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SPREADING LIGHT AND
TORAH TO OUR AMAZING
BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN
AM YISRAEL



My friends, we have a very beautiful idea that the Torah communicates, even though it does so in language that at first glance feels harsh, not so positive, and not so easy to understand. But the lesson itself, and the message underneath it, is one of tremendous positivity.

Shimon and Levi: A Blessing That Sounds Like a Rebuke

The pasuk says: **“Shimon v’Levi achim.”**

Yaakov is blessing his children, and he says: Shimon and Levi are brothers.

Then he continues: **“Klei chamas mecheroteihem.”**

They possess vessels of violence. Stolen vessels.

What are these stolen vessels? Rashi explains that these are vessels of war. They “stole” them, so to speak, from Esav when they went to war in Shechem.

Then the pasuk continues:

“Besodam al tavo nafshi.”

Literally, *besodam* means “in their secret.”

Onkelos translates *sod* as *berazon*. The word *raz* means a secret, like the Gemara in Shabbat says: *Mi gilah raz zeh lebnai?* Who revealed this secret to My children? Referring to the secret words that the angels use in Shamayim — *Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuto*.

So Yaakov says: *Besodam al tavo nafshi* — let my soul not come into their secret.

And then he adds:

“U’vik’halam al techad kevodi.”

In their gathering, let my honor not be united with them.

And then Yaakov explains why:

“Ki b’apam hargu ish, u’vartzonam ikru shor.”

Because in their anger they killed a man, and in their willfulness they uprooted an ox.

So something here is being condemned. Something here is being rejected.

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Rashi: Two Moments Yaakov Wants No Part Of

Rashi explains *besodam al tavo nafsbi* in a very specific way.

Yaakov is saying: I don't want my soul involved in their *sod*, in their secret. And I don't want my *kavod*, my honor, involved in their gathering.

What is he talking about?

Rashi says the first part refers to **the story of Zimri ben Salu**.

Zimri ben Salu: A Sin of Epic Proportions

What is the story of Zimri ben Salu?

This takes place in the aftermath of the story of Bilaam.

Bilaam tries again and again to curse the Jewish people, and every single time, Hashem miraculously turns his curses into blessings. Bilaam becomes completely frustrated. When he leaves, he tells Balak, listen carefully. If you really want to destroy these Jews, there is only one trick that I know will work.

Get them to sin.

Get them to sin with adultery. Get them involved with women. And through that, lead them to worship *avodah zarah*.

And tragically, it works — to a degree.

But no one embodies this more than Zimri ben Salu.

Zimri ben Salu is not a nobody. He is a *nasi beit av*, a prince, one of the leaders of the tribe of Shimon. And he sees this Midianite princess, Kozbi bat Tzur, who has come to throw away her dignity and honor in order to entice the Jewish people to sin.

Zimri approaches her and says, listen, I am one of the princes of the Jewish people. Be with me.

And he takes Kozbi bat Tzur.

This is the story that leads to Pinchas.

Pinchas walks in and sees Zimri committing this act — not privately, but publicly. Zimri brings Kozbi bat Tzur in front of all the rabbis, in front of all the prophets, in front of the Ohel Moed, and he declares openly: “This woman is permitted to me. And if she's not permitted to me, then who said, Moshe, that you were permitted to marry Tziporah?”

It is an aggressive, brazen, public flaunting of the law.

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And Yaakov Avinu says: I want no part of this.
Don't bring my soul there.
Don't bring my *kavod* there.

Why Yaakov's Name Is Missing

What does it mean, "Don't bring my kavod"?

Look carefully at how the Torah introduces Zimri.

It says: **Zimri ben Salu, nasi be'it av laShimeoni**
— a prince of the tribe of Shimon.

But something is missing.

It does not say: *ben Shimon ben Yaakov*.

Yaakov's name is omitted.

Why?

Because Yaakov begged here, in these blessings, that his name not be attached to this act. He said: cut my name out of this lineage.

This sin involved *avodah zarah*.

It involved *giluy arayot*.

It involved massive *chilul Hashem*.

It was an act that attempted to tear down Moshe Rabbeinu himself by suggesting that Moshe's marriage to Tziporah was no different — which was completely false. Moshe married her long before the

Torah was given. There was no conversion process at that time. The comparison itself was dishonest and destructive.

So we fully understand why Yaakov says: I don't want any part of this.

But There Is One More Thing Yaakov Rejects

However, Rashi says there is **one more event** in Jewish history that Yaakov explicitly says: I don't want my honor there.

The first was Zimri, from the tribe of Shimon.

The second is **Korach**, from the tribe of Levi.

The pasuk says: "*U'vik'halam al techad kevodi.*"
In their gathering, let my honor not be united with them.

Rashi explains: this refers to **Korach** —
keshe'yak'hil Korach — when Korach gathers the people.

Korach, who is from the tribe of Levi, gathers *kol ha'edah* and launches a rebellion against Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon, claiming that Moshe has given leadership positions to his own family.

And again, look carefully at the lineage.

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The Torah says:

Korach ben Yitzhar ben Kehat ben Levi.

And then it stops.

It does not say: *ben Yaakov*.

Yaakov's name is once again removed.

The Question That Demands an Answer

And now we have a serious question.

How do these two events belong in the same category?

Zimri's sin involved idolatry and immorality.
Korach's rebellion did not.

Korach was arguing about leadership.
About appointments.
About authority.

Why is Yaakov choosing *these* two events, out of all of Jewish history, to say: "Count me out"?

He could have said a thousand other things. He could have said, "Don't associate me with this group or that movement." But no. These are the two.

So clearly, something very deep is going on here.

And to understand it, we need to talk about **machloket**.

Two Kinds of Machloket

To understand why Yaakov pairs Zimri and Korach together, we need to understand something fundamental about **machloket**.

The Mishnah in *Pirkei Avot* tells us that there are **two kinds of machloket** in this world.

There is a *machloket lesheim shamayim* — an argument for the sake of Heaven.

And there is a *machloket shelo lesheim shamayim* — an argument not for the sake of Heaven.

What is a *machloket lesheim shamayim*?

The Mishnah gives the classic example: **Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel**.

Open almost any page of Gemara and you'll see it. Beit Shammai says this. Beit Hillel says that. Beit Shammai is usually more strict. Beit Hillel is usually more lenient, with a few exceptions listed in the first Mishnah in Masechet Beitza.

They argue about everything.

How to prepare for Shabbat.
How to light the menorah.
How to build the sukkah.
How to interpret the Torah.

But what are they arguing for?

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They're arguing for the sake of Heaven. They want the truth. They want to know what God wants. There is no personal agenda. There is no self-promotion.

And then the Mishnah says there is another kind of machloket.

A machloket shelo leshelem shamayim.

What is the example?

Not Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel.

The Mishnah says: **Korach ve'adato** — Korach and his people.

And the Chachamim point out something very strange here.

Why Doesn't the Mishnah Say "Korach and Moshe"?

If Korach is arguing, who is he arguing with?

Moshe Rabbeinu.

So why doesn't the Mishnah say: *machloket Korach u'Moshe*?

Why does it say *Korach ve'adato* — Korach and his own people?

Almost as if the fight wasn't between Korach and Moshe at all.

Almost as if Korach was fighting the people standing next to him.

That's strange.

So let's think for a second.

What did Korach want out of this machloket?

Power.

He wanted honor.

He wanted leadership.

He wanted to be number one.

So what does he do?

Does he come out and say, "It should be me"?

No.

He never says that.

He does something much smarter.

The Smartest Lie Korach Ever Told

Korach says: it shouldn't be Moshe either.

It shouldn't be *anyone*.

Nobody should be in charge.

He says: "**Kol ha'edah kulam kedoshim.**"

The entire congregation is holy.

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We don't need leaders.

We don't need hierarchy.

We don't need authority.

Everyone is equal.

Now let me ask you something.

Korach, why did you start this whole campaign?

Because you wanted to be the leader.

So let's say you win.

In your new world order — where nobody is in charge — what are you?

You're still nobody.

Because your entire platform was that nobody should be in charge.

So what was Korach actually doing?

He was saying: nobody should be in charge — **and I'm in charge of making sure nobody's in charge.**

You got it?

Nobody leads.

But you all have to listen to me.

Otherwise this whole system won't work.

This is the platform.

Who Is Really Fighting Here?

So the Mishnah is teaching us something very sharp.

Who is actually fighting in this machloket?

Moshe couldn't care less about leadership.

Moshe argues *against* being the leader from the very beginning. Hashem keeps pushing him into it. Moshe keeps saying no.

So when Korach comes and says, "Moshe, you shouldn't be the leader," Moshe is basically saying, you're knocking on an open door, honey. *Faddal*. Come on in. The water's warm.

So who is the fight between?

It's between Korach and his people.

Every person in that crowd who says, "I don't want power," really means one of two things.

Either:

1. I want to be in charge.
- Or
2. I don't want anyone telling *me* what to do.

And those two things are deeply connected.

Why We Hate Being Told What to Do

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Why do people want to be in charge?

Not always so they can control others.

Sometimes it's so that others don't control them.

I don't want power over you.

I want power over *me*.

I don't want to wait in line.

I don't want to be told no.

I don't want to be restricted.

And Korach understands this instinct perfectly.

He touches a nerve that runs through **every Jewish soul**.

No Jew likes being told what to do.

You tell a Jew this is the rule at the airport — you have to carry your bag this way — what does he want to do?

“I want to speak to the supervisor.”

Who's the supervisor?

“I *am* the supervisor.”

No, no, you must answer to someone. Get me *that* guy.

We don't like being told:

You can't go there.

You have to wait.

You're boarding in group seven.

“I have kids.”

“I always have a reason.”

A Pesach Program and the Hangers

You ever go on a Pesach program?

Everyone checks into their rooms. Within minutes, everyone is back downstairs holding their room key.

“I shouldn't be in this room.”

“There aren't enough hangers.”

“There's no crib.”

The guy checking everyone in is thinking: you're not even in your room yet. Why do you need hangers already?

“I just need it in my room.”

This is how we are.

Why?

Why are we like this?

Every Negative Comes From a Positive Place

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My Rabbi taught me something incredibly powerful.

He said: whenever you find something negative in a human being, it **always** comes from something positive.

Always.

I said, always?

He said, always.

There is no negative trait that does not originate from something good.

I said, what do you mean? There are a lot of terrible traits in the world.

And he explained it to me like this.

Hashem is good. Only good.

That means when God creates something, it can only be good.

Evil has no independent existence.

It's like unplugging something from the wall. It loses its electricity. It dies.

So how does evil exist?

Because it is rooted in something good — and then twisted.

Chesed Used in the Most Shocking Way

The Gemara points out something shocking.

The Torah uses the word **chesed**, kindness, to describe an incestuous relationship.

Chesed hi.

How can the Torah use the word chesed for something so horrific?

The Chachamim explain: closeness, connection, the desire to bond — that is something good.

But when that desire is perverted, twisted, and corrupted, it becomes something horrific.

The most heinous relationships often come from a twisted desire for closeness.

That's why, tragically, so much abuse happens within families.

In some sick, perverted way, the abuser convinces themselves that they are giving closeness, care, or love — a connection that should never exist.

So at the root of all evil is something good — completely distorted.

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We Are Living This Reality Right Now

We are watching this happen in the world right now.

Terrible forces are being given a platform.

Victims are being silenced.

Why?

Because of something called **intersectionality**.

“You’re suffering.”

“I’m suffering.”

“Let’s merge our agendas.”

You can take a genuine victim.

You can take a terrorist.

And you can make their stories sound the same.

The root is good — protecting victims.

The application is evil.

Why Korach Was So Dangerous

Yaakov Avinu is pointing this out to Am Yisrael.

Korach’s machloket is built on something good.

“Nobody rules me.”

“Money doesn’t control me.”

“Power doesn’t own me.”

“Culture doesn’t dominate me.”

That instinct — at its root — is holy.

And that’s why Korach succeeds.

That’s why he gathers everyone.

Intersectionality.

The Only Two Things That Ever Gathered All the Jews

There are only **two things** in history that gathered all the Jewish people together.

One was **Har Sinai**.

The other was **Korach**.

Think about that.

What did God say at Har Sinai?

“Anochi Hashem Elokecha.”

I am Hashem your God.

And then immediately:

“Lo yihyeh lecha elohim acherim.”

You have no other masters.

You are not enslaved to culture.

You are not enslaved to power.

You are not enslaved to people.

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You serve only God.

That message is the most liberating thing a human being can hear.

And Korach sings the same tune.

Nobody's in charge of you.

Only — he hijacks it.

Yaakov Sees the Trap

Yaakov is Torah itself.

Ish tam, yoshev ohalim.

He knows this tune.

He knows how dangerous it is when something holy is weaponized.

And that's why he says:

Cut my name out.

“If You're Involved in Machloket...”

Korach is described as:

Korach ben Yitzhar
ben Kehat
ben Levi

Not ben Yaakov.

Yaakov is saying something devastating.

If you're involved in machloket — you are **no son of mine**.

The Power That Can Destroy Everything

Machloket is not just another sin.

It is not just another bad middah.

It is a force of destruction that has no parallel in the Torah.

And Yaakov Avinu knows this.

That's why he says:

Cut my name out.

Take my name off the wall.

You want to know why?

Because machloket doesn't just damage a person.

It doesn't just damage relationships.

It doesn't just damage families.

It destroys everything.

Three Rules to Geulah

There used to be an old adage about real estate.

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Three rules to real estate:

Location.

Location.

Location.

My friends, there are three rules to geulah as well.

And Yaakov Avinu sees this clearly.

He sees that his children and grandchildren have
left Eretz Yisrael.

They have gone down to Egypt.

And Yaakov knows the prophecy.

He knows that Galut is coming.

He knows that the Jewish people are going to be
exiled and enslaved for four hundred years.

He is on his deathbed.

His children are surrounding him.

And Yaakov says: there is one thing that will keep
you stuck in Galut.

And I cannot be associated with it.

Two Thousand Years of Not Listening

For two thousand years, we have chosen not to hear
this message.

The Gemara tells us explicitly why the Beit
HaMikdash was destroyed.

Not because of ignorance.

Not because of a lack of learning.

Not because of a lack of mitzvot.

Because of machloket.

Between brothers.

Between families.

Between factions of Am Yisrael.

Levels of religious observance.

Communities.

Almost always — money.

And what happens?

We are still in Galut.

“You’re Part of Machloket — You’re Not My Child”

Yaakov Avinu is making a statement that sounds
harsh.

He is saying:

If you are involved in machloket — you are not my
child.

Not because you’re evil.

Not because you’re irredeemable.

But because this poison cannot be allowed to enter.

Machloket is the thing that keeps us here.

It is the thing that delays redemption.

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Remember Each Other

Yaakov promises his children something.

Hashem will remember you.

Hashem will take you out.

But there is a condition.

That you remember each other.

That you remember you are brothers.

Take Out the Fire Extinguisher

So I'm asking you something very practical.

Find one machloket in your life.

Just one.

And grab your fire extinguisher.

Now what is a machloket?

It could be something huge.

But it could also be something very small.

Aim the hose.

Pull the trigger.

No more.

If it's in family — ten times more important to
erase.

You Don't Have to Agree

And I want to be very clear about something.

Ending machloket does not mean:

You have to agree.

You have to think the same.

You have to live the same life.

You don't.

You can carry on separately.

You can split up a business.

You can part ways.

Splitting is not machloket.

Machloket is animosity.

You can stay partners and hate each other.

You can split and have peace.

Yaakov is not asking for uniformity.

He is demanding peace.

Why This Hurts Yaakov So Much

Yaakov speaks from pain.

Think about his life.

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With Esav — machloket.
With Lavan — machloket.
People constantly bringing machloket to his door.

And then finally, within his own family —
machloket.

And what does he witness?

Machloket takes a man who was building the holy
family of Am Yisrael, living in Eretz Yisrael — and
it drags him down to Egypt.

To the most impure place.

That is the signal.

That is the sign.

The Final Message

Hashem is asking you something.

Whatever the machloket is — figure out how to
end it.

There is nothing in the world worth having
machloket for.

Nothing.

Yaakov could tolerate many failures.

But machloket?

Never.

He says:

You could do everything wrong — just not this.

Takeaway from the Lecture

*Yaakov Avinu draws a line that is sharper than we
expect and more painful than we want.*

There are sins he cannot tolerate.

There are failures he cannot attach his name to.

But there is one force he treats as uniquely dangerous.

Machloket.

Not disagreement.

Not difference.

Not separate paths.

*Machloket — animosity, ego-driven conflict, the need
to win, the refusal to let go.*

*Yaakov understands something that history keeps
proving again and again: machloket has the power to
disguise itself as holiness. It borrows the language of
justice, equality, independence, and truth. It touches
something real and good inside the Jewish soul — the
refusal to be owned, controlled, or silenced by
anything other than God.*

And that is precisely why it is so destructive.

*When holiness is weaponized, when ego hides behind
ideals, when conflict dresses itself as righteousness, it
can gather people as powerfully as Torah itself — but
it leads in the opposite direction.*

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Yaakov's message is not theoretical. It is generational.

Machloket is not just a personal failing.

It is a national danger.

It is the poison that extends exile.

And that is why Yaakov says something devastatingly clear:

If you cling to machloket, I cannot put my name there.

Geulah does not require agreement.

It requires humility.

It requires restraint.

It requires the courage to put out the fire instead of feeding it.

There is nothing in the world worth keeping machloket alive for.

Nothing.

Five Shabbat Table Discussion Questions

1. ***What is the difference between disagreement and machloket, and how can we tell when a disagreement has crossed that line?***

Where have you seen this distinction play out in real life?

2. ***Korach's message resonated because it touched something holy — the refusal to be controlled by anything other***

than God.

How can a good instinct become destructive when ego enters the picture?

3. ***Yaakov removes his name from Korach and Zimri.***

What does it mean, practically, to “remove your name” from a conflict in your own life?

4. ***Why do conflicts that claim to be about values, justice, or principle often become the most bitter and damaging?***

What safeguards can prevent that?

5. ***If machloket delays geulah, what would “putting out one fire” look like this week — in a family, a community, or even internally?***

What would it cost you, and what might it save?

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LOVE WITHOUT ATTACHING A NAME

"No son of mine" is not rejection,
It is love that refuses to legitimize fire.

I will love you.
I will pray for you.
I will wait for you.

But I will not place my name,
where everything burns.

Inspired by the Torah of Rabbi Shlomo Farhi

FAILURE WAS NEVER THE PROBLEM

Yaakov lived with sons who failed.
Who stumbled.
Who made devastating mistakes.
And he never erased them.

Failure did not
disqualify them.
Weakness did
not sever them.

Because broken people can
still be built.

MACHLOKET IS DIFFERENT

Machloket doesn't wound —
it consumes.
It doesn't leave room for growth.
It leaves ashes.

That's why Yaakov says:

You can carry my name
through struggle.

But not through destruction.

WHEN A FATHER DRAWS A LINE

Yaakov blesses his children.
But then he does something shocking.
He says:

DO NOT PUT MY NAME THERE.

Not over failure.
Not over weakness.
But over *machloket*.

Because there are mistakes
you can grow from —
and then there are fires
that burn everything down.

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