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of Metropolitan Washington**

**Parshas Korach
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Everlasting Dispute

By Rabbi Eliezer Lachman, Rosh HaKollel

We are accustomed to thinking that machlokes (dispute) is, in its essence, a negative. Although we realize that it might be proper at times to engage in machlokes, we tend to view this as a necessary evil. We attribute the need to partake in machlokes to the imperfection of this world, and expect machlokes to be abolished in the next world.

The Sages, however, teach otherwise.

"Any machlokes (dispute) that is for the sake of Heaven, its end will be that it will endure; but one that is not for the sake of Heaven, its end will not be to endure. What is a machlokes that is for the sake of Heaven? The machlokes between Hillel and Shammai. And which is one that is not for the sake of Heaven? The machlokes of Korach and his entire company" (Pirkei Avos 5:20).

This Mishnah teaches three principles: (a) there is a "good" machlokes and a "bad" machlokes; (b) good machlokes is "for the sake of Heaven" and bad machlokes is not; and (c) as a result of this difference, good machlokes will endure and bad machlokes will not. Evidently, good machlokes is not a necessary, temporary evil; it will endure forever, and thus it must possess some inherent goodness.

But what is this inherent goodness? And why is good machlokes defined as being for the sake of Heaven, and not by some other characteristic?

In order to deal with these questions, it is necessary to appreciate the context of this Mishnah. Immediately prior to this statement, the Mishnah taught: "Any love that is dependent upon a thing, when that thing ceases, the love ceases; but a love that is not dependent upon a thing will never cease. What is a love that is dependent upon a thing? The love of Amnon for Tamar. And which is not dependent upon a thing? The love of David and

Jonathan" (5:19).

Besides the obvious semantic parallels between the Mishnah's two statements, there is a deeper conceptual parallel: the difference between "good" love and "bad" love, just as the difference between "good" machlokes and "bad" machlokes, is that good love will endure forever! But there is also a clear contrast: machlokes must be for the sake of Heaven in order to endure forever, but love need not be. As long as the love is pure, i.e. not for the sake of an external "thing," it will endure forever, even if that love is not for the sake of Heaven.

Why is this so and what is its significance?

The Mishnah is dealing with an extremely important problem. Man is a finite, limited being, yet he is confronted by a complex reality that is beyond him. This reality, in turn, reflects and reveals the Greater Reality, God, Who is infinite and unlimited. Man is driven to achieve a greater existence, but he realizes that in order to do this, he must somehow grow and encompass within himself perspectives and aspects of reality that are foreign to him. How does he accomplish this?

The Sages are teaching that there are two ways to do this: one is through love and the other is through machlokes for the sake of Heaven. Through love, one bonds with another, caring for him, giving to him and feeling his sorrows and joys as if they were one's own. Provided that the love is pure and selfless, it is a powerful means of transcending oneself, of uniting with realities beyond him. It is a Godly force and as such will endure forever.

There is also another, almost opposite, way of transcending oneself, and that is, paradoxically, through engaging in disputes. People have different ideas and perspectives, and it is only through the back and forth of a dispute that one is challenged to go beyond his reality and appreciate and deal with alternate views. The dispute also allows each of the participants to understand the differences and similarities between their views, and to see the larger picture of which each of their views is only a part. Since this type of machlokes is a means of transcending oneself, of encompassing within oneself the Reality that is greater than him, it too will endure forever.

This is true only if the machlokes was "for the sake of Heaven," i.e. for the sake of the reality that is beyond oneself. If it is not for this sake, then it is a negative, because it is only a way of opposing and invalidating other people, their interests and perspectives, and will lead only to destructiveness and hatred.

About the Friedman Kollel

The Rabbi Samuel and Zehava Friedman Kollel, located in Olney, Maryland, offers learning opportunities for Jews of all backgrounds. These include one-on-one chavrusas, public lectures and classes for men and women, as well as after-school structured learning for public school teens. The Kollel operates under the leadership of Rabbi Eliezer Lachman and Rabbi Shaya Milikowsky. For more information or to sponsor an upcoming Capital Torah, please contact Rabbi Elyakim Milikowsky at FriedmanKollel@BetterFamily.org.

The Rabbi Samuel and Zehava Friedman Kollel of Metropolitan Washington

18318 Georgia Avenue * Olney, Maryland 20832
FriedmanKollel@BetterFamily.org

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Samuel & Zehava Friedman Kollel of Metropolitan Washington | 18318 Georgia Ave. | Olney | MD | 20832