

# FOREFATHERLY FORESHADOWING

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

*These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 198, Ethiopian Jewry Question. Good Shabbos!*

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## The Negative Actions of The Fathers Also Foreshadow

I would like to share an excerpt from the writings of the Chofetz Chaim. Part of the Chofetz Chaim's writings include a work called "Gate of Remembrance" (Sha'ar haZechira), in which he writes about the types of sins that a person should be very careful to avoid.

The Chofetz Chaim devotes two or three chapters to what he calls "a very severe sin" -- the sin of divisiveness (machlokes). The Chofetz Chaim writes that divisiveness is one of the most destructive sins that a person can transgress, both literally and figuratively.

The Chofetz Chaim quotes the Medrash from Korach, which states that normally the Heavenly Court only punishes sinners from age 20 and up, while the "Courts below" punish sinners from bar/bas mitzvah. But in the case of the machlokes of Korach even young infants were punished and swallowed up by the earth. Machlokes, which was Korach's sin, not only destroys a person and his family -- it even destroys his very small children.

On numerous occasions, we have discussed the positive aspects of the concept that "the actions of the fathers foreshadow the actions of the children". For example, Avraham is the paradigm of Chesed. We have many positive paradigms among the Biblical personalities. However, there are also negative paradigms. This week, we will examine a negative aspect of the concept "ma'aseh avos siman l'banim". The paradigms of divisiveness are Dathan and Aviram [two of the leading antagonists in Korach's group]. The heritage of machlokes -- and what it can do to a person -- stems from these two individuals.

The Chofetz Chaim writes -- and this is so true -- that in addition to all the other sins associated with machlokes (slander, jealousy, hatred, embarrassing people publicly, etc.), machlokes always degenerates into "I am going to win this thing". And this evil inclination called "I've got to win"

inevitably leads to the most destructive of outcomes.

The Chofetz Chaim comments upon an amazing thing: if someone would try to cause the slightest harm to a person's child, the parent would stop at nothing to prevent the child from being harmed. So if a person becomes involved in a machlokes, and he is aware that we have a tradition that divisiveness will harm his or her children -- wouldn't any person with any common sense try to make peace, and stop the argument?

But the evil inclination of machlokes causes people to feel that nothing else matters, other than "I've got to make my point."

Rabbi Berel Wein once related a mind-boggling incident which involved the Chofetz Chaim himself:

Two people became involved in an argument, and it grew and grew and grew. It became ugly and messy and consumed their lives and affairs. And then, mysteriously, the children of the two antagonists started dying. It happened just like it is "supposed" to happen -- just like it happened with Dassan and Aviram. The Chofetz Chaim himself went to one of the parties involved and asked, "Don't you think it is time to stop? This is harming your children already!"

Rabbi Wein said in the name of the Chofetz Chaim that the person answered as follows: "I will bury all of them, but I am going to win." That is the power of machlokes! A person becomes so obsessed that nothing else matters other than winning. "Winning IS everything."

This is the lesson of Parshas Korach. When we read that Dassan and Aviram were swallowed up WITH THEIR CHILDREN -- this is the 'actions of the fathers that foreshadow the actions of the sons'. All of us can claim that we are the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. The question is, do we also want to be considered the descendants of Dassan and Aviram? Is that part of our ancestry? If it is, that type of heritage exacts, Heaven Forbid, a terrible cost -- it takes him down and it takes his children down as well.

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## Glossary

**machlokes** -- divisiveness

**ma'aseh avos**-- the actions of the fathers...

**siman l'banim** -- foreshadow (the actions of) the sons

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#198). The corresponding halachic portion for this tape is: The Ethiopian Jewry Question. The other halachic portions for Korach from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are:

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