

Parshat Korach 5777

A Sweet Story – with a powerful message

Rabbi Reisman relates a true story which is brought down in Rav Druk's Sefer that speaks about the מצות לא תעשה in this week's Parsha of not being like Korach and his congregation. In other words, we should avoid a Machlokes at all costs.

Rav Druk tells the story that happened in Yerushalayim many decades ago. There was a Jew who had saved up money and his entire fortune was invested in a Golden Napoleon which historically was a fortune of money. It was a coin which a person used in times when there were no banks and it was a respected currency. It was a fortune that a person invested into a coin and travelled with it on his journeys. This Jew owned such a coin and he also had a young son who had heard that recently lollipops had been introduced to Yerushalayim and as most children he was no exception. He wanted a lollipop.

One day he chanced upon his father's Golden Napoleon and not really recognizing how important or valuable it might be, after all it was only a coin. He went to Amram the local grocer and bought a lollipop for that Golden Napoleon and brought home his "treasure". His parents saw him enjoying this sweet and asked him about it. The child responded that he had bought it from Amram the grocer. They asked him who had given him the money to buy it and he said that he had found the coin in this and this location in the house.

The parents checked the "hidden" location and realised that their Golden Napoleon was now missing. They ran to Amram and asked him did you sell our son a lollipop? He gave you a Golden Napoleon and you gave him a lollipop? Amram said that he didn't give me a Golden Napoleon he gave me a regular copper coin which was the cost of a lollipop. They were indignant and said that he took the Golden Napoleon. They challenged Amram and said you are lying and you are a thief.

They summoned Amram to Beis Din. As it is recorded there, each side told its story and Beis Din paskened that this person Amram was a Modeh B'miktzas (he had partly admitted the claim). The Halachik implications of that is not part of this discussion. Beis Din paskened that Amram had to make an oath to back up his claim. Amram had no choice because he didn't have a Golden Napoleon and so Amram swore. The city was in an uproar, a Golden Napoleon had been taken by Amram. They believed the owner of the Golden Napoleon and not Amram. Not

only did he steal it but he swore falsely. Needless to say, Amram didn't have many customers after that. The town made a tumult and his business went down, he was embarrassed. He was held to be a thief.

A number of months later a gentleman knocked on the door of the man who originally owned the Golden Napoleon and said that he had a confession to make. A few months ago I was desperate. I didn't have money to feed my family and they were starving. I saw your son waking with a Golden Napoleon and first I thought to myself I should rescue that coin as he is going to lose it and I should return it to its rightful owner.

I then took the Golden Napoleon from him and traded it for a copper coin, he didn't realize the difference and I had intended to return it. Then I thought, my family is starving. Let me buy them food and I will make some money and return it tomorrow. Months have passed and finally I put together the money to return it to you. The man was dumbfounded. He now realized that Amram the grocer was in fact an honest man and that he had been put to shame for no reason.

Says Rav Druk, in heaven who gets Gehinnom? Is it the owner of the Golden Napoleon. He had done nothing wrong. He argued in Beis Din what he thought was the true position. Was it Amram the grocer? He too was perfectly honest and was the victim, or was it the man who took the Golden Napoleon Shelo K'din? But after all, he only borrowed it because his family was starving and eventually paid it back and he did Teshuvah.

You know who gets Gehinnom asks Rav Druk?

All the people in town that made the tumult over the quarrel that did not involve them. It was a fight that was none of their business. The people who came and in some self-righteous flow defended who they thought to be the victim. They are the ones who go to Gehinnom. They are people who get involved in a Machlokes in which they have no business. This can be in a community, or a Shul, sometimes on the street or in business.

It can and does happen that people have disputes or disagreements. If one does hear of this, the answer is to go to the other side of the Shul. Don't get involved when there is a Machlokes. Stay away from it. It is a Riv Shelo Lachem. What a lesson for all of us.