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Torat Imecha
NACH YOMI

בס"ד

Division, Debate and Koach HaDibbur

The division of the kingdoms of Israel was a cataclysmic event that continues to reverberate in our contemporary era. The Maggid of Mezeritch, the primary disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, taught that since the division of Malchut Beit David, there is no one who introduces a teaching of Torah or Avodat Hashem without someone offering an opposing view. The origins of *machloket*, of the intellectual argument that characterizes our study of Torah Shebe'al Peh, the Oral Law, lie in the splitting of the Malchut.

Hazal trace the roots of the division of the Malchut to an earlier episode, in which upon David HaMelech's return to Yerushalayim after Avshalom's rebellion was successfully quelled, he encountered Mephiboshet, the son of Yonatan, who had come out to greet him. Previously, upon David's departure from the city, Mephiboshet's servant Tziva had met

David with the report that his master had allied himself with Avshalom, a report which Mephiboshet now assiduously denied. David was in a quandary, for upon hearing Tziva's report he had decreed that all that belonged to Mephiboshet be transferred to Tziva. When he heard Mephiboshet's account of his enduring loyalty to David, David decreed that the property be split between the two. Hazal teach that at that moment, a heavenly voice emerged and stated that Rechav'am and Yerov'am would split the kingdom between them. The gemara continues: Rabbi Yehudah taught in the name of Rav - Had David not accepted the slander of Tziva, the malchut would not have been split, the Jewish people would not have worshipped Avodah Zarah and we would not have been exiled from our land.

The division of the malchut is inextricably linked to the power of speech. The Zohar, in a passage that explains the *sefirot* in correspondence with parts of the body, likens Malchut to the mouth. This idea is explained further through a pasuk in Kohelet: בְּאֵשׁ דָּבַר מֶלֶךְ שְׁלֹטוֹן - The words of the king are authoritative. An effective king rules by the decree of his mouth; thus, his power of speech must be under careful control. Misuse of the power of speech can have disastrous consequences. While this is true for all kings, it is especially

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true of David HaMelech, whose extraordinary power of speech still provides us with daily inspiration in our Avodat Hashem.

The Zohar provides the basis for the teaching of the Maggid mentioned earlier. Since Malchut is associated with the power of speech and argument, there is an inherent relationship between Malchut and Torah Shebe'al Peh. The ability to respectfully communicate and debate ideas is critical to our understanding of the Torah and of one another. The splitting of the Malchut between Rechav'am and Yerov'am was a direct result of an argument in which personal dignity was placed above the integrity of the institution of Malchut. Had Rechav'am listened to the elders, he might have built a relationship with the people he led, establishing connection rather than leading to rupture. So too today, when we debate ideas within the Jewish nation, we must strive to do so respectfully and in unadulterated pursuit of Truth, with a desire to connect with, rather than distance the other.

The Ozherover Rebbe, Rav Moshe Yechiel Halevi Epstein zt"l, teaches that true understanding of Torah is dependent upon rectifying our power of speech. In the bracha preceding Kriyat Shema, Ahavat 'Olam (Nusach Sfarad), we conclude with the following request: וְקִרְבָּתֵנוּ מִלִּפְנֵי שְׂמֵךְ הַגְּדוֹל סֵלָה בְּאַמֶּת

בְּהַקְרָבָה לְהוֹדוֹת לָךְ - You have brought us close, **our King**, to Your great Name in absolute truth and with love, that we may give thanks to you... Similarly, at the end of Shmoneh Esrei, we pray that Hashem preserve us from evil speech, followed by a request that He open our hearts to Torah. Malchut, speech and Torah are inherently intertwined.

As we repeatedly encounter the refrain declaring that a state of war existed between the two kingdoms of Israel, let us bear in mind the roots of that conflict, and contemplate how the misuse of our power of speech perpetuates the divisions in our contemporary community. May Hashem grant us success in our attempt to effectively communicate respectfully with others as we await the renewed kingdom of Beit David. ■

Mrs. Leah Feinberg is a master educator who taught at the SKA High School for Girls in Hewlett for twenty-one years, also serving as Tanach Department chairperson and New Teacher Mentor. Leah is currently on the faculty of the OU Israel Center and has taught in all three cycles of the OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi program

In the **OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi series**, which just began its fourth cycle, women scholars deliver a daily shiur on the books of Prophets (Neviim) and Writings (Ketuvim) at the pace of a chapter a day. Shiurim are geared toward learners of all levels who would like to participate in the two-year Nach Yomi study cycle. Visit the OU Women's Initiative to register for additional content.



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