

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Maharal Sefer Netivas HaShalom - Notes from June 17 2007

Rebbetzin Heller Maharal Netivas HaShalom notes from June 17, 2007 given through www.naaleh.com

We spoke last time about redifas Shalom, now we are going to talk about the consequences of machloket a bit more, and then we are going to go back to it, so I am skipping a part and we will go back to it next time.

Machloket which we learned last time is the opposite of shalom, we remember that the letters of machloket and how their message was the opposite of the letters of shalom, as you might remember. So everything about them, the openness, where it opens, where it shouldn't be open, the dissent, you remember all of this from last time there is no need to review it again.

He says machloket is in a different place from other bad behaviors. It is in a whole other place, which is obvious in what we learned until now, that shalom is necessary to put everything into place. Machloket doesn't only affect the bale machloket, it takes everything out of place. So we see that the severity in machloket generates a different level of punishment than with other sins. The Gemara makes mention of this, that a person is punished by Hashem from the age of 20 and from a human court from the age of 13. Before we go into machloket, let's talk about why there is a difference.

We don't believe humans can judge anyone. We can't. Let's say someone stole a car and was caught red-handed. And let's say the law of the country in which he stole the car says that he should get 6 months in prison. Red-handed, he gets 6 months. Does he deserve it? Maybe yes, let's assume it is a just punishment. Will his wife who didn't steal a car be affected? Will she or not? Of course she will be affected and in fact, especially if she is on a better level than he is, the humiliation of being married to a car thief will be much greater than his humiliation of being in jail. Could the judge who sentenced him take that into consideration? No, and if he did he made a mistake. Now let's take it further. Let's say they have two kids and one kid goes to gan. Now is life going to be harder because this child's father is in prison? Of course. Other children may mock him, this could affect his self esteem, he may get reactive. The kindergarten teacher, did she steal a car? No. Will she have to deal with this difficult child? Yes. So she has a terrible day at gan, and her husband comes home – did he do anything that mad e him deserve having to deal with a contentious and difficult wife? No but she had a hard day in gan. Did he steal a car? No, now this can go further, his boss, his chaverusa, there is no end. A human being can't possibly take all of this into consideration. Hashem can.

When Hashem judges it is the whole picture. So we don't believe that a person can ever judge another person, so why do we judge at all? What we could do is to see that someone restores damage to the person that they hurt so that a person could see this. At the age of 13, a child is mature enough to realize that if they threw a rock through a window, the window will break and replacement costs money and why should the person who did no wrong have to pay? Now that doesn't mean that they can possibly pay for all of the other things that are involved there. They will have to pay with their money, so they won't have money for the gift they wanted to give to their mother, the mother will be upset...we don't even try to go there. So the earthly court punishes at the age of 12 or 13 when the child can see the observable consequences of their deeds. Hashem punishes at 20 when a person is fully mature and accountable for who they are, not just for what they do. The exception is machloket where you find Hashem punishing even infants, in the Korach story. So let's find out why.

He tells us something deep about human nature, but let's go into something else that we have to know by way of prelude, which is whatever you want is what you get in ruchnius. Materially, you get whatever Hashem thinks you need to do whatever you have to achieve in life, with previous lives taken into consideration etc, but spiritually you can be whomever you want! The nature of a person who is a bale machloket –let's carefully define this as a master of machloket, someone who enters quarrels and has no regrets, someone who enjoys quarreling, not just someone who once in their life ends up in a quarrel.

A baal machloket always feels that he is right. I am right so why should I give in if I am right? This feeling evokes middos ha Din. Middos ha Din means Hashem is setting boundaries on human behavior, not allowing them to do things that are destructive to others or to themselves. So the more you become a person of Din, the more you invoke Din upon yourself and upon others. Maharal says a person who is truly a person of din will be involved in machloket because they can't compromise on anything. Everything is principle and everything is my way or the highway. I know I mentioned this in other shiurim, but because this is one of my pet peeves, I want to tell you how this looks.

This happened to me (and I don't come out looking that good in this story so I am warning you before hand). I got a call from someone who was reluctant to give me their name, who says she has a check of mine that came back. So I said, put it back in the bank, I know there is money there, I don't know why it came back. Put it back in.

So she says, well actually, it was 8 months ago. So I said, now it is no good anymore, where were you for these 8 months? She said, it wasn't actually my check, it was a check that came to me through someone else through someone else, through someone else. So this began to be suspicious to me so I asked her what she wanted. She said, I will send you a copy of the check and you send me cash. So I said no. She said why not? So I said, until I have my check back I have no way of proving that I paid you. I am not going to mail you money until I see my check. Mail me the check and I will give you the money if I owe it – you can't cash it this way anyway. You are losing nothing. This is bad enough. I could have looked more carefully to try to find out where she got the check from originally and to deal in that way but I didn't. She says but you are chareidim, why can't you be mvater? Now she pressed my button, and I will tell you why this is my button in a minute. I said you are also a wonderful moral person, why can't you be mvater? She says why are you being so aggressive? I am not being aggressive, I am willing to give you the money if you give me the check, why are you being aggressive? What game was being played by both of us? The same game that people play in marriage. Picture a couple. He likes the beach, she likes the mountains. It is vacation time and here they are talking to their best friends...she if he really cared about me, then he would know I am miserable at the beach, so hot and boring I can't bear it. If he really loved me he would want to go to the mountains because he knows I can't stand the beach. So his problem is really that he is an insensitive person. He is talking to his friend now, saying, you know, she seemed so sweet and nice when we were going out, you should hear her – if she was really sweet and nice she wouldn't want me to be bored out of my mind in the mountains – what am I supposed to do count the apples on the trees? I like the beach, why is she so self-absorbed? She thinks this world exists for her. She is not a sensitive person. So what are they both saying? Each one is saying that the other one, that the proof of someone's sensitivity, is saying if they do what I want. This is what happens in every machloket, both parties think that they are right and that the other person should be honest or decent enough to compromise. What is the truth? In marriage, no one should be able to be happy unless the other one is also happy. You have to make a compromise or take turns or take pleasure in seeing your spouse happy.

Similarly where there is machloket, say I am committed to there being shalom, it doesn't have to be my way – that is not my commitment.

Let's go back to what I am saying here. The person who says I have to be 100% right brings down 100% middos Ha Din.

People who really want peace go beyond the letter of the law. But people who are into Din don't want to let go of even the smallest thing. Now the problem is not that people don't want to give in per se, the problem is that they made it a principle and therefore a machloket. The truth is , 100 sheckels was not going to change my life radically. Since this woman was talking from a corporation, it was not going to bring that corporation under. The problem is that it became the principle. The same things holds in marriage. As soon as you say it is the principle that the other person should be sensitive, you no longer are just talking about the outcome, you are talking about the principle, and people who are able to let go aren't able to let go of principles. These principles often spell out machloket. Let's see how.

Of course din is stretched forth against bale machloket because that is their middos, their midda is extreme din, they feel completely right. A chochma that a person has to learn in the course of their life is to learn to say I am right so what! Okay, that is one thing, I am right. But what is the best way to deal with this? What is the best way to bring shalom in this situation. What is good in this situation, not just who is right? How can I make this good for all of the parties concerned, how can each person have their piece in the puzzle, maintain their integrity? So in the marriage example, how can I go where my husband doesn't want to go and still have him feel as though he is the husband in the relationship, and that I give him kovod and see him as an important person? Or , how can I go where my wife will not be happy when I am supposed to make her happy and provide for her? Both people should be saying am I right but is it good (ve a ve the

integrity of the other person). So there are all sorts of stories that bring this home but I will tell you just one, that you probably already know. It is a famous story. Everyone knows the story of the man who goes to the famous Rosh HaYeshiva and says his wife doesn't have her act together, she wants me to take out the garbage. And the Rosh HaYeshiva says yes, and? And he says I am a Ben Torah, she married me because I am a Ben Torah, she wanted to be married to a Ben Torah. Her parents are committed to supporting us so I can learn, why should I become the family garbage man? Why doesn't she see to the house and even the unpleasant parts of housekeeping? These are hers, while I give the house spiritual direction? The Rosh Yeshiva speaks to the wife. I don't know what is wrong with him, he thinks I am the maid. All the husbands take out the garbage, he leaves in the morning why can't he take the garbage with him? Why does he have to make a principle? He is treating me like a slave, he is not normal. The next day there is a knock on the door, and there is the Rosh HaYeshiva. He says, the garbage. You can't take it out, she can't take it out. It has to go out, so give me the garbage. I'll take it out. This is a true story. And usually when it is told it is told as showing the great humility of the Rosh HaYeshiva, but that is not what the story is really about. What the story is really about is the blindness of middos hashalom of both the husband and the wife. You have to be able to say yes I am right but let's make shalom, let's deal with the situation as it is.

Even the children who are certainly not the bale machloket themselves are caught up in this because of the severity of din. When you have machloket, everything goes according to middos hadin.

We are talking about the machloket of Korach. The Gemara says that the sun and the moon went before Hashem and each one of them had what to say. Master of the World, they said, if Ben Amram is right (speaking about the Korach episode) then we will go out. But if Korach makes him seem wrong, then we will not shine today, we are not going out. So Hashem says to the sun and moon, for the honor of Moshe, a human being, you protest? What about My Honor? I am the one who set up the Bereshis, why are you not protesting for My Honor? Now, where anything sounds like it did not actually happen, don't think it actually happened- most of the times these are parables, so don't try to figure out how exactly the sun and moon speak. This tells us, this maimar, which is really strange because what do the sun and moon have to do with Korach, is how great the power of machloket is in drawing other forces into it. Before we read how great the power of machloket is, bringing in the sun and the moon, let's talk about something more concrete which is getting involved in other people's quarrels. Hashem is saying to the sun and moon, why are you involved with this? Why is this your quarrel? What is the pshat in that? So the power of machloket is that idealism and principles are so engaging that we often take very strong and uncompromising stands on issues that we don't have to be involved in at all. Political issues, for instance. If something is currently an issue and your vote can change it, then by all means it is worth becoming informed and having an opinion. But if something is not current and there is no point in having an opinion because your voice will not be heard in any case, why alienate people by saying you are wrong and I am right? What are you actually gaining by this..I am against those and I am for this. And these ones are right and those are wrong. They have opinions on every possible group and subgroup in the area of Torah Judaism. Why? Why is this necessary? In any case, he says because it has great force. He says the great force of machloket in the spiritual sense is as great as the force of energy that generates continual light, heat and movement in the sun and the moon physically. So he is saying that the sun's continued existence, the continual production of the gases where we don't even have vocabulary to describe this kind of energy, spiritually, machloket has that kind of force. What he says is that in the creation story, which he mentions many times, the name Elokim is used, meaning that Hashem is the Master of Forces. This is called middos haDin, the name Elokim is always used to convey Din. How so? The idea of their being forces is that each one has to have a border. So Hashem moves from His All Encompassing Infinity, created a world by creating limitations and borders between gravity and velocity, hot and cold, times' passage and endurance. There are all sorts of borders that constitute the laws of nature. So nature equals borders and limits. The name Elokim in Gematria is the same as haTeva, nature. Nature equals Din equals borders. That is why Elokim is the name used to convey middos Ha Din, the midda through which Hashem imposes limitations. In the Creation narrative it continually says vayomer Elokim, because as soon as Hashem says let there be this, it is this and it is not that...a border was put into place. He says Shemayim is not the land, these are two separate things. In time, it is yom ha sheini, there is no more infinity. What he is saying is that of all the things in nature that we relate to, the sun and moon are viewed by people on our level as being the source. How so? The most sophisticated form of idol worship is sun worship because the worshippers notice and consider how everything is vivified through energy and how all the energy comes physically from the sun. So the sun has borders, if it had no limitations or borders, if there were too much sun, then we would be burnt. Too little, no possibility of life would be sustained. So you can see that the sun and the moon are for symbols of border making, symbols of limitation, symbols of restriction, and since the beginning of time, they also conceal Hashem. Din is also concealment. In Kol Zeh, the sun and the moon have no tolerance for Korach's machloket. Why? Because its destructive nature would have destroyed the very purpose of existence. Machloket is wrong because it can render natural law irrelevant. Now this is also why Korach died by the earth opening and swallowing him and

his community alive. As you know from Pirke Avos, one of the things that was created Ben Hashamshot was the mouth of the earth. Ben Hashamshot was the time that was not quite Shabbos but not quite ordinary weekday. If it were from Shabbos, it would be above time and space and if it were part of the week it would be totally within time and space. Chol, sand, individual pieces of sand, don't stick together. Kedusha has to do with achdus, this world of chol has to do with pieces, they are not the same at all. Things that were created Ben Hashamshot are things that are both kodesh and chol (seeming separateness, separation, limits). So those that are listed in Pirke Avos are not quite kodesh and not quite chol. Now lets look at the mouth of the earth. What actually happened? The earth opened, but we have testimony of sometimes the earth opening. Those of you from California are aware of the San Andreas fault and terrible geological events that take place there. Now what makes this "p ha aretz" the mouth of the earth is that there wasn't a huge earthquake that left a huge gap. Everywhere else except where Korach was stayed in tact. No shaking, no nothing. So because of that it is called the mouth of the earth. It was as though the earth opened its mouth. But the function of the mouth isn't just to consume, the mouth also breathes and is the instrument we use in speaking. The Maharal explains there that the mouth of the earth is the articulate message of the world. Machloket is too destructive to tolerate. It is the earth's voice, it is the earth's articulation of its purpose.

He explains more about the sun and the moon. The way we measure time is through rotations and revolutions. Through the constant movements involving the luminaries. Otherwise we have no sense of time. So what he says now, and this is a very deep idea, is that the ultimate statement of din, of border-making is time. How so? If something takes place in time, then brevity is what it is all about. Something that happened to a minute ago belongs to that thing called past. Something that is going to happen in five minutes from now has no tangible form. The narrow place in presence is where all existence takes place. Middos HaDin here is the least flexible of any other form of Din. We can never go backwards. The borders are too heavy. Even with teshuva, Hashem heals the damage, but you don't go back. If you killed someone, they are still dead. That wall is so solid, that border is so great, there is absolutely no possibility of change. The same is true for the future. We can envision the future, plan the future, but as long as we are here, right now, our access to the future is limited. I remember once someone was gravely ill, and the doctors gave her two weeks, which of course made her feel terribly distraught. Her husband called up Reb Mattisyahu Salomon and I want you to hear carefully what he said. According to what the doctors see, the prognosis of what will happen is two weeks, they are not lying to you. But they are seeing the present, what the tests look like today, in the present. They are stuck in the present. Everyone is going to die in the world, but no human being really knows the future. Not really. It is not in our hands, and indeed the woman lived considerably longer. Time is the ultimate limitation, but even the limitation of time is nothing compared to the middos Ha Din in machloket. In mackloket, people stretch out middos HaDin, they speak about things they have no business with, so they can enlarge it and make it more strong than it needs to be..

What does peace look like? The sign of peace is quiet. And tranquility. Where does quiet fit in? Machloket in the context that he is describing today is a clash of principles. Silence means that you can have a principle without engaging in various and sundry battles. It is possible to do that. Now that doesn't mean being a morano and hiding who you are. But it does mean not having a need to say "you have to be wrong for me to be right." You can hear someone saying something that you disagree with and say oh, hm. B'emet. And accept that they see things through a different prism, may have uncovered a different facet, and even if you think your view should prevail you have to say but why do I need to say this now. Obviously if there is a practical issue at hand you have to say something. But if there is no practical issue, why say it? What is wrong with shecket?

He completes this part by taking us to an idea that you are familiar with, which is that machloket, since it is the opposite of peace, is going to be very noisy, it is not going to be silent. The sun and the moon which require din, they have laws that govern their behavior in every possible way, say we need these boundaries and machloket (and this is taking us to a whole different mabat) breaks din. You can two different people who are so involved in principle that there is no talking to them. How does machloket break din? He is going to take us into the idea of how machlokets can differ. In Korach's machloket there were not really two sides, Moshe was right and Korach was wrong. If Korach's borders were to be established in any way it would corrupt every border in the world. The world was made for Torah, and if he corrupts that, then the whole system is out. So now we have to learn to differentiate between machloket and machlolet. There are three kinds, machloket where both parties are right and you need someone with a little seichel to make shalom between them. This is the majority. Next, both parties believe themselves to be right because there is something true in what they are saying. It is not just selfishness or bad middos, there is something to be said for each position. However, what they should do, is to question whether they haven't taken something small and overlaid with so many other layers of ego or whatever, that there is no room to move. Now perhaps if they take away all the layers of ego, there will still be two positions. The positions and the differences between them will be small enough to have peace. And this is what we mean when we say don't

say everything. Don't put on layers of machloket unnecessarily. That way you can function. But sometimes you have a situation where there is objective 100% right or wrong. In that case, when you compromise you are not making peace, you are corrupting both pieces of the puzzle. Meaning, the wrong person who is being given enough credence to do what they want will now be an expanded puzzle piece, not the puzzle piece they should be. Conversely, the one who gave into them isn't generous and kind and peacelike, they have taken their puzzle piece and broken it. This third type of machloket bears no compromise. As I said, this is the minority of the machloket that we have to deal with.

What he is saying is that the sun and the moon therefore have to have movement, din, and direction (but it has to be true.) I want to take this principle and move it to child education for a moment even though I imagine most of you don't have children. In Neve, there are many girls who are off the derech and are coming back. I see many off the derech girls who are coming back. Of the ones that I have talked to, I have yet to find a girl who understood and had boundaries who went off the derech to begin with. Girls who don't feel understood feel that they have to discover themselves and write their own scripts. Girls that have no boundaries have no limits. Which mistake do you think is more prevalent? What I find is that it is generational. The younger the parents, the more likely that there are no boundaries, or fewer boundaries. So here is how things work in a home where there are no boundaries. Let's say a child doesn't want to go to school, he had a fall out with his teacher, the teacher said something unpleasant, and he storms out of the house and says I just want to have fun. I need a week off. And he goes to the beach. Comes the end of the week, the parents have understood, the teacher was too severe or whatever, he still doesn't want to go back to school. So the parents say school is school you have to go back, what is the child thinking? There wasn't school last week, what is your problem? If the parents hold their ground, the child will get it. Last week was vacation and now it is not. But what happens in a home where the parents learn Western permissive psychology, is that they tell the child that they are wrong but they won't make them go back to school. They won't say, no money, no bed, no nothing. Back to school. That is it. The parents will yell you are wrong, you are stupid, you are ruining your life – they will take his self-esteem – and turn it into garbage, but in the end they won't do anything to set a boundary, which is a terrible mistake. Why am I talking about this in this context? The sun and the moon – the physical things that make the world move – show us appropriate bounds and limitations. Not Korach. Now remember that Korach felt right. What actually went wrong with Korach? In order to understand what went wrong with Korach and from there how to identify an irredeemable machloket, we will talk about Korach's principles. To do this we have to go back to an earlier idea which is that Hashem created the world with the letters of the Hebrew alpha-bet. The letter through which Hashem created this world is the letter hay. There is a tiny Hay to give it focus, with the letters of yud and hay Hashem formed higher worlds. When you look at the letters that make up the word Korach, you will notice that they are all formed in a way that is similar but distorted from a hay. But first let us understand the letter hay. The hay has a top, an attached side and a detached side. The top is a symbol of spiritual and intellectual realities of this world that make it possible for G-dliness to flourish in this world. Coming down from there comes a leg, called a middos. There is spiritual reality in this world that we have access to that is not just there in the abstract, but that is our tool. Then you have the disconnected leg, gashmius, that doesn't necessarily have any observable connection to G-d or to the world of spirit, unless we incorporate it and make it one letter. The perfected world is where the hay is right inside and encompassed by the top and side and it forms its own letter. Now let's look at kuf. Kuf is very much like hay only with an elongated foot, the gashmi side is elongated. So what we know about Korach is that he was fabulously rich. To him, physical things took on an artificial sort of importance. Wealth made him think of himself as a person who deserves more kovod than what he got. When that is the issue in a machloket, then it is irredeemable. If the machloket is money equals power equals right, you have an irredeemable machloket. Did we ever have machloket like this? All the time. One of the things that people are not aware of historically is how many people converted in Germany before the birth of Reform and Labor and before the redeeming power of Rabbi Hirsch. Large numbers of people converted all for money, there was no pretext of idealism.

Next, Raish. Raish is the same thing and opposite. You have the exact same spiritual side but no world to enact it in. The exact opposite is where a person says that material things have no significance. The world is only transcendental, it has nothing to do with the material. Think of Korach's arguments in halacha – the tallis. He was a complex person, on the one hand the kuf was there but the raish was also there. Then you have the chet. The chet is almost exactly like a hay only there is a connection between the material, the spiritual and the top, meaning that the idealism is used to promote material goals equally to spiritual goals. There is no difference, no number one and then number 2. They are both number 1.

So let's look at fabulously wealthy Korach who wanted to be a Nasi, wanted to be seen as important as he saw himself being. He thought his wealth gave him privilege and purpose, but Hashem also gave him wealth because Hashem saw what a profound personality he had. The Gemara says that there would have been a post called Levi Gadol, just like Kohen Gadol, and Korach would have fit it, Korach should have been

the person of Din, the person who sets borders, but everything within him said be expansive. He saw the future and saw that he would be the ancestor of Shmuel. It set him off. He, by overcoming his yetzer hara for wanting more, could have brought din into the world on the highest possible plane – he missed the boat. Notice the three arguments though. One, the material reality is where it is at, two, materialism is not relevant and ideals don't have to actually be lived, and third you have to put equal emphasis on material goals as with spiritual goals. When these are the principles that are voiced, then machloket is inevitably the end and has to be the end. Let's take this just a little further.

Especially when you consider that in this machloket that Korach was arguing against Moshe who was above the sun, above nature, who doesn't have to follow the rules of nature, only the rules of Hashem, this is why Hashem says you had no respect for my kovod, only for the kovod of bosor vadam, the flesh of man. What does this mean? The only reason Moshe has chashivos is because Hashem gave him the chashivos. More than anyone, who knew this? Moshe, who was the epitome of humility, the transcendental power of nevuah, to split the sea, his ability to give Torah, to speak to Hashem face to face came because of Hashem's will not Moshe's will. What you have to be going out for, says Hashem to the sun and moon, is My kovod. If it is my kovod that you come out, then you come out. Now what does that say to us? We can't lose Hashem in our defensive principles, which happens all the time. You have people speaking lashon hara l'shaim shemayim, you have people ruining other people's reputations l'shaim shemayim, and it really is l'shaim shemayim except that they have lost track of what Hashem's Will is – that Hashem really means what He says.

May we live lives where we can notice which fights are not worth fighting, which ones are worth fighting, and even in the fights that are worth fighting and are necessities, that we are wise and insightful enough to know what weapons can be used so we don't demand justice as though justice is a value in and of itself. Justice just like all of the other middos is an emanation of Hashem's will but Hashem's will as it is revealed to us through Torah, Toras Emes, which incorporates both chesed and din, that is the world to which we have to be alleged and no other.

That is what I will leave you with for this week.