

# How to Cure MACHLOKET

by **Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher**  
Dean of Students, Diaspora Yeshiva

Many American Jewish Groups are now embroiled in a bitter dispute with the Prime Minister and the Government of Israel. We are witness to shocking displays of Sinat Chinam (baseless hatred). Our progressive Jewish brethren in the U.S.A. must realize that the Torah's principles are eternal, even while science, medicine, and technology evolve and progress.

How can we rid ourselves of this baseless hatred and Lashon Hara that appear to be spreading throughout the Jewish World? The Chofetz Chayim offers a profound explanation of the root of Sinat Chinom and Lashon Hara. The catalyst of discord is the focus on points of dissimilarity between us, to the exclusion of the things we have in common. Another person may have many wonderful qualities, but we don't see them because we are so zeroed in on the components of the other person's personality that we detest.

Lashon Hara results from focusing on another's negative traits and not seeing his positive qualities. When we cannot see beyond the things that irk us about his personality, we may feel the need to share those negative feelings with others. The Torah warns that one who speaks Lashon Hara will

be afflicted with Tzoraat. What is the Mida K'neged Mida here (measure for measure punishment)?

A person who has Tzoraat may be 99% healthy. There may be only one small blotch of Tzoraat on his skin. Yet that one blotch renders him a Metzora, totally unclean (TAMEI, ritually defiled). The 1% of afflicted skin completely defines him, just as he defined another person by focusing only on the 1% of his personality that he dislikes.

The Hebrew word MACHLOKET (quarrel and dispute) is derived from the word CHELEK (a part), for one involved in a dispute sees only a part of the entire picture. My Rebbe, Rabbi Avraham Pam זצ"ל, noted that it is our responsibility to constantly espouse the merits and virtues of Klal Yisrael. The Tanna D'vei Eliyahu speaks about the intense pleasure G-d has when we speak kindly of our fellow Jews. Rabbi Pam bemoaned the fact that it is common to hear people speaking about the spiritual degeneration and sinfulness of our times.

However, we must realize that G-d derives no pleasure from such negative speech about our fellow Jews. Rabbi Pam added, "Perhaps this malady is one of the causes of the delaying of Moshiach."

It is analogous to a father who has a wayward son, who causes the father much heartache and grief. If a person approaches the father and tells him about some negative behavior that the son is involved in, it will cause the



father great anguish, even though the father is aware of his son's wicked behavior. However, if the person would tell the father how his son helped and acted kindly to him, the father would be extremely appreciative.

So too, G-d waits to hear words of defense and merit on behalf of Jews, especially by other Jews. G-d does not put any labels on Jews. For Him, there are no Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform Jews. We are ALL His Beloved Jewish People. It is not a matter of being blind to the truth of our faults but a matter of focus and perspective. What do you choose to see? Unless you have the ability to correct and rectify evils that are committed by other Jews, you should not speak negatively and derisively about ANY Jew. Rather, we must seek out our fellow Jews' positive traits and focus on them.

There are undoubtedly many serious challenges and problems confronting the Jewish world. However, there is no shortage of merits that we all possess. It is all a matter of maintaining a proper perspective.

Let us focus on seeing the proverbial glass as half full instead of half empty. Let us learn to agree to disagree with respect and cordiality. 🌸