



# A Taste of Torah Worth Fighting About

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Arguing is as Jewish as gefilte fish and cholent, and while the proverbial three opinions from two Jews may be an inalienable part of our nation's personality, this week's Torah portion sheds a great deal of light as to when one is better off abstaining from pressing his point.

Our Sages make it very clear that Korach's rebellion was a dispute that had no business getting started; his battle is characterized (Ethics of the Fathers, 5, 17) as a machlokes (dispute) that was not for the sake of Heaven, and, thus, was not destined to last. A dispute that is for the sake of Heaven, such as the halachic disagreements between the great sages Hillel and Shammai, were for Heaven's sake, and they exist for all time.

Yet drawing the line between a machlokes that is proper and one that is downright wrong is quite a challenge. Sure, there are times when a disputant is clearly fighting for his own personal agenda; more often, though, the lines are not as clear. What criteria can be used to determine if one is battling for G-d or for himself?

If you've ever had the opportunity

to visit a beis medrash, where Torah scholars toil in understanding the depths of the Torah, you will surely notice that it isn't exactly a library. Shouting, gesticulating, and finger-pointing are the norm. At first glance it seems like these individuals simply cannot get along. Whatever one says, the other disagrees - vehemently. And these people are the pride and joy of the Jewish People!!?

But wait a while. Hang on until the study session is over, and our erudite intellectuals depart from the study hall. You will notice that suddenly, these enemies are now the best of friends! How did that happen?

The answer is quite simple: These people are on a quest for the pure, unadulterated truth. They are willing to scream, yell, and fight to achieve it. And when one person perceives truth from one angle, and another from another angle, it's no-holds barred. But there's one important ingredient: It's not personal. Because the goal is truth, not pride, the battle never becomes personal. These people can fight to the death over a hair-splitting issue, and will never get insulted by each other, because it is an intellectual debate, not an attack on another's person.

## Ask the Rabbi Judging Others

Beth from New Jersey wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I have been working on my observance of lashon hara (negative speech) and judging others favorably, with limited results. Do you have any

suggestions?

Of course the ideal would be to become spiritually wonderful (and the aversion to gossip would come by itself). But, I know that, sometimes, the action has to be forced, and the feelings come later. I just need some tips on the

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## Stories For The Soul

### Finding G-d at West Point

In 1974, Rabbi Asher Wade, a US Army chaplain, befriended a Jewish American officer named Stuart. One day, Rabbi Wade was surprised to find Stuart wearing a yarmulke. Stuart told Rabbi Wade the fascinating story behind it.

As part of their first year studies, cadets were enrolled in a course called "History of Military Tactics & Field Strategies," which surveyed all the major battles in history. At the end of the course, Cadet Stuart asked the general who taught the class why they didn't survey the battles fought by the Jews. The general ordered Stuart to see him in his office after class.

"Do not think that the staff here at West Point has left the Jewish wars unnoticed," began the general. "We do not teach them at West Point. According to military strategy and textbook tactics, the Jews should have lost them. You should have been swept into the dustbin of history long ago.

"This past year, we hired a new junior instructor," the general continued. "During a private staff meeting and discussion, the Arab-Israeli wars came under discussion. We puzzled at how you won those wars. Suddenly, this junior instructor jokingly said, 'Honorable gentlemen, it seems to be quite obvious how they are winning their wars: G-d is winning their wars!' Nobody laughed.

"The reason is, soldier, that it seems to be an unwritten rule around here at West Point that G-d is winning your wars, but G-d does not fit into military textbooks!" said the general.

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## Kollel Happenings

### DERECH HASHEM SERIES MON. NIGHTS

Join Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher for "Derech Hashem: Who is G-d and Why Did He Create the World?", a series for women based on Derech Hashem by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato. The classes are held on Mondays at 7:45 p.m., at EDOS. The class will resume after Pesach break, on April 23rd. For info, contact Mrs. Tzippy Sommers at 303-257-1089 or [pit@denverkollel.org](mailto:pit@denverkollel.org).



### HEART OF THE TORAH - AT AISH OR ANYWHERE

Join Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab and Rabbi Yechiel Erlanger to learn the Ten Commandments - the Heart of the Torah - in depth. This 14-part series will complete the study of the Ten Commandments just in time for the August 1st national and local Grand Siyum Hashas celebrations. Classes are held at Aish & broadcasted via [gotomeeting.com](http://gotomeeting.com). For information, email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855.



### COMMUNITY WIDE SIYUM HASHAS CELEBRATION

The Denver Jewish Community will gather on August 1st, 2012 to honor local Daf Yomi participants and celebrate Torah study in Denver. Celebrate with Denver's own devoted Daf Yomi participants, people who have taught us the meaning of commitment over the past 7 ½ years. To register, or for more information, visit the Kollel's website, [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org), or call 303-820-2800 ext. 7.

## Interpersonal Issues

### If A Lost Item Has No Valid Identifying Marks

In all cases, if one is aware who the owner is, it is recommended that he go beyond the letter of the law and return the item.

*Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)*

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forcing! I have found that, sometimes, the best way to get rid of a bad habit is to sneak up on it.

If anyone has anything that they found worked, I would love to hear it! Thanks for your time!

Dear Beth,

Let's let Rabbi Akiva answer your question. Yes, it's the old "drip on the rock" theory. Rabbi Akiva realized at age forty that just as a sustained trickle of water can carve rock, so too sustained Torah study can change our heart. Solid change can be achieved with constant, daily, study. So, study works about negative speech and judging favorably every day (Examples: "The Other Side of the Story," "Courtrooms of the Mind" and "A Lesson a Day"). Even a few minutes a day will, over the course of time, create a change in you.

And don't forget to judge yourself favorably too. Be happy with any change,

no matter how incremental.

If you find yourself speaking negatively with certain friends, you may need to get different friends. Avoiding people, places and situations that trigger forbidden activity is great way to change one's behavior.

Here's a stratagem to help you feel positive even towards people who annoy you: When you see someone doing something that bothers you, and you think to yourself "What an obnoxious boor," imagine the person as a little baby. Picture his mother's unqualified love for him and her joy as she holds him in her arms. Now try to feel a little bit of that love.

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## Stories for the Soul

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Stuart told Rabbi Wade that he felt humiliated and couldn't believe that he would have to come to West Point to "find out how great my G-d is from a Presbyterian three-star general."

He went back to his room and dug out his yarmulke and said to himself, "This thing is going on my head, because I found, in essence, who I was and

where I came from."

In Parshas Korach, we see the important lesson that G-d runs the world and it is not for us to deride or complain. In fact, we should be happy that G-d is running the world because He is always protecting us, the Jewish people.

*Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.*