

Moshe sent forth to summon Dathan and Aviram, bnei Eliav, but they said, “We shall not go up!” (16:12)

Two words: discord and disagreement, both begin with the same letter – “D,” but the words could otherwise not be further apart. Discord is the result of a disagreement in which one or both factions take it personally. Our *parsha* presents a classic case in which one side made every attempt to ameliorate a disagreement but did not succeed, since the other side was insistent on taking it to the next level.

When Korach rebelled against Moshe *Rabbeinu*, he was joined by Dathan and Aviram, Moshe’s nemeses. Our leader did everything to appease them to the point that he sent a messenger to Dathan and Aviram, inviting them to come speak with him. They refused. Undeterred, Moshe went to them to make a final plea for peace. Korach was intractable, but, perhaps his followers, individuals who would continue to remain followers (as opposed to achieving any leadership for themselves), stood firm in their rebellion. Their obstinacy was their downfall.

Moshe could have easily ignored Dathan and Aviram. These men had been bothersome to him from their first meeting in Egypt, when Moshe attempted to put a stop to their squabbling with one another. Nonetheless, Moshe did everything to placate them. If it would engender peace, then it would be worth the personal denigration.

Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl, observes that while it is highly commendable that one attempt to emulate Moshe’s behavior, the ability to disagree without arguing on a personal level is no easy task. It is not uncommon that when two people (or more) disagree, their difference of opinion quickly snowballs into hostilities which bring about an end to a relationship that had been cultivated over a period of years. Their differences have now become personal. One might question how a close relationship that had been nourished over years could so quickly become a thing of the past. When personal feelings are hurt, people respond atypically.

A Torah disagreement that led to the founding of a second *yeshivah* occurred when *Horav Baruch Ber Leibowitz, zl*, disagreed with *Horav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, zl*, (the *Alter m’Slabodka*) concerning the study of *Mussar*, ethical character refinement. *Rav* Baruch Ber felt that *Mussar* should be derived from full-time Torah study. He saw no need to set aside time for a *Mussar seder*. *Rav* Nosson Tzvi, being a disciple of *Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl*, the founder of the *Mussar* movement, was of the opinion that the average Jew needed to complement his Torah study with specific time set aside for the purposeful study of *Mussar*. As a result of their disagreement *l’shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven, the *Alter* left *Knesses Bais Yitzchak* (*Rav* Baruch Ber’s *yeshivah*) and establish his own *yeshivah*, *Knesses Bais Yisrael*. *Rav* Baruch Ber did not take offense. In fact, he took one of the *Alter*’s primary students as a son-in-law. They had a dispute, but their disagreement was not personal.

Rav Wolbe cites a well-known vignette concerning *Horav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zl*, who stated at his *rebbetzin's* funeral that he and his *rebbetzin* had lived in harmony throughout their entire marriage. Therefore, he felt he had no need to ask forgiveness of her *neshamah*. Sometime later, *Rav Shlomo Zalman* met one of his recently married students. He questioned him on how his marriage was going. The response was overly positive. "Things are great, my wife and I never argue," the young man replied. *Rav Shlomo Zalman* asked if they were both well. When the student responded in the affirmative, *Rav Shlomo Zalman* looked pensive. "*Rebbe*, what is wrong? We are both healthy. We never argue. What more can we ask for?"

Rav Shlomo Zalman explained that it is not normal for a husband and wife not to have disagreements. (Two people; two varied mindsets; often two different backgrounds.) It is not unusual that arguments will ensue. "But did the *Rebbe* not say at the *rebbetzin's* funeral that he did not have to ask his wife for forgiveness?"

"Absolutely," replied *Rav Shlomo Zalman*. "Our disagreements did not impact our personal relationship. Thus, there was no reason to beg forgiveness."

There is no such thing as a life without disagreement. Our focus must be to see to it that the differences of opinion we have with others never become personal, never reach the point of discord.