

RABBI SHIMON GRUEN

TORAH LESSONS for the HOME

{ KORACH 5780 }

THE RIGHT WAY TO BE RIGHT

THE FIRST STEP

Korach had some very strong opinions regarding who was supposed to be granted the Kehuna, and he generously shared those opinions to whomever would listen. What followed was the famous rift between the Yidden who sided with Korach versus the ones who remained loyal to Moshe.

Moshe Rabbeinu was 100% right, and he knew it. He heard about the right candidate for every position straight from Hashem, and Korach's argument held no merit in his eyes. Moshe wasn't afraid of Korach, either. He could have just ignored the whole situation and gone about his business, letting Hashem handle it.

Instead, Moshe Rabbeinu attempted to deescalate the fight. He sent for Dasan and Aviram to placate them with words of peace. Rashi clarifies that he did this to avoid participating in a fight.

This teaches us an extremely important lesson. When we find ourselves in a conflict, even if we are 100% undoubtedly right, the onus is on us to try to diffuse the tension and bring about peace.

WHO'S RIGHT?

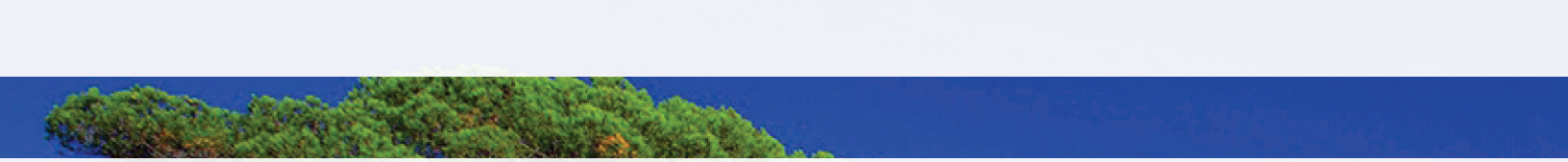
The only things that are always right are Torah and Halacha. So when you have a monetary disagreement with someone, or a conflict of ideas, there's a chance that a precedent has already been set somewhere in the Shulchan Aruch and

poskim, and by looking it up and seeing how that was resolved, you can come up with a resolution for your current problem.

Most of the time, though, the arguments that you have with your family and friends will not be found in the Shulchan Aruch. Disagreements like whose turn it is to take the garbage out, and whether it's too early to leave Great Uncle Nachum's grandson's wedding, are not things you can resolve by looking into your nearest bookcase.

Deciding who is right is up for interpretation.

Naturally, you will think that you are right. You might even have a handful of people behind you who think you're right, too. However, your wife thinks that *she* is right.



And wouldn't you know it, she has *two* handfuls of people who agree with *her*!

Being right is completely subjective. Most arguments are 95% opinions and/or emotions. Facts are very easily twisted to suit our narrative and reflect our perspective. Korach was entirely convinced that he was right! And he didn't only have a handful of people who agreed with him. He had hundreds and hundreds of followers!

When we take a step back, we realize that every person who was ever in a conflict believed that he was right. So being right should not be our objective. The goal is to get ourselves out of the conflict and resolve the disagreement. Moshe Rabbeinu did it, even as he knew – with the greatest certainty – that he was right. We can do it too, especially when we have reason to doubt how right we actually are.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

What can you do to mitigate a conflict? First, apologize. Apologize for any hurt feelings involved, or for any unintended (or intended if there were) insults, critique

or derogatory comments that came up before or during. Apologize for the fact that something you did, said (or someone thought you said or did), caused pain to someone else. And do it sincerely and genuinely, without making anyone feel stupid for “taking it wrong”. You might be under the impression that saying you're sorry means you're weak. But you couldn't be more wrong.

The person who takes initiative and apologizes shows amazing strength of character. Even if he just apologizes for causing a disagreement, without saying that he was in the wrong, he will cause the argument to deescalate, and then everyone will be able to discuss the matter respectfully. Whether you are right or not doesn't matter. As long as you can urge the participants to quit squabbling and start discussing, you are a paragon of strength.

We sometimes stay in a fight for a long time, simply because we want to hold on to the belief that we were right. Asking for forgiveness does not mean taking the blame or admitting defeat. It

is just to show everyone that you want to stop fighting.

What's more, if you don't get yourself used to coming forward and put an end to bickering when you're right, you will have a very hard time doing so when you are actually wrong!

PROMOTE PEACE

When someone comes to tell you that they are caught up in an argument, and they proceed to convince you of how right they are, don't ever encourage them to stick to their guns and keep proving to everyone that they're the one who is right. Instead, make them aware of the dangers of fighting, and convince them to be the bigger man and call off the conflict by diffusing the tension and apologizing.

It goes without saying that you don't have to allow yourself to be stepped on or tolerate abuse. This is about moving on, letting bygones be bygones, even allowing others to hold onto their mistaken opinions, for the sake of peace.

CHINUCH: LET IT GO

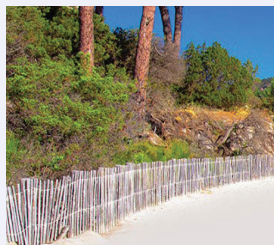
When a child apologizes for doing something wrong,

accept his apology and move on. Don't hang onto your anger or disappointment. Some parents claim that this is how they will get their child to stick to the straight and narrow, but they don't realize that this will only alienate their child. Even if you are right and the child is wrong, don't cause your child excessive pain by refusing to forgive him.

If you tell your child there will be a consequence if he does – or doesn't do – something, and he ends up getting that consequence, let it go. Don't bring up the incident again.

It's not about begging your child for forgiveness or constantly apologizing. It's about not staying stuck in your indignance and negativity.

Moshe Rabbeinu was the leader of Klal Yisroel. He was not obligated to offer up Korach olive branch. And yet, he did it. This was to show us – his disciples – that getting ourselves out of a conflict is always worthwhile.



Q&A

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO SEND
ANY QUESTIONS, ON THIS
TOPIC OR ANY TOPIC TO
RABBIGRUEN@LEHAIR.ORG



QUESTION:

My wife asked me to come with her for a walk, but the timing was not right. So, I told her I was running late and was not able to do so. She became very upset and claimed I don't care about her needs. What could I have done differently?

ANSWER:

When your spouse asks you for something, at first empathize with their request. "You want to go for a walk? What a good idea!" After you have validated their request, you can continue with your objection in a kind way. "Oops, I think it's a bit late for that tonight. I won't be able to make it to my shiur on time. How about we plan to do it tomorrow?"

When your spouse will see that you are on the same page as them, and you want to please them, they will understand why it isn't possible to do it right then. If you dismiss their request out of hand, and in a mocking fashion, they will feel disrespected and upset.

Another good idea if you know there is something your spouse wants, would be to anticipate it and initiate the conversation by offering it yourself. "How would you like to go for a walk sometime? It's a bit late for it tonight, but tomorrow should work for me."

The same thing can be done when a child asks you for something. Instead of shooting down their idea as crazy or impractical, consider it – or pretend to consider it – and then explain to them why it is not such a good idea after all.

When you give the other person the feeling that they matter, and it's just not practical for right now, they will have a much easier time accepting your refusal.