

If a person will have on the skin of his flesh a s'eis or a sapachas, or a baheres, and it will become a tzaraas affliction on the skin of his flesh. (13:2)

Lashon hora, slanderous speech, which is the cause of *tzaraas*, is most often the result of envy and controversy in their various states. In the scheme of things, for every dispute among people, every point of contention which catalyzes animus towards one another and the resulting inevitable *lashon hora*, there is one simple point, one solitary position, that would make the controversy dissolve, if the individual would opt for it. If so, the envy dissipates and harmony continues to reign. What has the power to mitigate dispute, to put an end to contention between people? *Vitur*, acquiescence, submissiveness. One who has an accommodating nature, who is compliant and tolerant, will inevitably never be involved in a *machlokes*, controversy. He does not look to promote himself; he is willing to bend, to submit to the will of others. It takes two people to start and maintain a dispute. When one is *mevater*, compliant, he has no one with whom to contend.

Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl, once remarked concerning a dispute that raged between two distinguished people, *Es iz a shad as zei beida vaisin nisht der ziskeit fun zein a mevater*, "It is a shame that neither one knows the sweetness of *vitur*, acquiescence." Furthermore, he was wont to say, "Throughout my life, I have always been *mevater* – and you should know that I never lost out" (due to my submission).

A number of years ago, an episode occurred that received some attention and was recorded by a number of periodicals – *Peninim* included. I take the liberty of repeating it because of its capacity to inspire. **Rav Eliyahu Mann**, who serves as a close student and aide to **Horav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita**, was asked by a man to set up a special appointment with *Rav Kanievsky*. Apparently, his daughter was engaged to a fine *ben Torah*, with the wedding date set for three weeks from then. That day, they had been informed by the *chosson's* parents that their son was ill with the dread disease and would require treatments for some time. They asked the *Gerrer Rebbe* to advise them with regard to the wedding plans. The *Rebbe* replied that this was a difficult question. The only person who could render a *halachic* response consistent with Torah dictate is *Rav Chaim Kanievsky*. The meeting was arranged.

The next morning, the *chosson* and his parents, together with the *kallah* and her parents, met with *Rav Chaim*, who listened to the two sides. The *chosson* claimed that, since he would have to undergo painful and, at times, debilitating treatments, it was not fair that the *kallah* should have to be subjected to such a relationship during the first year of their marriage. The *kallah*, however, claimed that it was not proper that such a distinguished *ben Torah* as her *chosson* should be compelled to suffer alone through such an ordeal.

When *Rav Chaim* heard the two sides of the "dispute," he immediately rendered his decision: they should get married on the designated date, and they should be blessed to build a *bayis ne'eman*, a

true Jewish home, committed to the Torah and a glory to Hashem. As soon as the *Rav* rendered his decision, all the parties present broke into tears of joy, knowing that the wedding would go on as planned.

On the day of the wedding, *Rav* Eliyahu suggested to *Rav* Chaim that perhaps they should attend the wedding. After all, the *Rav* had played a critical role in preserving the *shidduch*, match. *Rav* Chaim agreed. The arrival of *Rav* Chaim at the wedding created quite a stir, since it was highly unusual for him to attend any affairs. He sat with the *chosson* for a few minutes, then rose and danced with him. Following the dance, *Rav* Chaim bid the *chosson* and *kallah mazel tov* and wished them well. As *Rav* Chaim walked from the hall to the waiting car, he was accompanied by the *chosson* and *kallah* and all of the guests.

When they returned home, *Rav* Eliyahu asked *Rav* Chaim the reason for his decision that the young couple not delay their wedding. *Rav* Chaim replied, "It is an explicit *Midrash* (*Bereishis Rabbah* 33:1). In its commentary to the *pasuk* (*Bereishis* 7:11), the *Midrash* addresses the concept of the judgment that is rendered by Hashem. A story is quoted in which Alexander of Macedonia visited a far-away country for the purpose of studying their judicial system. A case presented itself in which two litigants came before the ruler (who was also the judge) with the following dispute: One person sold a ruin, in which the buyer later discovered a hidden treasure. The buyer claimed that he had purchased a ruin – not a treasure. The seller claimed that he had sold the *churbah*, ruin, with whatever may be in it. The ruler rendered the following decision. He asked one of them, "Do you have a son?" He replied in the affirmative. After confirming that the other litigant had a daughter, he suggested that the two children marry one another and share in the treasure.

Alexander, of course, took issue with this judgment, saying that he would have had both litigants killed and the treasure reverted to the king. The ruler of the country countered that, if it rains in Alexander's kingdom, it is only in the merit of the animals. The human beings are not worthy of blessing – if this is how judgment is rendered in his country.

Rav Chaim commented that we derive from this *Midrash* that, when two people are each out to be *mevater*, to acquiesce to one another, the only way to "solve" their "dispute" is through a matrimonial match in which they will now share together as one. "Therefore," concluded *Rav* Chaim, "I advised the young couple to marry – in compliance with the sage advice of *Chazal*."