



Adapted from the sefarim חמין במוצאי שבת and חזקוני דעיר אנפין collections of maamarim given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Seuda Shlishis and Melave Malka

Melave Malka Parshas Korach 5762

In Parshas Korach, Perek ט"ז begins with Hakadosh Baruch Hu telling Moshe Rabeinu to instruct Elazar, the son of Aharon Hakohen, to collect the *machtos* (fire pans), that were utilized by the two-hundred and fifty followers of Korach who were devoured by fire. He also tells him that they are to be made into a covering for the *mizbeach*.

The *Pesikta Zutresa* (קט"ז), asks why this command was directed to Elazar rather than to his father Aharon Hakohen. Among the answers, we find "Because Aharon was the *Kohen Gadol* whereas Elazar was only the *segan*, Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, 'It is best that the *segan* should enter the place of the fire, and that the *Kohen Gadol* should not.'" Various commentaries try to explain this puzzling statement.

I believe that a commentary of the *Meiri* on Maseches Brachos can help us explain the *Pesikta Zutresa*. On דף כז: , the Gemara tells the story of the *chachamim* demoting Raban Gamliel from his position of *nasi*, because he repeatedly and publicly caused *tzaar* to R. Yehoshua. The *chachamim* then had to choose his replacement. They originally thought to appoint R. Yehoshua as *nasi* for he had every quality that was necessary for the *nesius*. They then decided that it wouldn't be right to appoint him, for he was the *baal maaseh* (the one who was involved in the conflict with Raban Gamliel).

The *Meiri* explains;

"It is fitting for a person to distance himself from *machlokes* as much as possible. This applies especially to *Gedolim* and people on higher levels,



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and even more to the *tzibur*. Even if it becomes necessary for them to become involved in a conflict and remove someone from his position, it isn't proper to replace him with the person who was the subject of the *machlokes*, even if that person is the most qualified. This would cause the one who was removed, to suffer even more mental anguish.

This is why they decided not to replace Raban Gamliel with R. Yehoshua. We find a similar lesson in the *machlokes* of Korach. Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded Elazar to collect the *machtos* rather than Aharon, in order to teach us this principle of *derech erez*.”

The *Meiri* learned from our *pasuk* that even though Korach certainly deserved his punishment, we don't say, יקוב הדין את ההר, (let the *din* penetrate the mountain). Instead, Hakadosh Baruch Hu taught us to go *lifnim mi'shuras ha'din* - above and beyond the letter of the law. Even though Korach was entirely in the wrong, Hashem didn't tell Aharon to collect the *machtos*, because he was at the center of Korach's *machlokes*. Hashem assigned that task to *Elazar* so that we would learn how He wants us to behave.

Centuries later, this principle was applied by Rav Yitchak Elchonon Spector zt”l, the Rav of Kovna. One year, the *chazan* who was to have led the *tefillos* of the *Yamim Noraim* in the *Beis Knesses Hagadol* of Kovna suddenly passed away. The שבעה טובי העיר, (community council) gathered in order to choose a new *chazan*. They based their decision on the criteria listed in the *Shulchan Aruch* (או"ח סימן נ"ג סעיף ו"). Satisfied that they had selected a suitable *chazan*, they approached the Rav and asked for his approval.

To their surprise, Rav Yitzchak Elchanan instructed them to choose someone else. The man was also learned, a *yerei shamayim* (G-d fearing), and beloved by the community. However, his singing voice couldn't compare to that of the candidate chosen by the council. They couldn't understand the Rav's decision and tried to convince him to change his mind, but the Rav remained steadfast in his position.



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After the members of the council had departed, Rav Yitzchak Elchanan's son asked his father to explain the rationale behind his decision. The Rav told his son that he was certainly aware that the *tzibur* wouldn't find the voice of the second candidate as pleasing to the ear as that of the first.

He explained that he reached his surprising decision because he thought about the previous *chazan's* widow. He imagined her sitting in the *ezras nashim* listening to the beautiful voice of the man who replaced her husband. It could be that after *davening*, people would talk about how wonderful the new *chazan* is, and the women would gather around the new *chazan's* wife, complementing her husband's *chazanus*.

I realized that this could cause the widow great anguish, so I specifically chose a *chazan* whose lack of talent would enable her to proudly remember her husband who was a much better *baal tefillah*. By appointing my candidate to lead the *tefilos*, the *tzibur* will have the tremendous merit of bringing joy to the heart of the *almanah*, as it says in *Iyov* (29:13) וּלְבַב אֲלִמְנָה אֲרִינִי - "I will make the widow's heart sing for joy."

According to the criteria of the *Shulchan Aruch*, the members of the council certainly chose the person most suited to serve as the *shliach tzibur* on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Nonetheless, Rav Yitzchak Elchanan's decision teaches us that we don't always follow the letter of the law. Someone who has sensitivity and empathy considers the feelings of those who will be affected by a decision, and goes above and beyond the letter of the law.

This lesson applies to everyone, young and old, great or small. In matters of *bein adam l'chaveiro*, we shouldn't say יָקוּב הַדִּין אֶת הָהָר. We should act לפְּנִיִּם מִשּׁוֹרֵת הַדִּין. Someone who wants to be *machmir* and follow the letter of the law should do so in his own *bein adam l'achav* decisions, but not when it comes to *bein adam lachaveiro*.



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In this Beis Medrash, which was founded by my grandfather zy”a, we should remember and emulate his *mesirus nefesh* to avoid causing pain or distress to any creature in the world. If he ever had the slightest suspicion that he may have hurt someone’s feelings, he wouldn’t rest until he made sure that he had appeased him.

On Motzaei Shabbos Parshas Korach, we should commit ourselves to never be one of those people who are blind to the feelings of those around them. Instead, we must pay attention to the feelings of everyone who will be affected by our decisions. If we consider the feelings of others, and go לפנים משורת הדין even when we are justified according to the letter of the law, Hashem will repay us מידה כנגד מידה, measure for measure, and treat us with mercy, as opposed to strict judgement, ויגאלנו במהרה גאולה שלמה, אכי”ר



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