

SCHEDULE

שבת קדש

Mincha Erev Shabbos	→	7:00 PM
ON TIME SHABBOS:		8:18 PM
Daf Yomi- By R' Motty Rabinowitz		7:30 AM
Shacharis-Followed by Kiddush		8:30 AM
-Sof Zman K"Z-	מ"א 8:48 <	9:24 א"ג
Guest Speaker— R' Elchanan Oberstein		
Pirkei Avos - By R' Moshe Grossberg		7:30 PM
Mincha - Followed by Shalosh Seudos		8:20 PM
Guest Speaker—Dovid Barer		
Maariv -		9:27 PM

Weekday Minyanim & Shiurim

Sunday

Daf Yomi- By R' Teichman	7:30 AM
Shacharis	8:30 AM

Mincha / Maariv	8:25 PM
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Monday - Friday

Daf Yomi- By R' Teichman	5:45 AM
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Shacharis

Monday, Thursday	6:40 AM
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Tues., Wed., Fri.	6:45 AM
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Mincha (Mon-Thur)	1:45 PM
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Mincha/Maariv	8:25 PM
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Maariv (Mon-Thur)	9:45 PM
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**Rabbi Teichman's Thursday Night
Shiur After Maariv**

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And the Entire Teichman Family
On the birth of a Grandson to
Shulamis & Yossi Teichman!*

מ-ת-ת-ת-ת-ת

Shul Contacts

@OhelMosheBaltimore.com

Rabbi Teichman

410-570-3333 or ravzt@hotmail.com

Gabaim:

Naftali Miller (Rishon) & Yossi Frydman (Sheni)- Gabbai@

Lainig Schedule:

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CONGREGATION OHEL MOSHE
2808 SMITH AVE
BALTIMORE, MD 21209
WWW.OHELMOSHEBALTIMORE.COM
DAVEN@OHELMOSHEBALTIMORE.COM
(410) 878-7521

Issue#239

Fatal Distraction

When all efforts to quash the rebellion of Korach by directly confronting him fail, Moshe makes a last ditch attempt for reconciliation by appealing to the other antagonists, his old nemeses, Dasan and Aviram, to meet with him, with hopes of rapprochement.

Although they immediately assert (לא נעלה במדבר טו ב), *We will not go up!*, they feel compelled to lash out against Moshe with stinging criticism.

More or less echoing Korach's central accusation of (שם טו ג) *Why do you exalt yourself over the congregation of God?*, they indignantly exclaim כי תשתרר עלינו (שם טו ג), *yet you seek to dominate us, even to dominate further.*

The Torah, however, goes on to devote two full verses in recording their entire scathing tirade against Moshe.

What significance is there in depicting these details? Moshe doesn't even respond to them directly, as he did earlier to Korach. What then could be the purpose of our hearing these harsh but vacuous complaints, that evidently merited no response?

At what point did Moshe realize there was indeed no more hope for any appeasement?

Dr. John Mordechai Gottman, a kippa clad, world renowned relationship therapist, has studied thousands of couples for over two decades. Through his observations he has discovered a pattern by which one can predict, with 94% accuracy, whether a relationship will survive.

Generally the theory states that as an argument develops, the following sequence of reactions will ensue, not necessarily but often in the following order:

Criticism: Attacking the other person's personality or character, usually with the intent of making someone right and someone wrong.

Contempt: Attacking the other person's sense of self with the intention to insult or psychologically abuse them.

Defensiveness: Seeing and portraying oneself as the victim, warding off a perceived attack.

Stonewalling: Withdrawing from the relationship as a way to avoid conflict.

In each stage, what one is doing is creating distance. Whereas complaining is a valid way to constructively work out differences, criticizing destroys and transforms a concern into an attack, thus escalating the "battle" and tensions. Contempt is usually evident by the use of insults, sarcasm and tone of voice. Defensiveness is apparent when we make excuses or counter complain, seeking instinctively to play the "victim", not willing to see the other side or take any responsibility. Finally, stonewalling is total withdrawal, often displayed by stony silence and a total unwillingness to "engage".

In a remarkable parallel the Torah reveals for us these elements in the disastrous "final" encounter between Moshe and the provocateurs Dasan and Aviram.

Central to Dasan and Aviram's complaint was their first "criticizing" Moshe by accusing him of being an arrogant dictator whose selfish goal was a quest for dominance.

They also laced their grievance with mocking "contempt".

When complaining about their being taken out of Egypt by Moshe to die in the desert, they describe their being plucked from a "land flowing with milk and honey", a sarcastic reference to Moshe's description earlier of this special quality that he alleged is unique to the promised land.

They also derisively mimic Moshe's exhortation to Korach. When Moshe confronted Korach earlier, he emoted: (שם טו ח) *"Is it not enough for you that the god of Israel has segregated you from the assembly of Israel to draw you near Himself, to perform the service... and to stand... to minister to them?"*

With scorn in their voice, Dasan and Aviram respond similarly to Moshe: *המעט כי חעליינו* "Is it not enough that you have brought us up from a land flowing with milk and honey to cause us to die in the wilderness...?"

Clearly intending to cynically mock Moshe's words, they contemptuously place an additional barrier of fatal distance between them.

With one last flourish in this sweeping indictment against Moshe, Dasan and Aviram intimate an implied threat by Moshe to gouge out their eyes, thereby casting themselves as defenseless victims at the mercy of the "manipulative" Moshe. They deviously cry out: *"Even if you would gouge out the eyes of those men*

(euphemistically referring to themselves)- רש"י we shall not go up!"

Why did they choose this strange method of penalty, the gouging of their eyes, as an example of a possibly feared punishment that could not even prod them to make peace with Moshe? They should have simply stated; "even if you threaten us with death we will not succumb to you!"

There are two episodes in *Tanach* where individuals had their eyes routed. Shimshon, when taken captive by the Plishtim, has his eyes gouged, as well as Tzidkiyahu, the last king of Yehuda, whose eyes were removed by Nevuchadnetzer. In each case it was a symbolic act of degradation and enslavement.

We find a similar sentiment when the people of the town of Yaveish seek to make a pact with Nachash the ruler of Ammon to serve him, and he makes it conditional on each one of them to put out their right eye. (שמואל א יא א)

Herod as well, forces out the eyes of his Jewish advisor, Bava ben Buta in an act of submission. (בבא בתרא ג.)

In ancient times captives were blinded as a sign of servitude. (קדמוניות ההלכה פ"ב.)

Dasan and Aviram were seeking to portray themselves as unfortunate victims of Moshe, implying his imposition of dictatorial authority over them. Even their euphemistic reference to themselves as "יהאנשים", "those men", is a sinister attempt to remove any association of self guilt, as if they were just random victims of Moshe's wrath and rule.

This is the ultimate mode of defensiveness, removing any responsibility for their actions, foisting all the blame on the evil other who is constantly out to get you.

After initially reacting, "We will not go up!", Dasan and Aviram nevertheless feel compelled to respond and they launch their verbal assault on Moshe. At the conclusion they repeat with resoluteness once again, "We will not go up!", laying the last brick in the "Stonewall" that will now leave no hope for any resolution. The moment one chooses to disengage is the portent the relationship is doomed.

Moshe defends himself when he proclaims incredulously: לא חמור אחד מהם נשאתי ולא (שם טו ט) *"I have not taken even a single donkey of theirs, nor have I wronged even one of them."*

The placement of Moshe's defense, however, is critically instructive. He didn't seek to justify his actions to Dasan and Aviram, because regardless of innocence it wouldn't be purposeful. When someone is upset, defensiveness merely cements the divide, it shows you aren't sensitive.

His words were directed to God, (שם) *and he said to God, even a single donkey...*

Every person is entitled to and must take inventory of his actions, assuring they are purely motivated, it just has to take place in the right context, where it can serve its purpose.

After Dasan and Aviram's final, "We will not go!", Moshe realizes the relationship is done. Moshe reacts: (שם) *This distressed Moshe greatly.* Rashi teaches that it doesn't mean he was angry, only pained.

The Midrash (תנחומא ו) says that Moshe's predicament can be compared to a person who is arguing and lodging a complaint against his friend, if he responds he has great satisfaction, but if he ignores him and remains silent, he feels much anguish.

Dispute helps bring people together, provided one complains without blame, validates the others feelings, takes responsibility and stays engaged and does not retreat.

A seemingly purposeless presentation of a one-sided diatribe reveals for us the elements of relationships that are vital for survival. No wonder the Torah records with great accuracy this account of Dasan and Aviram, so we may learn a lesson.

May we ponder all our relationships and seek the means to improve them.

After all is said and done this the ultimate goal in life, to achieve *שלום*, peace.

As our Rabbis have taught, *אם אין שלום אין כלום* (ספרא בחוקתי א), without peace we have nothing!

באתבה,
צבי טייכמאן



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