



PEACE NOW, AND FOREVER

Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Korach 5781

Children flourish in an atmosphere of peace and stability. With a limited understanding of and experience with the world around them, they react to strife and controversy similar to the way we react to sudden turbulence on an airplane. We don't really understand or think much about how a two hundred ton metal behemoth can fly through the air, but when it starts shaking, we start panicking. When children are surrounded by fighting and anger, even though they are not directly involved, their world is shaking and they suffer greatly.

A metaphor of sorts for this can be found in a *Medrash* on this week's *Parsha*. (*Bamidbar Rabbah 18:4*) The *Medrash*, in referring to the devastating punishment *Hashem* meted out to *Korach* and his followers, says: "*Rabi Berachia says – how difficult is controversy, because the Heavenly Tribunal only extracts punishment from those twenty years and older, the Earthly courts only from the age of thirteen and up, but in the Machlokes (controversy) of Korach, even one day old infants were consumed and swallowed up. Hashem never allows punishment to be brought upon a person unless he has the maturity to be responsible for his own misdeeds. Never, except in a machlokes.*"

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Children suffer doubly from strife and contentiousness in their family. They are the unintended victims of domestic strife, as their world loses its moorings amidst the shouts, anger and bitterness that envelops their day to day life. Furthermore, as *Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz zt'l* is paraphrased as saying; (*Al Pi Darko p. 228*) - *when children have parents who don't go out of their way for peace, they are more likely to become contentious adults themselves.*

Machlokes is a force that destroys like nothing else can. It destroys families, it can devastate shuls, yeshivos and entire communities. We only lost the *Beis Hamikdash* because of *machlokes* and *Sinas Chinam (baseless hatred)*. On the opposite side of *Machlokes* is *Shalom*. Peace is the greatest gift, because all blessing flourishes only in an atmosphere of *Shalom*.

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Arguments and strife don't just happen. In a moment of frustration and disappointment every person has a choice. They can accept the difficulties and be gracious and forgiving. Or, they can choose to fight and go to battle. Parents especially need to think long and hard about the costs and risks of choosing the path of *machlokes*. We all have a tendency to think that we are fighting for a higher purpose and are acting objectively and *L'Shem Shomayim (for the sake of Heaven)*. If we are able to realize that in almost all

cases we are in fact acting out of self-interest and self-promotion, we may be able to put a brake on our behavior.

Stopping a pattern of endless fights and arguments is certainly not easy. It may require outside intervention. It certainly requires the very painful process of introspection and concluding you have been at least somewhat misguided in your behavior and attitude. However, when you balance that with the limitless benefits to your family and children of bringing peace and harmony to your home, you will gain a powerful motivator to attempt the task.

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For the enhancement of peace and harmony in your life today, coupled with a positive impact on generations to come, our efforts, thoughts and *mesiras nefesh* can be directed to no more important an endeavor than promoting understanding, respect and calm throughout our home and relationships.

May we all be blessed with a Shabbos and week of peace and harmony.

Rabbi Kalman Baumann