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PARSHAS KORACH

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

MACHLOKES AND SHALOM

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Part I. Conflict With Greatness

Jewish History

There's a fundamental principle which we should keep in mind whenever we hear *krias haTorah*, and that is: all of the episodes in the Torah are for each individual to learn from. Hakadosh Baruch Hu dictated these stories to Moshe Rabbeinu so that we should utilize them in our own lives.

Of course, it's of the utmost importance to know Chumash even *k'pshuto*; without lessons, just to know what happened in our history. Every Jew should have a clear picture of the lives of our *Avos* and *Imahos*. Everyone should know about Yosef Hatzaddik; how it happened that he went down to Egypt and because of him we all went down to Egypt

subsequently. What happened in Mitzrayim? And Yetzias Mitzrayim, how did it all happen?

And once you know the Chumash, then go ahead and know what happened in the rest of Tanach. I would recommend, if you have no time, at least read the Tanach in English; at least once in your life. You won't understand much, but at least get an idea of what happened in the days of Yehoshua, what happened in the days of the *Shoftim*. That whole glorious era should be a blank in your mind? What happened in the days of Shaul and Dovid Hamelech and Shlomo Hamelech and all the kings of *Malchus Beis Dovid*? What happened to the *Aseres Hashevatim*? There's so much! How could a person live out his life and not know our history? It's part of our great heritage, and therefore, among your achievements in this world should be familiarity with our history.

History Lessons

But there's something much more important than that. The stories of the past, as they're recorded by the Torah, are for the purpose of teaching us how to live successfully in the present. It's a very important lesson and I'll repeat it: Whatever is said that happened in the history of our nation is said also for us to study and learn from there how to make our own history.

Now, even though that's true for everything, but when it comes to the story of Korach and his *machlokes* against Moshe Rabbeinu, it's even more so — because here the Torah especially sets up Korach as a model. וְיִהְיוּ לְאוֹת לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *You should make a memorial of what Korach did and what happened to him so that it should be a sign for the Am Yisroel...*, וְלֹא יִהְיֶה כְּקֹרַח וְכַעֲדָתוֹ – *that they shouldn't be like Korach and his cohorts* (Bamidbar 17:3,5). When it comes to this particular episode, Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants us to think about it more than others; we are expected to think about what happened and what could happen, *chas v'shalom*, to us.

Downfall of a Great Man

Korach, you have to know, was a great man. He went out of Mitzrayim with the Bnei Yisroel. If he wasn't a worthy man, he wouldn't have come out; אֵלּוּ הָיָה שָׁם לֹא הָיָה נִגְאָל. Korach also stood at the *Yam Suf* and he sang *Az Yashir* with the rest of the nation. He stood at Har Sinai, and he

shouted *naaseh v'nishma* just like everybody else. Korach was a *tzaddik*, no question about it.

So what happened? He made a big mistake. When a certain evil thought entered Korach's mind — "Why should Moshe Rabbeinu give Aharon Hakohen so much power? We're also in the same *shevet*!" — he let that quarrelsome thought fester; he began to suspect that he was in the right.

And when he saw that the sons of Aharon died, he was thinking, "Why did such a thing happen that Nadav and Avihu died? I think it's a hint that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is not entirely satisfied to give the *kehunah* to the sons of Aharon. Only that Moshe Rabbeinu has so much influence with Hakadosh Baruch Hu, so He yielded to him." Korach suspected that Moshe was at fault. Hakadosh Baruch Hu *retzon yereiav ya'aseh*, He does what those who fear Him want, and therefore He yielded to Moshe Rabbeinu's choice. But if Moshe wouldn't have pressed the case for Aharon, it wouldn't have happened.

"What's wrong with *me*?" Korach thought. "And even if not me, there are others." And he wasn't *omed b'nisayon*; he confronted Moshe Rabbeinu — he thought it was *l'shem Shamayim*, of course — and he spoke up against him.

A Torah Warning

What was the end of Korach and those who went along with him? They died in the Midbar. וַתִּפְתַּח הָאָרֶץ אֶת פִּיהָ – *The ground opened its mouth*, וַתִּבְלַע אֹתָם – *and it swallowed up Korach and his people* (*ibid.* 16:32). Because he opened up a big mouth against Moshe Rabbeinu, so the earth opened up a big mouth on him. And at the conclusion of the story, the Torah tells us, "Be careful! וְלֹא יִהְיֶה כְּקֹרַח וְכַעֲדָתוֹ." The Torah goes out of its way to warn us: "Don't make a *machlokes* with the 'Moshes,' with the Torah leaders."

Because you have to know that Moshe Rabbeinu is not one person; he's considered a model for all the *Gedolim* in every *dor*. That's why in the days of the Talmud when somebody said something good, a true *pshat*, they complimented him, מֹשֶׁה שַׁפִּיר קָאָמַרְתְּ – "*Moshe, you're talking right*" (see Sukkah 39a). They called him "Moshe." Because the Torah leaders, the *talmidei chachomim*, the *roshei yeshiva*, are our Moshes.

Many Moshes

Why is that? Because Hashem wants us to look up to all the *Gedolei Yisroel* in our generation and obey them. Rav Moshe Feinstein, *zichrono livrachah*, was our Moshe Rabbeinu. Rav Aharon Kotler *zichrono livrachah*, he was our Moshe. And every *dor* has great leaders. *Baruch Hashem*, even today we have great leaders. Maybe they're not as great as they were a hundred years ago, but they're our leaders. We have *roshei yeshiva*, *zol zein gezunt*. We have big *rebbes*, big *tzaddikim*. I'm thinking of one right now; he lives not so far away, a very big *tzaddik*. I won't say his name because others might get jealous. Also, because it's not only him. We have leaders!

Unfortunately, people are not utilizing them. I don't understand why there aren't crowds in Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky's *beis hamedrash* so much that they're standing on each other's heads. People tell me there is sitting room there! He's the *gadol hador*, a kindly, soft-spoken person who has knowledge about everything. So why shouldn't everybody go to him? I don't understand why people aren't utilizing the *Gedolim*, but the minimum, the bare minimum is to respect them, to look up to them. Even though you may not always go to hear them because you're busy, but you must have in your mind the attitude, "I am loyal to the *Gedolei haTorah*, and I would never think of arguing with them, of causing *machlokes*."

History Repeats Itself

And the model of Korach was given for that purpose. It's not just telling us stories so we'll have something interesting to listen to in the shul, something interesting for the rabbi to speak about. It's telling us just as then people made a mistake, people are making the same mistake today.

People look at the Torah leaders and they think, "Well, it's true he knows more Torah than me, but what's so great about him? He's a human being like me." You know, some people said that about Moshe Rabbeinu, too. When they saw him walking by, so וְהִבִּיטוּ אַחֲרֵי מֹשֶׁה, *people looked at him* (*Shemos* 33:8). And the Gemara says that they said, "Look at his thighs, how thick his breeches are" (Shekalim 14b). Moshe was a big, strong man and some people looked at him like a regular person. Of course, they didn't *say* it. Oh no, they

wouldn't have said such a thing. They didn't even think about it. But *subconsciously*, they thought, "He's a human being and I'm also a human being."

So we see that had we been in the days of Moshe Rabbeinu, it would have been a very difficult *nisayon*. Because if we would see Moshe Rabbeinu walking in the street, we would see that he is not a skinny fellow; he was a heavyset man — I don't want to say the words about such an *ish Elokim*, but that's how he was, he was a heavyset man. And as some people looked at him, they saw a person. He didn't have wings, after all, and therefore some people thought about him as an ordinary human being. He looked like an ordinary human being.

Small Brains, Big Mouths

We look back in amazement at them. It's hard even to believe that such a thing ever happened. Moshe Rabbeinu, the greatest man who ever lived, should have opposition? But you see the same thing today. Again and again we see it.

I once heard a rabbi, an American rabbi somewhere in Queens, who was angry at Rav Aharon Kotler, *zichrono livrachah*. He announced publicly, "If Rabbi Kotler won't change his ways, if he doesn't stop being so extreme, we'll stop making appeals for Lakewood." It's hard to even think about such a thing! Such a *chatzuf*! A rabbi *am ha'aretz* — all he did was make English speeches. That's all he could do. I knew him personally. He wasn't a *lamdan* at all. But he saw a nose! He saw lips! Rav Aharon has a nose like I have a nose. He has lips. I have lips. He has ears like I have ears.

Or another case. I remember there was a writer, a *frum* Jew who attacked the Satmarer Rebbe. I knew the writer personally, a *shomer Shabbos* Jew. He once characterized the Satmarer Rebbe in a story, "The *Rebbe* and the Satan" – a whole story of how the Rebbe made a *bris* with the Satan to attack Jews. A terrible thing. This man, I don't know how long he'll have to be in Gehenom for that.

All Types of Gedolim

Therefore, don't say, "Well, that story of Korach is only Moshe Rabbeinu. But this *Gadol* or that *Gadol*, this *rosh yeshiva* or another one, who is *he* compared to Moshe Rabbeinu?" Because Hashem says, "And

who are *you* compared to Korach? Korach was a very great man. You're a nobody, so you surely cannot make *machlokes*. You're not fit even to open your mouth!"

And I must tell you that I disagree with the attitude of putting down someone else's *Gadol*. No; I disagree with that attitude. *Gedolim* can be here and *Gedolim* can be there, and we have to appreciate all of them. Your *Gadol* doesn't have to be the only *Gadol*.

And even though there might be a disagreement between them; yes, there may be a *machlokes l'shem Shamayim* between them, but we should stay out of it. We shouldn't say a word. We should keep our mouths closed and recognize both sides. That's the way we should follow.

Membership in K'hal Adas Korach

Why did the earth open its big mouth to swallow Korach? Because Korach opened his big mouth. So don't open your mouth! Because even today, the earth opens its mouth to bury men. Many are swallowed in an early grave because they opened their mouths. And what's even worse, many are swallowed into Gehenom just like Korach was. To be swallowed by a cemetery is nothing like the problem of being swallowed by Gehenom.

And therefore, our function is וְלֹא יִהְיֶה כְּקֹרַח וְכַעֲדָתוֹ; we have to follow the *Gedolei Yisroel* implicitly. Korach, he's our model forever to be careful to avoid *machlokes*, to not open our mouths against the Torah authorities. Even in your yeshiva, your synagogue, you shouldn't be rebellious against the *rav* or the *rebbi*. Even though he doesn't have wings sprouting under his *kapote*, even though he can't make any *mofsim* and there is no halo around him, he is the one that Hakadosh Baruch Hu brought to you; he's your Moshe Rabbeinu. So don't make *machlokes*; don't do anything to weaken his authority. That's what it means, "Don't be like Korach." You're forewarned now; if you get involved, you are being judged by what you would have been in the days of Korach. In the days of Korach, you would have been *Adas Korach*. Certainly, you would have been there!

Korach in the Home

But it's even more than that. Did it occur to you that it also means that you shouldn't look for *machlokes* with your wife or with your husband? That you shouldn't make *machlokes* with your neighbors or with your mother-in-law? That if you're busy with *machlokes* with any Jew, you're transgressing וְלֹא יִהְיֶה כְּקֹרַח וְכַעֲדָתוֹ? The Gemara (Sanhedrin 110a) says that, and the *Poskim* bring that down in *sifrei halacha* (see Chofetz Chaim, *Pesicha*, *Lav Yud-Beis*).

But the question is, how do you learn it from there? That was a national thing, a community thing; Korach wanted to break down Moshe's authority. It's a terrible thing to break down the authority of a Torah leader, a *talmid chochom.* That we understand; certainly, you shouldn't be *choleik* on the *roshei yeshiva*, on the *Gedolei Hador*, on Torah leaders. The results of such a thing could be terrible for the nation.

But if your neighbor is getting on your nerves because he makes too much noise at night in the backyard — your little children are trying to sleep and he's banging on wood and you want to put him in his place — so that's only a minor thing; an individual story.

No! It's not minor at all. וְלֹא יִהְיֶה כְּקֹרַח means don't be like Korach at all! The *issur* of *machlokes*, even among regular people, is learned from וְלֹא יִהְיֶה כְּקֹרַח וְכַעֲדָתוֹ and so a Jew who allows himself to be involved in any *machlokes sh'lo l'shem Shamayim* — which most *machlokes* are — he should know that he's another Korach. And he's *oiver* on that *lav*! וְלֹא יִהְיֶה כְּקֹרַח! You shouldn't make *machlokes*! And if you're fighting with even one person, it's the same as if you're fighting with many people, even great people.

Arguing With Your Pilegesh

I'll explain that. The Gemara says, לְעוֹלָם אַל יַטִּיל אָדָם אֵימָה יְתֵרָה בְּתוֹךְ בֵּיתוֹ – *a man should never make his wife too afraid of him; he shouldn't make arguments in his home,* שֶׁהֲרֵי פִּילֶגֶשׁ בַּגִּבְעָה – *because it once happened a story,* הֵטִיל עָלֶיהָ בַּעֲלָהּ אֵימָה יְתֵרָה - *that a person made a machlokes in his home and, because of that, thousands of Jews were killed* (Gittin 6b; see Shoftim 19-21).

What's the story? There was a man who was angry at his *pilegesh*. He found in the soup that she prepared for him a fly or a hair. It was no great tragedy, it's just soup, but he made it into a big deal. He started complaining and shouting, and she was afraid of him — she knew him — and so she ran out of the house.

So, instead of immediately apologizing and trying to appease her, he closed the door. He locked her out. And that night, while she was on the street, she ended up falling into the hands of wicked people. And in the morning, she was found dead on the doorsteps.

Now, he was a quarrelsome fellow, and now his anger was against the people of the town. So he immediately said the town should make a meeting and discover who did it and punish him immediately. But the town wasn't in a hurry to do it, not as fast as he wanted.

So, what did he do? He cut up the body into twelve pieces and he sent a piece to the Sanhedrin of every *shevet*. The Sanhedrin of every *shevet* was sitting in judgment on regular, daily affairs when a man delivered a basket, with a message. They opened up the basket and saw a horrible sight.

Operation Epic Fury

And they became so outraged that they said, "Who did this?! We have to immediately go to war against *Shevet Binyamin*!" In the old days, the Jews didn't suffer injustice like that and keep quiet about it. And so, they made a big army and they marched on *Shevet Binyamin*. They said, "Immediately! We want to punish the whole town for that. We won't allow such things in Eretz Yisroel."

But Binyamin said, "Hold up a minute! The whole town?! This has to be discussed. Take your time."

"Nothing doing! We won't take our time!"

And there was a war, and many tens of thousands were killed.

Now pay attention to the Gemara. The Gemara says that we see from this story that you shouldn't be an argumentative person in your home because look what happened then, that tens of thousands of Jews died because of *machlokes*.

Blamed for Bad Potential

So the question is, what kind of comparison is that? Here's a man, a *meshugene*, who makes his wife tremble. Today I heard a story like that, a man shouting in his house. And she's trembling from him. But he's not causing a war! Even the neighbors don't know what's going on. And therefore, how could you say that because this man is fighting with his wife, it is as if he made a war that kills tens of thousands of people?

And the answer is yes! It just so happens that this man doesn't have the power to do it. There's no longer a Sanhedrin. And his wife is a sane woman; she's a smart woman and lets it pass. So nothing especially bad happens. But Chazal want us to know that even though it never happened to him, he is judged by what *could* have happened. Because it's the underlying *middos* — that's what you're judged for.

And so if a man makes fights, he's judged as if he were a very powerful person; the fact that you don't have the power, that's not going to save you. You don't get any credit for not having any power. You're judged as if you had the power and with your anger not only you frightened your wife to death but you caused many tens of thousands of people to perish.

And so every little *machlokes* is actually tremendous because it's the *middos* — arrogance, jealousy, anger, other things too — that ignite *machlokes*, and those *middos* would play out even more if you had more power. That's why these things are written; in order to teach us how to behave in our private lives. We are judged individually by what could have happened on a national scale.

The World on Fire

And so when people today fight among themselves, in the synagogue, in the office, in the home, it's the exact same as לֹא יִהְיֶה כְּקֹרַח וְכַעֲדָתוֹ. Isn't it a tragedy that people hear the Chumash read and they don't know that it's talking to them? They think, וַיִּקַּח קֹרַח – there was a man, Korach, way back who did this foolish thing, and that's all. Oh no! Our lives are just as important to us as the life of Korach was in his time.

And it's going on in every synagogue, in every yeshiva; *lehavdil*, every business. Mothers-in-law are trying to fight with their daughters-in-law and vice versa. The world is a hubbub! It's boiling; *ess kocht zich*. The world is a pot on the fire. It's cooking with *machlokes* in families, among

neighbors. I've been a *mispallel* all my life in shuls and a Rav in about seven, eight *kehillos*, and I've seen *machlokes* all the time. That's one of the most outstanding features of a *kehilla* — just like *tefillah b'tzibbur* and *krias haTorah*, also *machlokes*, constantly.

You innocent young people, you don't know. I know. My telephone is ringing all day long. Fights! With everybody. People tell me that neighbors are ruining their lives *l'hachis*. All kinds of spiteful things. Of course, among the gentiles it's a thousand times worse. When a *goy* makes *machlokes*, he pulls out his stiletto, his knife. Among Jews, although it doesn't go so far usually, but like it says in Mishlei, words are worse than swords. וְהֵם יָרְדוּ חַדְרֵי בָטֶן – *Words go down into the chambers of the belly* (18:8). People get sick from *machlokes*. There are stories upon stories; people who became diabetic because of *machlokes*. Heart failure, too. They died in the middle of an argument with their wives. All over the world people lose their jobs. They lose customers, too.

Slow Down: Trouble Ahead

And therefore, the model of Korach, the story in this week's *sedrah*, means watch out for *machlokes*. It means you shouldn't open your mouth against anybody — except against *reshaim gemurim*. Sometimes you must, *l'shem Shamayim*, but otherwise no. You have to be very careful when you open up your mouth.

That's what Shlomo says, אַל תֵּצֵא לָרִב מַהֵר – *Don't hurry to go out into a quarrel* (Mishlei 25:8). Because once you start, פֶּן מַה תַּעֲשֶׂה בְּאַחֲרִיתָהּ – *you don't know what's going to be the result* (*ibid.*). Who knows what could happen? Later you'll be sorry.

Now, it means two things. First, in *gashmiyus*, it means that ultimately you'll get trouble from that fight. You'll say angry words, the other party will answer angry words, and who knows what will happen? How many people ended up separating only because they started out with the wrong words? Separating from friends, from neighbors, from brothers. How many got sick from *machlokes*? How many lost *parnassah*? Had they kept their mouths closed, nothing would have happened. That's Shlomo's warning: "Don't hurry into a fight because you don't know what trouble you'll have as a result."

The Real Result

But listen now to what Shlomo really meant. פֶּן מַה תַּעֲשֶׂה בְּאַחֲרִיתָהּ – *What will you do when the quarrel turns against you and causes you trouble at the end, after you leave this world?* It's like I told you once, in Mishlei there is a peel of the fruit and there's a fruit itself. The peel of the fruit is also delicious; our grandmothers used to take the orange peels and never throw them away. They candied them. But that's not the main purpose of the orange. The inside is more important. So even though פֶּן מַה תַּעֲשֶׂה בְּאַחֲרִיתָהּ also means in this world — you'll lose friends, you'll lose your job, you'll lose prestige, you'll lose your health — but there's much worse than that. The fact that *machlokes* results in trouble for you in this world is only a *mashal*. Because whatever trouble you have in this world is nothing compared to the trouble that's going to be in the World to Come.

Because *machlokes* means all kinds of *aveiros*. Of course, number one is "Don't be like Korach," but there's much more. There's the big sin, וְלֹא תוֹנוּ אִישׁ אֶת עֲמִיתוֹ – *you shouldn't hurt your fellow man's feelings* (Vayikra 25:17). For getting angry, there are all types of punishments. כָּל הַכּוֹעֵס כָּל מִינֵי גֵּיהִנָּם שׁוֹלְטִין בּוֹ – *Someone who gets angry, all the different kinds of Gehenom will have control over him* (Nedarim 22b). There's *lashon hara*, there's *sinah*, other *aveiros* you never even imagined. And in the Next World, you'll be faced with a *din v'cheshbon* and you'll find out then — it'll be too late — that there's a very big Gehenom for *machlokes*.

Imagining Korach

And so it's a good thing to think about that. Sometimes a person is in the mood to start a quarrel, let's say in the *beis haknesses*, or he wants to make a *machlokes* on somebody, so he should remind himself that a man who opens up his mouth to swallow somebody up in *machlokes*, there is a mouth waiting for him, too.

Here's a man; he's walking home from the synagogue and he sees a deep ditch. The gas workers, let's say, are digging a deep hole so that they can lay a new pipe. So as he passes by, he thinks, "Maybe I should stop right now! Because how would it feel if a man was put in that ditch and the bulldozer pushed all the dirt on top of him and covered him alive? It's no fun!"

But suppose the ditch is very deep — it's deep and deep and deep — and you know it's a one way trip; then it's no fun *at all!* And so, אַל תֵּצֵא לָרִב מַהֵר – *Don't hurry to go out into a quarrel,* פֶּן מַה תַּעֲשֶׂה בְּאַחֲרִיתָהּ – *because that's going to be the result.*

Part III. Ending Conflict

The Peace Maker

Now, if we're speaking about the subject of *machlokes*, we have to complete the picture by speaking also about *shalom*, the great *middah* of peace. You have to know that *shalom*, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "That's My Name" (see Shabbos 10b). That's why you can't say "*Shalom aleichem*" in the *beis hakisei*, because you're using Hashem's Name.

Now, why did He call Himself *Shalom*? Because He's the עוֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם, the אָדוֹן לְכָל הַשָּׁלוֹם. He made the entire world one big machine whose parts work together. The sun, for example, is not a single phenomenon; the sun's energy supplies all the movement, all the action, all the changes that take place on this earth.

And the winds are an essential part of the system. If not for the winds, we would have no food. They blow the carbon dioxide past the plants which suck the carbon dioxide out of the air and create starches. And the soil cooperates with the winds and the sun. The clouds and the rain also cooperate. The seas cooperate with the continents because the seas control the climate. The drain of the water from the continents flows off into the seas. Then, it's evaporated into the sky, and transported again to the continents by the winds and the rainfall from the water in the clouds; so the sea and the continents are one. And it's all Hashem; Hashem is the *Oseh Shalom.*

The Peace Seeker

And that's how Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants us to live, in a way of *shalom*, a peaceful coexistence of cooperation. And Dovid Hamelech tells us that it's so important that you shouldn't wait for it to come to you. בַּקֵּשׁ שָׁלוֹם וְרָדְפֵהוּ – *You should seek out peace* (Tehillim 34:15); make it a principle in life to seek peace with everyone. Like somebody once said, "If you have a thousand friends, you don't have one friend to spare." You hear that *chochma*? It means, get busy making friends.

How? So the world says a drop of honey can catch more flies than a gallon of vinegar. You want to catch friends? Be honey, not vinegar. Smile, be polite, be friendly, give in to other people, speak softly, overlook their foibles and faults. Get along with everybody. It doesn't mean you have to associate with the lower elements but you can make it your business to always be on friendly terms with everybody.

It's one of the common sense principles of life, to seek *shalom*. And it's *avodas Hashem*, too. Get along with your father; get along with your mother; get along with your brothers and sisters — הִנֵּה מַה טּוֹב וּמַה נָּעִים שֶׁבֶת אַחִים גַּם יָחַד (*ibid.* 133:1). Train yourself to be friendly to the people of your family. To neighbors, too. A neighbor has to seek peace. I had a neighbor like that. My little boy broke a neighbor's basement window. Did he come running out to make a fuss? No. Instead of being *rodef* me, he was *rodef shalom.* He didn't say a word. A very sensible neighbor. We have to live together for many years so he keeps quiet. That's what neighbors are.

Suspicious Behavior

If there's a quarrel, even if the other party is wrong — by the way, it's probably not so. You have to suspect that maybe you're wrong. The truth is in many cases you'll discover that you are wrong. I speak to people all the time. How many times do people state their side of the story without even suspecting that the other party could be right too? Why are you right? Maybe the other person is right. He's not entirely right? Maybe he's a certain percentage right.

But once you're in a quarrel, your mind is working overtime; even when you're eating or you're going about your business, your mind is working with arguments to justify yourself and to prove that the other fellow is wrong. Check sometimes after an argument and you'll see how your mind is working; busy, busy, busy.

And you're quite a good lawyer for yourself. After a few weeks, you're convinced you're a *tzaddik* and the other fellow is a *rasha.* And so you repeat it to your relatives, and each time you tell it, you put in more relish on it to make yourself more righteous and the other person more wrong, and after a few weeks of retelling it, it's a beautiful story. You're shining like an angel! And your daughter-in-law or your mother-in-law is like a villain, a devil.

Wicked Self–Persuasion

But it could be *just* the opposite. That's what happened to Korach. He deceived himself into believing that Moshe Rabbeinu was wrong. And he kept on talking to himself and persuading himself until he was so blind that he couldn't see the truth. And that's what everybody else does. Everybody is a Korach, more or less; the difference is that Korach is given to us as an example. וְלֹא יִהְיֶה כְּקֹרַח – *Don't be like Korach*! Don't go to *machlokes* just because you deceive yourself and don't realize how wrong you are!

And therefore, never trust yourself! That's the cleansing wind that blows through the whole panorama of Torah living. Be *chosheid* yourself. These are the great words that we were taught when we were in Slabodka. Suspect yourself! Because the *oimek hadin* is going to hold us responsible. We're answerable for such errors, and therefore the best advice is to overlook things; whatever it is, try to make up with everyone. If he comes to you and asks for *mechilah*, very good. If he doesn't, try to get close to him anyhow and make *shalom.*

The Life Lubricant

That's what it means וְרָדְפֵהוּ. What does it mean to "run after"? When it's not easy. Don't say, "*Shalom* will come to me." Run after it. Pursue it. Sometimes there's a quarrel and a woman after the quarrel brings her husband a tidbit to eat, a piece of cake or something else. Very good! He may not take it — he's stubborn — but it's already the beginning of making *shalom.* She's lubricating life; they'll get along again.

That's an important point: the lubrication of life. You know if you look in the body where bones rub against each other, like your shoulder. This bone is rubbing against the shoulder bone back and forth. It could cause friction. What did Hakadosh Baruch Hu do? He put between the bones a gelatin, a sticky material so the bones never touch each other. As the bones rotate close to each other, this gelatin separates them.

So, *baruch Hashem*, all our bones are lubricated so as not to rub each other. Sometimes a person gets sick, *chalilah*, and this gelatin material disappears. Then the bones start rubbing — an abrasion — and it hurts terribly. He has to go to the Hospital for Joint Diseases in Manhattan. And so you see, lubrication is a very big principle in the body. The *Oseh*

Shalom does that for you. Your life is much more happy because of that lubrication.

The Peace Process

And therefore, that's something we have to do always; we have to find ways and means of lubricating between ourselves. There's no need to make unnecessary abrasions, that you should rub against each other and cause friction and cause trouble. Make up your mind, "I'm going to lubricate it."

Here's a *mechutan* who's walking with his wife in the street. From a distance, he sees you coming, and he pulls his wife into a store right away so he shouldn't have to meet you. He runs away from you.

What do you do? On Purim, you go and bring him *shalach manos* personally. You're trying. "Maybe I can be *mefayes* him." They take the *shalach manos*; he doesn't even say thank you. He talks against you all the time in his house. *Meshugene!* But you do it again next year. You look for ways of being *rodef shalom.*

It doesn't mean you have to be a milquetoast, a pushover. But you can always do things delicately. I remember once a *mechutan* who went to the wedding and there was a *mechitzah.* He didn't want it; in the middle of the *chasunah* he was making a huge fuss, "I don't want a *mechitzah*!" Now, you can't take down a *mechitzah* — there are yeshiva people around. But you have to deal with people with silk gloves. You don't take down the *mechitzah*, but you don't give him a smack either. You're itching maybe to give him a wallop. No; you have to be patient. Be patient and be quiet.

Ignore and Smile

Oh yes, keep quiet! That's the best lubricant! Because פּוֹטֵר מַיִם רֵאשִׁית מָדוֹן - *when a person opens up the water sluice and lets the water start coming out, that's the beginning of the quarrel* (Mishlei 17:14). So don't respond. Mend the breach as soon as possible!

A very important lesson. If there's something developing, an argument, close your mouth! If it has to be open, see that you get a monkey wrench to force your mouth open. And even if you have to bite your lips and check yourself, it's always better, it's always less costly than opening your mouth and expressing your anger, because it can

end up in who knows what. אֶשְׁמְרָה לְפִי מַחְסוֹם – *I'll put a muzzle on my mouth* (Tehillim 39:2). And the more your mouth is muzzled, the luckier you are.

Ignoring and Apologizing

I know a man whose wife is always scolding and belittling him. He bends his head and accepts it. He doesn't say anything back. He's a *rodef shalom*. That's lubrication. Keep quiet. טוֹבִיהּ – *How fortunate is a man*, דְּשָׁמַע – *who hears*, וְאָדֵישׁ – *and pays no attention.* חַלְפּוּהּ בִּישָׁתֵיהּ מְאָה – A *hundred evils pass him by* (Sanhedrin 7a). So anybody who says something you don't like, pay no attention. You didn't hear it. Unless your *rebbi* is criticizing you; *that* you should take in. Otherwise, pay no attention. If your husband is mean to you, pay no attention. Your wife is mean to you, pay no attention. A hundred evils will pass you by and you'll live together happily for the rest of your life.

Here's a man who says to his wife, "I won't give you any more money. You waste it." You can't say that. You're *mechuyav* to give your wife money. And therefore, he's breaking the *shalom.* But what does she say? Nothing. She keeps quiet. She knows that soon, next week, he will give her the money. It's only talk. Of course, he should put on some lubrication as quickly as possible. He has to apologize. Sometimes you might be bashful, so write a little note; say, "I'm sorry," and hand the note to your wife on paper. It's better than nothing.

Lubricating Life in Both Worlds

And so they both did a wise thing. They're not perfect, they're human, but they lubricated their life together and they'll live more happily because of that. מִי הָאִישׁ הֶחָפֵץ חַיִּים – *You want to live a long and happy life?* אֹהֵב יָמִים לִרְאוֹת טוֹב – *You want to see good days?* So בַּקֵּשׁ שָׁלוֹם וְרָדְפֵהוּ – *look for shalom* (Tehillim 34:13,15).

And not only good days in this world. If you're a *rodef shalom*, you're doing what Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants and you're a customer for Olam Haba. Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "*Bakeish shalom* — that's a good way to prepare for Olam Haba. Because I want you to be together with My people, and 'people' means every one of My people." And so each time you pursue *shalom*, you're getting a *tikkun*, a preparation for Olam Haba.

That's a very important point you're hearing right now, because the whole Torah emphasizes that: דְּרָכֶיהָ דַרְכֵי נֹעַם וְכָל נְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שָׁלוֹם – *All the*

paths of the Torah lead to shalom (Mishlei 3:17). Of course, *shalom* means *shleimus* also — perfection. But, *k'pshuto*, it means to be at peace with people. Because the Torah is intended for the purpose of making *shalom* between Jews, between the Am Hashem. And that *shalom*, because it's a *shleimus* of character, is going to translate into successful living in Olam Hazeh and also into the happiness of Olam Haba.

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Let's Get Practical

Run For Your Life

In this week's *parsha*, the Torah gives us a model for the ages of what can happen when a person — even a great person — becomes embroiled in *machlokes*.

This week, *bli neder*, at least once a day in the *bracha* of *Sim Shalom*, I will have in mind that Hakadosh Baruch Hu should help His people be unified in our loyalty to Torah leaders. And if, *chas v'shalom*, there is anyone whatsoever with whom I am lacking in *shalom*, I will go out of my way to try to make amends with that person.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:
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Dress To Impress

"*And you shall bathe and anoint yourself and put on your garments*" (*Rus* 3:3) Said R' Elazar: These are the garments of Shabbos. (*Shabbos 113b*) As we know, there is a special *halachah* of wearing Shabbos clothes.

The idea of changing into Shabbos clothes is learned from the *bigdei kehunah* as the Gemara (*Shabbos 114a*) states: "What is the source in the Torah for changing one's garments? It is written (*Vayikra* 6:4), "*And he [the Kohen] shall remove his garments and wear different garments*'" From here we see that Shabbos clothes are like the *bigdei kehunah*. Just as the *Kohanim* in the Beis HaMikdash had special garments, on Shabbos we have special garments.

A person's clothing expresses who he is. The *bigdei kehunah* are actually the garments of the angels. The angel Gavriel is called, "*The man clothed in linen*,"(*Daniel* 12:7) and the garments of the *Kohanim* are made primarily of linen. When the *Kohanim* enter the Beis HaMikdash, they are as devoted to serving Hashem as are the angels in Heaven. Thus they wear the garments of angels.

As a child in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, we had a neighbor who had a very menial job. I would see him walking around all week in his soiled work clothes. But when Shabbos came, he donned a splendid *shtreimel* and a *bekisheh* with a lovely floral design; with his long beard, you could think he was a Rebbe. I didn't even recognize him! On Shabbos, we all wear special and different clothing because then we are different, more elevated people. We are as dedicated to holiness and purity as the *Kohanim* in the Beis HaMikdash.

Now let's discuss Shabbos clothing. Imagine you're in a hotel on the other side of the world, spending Shabbos by yourself. You've packed everything you need. Will you put on your Shabbos clothes, or will you wear old, faded clothing? There is no question that all of us would wear the same special clothes we wear every Shabbos. Why? For whom are we dressing up? And we wouldn't stop there. We'd put a white tablecloth on the table, and even flowers, if possible. For whom are we doing all this?

The answer is obvious: On Shabbos, we meet Hashem. When we meet someone, we want to look respectable. That's how we develop positive relationships. So wherever we may be, we put on Shabbos clothes for Hashem. We're saying, "Hashem, I'm dressing up in Your honor!" We take out our best clothing and make ourselves look nice in order to make a good impression on Hashem, so to speak. We want to express how much we love and venerate Him, so we dress up when He comes!

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Adapted by R' Y. Levy from Nefesh Shimshon, Shabbos Kodesh, Rav Shimshon Pincus, Feldheim

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QUESTION

Should a husband and wife separate in order for her to go to the country in the summer and relax?

ANSWER

In general, a husband and wife should never separate. That's the purpose of having a wife and having a husband: וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד – *And they will become one flesh* (Bereishis 2:24). You don't separate from your hands or from your feet. You have to realize that it's one personality. It's not just a team, it's a personality. They must always be together.

Now, it doesn't mean that when he goes to the synagogue that she has to be in the background. Or that when she's going, let's say, to the sewing club, that he should hang around and look on, no. Each has his or her separate interests, but in general, they're together.

Now, sometimes, he has to go away on a trip for work. He can't take her along; it can't be helped. Or she has to go for a certain purpose that the husband cannot go along; he has to remain here because of his business. That's something else. But just to go off on a pleasure trip somewhere without her husband, to separate, that's not to be recommended at all. It's against the principles on which marriage is founded.

June 1984

QUESTION

What do you say about this bungalow-style vacation where the wife sees her husband only on Shabbos?

ANSWER

And the answer is, if it's a benefit for the children then it's proper. Because עֲמָלֵנוּ אֵלּוּ הַבָּנִים – all of our work is our children. If the children in the bungalow can have a better environment than in the city, if they can have a very good *rebbe*, and very good *chaveirim* or *chaveiros*, then it's worth it.

The only criterion is how much *ruchniyus* will the children gain. And on that basis, this kind of arrangement is justified.

August 1984

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