

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita*

Korach



Torah WELLSPRINGS

CONTACT INFORMATION

Mail@TorahWellsprings.com
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USA OFFICE Mechon Beer Emunah
1630 50th St, Brooklyn NY 11204
718.484.8136

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Table of Contents

Torah Wellsprings - Korach

Living in Wartime With Hashem.....	4
Hishtadlus without Panic.....	5
The Dangers of Fear.....	6
Avoiding the Kefirah of "The Strength of My Hand"	7
Hashem Listens to all Tefillos	7
Never Lose Hope from Tefillah.....	10
Avoiding <i>Machlokes</i>	11
Solutions.....	14

Torah Wellsprings - Korach

Living in Wartime With Hashem

Dovid HaMelech davened (Tehilim 140:8) ה' אֱדֹנִי עֹז יְשׁוּעָתִי סִכָּתָה לְרֹאשִׁי כִּיּוֹם נֶשֶׁק "Hashem, the might of my salvation; You shall protect my head on the day of battle." Rav Shach zt'l asks why Dovid HaMelech prayed that his head be protected in war? His entire body, all 248 limbs, needs Hashem's protection! Rav Shach answers that when there is a war, people tend to panic and lose their clarity of thinking. Dovid was requesting that his mind should remain calm and tranquil, and constantly with emunah.

We will now tell the obvious, but it must be proclaimed in a loud voice: A person should be cautious, not to listen to the news, or any other form of news broadcasts. He should tell his children, too, that they shouldn't listen to the news. The benefits from listening to these broadcasts are minimal, if anything at all, and the damage is significant, because they speak without emunah.

When missiles are flying above Eretz Yisrael, a siren is heard, and people run off to a "safe room" for protection. This is the proper course of action, but the problem is that another siren is needed, and it is lacking. The siren we hear arouses us to run and save our lives. Another siren should go off to warn people to run and save their *neshamos*. This happens when they avoid listening to or reading "the news", which casts fear onto people, or, in contrast, causes people to believe in the "strength of my arm". It doesn't repeat the news through the lens of *emunah* and *bitachon*. Every person has to be cautious on his own to avoid these broadcasts, and to tell his children to be careful, as well.

In parashas Yisro, it states that Yisro heard about the miracles that Hashem performed, as it states (Shemos 18:1) וַיִּשְׁמַע יִתְרוֹ כֵּהֵן מִדְיָן חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֱלֹקִים לְמֹשֶׁה וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַמּוֹ

... Moshe's father-in-law, Yisro... heard all that Hashem had done for Moshe and for Yisrael His people that Hashem had taken Yisrael out of Mitzrayim..." Yisro knew everything. He heard what had occurred, while still in Midyan.

Nevertheless, when he came to Moshe, Moshe told him about the miracles once again, as it states (ibid. 18:8) וַיֹּסֶפֶר מֹשֶׁה לְחֹתְנוֹ אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' לְפָרְעֹה וּלְמִצְרַיִם עַל אֹדֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת כָּל הַתְּלָאָה אֲשֶׁר מָצְאָתָם בְּדֶרֶךְ וַיְצַלֵּם ה' פָּרָאֹה וְעַל הַמִּצְרַיִם עַל חֲשׂוֹן מֹשֶׁה וְעַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עַם ה' "Moshe told his father-in-law about all that Hashem had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians on account of Yisrael, and about all the hardships that had befallen them on the way, and that Hashem had saved them." The question is why did Moshe have to tell Yisro, if he heard about this on his own?

Reb Shimshon Pinkus zt'l answers that Yisro heard it from the "news broadcasters" of his day. He also heard all their explanations, editorials, predictions, and opinions. Moshe repeated the same story, but with emunah. Therefore, it states (ibid. 18:9) וַיֹּסֶפֶר מֹשֶׁה לְחֹתְנוֹ אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' לְפָרְעֹה וּלְמִצְרַיִם עַל אֹדֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת כָּל הַתְּלָאָה אֲשֶׁר מָצְאָתָם בְּדֶרֶךְ וַיְצַלֵּם ה' פָּרָאֹה וְעַל הַמִּצְרַיִם עַל חֲשׂוֹן מֹשֶׁה וְעַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עַם ה' "Yisro said... 'Now I know that Hashem is greater than all the Elokim...' " Rashi writes, מכירו הייתי לשעבר, ועכשיו, "I knew Hashem before, and now I know more." Yisro had heard the story of yetzias Mitzrayim before, but now that he heard it from Moshe, through the prism of emunah, he was overwhelmed with Hashem's greatness. This is what occurs when one hears the news from a kosher source, from people who can repeat it in the spirit of *emunah* and *bitachon*.

The truth is that these days are *mesugal* for coming close to Hashem. People are worried for themselves, for their families, or for others, and they devote more time to Torah, tefillah, and Tehillim, thereby coming close to Hashem.

Tehillim chapter (20) begins with כִּיּוֹם ה' יַעֲנֶךָ "May Hashem answer you on a day of

tzarah..." and it concludes with the words ה' "Hashem, save me, the King Who saves on the day we call." The word *yom* is used twice in these pesukim, beginning with *yom tzarah* and concluding with *yom tzarah*. I heard from a person who had to be in the hospital an entire day, that when he first arrived, he felt that it would be a *yom tzarah*, a difficult, painful day, but it turned out being *yom tzarah*, a day filled with tefillos to Hashem. At the end of the day, he saw the good he experienced, because he had a day filled with deep tefillos to Hashem. Similarly, we can say about any difficult time we go through that it appears to be a *yom tzarah*, a difficult, painful day, but if we take advantage of the challenge, it can turn out to become *yom tzarah*, a day filled with tefillos to Hashem.

Hishtadlus without Panic

The Belzer Rav zt'l was traveling from Tel Aviv to Kfar Chabad to bake matzos for Pesach. It was Erev Pesach, and the *gaba'im* who were taking him were rushing because it was late. They had to bake matzos and get back in time for yom tov. Suddenly, the Belzer Rav told them to stop the car. He got out and stood on the side of the road for a moment, where he was heard saying הושיענא "Save the soul from confusion". He felt himself being swept up in the panic of others, so he stopped the car, despite the late hour, and he davened that he should have a calm mind, without worry and panic.

It states (Tehillim 34:1) לְדוֹד בְּשִׁנּוֹתָיו אֶת טַעְמוֹ לִפְנֵי וְיִגְרָשׁוּ וְיִלֵּךְ. The pasuk is saying וְיִגְרָשׁוּ, that Avimelech banished Dovid, and וְיִלֵּךְ, Dovid walked. These two expressions, וְיִגְרָשׁוּ, banished and walking, seem contradictory. Generally, when one is banished, he runs. It isn't וְיִלֵּךְ, walking away. But the pasuk is telling us the calmness that Dovid HaMelech always possessed. Even when he was banished, he believed that it was from Hashem, and therefore, he was calm and tranquil. He didn't lose his peace of mind.

The Rambam (Hilchos Malachim 7:15) writes, "When a person is at war, he must trust in Hashem Who saves Yisrael at a time of *tzarah*. Whoever thinks about the war and becomes afraid, he is transgressing a *lav*, as it states (Devarim 20:3) וְאַל תִּחְפְּזוּ, 'Let your hearts not be faint; you shall not be afraid, and you shall not be alarmed, and you shall not be terrified because of them.'"

Rabbeinu Yonah (Shaarei Teshuvah 3:32) explains the pasuk (Devarim 20:1) כִּי תֵצֵא לְמִלְחָמָה, "When you go out to war against your enemies, and you see horse and chariot, a people more numerous than you, you shall not be afraid of them." He writes, "The Torah is warning us that when a person sees a *tzarah* approaching, Hashem's salvation should be in his heart, and he should rely on it. As it states (Tehillim 85:10) יְשֻׁעוֹ, 'Truly, His salvation is near those who fear Him.' Also, it states (Yeshayahu 51:12) מִי אַתָּה וְתִירָאִי מֵאֲנוּשׁ, 'who are you that you fear man who will die.' So, it is a Torah obligation not to be afraid. וְרָאִיתָ סוּס וְרֶכֶב עִם רַב מִמֶּנִּי, we see "horse and chariot, a people more numerous than you" and yet we mustn't be afraid. As Rabbeinu Yonah writes, תהיה ישועת ה' בלבבו ויבטח, "Hashem's salvation should be in his heart, and he should rely on it."

It states (Tehillim 91:9) כִּי אַתָּה ה' מַחְסִי. A popular translation of this pasuk is "You, Hashem, are my refuge." According to this translation, אתה, "You" is addressing Hashem. "You, Hashem, are my refuge."

Rashi however writes, כִּי אַתָּה – אִמְרַתָּה ה'. Rashi is adding to the translation of the pasuk the word אמרת. The pasuk is speaking to the Yid, and it states that אתה אמרתה, you say, ה' מחסי, Hashem is my refuge. You say this, you trust in Hashem, and that is your salvation.

Then Rashi writes, והרי זה מקרא קצר, that this is a shortened pasuk. Literally, this means that the pasuk is written in brief, because it left out the word אמרת. We can also explain that Rashi is hinting to us that with this מקרא

die in the war, and another man inaugurate it."

The Maharal (Gur Aryeh Devarim 20:5) explains, "There are people who feel bad and have חלישת הדעת (disappointed and down) when someone takes what is theirs. When a person has חלישות הדעת, this results in him having a bad mazal, and therefore, he might die in war. It can cause death." We understand from this Maharal the importance of feeling happy and upbeat. This attitude is a protection. Sad, disappointing feelings can lead to one's downfall.¹

Arvei Nachal (Vayeitze Drush 2) writes, "It is forbidden to be afraid. The Gemara tells that Yehudah bar Noson walked behind Rav Hamnunah, and he was *krechtsing*. Rav Hamnunah said, 'This person wants to draw onto himself *yesurim*.' As it states (Iyov 3:25) כִּי לִי פֶחַד פְּחַדָּתִי וַיֵּאָתֶנִי וְאֲשֶׁר יִרְתִּי יָבֵא לִי, 'For the thing I feared has befallen me, and what I dreaded is coming upon me.'" The Arvei Nachal explains that fear is like a "magnet" which draws metals to it. So, too, fear draws the matter he is afraid of onto himself. When he has a good fear, like Yiras Hashem, he draws the shechina onto himself, keviyachol. And when one is afraid of something else, chas v'shalom, he draws that matter onto himself.

The army sends a select group of people home when there is a war. One of them is someone who built a home and didn't live in it yet. As it states (Devarim 20:5) מִי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר בָּנָה בֵּית חֲדָשׁ וְלֹא תָמַדוּ יָלָדוֹ וְיָשָׁב לְבֵיתוֹ פֶּן יָמוּת בַּמִּלְחָמָה וְאִישׁ אַחֵר יִתְחַנֵּן, "What man is there who has built a new house and has not yet inaugurated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he

It states (Devarim 20:8) וְיָסְפוּ הַשָּׂטָרִים לְדַבֵּר אֶל הָעָם וְאָמְרוּ מִי הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה וְהַנָּחָל יָלַךְ וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּלִיטוֹ וְלֹא יָמַס אֶת לִבָּב אֶחָיו כְּלָבָבוֹ "The officers shall continue to speak to the people and say, "What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, and not cause the heart of his brothers to melt, as his heart." The Dubno Magid asks, Why should we care if he causes others to be afraid? Regardless, the salvation comes from Hashem, and not from the strength of man! As it states (Devarim 3:22) לֹא תִירָאוּם כִּי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הוּא הַנִּלְחָם לָכֶם " Do not fear them, for it is Hashem, your G-d, He is fighting for you." The Dubno Magid answers that it is critical that the soldiers who go to war shouldn't be afraid. He writes, ומועולם לא תבוא הישועה על לב מפחד ולא מפלה על לב שליו "It never happens that a salvation comes to a heart that is afraid, nor does the tranquil heart experience downfall."

The Beis Aharon said, quoting his father, Rebbe Asher of Stolin, *המאמין לא יחוש* (Yeshayah 28). This means that when one believes in Hashem, he isn't worried.

Avoiding the Kefirah of "The Strength of My Hand"

During the war of תש"ח in Yerushalayim, the Brisker Rav zt'l heard two people speaking. They were saying, "The army ('the צבא') won the battle at that location... and the army won the battle over there..."

The Brisker Rav became frightened when he heard their words, and turned to them and said, "Do you think the צבא won the wars? Not at all! Reb Velvel Chechik and Reb Shlomo Bloch are from the tzaddikim of Yerushalayim. They arranged minyanim of tefillah around the clock, 24 hours a day. Those tefillos won the war!

The men responded, "So why are there people who were wounded in this war?" Their question was that if the war was won with tefillah, there should be no casualties.

The Brisker Rav told them a story that happened with his grandfather, the Beis HaLevi. The Beis HaLevi's son was engaged to be married, and the *mechutanim* promised a large dowry, in honor of the chasunah. The Beis HaLevi said to his son, "Don't feel proud that you are receiving a large dowry, because it isn't in your merit. They are giving the large dowry because you are my son."

His son asked, "If they are giving the money because of you, they should give ten times more. Since they aren't giving so much money, it proves that the dowry is for me."

The Beis HaLevi replied, "The truth is, they would have given a lot more. Only, you are also part of the story here, and this is the reason for the smaller gift."

Using this story, the Brisker Rav said to the two men, "You are correct. With tefillah, there should have been only success in the

war, and no one should have been harmed. Only, the צבא was also part of the equation, and that is the reason there were some casualties."

After the war against Amalek, it states (Shemos 17:15) *וַיִּבֶן מֹשֶׁה מִזְבֵּיַח וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ ה' נָסִי* "Moshe built a mizbeiach, and he named it 'Hashem is my miracle.'" The Ksav Sofer asks why Moshe chose this specific miracle to be memorialized by naming the mizbeiach after the miracle. After the *nissim* in Mitzrayim and at kriyas Yam Suf, Moshe didn't build a mizbeiach and name it ה' נָסִי, "Hashem is my miracle." Why did he do so specifically after *milchemes Amalek*?

The Beis HaLevi answers that everyone knew that the miracles in Mitzrayim and kriyas Yam Suf were from Hashem. But after the war with Amalek, there will be those who think it was they who fought and won because they had a stronger army. They will say that this is the way of war, one nation wins and the other loses. Therefore, after this miracle, Moshe built a *mizbeiach* and named it ה' נָסִי, "Hashem is my miracle", so it should be clear and known that the miracle and the success in the war was from Hashem, and not due to their strength.

Hashem Listens to all Tefillos

In this week's parashah, 250 people joined with Korach in the *machlokes*. They said the entire nation is holy, and they can all be *kohanim gedolim*. They claimed that there was no need for just one *kohen gadol*.

Moshe told them to bring *ketores* in firepans – Korach, Aharon, and the 250 people (see 16:16). If it is as they desire, Hashem will accept their *ketores* and they can all be *kohanim gedolim*. But if Hashem chooses only one person to be the *kohen gadol*, all the others will die.

The Torah tells us that Moshe became very upset at this *machlokes*, as it states (16:15) *וַיִּתֵּר לְמֹשֶׁה קִמָּד*, and Moshe davened, *וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל*.

אֵל תִּפְנוּ אֶל מִנְחָתָם, "Don't accept their offering".²

gedolim. Moshe davened that Hashem shouldn't accept their tefillos.

Some *Rishonim* explain that מִנְחָתָם refers to their tefillah (see Ramban).³ The 250 people were praying that Hashem accept their *ketores* and allow them all to be *kohanim*

It seems that Moshe's tefillah was necessary. Otherwise, there was a possibility that Hashem would accept their tefillos.

2. Rashi writes, לפי פשוטו, הקטורת שהם מקריבין לפניך מחר אל תפן אליהם, "According to its simple meaning [Moshe davened] that Hashem shouldn't accept the ketores that they would bring the following day."

3. Moshe Rabbeinu told Aharon that he should stop the mageifah with ketores, as it states (17:11) קח את המִנְחָה וְתָנוּ עָלֶיהָ אֵשׁ מֵעַל הַמִּזְבֵּיחַ וְשִׂים קִטְרֶת וְהוֹלֵךְ מִהֶרָה אֶל הָעֵדָה וְכָפַר עֲלֵיהֶם כִּי יֵצֵא הַקֶּצֶף מִלִּפְנֵי ה' הַחֹל הַנֶּגֶף, "Moshe said to Aharon, 'Take the pan and put fire from the mizbeiach onto it and place the ketores. Then take it quickly to the congregation and atone for them, for the wrath has gone forth from Hashem; the plague has begun.'" Rashi writes that Moshe learned this secret from *malach hamaves* (angel of death) when Moshe was in heaven: Ketores stops a mageifah.

The Zohar (Midrash HaNelam, Vayeira p.100) adds that *saying* the ketores stops all bad decrees and mageifos. "Reb Pinchas taught, 'Once, I was walking on the way, and I met Eliyahu HaNavi. Eliyahu HaNavi told him that when there is a mageifah, Hashem proclaims to all the heavenly hosts that if Bnei Yisrael gather in the batei midrashim and *say* the ketores with kavanah, the mageifah will end.'"

The Zohar (vol.2 218) states that saying the ketores with kavanah saves a person from all the bad things in the world, and from all evil thoughts, and "he won't be damaged the entire day, because the Sitra Achara has no power over him."

The Ibn Ezra writes, והמשכיל יבין, ולא אמר הקטרת, ושיים קטרת. He is noting that המחתה, the pan, is written with a ה at the beginning of the word, but it doesn't state הקטרת, with a ה. The Ibn Ezra concludes, והמשכיל יבין, the wise will understand. The Chernobyler Rebbe Shlita says that the Ibn Ezra is alluding to the lesson which we saw in the Zohar. It isn't solely הקטרת, the actual ketores from the Mishkan or Beis HaMikdash, that can stop a plague. Even when one recites the ketores today, it has the potential to annul harsh decrees and to halt a mageifah.

It states (17:13) וַיַּעֲמֵד בֵּין הַמֵּתִים וּבֵין הַחַיִּים וַתֵּעָצֵר הַמִּגֵּפָה, "He stood between the dead and the living, and the plague ceased." Targum Yonason writes, וְקָם לִיָּה אַהֲרֹן בְּצִלּוֹ, that Aharon stood in prayer. Why was prayer necessary? He had the ketores, and the ketores had the power to stop the mageifah! Instead, Moshe told Aharon that in addition to offering the actual ketores, he should "say" the ketores. This was to set a precedent for the future generations, when there is no ketores, that they can "say" the ketores, and this, too, has the power to stop a mageifah.

With this information, we can explain the Rashi on this pasuk: "[Aharon] grabbed onto the malach and caused him to stand up, against his will [and to stop the mageifah]."

The malach said, 'Let me do my shlichus.' Aharon replied, 'Moshe told me to stop you.' The malach didn't believe that Moshe said he should stop. So, Aharon brought the malach to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and Moshe, who were at the entrance of Ohel Moed, as it states, וישב אהרן אל משה. Only then did the malach stop the plague.

Now, this malach was the malach hamaves, the angel of death, the one who divulged to Moshe the secret powers of the ketores. So why did he argue over whether he must stop the plague or not? When he saw the ketores, he should have understood that his mission was over! He was the one who taught this segulah!

But the answer is that the malach taught the segulah of *bringing* the ketores. But now Aharon was davening and saying the ketores. The malach never said that this, too, would stop the mageifah. This was a new chidush that the malach hamaves wasn't aware of. Aharon brought the malach hamaves to Moshe, so Moshe could tell the malach that saying the ketores also stops a mageifah.

From here, we learn the strength of tefillah. These two hundred and fifty people were committing a terrible aveirah. They were joining the camp with Korach, who was attempting to destroy the emunah of Klal Yisrael (because Korach was fighting against the validity of Moshe Rabbeinu and the Torah he taught).⁴ Korach and these people were also trying to go against Hashem's will and take away the

kehunah from Aharon HaKohen. They were also creating a terrible rift and machlokes in Klal Yisrael. So, we wonder why Moshe had to request that Hashem shouldn't listen to Korach's and his followers' tefillos? Why would Hashem accept their davening?

The answer is that this shows us the power of tefillah.⁵ No matter who is davening, his tefillos have potential, because Hashem

4. It is important to note that the Arizal says that when Moshiach comes, Korach will be the kohen gadol. The hint is in the words צדיק כתמר יפרח, of which the final letters spell קרה. Also, in his lifetime, Korach carried the aron, an indication of his extremely exalted spiritual levels. Nevertheless, the Torah tells us the story of the terrible machlokes, so we can learn the severity of machlokes and know to avoid it at all costs.

5. The Kobriner zt"l (Toras Avos, Emunah u'Bitachon) says that tefillah has the power to be answered תיכף ומיד, immediately. Whatever one asks for, with tefillah, salvation can come right away. If the salvation doesn't come immediately, it is because he doesn't believe in his tefillah. "If a person believes that his tefillah pierces the heavens and has the potential to bring him everything he desires, he will receive all his needs, without waiting."

We heard about a person who had the dreaded "disease" in his eyes ר"ל, and the doctors "ruled" that there was no hope for him. He went with his family to Har HaMenuchos to daven. As they were traveling there, they listened to a Torah shiur on parashas Bahaloscha on the pasuk (Bamidbar 11:1) וַיְהִי הָעָם כְּמִתְאַנְּנִים רַע בְּאַזְנוֹתָיִם ה' וַיִּשְׁמַע ה'. He speaker quoted the Chasam Sofer, who explains that they didn't believe in בְּאַזְנוֹתָיִם ה' that Hashem hears tefillos. Therefore, at this time, Hashem showed them וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' that He hears. The proof is that they were punished, as it states there וַיִּהְיֶה אַפּוֹ וַתִּבְעַר בָּם אֵשׁ ה' "Hashem heard and His anger flared, and a fire from Hashem burned among them." This proved that Hashem listens, because if Hashem listened to their complaints, He certainly listens to their tefillos.

The family heard this as they were traveling to daven for this man, and this encouraged them to daven with all their hearts. They poured out their heart at kevarim on Har HaMenuchos. When they returned home and opened the door, the phone was already ringing. It was the renowned medical consultant, Reb Melech Firer Shlita. He told them that with siyata di'Shmaya, the greatest expert for this type of illness would be dealing with his case.

With Hashem's kindness, he is now well, totally healed.

There is another story of a Jewish girl who suffered from severe headaches. She went to the hospital, where a CT scan showed a large growth on her head ר"ל. (She was ill before this episode, but the "disease" was in a different part of her body. Now it was discovered in her head, as well.) The doctors recommended emergency surgery, and a date was set for a week later.

Before the operation, the doctor told his student to take another CT scan. The student protested, "The scan we took last week is still fresh. Why do we need another one?"

The doctor replied, "Did you come here to learn or to teach? Do as I say."

Shockingly, the new CT showed that the growth had shrunk by 50%. The doctor said that if she is getting better, it is better not to operate, and perhaps the growth will disappear entirely.

The grateful father asked the doctor why he insisted on taking another scan. The irreligious doctor answered as follows: "I never operate before taking another test. I have experienced with hundreds of cases, and particularly with the religious community, and I repeatedly see that the second test comes out better than the first one. I always ask what happened. How did the situation improve? Which treatment did you use? And the answer is always the same: There were tefillos. So, I learned never to operate before checking again.

listens to the tefillos of all people.⁶ (see Or Yechezkel vol.5, p.280)

It is hinting that whenever a Yid has a tzarah, he escapes and runs לקלם to the voice of tefillah.⁷

Never Lose Hope from Tefillah

It states (16:34) וְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבֵיהֶם נָסוּ לְקִלָּם, "All Yisrael who were around them fled from their voices." Rashi writes, בשביל הקול, "because of the sound that came forth when they were swallowed." When the ground was swallowing them, there was a loud sound, and everyone around them ran away in fear. The *miforshim* ask that it should have been written as נָסוּ מִקִּלָּם, "They fled **from** their voices." Why does it state נָסוּ לְקִלָּם, that they were running **to** their voices?

This is our only strength when we have a tzarah, to run to tefillah.

Regarding the miracle of Purim, the Gemara (Megillah 4a) says, "A person is obligated to read the megillah at night and again by daytime." Rashi writes, זכר לנס, "This is in memory of the miracle, that during their days of their sorrow they shouted [to Hashem] day and night."

We wonder, how is this זכר לנס, a memory of the miracle? When they were shouting out to Hashem, the miracle hadn't yet occurred? They were amid their *tzarah*!

Indeed, for this girl, many people in the kollel where the father learns davened with kavanah for the health of this young girl. Their tefillos brought the yeshuah.

6. Chasidim of the Tzemach Hashem L'Tzvi were in their rebbe's beis medresh and were discussing the greatness of tefillah – how much it accomplishes in heaven above and on earth below. A simple person said, "Not my tefillah. My tefillah isn't worth anything. If someone would offer to pay me a single prutah for my shacharis, I would sell it to him willingly, and I would have made a good deal."

The Tzemach Hashem L'Tzvi heard about his conversation and was very upset. "How can a person say such a thing about tefillah?" He sent someone to tell this simple person that he doesn't have permission to come to the beis medresh anymore. Someone who doesn't believe in tefillah can't come to his beis medresh.

Some days passed, and the people of the beis medresh spoke with the Tzemach Hashem L'Tzvi and explained to him that this man is very simple and doesn't know much. He davens what he was taught in cheder. Why shouldn't he be allowed to come back to the beis medresh?

The Tzemach Hashem L'Tzvi agreed to allow him to return to the beis medresh, but on condition that he never speak that way again. "Because the simplest tefillah accomplishes wondrous things."

The Tzemach Hashem L'Tzvi then told his students the following mashal:

There was a person who was highly talented in creating music. He would sing his compositions, and people would melt from pleasure. When he passed away, his son took his place. His son wasn't at all like his father, but he would sing his father's songs, and when he did so, people remembered the father, and they had immense enjoyment.

The same can be said about the tefillah. Anshei Kneses HaGedolah compiled the siddur with ruach hakodesh and beautiful words. These words created a wonderful nachas ruach for Hashem, and the tefillos go up to heaven and accomplish so much, above and below. The Anshei Kneses HaGedolah aren't in the world right now, and we aren't able to create the wonderful tefillah like they composed. Nevertheless, when we say the tefillah that the Anshei Kneses HaGedolah established, it generates immense pleasure in the upper worlds. Regardless of who is saying the words, it creates a great nachas ruach and the tefillos are answered, as if the Anshei Kneses HaGedolah themselves are saying these words.

7. לקלם is roshei teivos of קרה לבני קרח מזמר (Tehillim 47).

But a great miracle occurred, that they didn't lose hope from tefillah. The decree was signed and sealed, in heaven and also on earth, להשמיד להרוג ולאבד, to destroy all Yidden, r'l, and there seemed to be no hope; it seemed as if it was too late to daven. Miraculously, they didn't lose hope from prayer. They continued to knock on heaven's doors until they opened, and there was salvation for Bnei Yisrael.

We can say that this is alluded to in (Tehillim 66:20) בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִסִּיר תְּפִלָּתִי וְחַסְדּוֹ מֵאֵתִי, "Bless Hashem, Who did not remove my prayer and His kindness from me." This pasuk is stating two points. One is that Hashem didn't remove His kindness, and He sent his salvation. The second point is בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִסִּיר תְּפִלָּתִי that Hashem gave us strength to daven, and we didn't lose hope from our tefillos.

The yetzer hara works hard to cause a person to lose hope from tefillah. He tells the person, "It is too late, it is impossible to change this situation." Or he says, "You davened many times in the past, and you weren't answered. It is obvious that heaven isn't interested in listening to your tefillos."

At times, the yetzer hara says, "You have many aveiros, and you don't deserve to be answered." A person must be strong and daven with *kavanah* and be aware that he can accomplish so much with his tefillos.

Avoiding *Machlokes*

The Torah commands us (17:5), וְלֹא יִהְיֶה כְּקֹרַח, "Don't be like Korach and his congregation." From here, we learn that we should do everything possible to avoid being involved in a *machlokes*.⁸

8. Before World War Two, in a city in Romania, there were two large chassidic courts. Each one had their *shochet*, and each court claimed that only their *shochet* slaughters properly. Both argued that the meat of the other *shochet* was *treif*. A bitter *machlokes* ensued, lasting two years, until the Nazis came, r'l, and the city was destroyed.

A righteous Jew, Reb Yitzchak Wertzberger zt'l, lived in this city, and he refused to take part in the *machlokes*. He ate from both *shechitos* because both *shochtim* were *yirei Hashem*. He said that the day he gets involved in the *machlokes*, he will leave the city.

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 the *machlokes* that all the troubles began, and you want my rebbe to have a part in this?"

Reb Yitzchak put his hand to his head and shouted, "Oy. What did I 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 run. But she was a loyal wife (an אשה כשרה העושה רצון בעלה), and they packed up that day and left the city. They moved to Arad, Romania.

This move saved their lives. Soon after, the Germans came to the city where the *machlokes* reigned; almost no one survived. Today, Reb Yitzchak has grandchildren who are *erlicher* Yidden, some of them *poskim* and *magidei shiur*, and they have gratitude to Reb Yitzchak, who fled from *machlokes*, saving their lives.

In Shechetz, Poland, there were two *shochtim*, and it was debated who was the primary *shochet*. 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 up your feet and leave Shechetz right away." Unfortunately, the *shochet* didn't receive the letter. The letter fell into the hands of someone who wanted him to continue being the *shochet* in Shechetz, so he didn't deliver the letter. The *shochet* was *niftar* shortly afterwards. The fire of the *machlokes* consumed him.

The family never forgave the person who withheld the letter.

A close student of Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt'l tells that many years ago, he was in the home of Reb

Rav Shaul Kardi Shlita, the Rav of the Keser Torah community in Mexico, told me that ten years ago, he asked Reb Matisyahu Solomon, the mashgiach of Lakewood yeshiva, "What is the secret of the success of the Lakewood yeshiva? There are thousands of students, the budget is millions of dollars, and yet there is an abundance. The *siyata dishmaya* is beyond natural."

Reb Solomon replied, "I have been here for twenty years. There are four *roshei yeshivos*. From time to time, we gather for a

meeting, and we discuss matters that are of great importance. There are times that there are differences in opinion among the *roshei yeshiva*, but there is never a *machlokes*." In other words, they are allowed to think differently, but they never end in dispute.

Reb Kardi also told me that once, towards the end of Reb Aharon Kotler's *zt'l* life, he grabbed onto his son, Reb Shneur (who would take over the yeshiva after his father's demise) and told him, "Run away from *machlokes* like one runs away from fire."

Shlomo Zalman, when several young men entered, and shouted and spoke with *chutzpah* to this *gadol hador*. (They were protesting a certain halachic leniency that Reb Shlomo Zalman had suggested. Even though Reb Shlomo Zalman never actually paskened that way, and it was just a suggestion and an approach in halachah that he was considering.) Reb Shlomo Zalman listened to their complaints and shouts with calmness, even with a smile on his face, as though they were speaking to someone else and not him. When they left, the student asked Reb Shlomo Zalman how he managed to remain so calm. Reb Shlomo Zalman replied, "Let me tell you a story that happened in the Shaarei Chesed neighborhood where I grew up, and then you will understand."

Reb Shlomo Zalman told his student about Reb Aharon Cohen *zt'l*, the Chofetz Chaim's son-in-law, who came to live in the Shaarei Chesed neighborhood. "We were all delighted when we heard that this *gadol* would come to our neighborhood. The community arranged for Reb Aharon Cohen a place to live, furniture, and all his needs. He lived in the Shaarei Chesed neighborhood for a few months, and it was a great privilege for all of us. But suddenly, Reb Aharon Cohen disappeared. No one knew where he went. Even his neighbors didn't know where he went."

They announced in *beis medresh*, "Whoever knows where Reb Aharon Cohen is should come forward and tell us." An elderly person came forward and said that he saw Reb Aharon leaving the city in a wagon packed with all his belongings. He was headed to the city of Yaffo.

Everyone was shocked. Why did Reb Aharon leave them? The community sent messengers to Reb Aharon's home in Yaffo to ask him.

Reb Aharon greeted the messengers warmly and expressed his appreciation for everything the Shaarei Chesed community did for him. Then Reb Aharon told them the following:

"When I said goodbye to my father-in-law, the Chofetz Chaim, I asked him where I should live, whether in Shaarei Chesed community of Yerushalayim, Tzfas, or Yaffo. The Chofetz Chaim replied that it doesn't make a difference. "However", the Chofetz Chaim added, "this I request from you. Promise me with a handshake that if there is a *machlokes* in the city you choose, pick up your feet and run away from there. Never go to a place where there is a *machlokes*, and if a *machlokes* breaks out there, leave immediately."

"I did as my father-in-law requested. I gave him my hand as in promise, and with tears and with deep emotions, we said goodbye. Lately, a *machlokes* broke out in the Shaarei Tzedek neighborhood regarding the nomination of city *gaba'im*. Since *machlokes* was so severe in my father-in-law's eyes, and he even forced me to shake hands that I won't live in a place of *machlokes*, I didn't have a choice other than to leave right away. I didn't even have time to say goodbye to the good people in Shaarei Chesed."

Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach said, "When the messengers returned from Yaffo and repeated what they heard from Reb Aharon Cohen, it made a deep impression on my young mind. I decided that I will always keep away from *machlokes*. Now you understand how I was able to remain silent when these people came and shouted and protested against me. Since my youth, I have trained myself to avoid *machlokes*."

The Chazon Ish *zt'l* said, "The Torah doesn't have to tell us not to start a *machlokes* when we are in the wrong, because then it is obvious that we mustn't make a *machlokes*. The *pasuk* is talking to those who are innocent, yet there is a *machlokes* against them for no reason. Even so, the Torah says, ולא יהיה נקרה, don't act like Korach. Seek ways to end the *machlokes*."

The *pasuk* says (16:12), וישלח משה לקרוא לדתן, ולאבירם, "And Moshe sent to call for Dasan and Aviram." They didn't come. Later (16:25), ויקם משה וילך אל דתן ואבירם, "Moshe stood up and went to Dasan and Aviram." He was trying to make peace with them. Rashi (16:22) writes, מכאן שאין מחזיקין במחלוקת, "From here we learn that one shouldn't hold on to a *machlokes*." We should try to make amends and stop *machlokes* as quickly as possible.

Rashi (*Sanhedrin* 110.) elaborates, "If a *machlokes* has already begun, it is forbidden to keep it alive. We must learn from Moshe Rabbeinu. He forgave Dasan and Aviram for disgracing him, and he himself went to them to stop the *machlokes*."

There is a Talmudic concept called "*chazakah*," which means we assume that what was, will probably continue to be so.

The Chasam Sofer says that אין מחזיקין במחלוקת can be translated as, "When it comes to *machlokes*, we don't assume (חזקה) that what was in the past will continue to be." Dasan and Aviram were always making *machlokes*. Our first encounter with Dasan and Aviram takes place in Mitzrayim, where it states (*Shemos* 2:13), והנה שני אנשים עברים נצים, "[Moshe saw] two Jewish people fighting." Over there, Rashi tells us that they were Dasan and Aviram. From the very beginning, we find them to be the instigators of quarrels. Later, Dasan and Aviram slandered to Pharaoh, saying that Moshe killed the Mitzri. This forced Moshe to escape Mitzrayim (see Rashi, *Shemos* 2:15). Dasan and Aviram fought with Moshe when the workload in Mitzrayim became heavier on Bnei Yisrael (see Rashi, *Shemos* 5:20). They also disregarded Moshe's command and left over manna for the next day (see Rashi,

Shemos 2:13). At the *machlokes* of Korach, Dasan and Aviram were there again.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* writes that Moshe had every reason to say, "Dasan and Aviram are always fighting with me. They create *machlokes* at every opportunity. It is impossible to make peace with such people." It would have been rational for Moshe to claim this, but Moshe didn't. He tried to make peace with them. He thought, "Perhaps this time I can make peace with them." But אין מחזיקין במחלוקת, when it comes to *machlokes*, we don't make assumptions. Perhaps this time you can end the *machlokes*.

Reb Shmuel Wosner *zt'l* was once asked how he merited such a long life. He answered that it was because he avoided *machlokes*. He told the following *hashal* from the Imrei Noam:

A lion asked a sheep to smell his breath and tell him how it smelled. The sheep sniffed and said, "Your breath smells terrible."

The lion got angry, shouting, "Where is your respect for the king of all animals?" and devoured the sheep.

Then the lion asked the wolf for his opinion. The wolf saw what happened to the sheep, so the wolf replied, "My master, your breath smells lovely."

"You're lying! How dare you lie to me!" and the lion 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 that this is what one should do when a *machlokes* is raging. Just stay away because getting involved will only bring you trouble.

Reb Wosner *zt'l* added, "I am 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 have saved yourself a lot of heartache and problems."

When children see their parents running away from machlokes, they will do the same. If they see their parents getting involved in a machlokes, they won't know any other way.

The Gemara (Gittin 55b) says that the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of קמצא. The *miforshim* ask how קמצא was the one to cause the Churban? We all understand that it was בר קמצא who slandered to the Roman king, and he was the one who made a blemish in the korban that the king sent. This led up to the Churban. But how did *kamtza* cause the Churban?

The Maharsha says that it is possible that קמצא was the father of בר קמצא. (בר קמצא means "the son of Kamtza", so it is likely that קמצא was the father). With this information, we can explain that קמצא, the father, didn't train his son to run away from machlokes. Therefore, קמצא is also considered responsible for the Churban. If בר קמצא had seen his father forgiving and forgetting and learning to get along with others, he would have done the same. Instead, בר קמצא saw his father fighting for his rights, never forgiving, and therefore, as an adult, בר קמצא did the same. It is thus correct to say that the Churban came from קמצא and also from בר קמצא.

At the beginning of *parashas Korach*, Rashi writes, "פרשה זו יפה נדרשת במדרש רבי תנחומא, This

parashah is taught beautifully in the Midrash Tanchuma."

Rashi rarely tells us where to look things up. What is Rashi implying here?

The Pri Megadim (תיבת גומא עה"ת ד"ה קהלת) writes, "אומרים הלצה", people explain this Rashi in a light way by connecting it to what the pasuk states in *Mishlei* (15:23). 'ודבר בעתו מה טוב', 'When something takes place in its right time, how good it is.' It is good to say a drashah on Torah when the topic is related to the times. Rashi writes, פרשה זו יפה נדרשת, it is always the right time to speak about *parashas Korach*. This is because there are always *machlokes*, and thus, it is always the right time."

Solutions

We will discuss some practical ways to avoid machlokes.

1) One solution is that whenever you feel you should start a machlokes, push it off until tomorrow. By then, you may see things differently.

When Korach and his followers argued with Moshe, Moshe replied, בקר וידע ד' את אשר לו (16:5). Rashi writes that Moshe pushed off the *machlokes* for the next day because "maybe [by then] they will change their minds."¹⁰

2) The Pele Yoetz writes, השתיקה בעת הכעס, כמים לאש שמכבהו, "Silence during anger is like water to fire – it extinguishes it."

9. There is a custom for chasanim to say a drashah, and then people sing in and stop him in the middle. Rebbe Aharon, the Belzer Rav zt'l explained that by singing in, and not letting the chasan finish, we are teaching the chasan that he doesn't always have to have the last word. If some oppose him and want things to be done differently, he can allow that to happen. With this attitude, there will be peace in his home.

10. Opposing Moshe was Korach, along with two hundred and fifty heads of the Sanhedrin. The sefarim say that they had logic and explanations for their machlokes. Now, how can an average person know which side to go to? Moshe is on one side, but there are great people, with proofs and logic, standing on the other side. How can a simple, unlearned person know who is correct and which side he should join?

Some answer that when they see that Dasan and Aviram are on one side, that is enough indication that this isn't the side of kedushah, and he is better off standing on the other side.

3) Another solution for machlokes is to end it as soon as it begins. The quicker you make amends, the better.

It is written, פוטר מים ראשית מדון, "Like water streaming through a breach, is the beginning of a dispute" (*Mishlei* 17:14). When water pushes through an opening, it begins as a small trickle, but then it widens and becomes very difficult to contain. Disputes are similar because they start small, but if they aren't stopped at the onset, they can become unbearable (*Sanhedrin* 7).

Therefore, one should keep his antennas up to perceive the slightest breach in peace and immediately mend it. If you leave that breach unfixed, it can widen and become overwhelming, *chas veshalom*.

The Shlah HaKadosh teaches that this counsel is found in the letters of מחלקת. The first letter, the מ, has a small opening on the bottom, hinting at a minor breach in the peace. If the problem is resolved immediately, everything will be fine. However, when the gap isn't fixed, it will become wider. This brings us to the following letter of מחלקת, the ח, with a wide opening at its bottom, suggesting that the machlokes has taken root, and the gap has widened. Afterwards comes the ל and ק. The *lamed* has a line going up, and the *kuf* has a line going down. This hints towards the fire of the dispute that has become extreme, with the flames of their dissension blazing in all directions. Finally, we reach the letter ת, which stands securely upon its two feet, implying that the fight is firmly established and now very difficult to

uproot. This can all be avoided if the machlokes is mended when still small.

4) Another counsel to avoid machlokes is to be *mevater* and let the other party have their way.¹¹ The Rambam (*Dei'os* 6:7) teaches, "It is proper that a person should be מעביר על מדותיו, to be *mevater*, when it comes to matters related to this world, because to the wise, everything in this world is foolishness and not worth fighting over."

5) The Gemara (*Chulin* 58:) discusses the *baka* bug, and the Gemara says that it lives no longer than a day. The Gemara asks that people say the following about the *baka* bug:

"A female *baka* separated from her husband for seven years. She said, 'You found a fat person in Mechuzah who just came out of the river and was wrapped in sheets. You landed on him, sucked his blood, and didn't tell me!' The Gemara questions this by saying that from here we can derive that a *baka* lives much longer than a day. In this story, a *baka* couple separated for seven years due to a dispute!

The Gemara replies, בשני דידהו, "in their years." For the *baka's* short lifespan, it was like they were separated for seven years.

Life is longer for humans, but relatively speaking, it's also quite short. Does it make sense to fill the short time with quarrels? We should try to make peace as quickly as possible.

6) A primary solution to avoid and stop machlokes is tefillah.

11. Satmar chassidim organized a special Shabbos together with their Rebbe, the Divrei Yoel of Satmar zt'l. Lots of planning, effort, and money were invested to make this Shabbos a success. But on Shabbos afternoon, the Rebbetzin wasn't feeling well and asked the Rebbe to remain home, and he obliged. He stayed home and didn't lead a *tisch* for his chassidim.

After Shabbos, the *gabai* told the Rebbe that the *chassidim* were disappointed. "Why does she always get her way?"

The Rebbe replied, "We've received a *kabalah*, tradition, that for *shalom bayis*, the one who is *mivater* is the one who wins."

It states *ובני קרח לא מתו*, "Korach's children didn't die" (26:11). Rebbe Mendel of Riminov *zt'l* said that *ובני קרח לא מתו* can be translated as Korach's *students* never died because the approach of creating disputes has been passed down from generation to generation. There are always *machlokes*. The only solution is to pray that you never get caught in one.

The *Aruch HaShulchan* (*Orach Chaim* 56:8) explains the tefillah for peace that we have

in the *kaddish*: "At the end of the Kaddish, we add... *יהא שלמא רבה* (a tefillah for peace). This is because peace is one of the pillars of the world. Therefore, at the end of kaddish, before people go out to the world, we pray that there should be peace among us. We add, *עושה שלום במרומיו*, although it is the same concept as *יהא שלמא רבה*. First, we pray that there should be peace among us, and then we ask that if *chalilah* a *machlokes* does break out, Hashem should help us make peace."