

# VOV OF CONNECTION-VOV OF DIVISION

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

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*This Dvar Torah was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #64, 'The Yarmulka: At Home and In the Office'.  
Good Shabbos!*

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**Dedicated This Year Le'eluy Nishmas Chaya Bracha Bas R. Yissocher Dov  
In memory of Mrs. Adele Frand**

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## **The Double Vov: Sometimes a Vov of Connection, Sometimes of Division**

Parshas Pinchas begins with the conclusion of the incident that occurred at the end of Parshas Balak. In an act of zealous jealousy for G-d (Kanaim pog'im bo), Pinchas killed both a Jewish tribal leader and a Midianite woman while they were publicly engaged in an act of sexual immorality.

In the beginning of this week's parsha, the Torah grants Pinchas "The Covenant of Peace" (es Brisi Shalom) as a reward for his action. The letter "vov" [the sixth letter of Hebrew alphabet] in the word Shalom is split (vov k'tiah), as if there are two vovs, one on top of the other. What is the symbolism behind this unique vov?

Throughout the description of Creation, the Torah concludes each day with the comment, "And the L-rd saw that it was good." Chazal note, however, that at the conclusion of the second day of Creation, when G-d split the waters [Genesis 1:6] (between the waters above and below the "Rakiah" -- the firmament), the Torah omits that comment. The Rabbis explain that the reason for this omission is that the splitting of the waters marked the first time in history that there was division (Machlokes). Prior to this act, there was Unity in the world; now there was Division. Regarding

"Machlokes" [literally: Argument] we can never say "It was good".

Chazal elaborate: If this original Division, which enabled establishment of the world, could not be described as "Ki Tov" [it was good], then certainly regular disputes, even with the noblest of motives, cannot be described as "Tov".

However, there appears to be a contradiction to this Chazal from the very same parsha in Bereishis. G-d divided between the Light and the Darkness, and the pasuk [verse] there immediately comments, "And the L-rd saw that it was good" [Genesis 1:18].

Rav Shlomo Breuer resolves this contradiction with a beautiful insight: He quotes the verse "...Truth and Peace you shall love" [Zechariah 8:19]. We must love Peace. However, there is something that comes before Peace... and that is Truth. As much as we emphasize the importance of Shalom [peace], in the final analysis Shalom is important up to a certain point -- and that is the point of Emes [truth]. A person should not make Shalom if making Shalom is going to compromise the Emes, by causing him to throw out principles and values that he knows to be Emes.

The Mishnah [Uktzin 3:12] states "G-d did not find any vessel to hold Blessing, other than the vessel of Peace". Shalom is the receptacle; it is the vessel that holds everything; but a person sometimes has to look and ask himself, "what am I left holding?" If I compromise everything in the name of Shalom, then what is this vessel of Shalom left holding? It is holding nothing. Yes, Peace, but remember the sequence of the verse: Truth and (then) Peace you shall love.

Now we can understand the difference between the Separation between "the waters and the waters" (the Rakiah) and the Separation between "Light and Darkness". In the case of the Rakiah, there was no real difference between the waters above and the waters below. The division was merely for the sake of division. While the division was necessary for the welfare of the world, inherently it had no purpose. Therefore, the verse does not say "Ki Tov". However, separation between the Light and the Darkness -- between something that represents good and something that represents bad; between something that is right and something that is wrong -- that is a division about which we can indeed say "Ki Tov".

Pinchas did not seek out compromise with Zimri and Kozbi in the name of Peace. Pinchas knew that there is a point at which a person must draw the line and say "here, and no further!" That is an example of "between Light and Darkness".

Now we can understand why the vov of Shalom is split: Yes, Shalom is important, but there are two kinds of Shalom. The "vov" can sometimes be a "vov haChibur" -- a vov that connects [the vov used as a conjunctive "and"] and sometimes the "vov" can be used for distinction as a letter which divides, a vov of "machlokes", of division.

That is why the "vov" of Shalom is split. When pursuing the cause of Shalom, a person must remember that there are two vovs. Sometimes the "vov haChibur" is appropriate and he should say,

"Yes, here it is worthwhile to compromise". However, sometimes the "vov of chiluk" -- of separation - is appropriate. Sometimes in the name of Shalom, a person must say "No, machlokes is better than Shalom at \_any\_ price".

The Chasam Sofer takes note of the fact that the language of the Mishneh [Avot 1:12] is "Loving Peace and Pursuing [Rodef] Peace". Usually the connotation of the word Rodef means one who pursues (for the sake of harming). The Chasam Sofer notes that sometimes in the name of Peace, we must be a Pursuer of Peace. When Pinchas was trying to kill Zimri, he was indeed a Rodef (a pursuer), but sometimes that is what is in fact necessary in the name of Shalom.

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Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.  
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