

מחלוקת

Controversy

The despicable nature of controversy is explicit in the words of our holy Sages. Based on its severity, a person must galvanize himself with great courage and fortitude to distance himself and flee from it, like one who flees from death. Behold, someone who has never encountered the circumstances which engender controversy should not boast. Only about this should one boast: When a person had a very compelling reason to engage in controversy – for example: people sinned against his person, his property, or his honor – and, in spite of this, he remained from those “who are insulted, but do not insult others; who hear their shame and do not respond”, and about whom it is written (Shoftim, 5:31), “... and those who love Him are like the strong emerging sun...” It is well-known that our Sages (Chullin 89a) interpreted the verse (Iyov, 26:7), “He hangs the earth on nothingness...”, as “The world does not exist except in the merit of someone who seals his mouth at the time of controversy.” Due to sin, the “enemy” has become powerful – the evil inclination of controversy incites people to argue over matters of no consequence. In truth, all affairs

are vanity and the vexation of spirit. What does the honor or disgrace that mere mortals confer give or add to a man?

Would that when men argue, one of them – who is G-d-fearing and a pursuer of peace – bring the other to the ways of peace. It is impossible for a controversy to exist with only one contender! But herein lies the problem: When two people argue with each other, they both are equally evil. Each one arrogates, “I am great! Why should I lower myself and remain beneath him?” As a result, the controversy fomented and grows. Behold, our Sages (Sanhendrin 7a) said, “Controversy is like a burst of water – once it broadens the channel, it continues to become bigger.” Would that people be wise, they would understand that the individual who lowers himself in pursuit of peace is the one who ascends higher and higher!

If the evil of controversy is so great when two men argue, how much more so is the evil intensified when there is discord between a husband and wife. It is well-known the extent to which the Sages were attentive and enacted rules because of the ways of peace, especially between a husband and wife. The name of the Holy One Blessed Be He – that was written with holiness – was allowed to be erased in order to secure peace between spouses. From this we should learn how much a man must be willing to endure for the sake of domestic peace. Whenever there is a dispute, the wisdom must come from the greater one and he should rebuke the satan (inciter); one should not embrace controversy, on the contrary, one should love peace and pursue it. All the more so, between a husband and wife, (who is extremely sensitive), it is incumbent upon the “thoughtful” husband to forgive his insult, to humble himself for the sake of the honor of his Maker, and to pursue peace

with all of his strength. This is urgent because the evil of discord within one's house is so great – it causes evil to himself and to his children after him. Woe unto the man who blemishes his offspring – he causes them to be argumentative and the children of passionate hatred!

Therefore, with strength and fortitude a man must seek domestic peace – he will become richer with the increase of the honor of his home. All the more so, a person must avoid an argument against the community. Even if it appears to him that they are trespassing against him and violating the law – justice rests with the them, for G-d is great and does not despise the many. If it is incumbent upon a person to make a protective fence and safeguard in regard to all sins, how much more must he do so in regard to the severe issue of controversy! Just as much as it says (Tehillim, 34:15), "... seek peace and pursue it.", so too, one must distance oneself from discord and flee from before it like one who runs away from fire – because it is fire and consumes to the point of total destruction.

Behold, the majority of discord is found among women. Ten men are able to sit together with love and brotherhood, yet two women are not able to dwell together without controversy. The Sages already said in Avot D'Rebbe Natan, "When you see two white ravens – you see two sisters sitting as one in peace and friendship; however, they arouse dispute among the men. As such, separating them is a benefit for them and for their husbands. Brothers should not dwell together in one house; nor should a daughter-in-law live by her mother-in-law. Immediately when people see words of disagreement approaching, they should separate from each other before the flame of dispute rises, and

afterwards a continuous fire will burn – it will not be extinguished. As a result of controversy, people utter blasphemy and cursing – afterwards, their anger is everlasting. Therefore, a person must hasten his refuge – better one moment too early. One should not be concerned about any large expenses, nor should one be deterred by anyone from seeking resolution because controversy destroys money, body, and soul. Great is peace – that is where G-d commanded the blessing of life forever.

