

Rather, he must act *b'darkei noam ub'darkei shalom*, an explicit mitzvah in the Torah, which is the will of Hashem, the *meshalei'ach* of the *meshalei'ach*!"

(*Sefer Hashlichus*, page 365)

