

B”H

The Tragedy of Strife

How Fighting Destroys Families, Communities, and Nations

By Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson

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Dedicated by **David** and **Eda** Schottenstein  
in the loving memory of  
Rabbi **Gavriel Noach** and **Rivki Holtzberg**  
and all of the **Mumbai Kedoshim**

And in the loving memory of a young soul  
**Alta Shula Swerdlov**  
Daughter of Rabbi **Yossi** and **Hindel Swerdlov**

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Dedicated by **Roberta Schorr**
in honor of her **children** and **grandchildren**

Dedicated by **Ahron Fishbein** and family
in honor of **Faiga** bas **Ahron** for her 4th birthday
And in honor **Moshe** and **Rachely Rosenfeld**

Dedicated by **Robert Dick**
in honor of **Shnuer Zalman Dick**
on the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah on the 4th of Elul 5770

Dedicated by **Alex J. Fettman**

Dedicated by **Yanina Weiser Shenkman**
in the merit of **Zacharia** Ben **Zelda Rivka** for a complete recovery

Dedicated by Rabbi **Zalman Gutnick**
Melbourne, Australia

Dedicated by **Elki Rosenfeld**
in honor of the birth of a baby boy **Yisroel** to **Chani** and **Shmuly Rosenfeld**
And the birth of a baby girl **Chana** to **Rachely** and **Moshe Rosenfeld**

Dedicated by **Sofya Smolyar**
in honor of **Yosef** ben **Miriam**

Parshas Shoftim

Dedicated by **Vera Schwarcz**
in honor of **Levana Bat Hana**

Dedicated by **Martha Wasserman**
in honor of Rabbi **Dovid Goldstein**

Dedicated by **Irene Susmano**
in honor of **Devorah** bas **Chaya Sarah**

Dedicated by **Allison Gottlieb**
in memory of her Great Aunt **Hilda Kalotkin**

Dedicated by **Stan Gaddin**
in memory of **Talia Geula** bat **Shalom Moshe** and **Dina Miriam**

Dedicated by **Howard Messing**
in memory of **Shana Riva** bas **Zev**

Dedicated by **Floyd Tuler & Family**
in memory of our parents

Dedicated by **Michael Blumberg**
in memory of **Nosson** ben **Zalman Yuda Deitsch**

Dedicated by **Fran Mazer**
in memory of her mother, **Betty Kaplan**, **Rivka** bas **Avraham Yitzchok**

Dedicated by **Mikhail Dubov**
in memory of **Velvl** ben **Yosef**

Dedicated by **Chana Sarah Levin**
in memory of **Daniel Avraham** ben **Mendel Wolf**

Dedicated by **Laurie Piotrkowski**
in honor of the Shabbat

Dedicated by **Jeff Bander & Family**
in honor of the **IDF**

Stephen Herman
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Curriculum:

1. Class Summary
2. Sources
3. Bibliography
4. Questions and Exercises

1. Class Summary

“If a matter eludes you in judgment, between blood and blood, between judgment and judgment, or between lesion and lesion, words of dispute in your cities, then you shall rise and go up to the place the Lord, your G-d, chooses,” states the Torah in Deuteronomy in the portion of Shoftim.

The greatest Kabbalist in Jewish history, Rabbi Isaac Luria (16th century), interprets this verse to be addressing the historical enigma of the disproportionate suffering of the Jewish people; suffering which seems to be in complete contrast to the systems of justice G-d Himself established in the Torah! He explains that this is all caused by the quarrels, strife, and dissension among Jews themselves. This class explores the tragedy of strife and explains the extraordinary blessing when there is unity and love.

The Midrash makes a powerful contrast between two biblical generations of Jews, one pagan and the other monotheistic.

The generation living during the reign of the evil King Achav was full of pagan idol worshippers. Yet, these sinful Jews were victorious in their wars against their enemies. Why? Because of their mutual accord and respect; they learned to like each other and get along.

On the other hand, the generation of Jews living during the reign of King David was very religious and observant, clinging ferociously to the Jewish faith in a single universal G-d. Yet they died in war. Why? The sages say, because they despised and informed upon each other.

The ultimate test for the integrity and spirituality of a human being in Judaism is not in one’s scholarship, faith or religious observance, but in our capacity to love the stranger, to transcend the ego, and to escape the traps of divisiveness and hate.

2. Sources:

<p>1. Shoftim</p> <p>17:8</p> <p>8. If a matter eludes you in judgment, between blood and blood, between judgment and judgment, or between lesion and lesion, words of dispute in your cities, then you shall rise and go up to the place the Lord, your God, chooses.</p>	<p>1. שופטים</p> <p>יז, ח</p> <p>כִּי יִפְלֵא מִמֶּךָ דְבַר לְמִשְׁפָּט, בֵּין-דָּם לְדָם בֵּין-דִּין לְדִין וּבֵין נֹגַע לְנֹגַע דְּבָרֵי רִיבָה, בְּשַׁעְרֵיךָ, וְקָמַת וְעָלִיתָ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם, אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בּוֹ.</p>
<p>2. Likutei Torah (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, Safed, 1534 – 1572)</p> <p>Shoftim 17:8</p> <p>Our Sages said: At the time of the destruction of the Temple, the ministering angels asked the Almighty: Master of the Universe!</p> <p>It is written in Your Torah, ‘And if you [slaughter an animal] and spill its blood, you shall cover it with dirt’ and now [after the destruction of Jerusalem] ‘Their blood is spilt like water...’ and ‘Her blood is in her midst...’?</p> <p>You wrote in Your Torah: ‘On one day do not slaughter an animal and its child’ and now ‘the children are slaughtered...’?</p> <p>You wrote in Your Torah [regarding a house that contracted leprosy and must be destroyed] ‘You shall empty out the house [to save its contents]...’ and now ‘They burnt the House of G-d, and all of its treasures were destroyed...’?</p> <p>The Almighty replied: Is there peace in the world? If there is no peace, then there is nothing left at all.</p> <p>All of this is hinted to in this verse: ‘<u>If a matter eludes you in judgment, between blood and blood</u>’ this refers to the law that blood must be covered. ‘<u>Between judgment and judgment</u>’ this refers to the law prohibiting the slaughter of parent and child. ‘<u>Between lesion and lesion</u>’ this refers to the law of leprosy in the house.</p> <p>The response to all of this is: ‘<u>Words of dispute in your cities.</u>’ It is all caused by fights and lack of peace.</p> <p>And the verse concludes: ‘<u>You shall rise and go up to the place</u>’, through Jerusalem, the city that ‘unites all as one,’ where all Jews become friends, and through the</p>	<p>2. לקוטי תורה להאריז"ל</p> <p>שופטים יז, ח</p> <p>אמרו רבותינו ז"ל ששאלו מלאכי השרת להקב"ה (בשעת החורבן), רבונו של עולם!</p> <p>כתבת בתורתך ושפך את דמו וכסהו בעפר, וכאן כתיב שפכו דמם כמים, כי דמה בתוכה וגו'.</p> <p>כתבת בתורתך אותו ואת בנו לא תשחטו ביום אחד, וכאן כתיב הבנים נשחטים וכו'.</p> <p>כתבת בתורתך וצוה הכהן ופינו את הבית וכאן וישרפו בית האלקים וכל כלי מחמדיה להשחית.</p> <p>אמר להם הקב"ה, כלום יש שלום בעולם, הואיל ואין שלום, אין כלום.</p> <p>וכל זה רמזה לנו התורה בפסוק זה:</p> <p>כי יפלא ממך דבר למשפט בין דם לדם, היינו ושפך את דמו וכו', בין דין לדין, היינו אותו ואת בנו וכו' כנ"ל, ובין נגע לנגע, היינו וצוה הכהן וכו' כנ"ל.</p> <p>והתשובה לכל זה, דברי ריבות בשעריך. שעל ידי המריבות והעדר השלום שבהם גורם לכל זה.</p> <p>ומסיים וקמת ועלית אל המקום שעל ידי ירושלים עיר שחברה לה יחדיו, שבה נעשו כל ישראל חברים, ועל ידי התורה, יתאחדו ויתוודך ביניהם השלום.</p>

<p>Torah, peace will be mediated amongst them.</p>	
<p><u>3. Hoshea</u> 4:17 17. Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone.</p>	<p><u>3. הושע</u> ד, יז חבור עֲצָבִים אֶפְרַיִם הֵנַח לוֹ.</p>
<p><u>4. Tractate Derech Eretz</u> 7:37 Rabbi Elazar Hakappar says: Love peace and hate dispute. Great is peace, because even as Jews worship idolatry, if there is peace amongst them, G-d says 'I do not wish to touch them' as it is written, 'Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone.' But regarding dispute it is written 'Their hearts are divided now they will be indicted.' How great is peace and how hated is dispute! What does this mean? A city that is torn by fighting will be destroyed, as our Sages say, 'A conflict in the city leads to murder.' A synagogue that is torn by fighting will be destroyed. A home that is torn by fighting will be destroyed, and our Sages say 'If there is fighting at home, there is promiscuity.' If there are two courts in one city and they are quarreling, they will both die, and our Sages say 'fighting between courts is the destruction of the world.'</p>	<p><u>4. מסכת דרך ארץ</u> פרק ז, לו ר' אלעזר הקפר אומר אהבו את השלום, ושנאו את המחלוקת, גדול השלום, שאפילו בשעה שישראל עובדין עבודה זרה ויש שלום ביניהם, אומר הקדוש ברוך הוא אין רצוני ליגע בהן, שנאמר חבור עצבים אפרים הנח לו, אבל בדבר מחלוקת מהו אומר, חלק לבם עתה יאשמו, הא גדול השלום, ושנאה המחלוקת. כיצד, עיר שיש בה מחלוקת, סופה ליחרב, ואמרו חכמים מחלוקת בעיר, שפיכות דמים. בית הכנסת שיש בה מחלוקת, סופה ליחרב. בית שיש בו מחלוקת, סופו ליחרב, ואמרו חכמים מחלוקת בבית, זימה. שני בתי דינין והם בעיר אחת, וביניהם מחלוקת, סופן למות, ואמרו חכמים מחלוקת בבית דין, חורבן העולם.</p>
<p><u>4. Vayikra Rabbah</u> 26:32 In the days of David, there were children that before ever even tasting sin, already knew how to expound forty-nine reasons to rule something ritually impure and forty-nine reasons to rule it pure... Notwithstanding this greatness they would go out to war and be killed in battle! This was only because they had informers amongst them... However in the days of Achav everyone served idols, and yet because there were no informers among them they would go out to war and be victorious.</p>	<p><u>4. ויקרא רבה</u> נו, לב מצינו תינוקות בימי דוד עד שלא טעמו טעם חטא, היו יודעין לדרוש את התורה מ"ט פנים טמא ומ"ט פנים טהור... אחר כל השבח הזה יוצאין למלחמה ונופלין. אלא ע"י שהיו בהם דלטורין היו נופלין... אבל דורו של אחאב כלן עובדי עבודת כוכבים היו, ועל ידי שלא היו בהן דילטורין היו יוצאין למלחמה ונוצחין.</p>
<p><u>5. Talmud Yoma</u> 9b During the period of the Second Temple they studied</p>	<p><u>5. יומא</u> ט, ב אבל מקדש שני שהיו עוסקין בתורה ובמצות</p>

<p>Torah, performed mitzvos, and did good deeds. So why was it destroyed? Because they had senseless hatred for each other.</p>	<p>וגמילות חסדים מפני מה חרב? מפני שהיתה בו שנאת חנם.</p>
<p>This teaches that hatred is the equivalent to three sins: idolatry, sexual immorality, and murder.</p>	<p>ללמדך ששקולה שנאת חנם כנגד שלש עבירות: עבודה זרה גלוי עריות ושפיכות דמים.</p>

3. מקורות:

לקוטי תורה להאריז"ל שופטים יז, ח.
דרך מצותיך לאדמו"ר הצמח צדק מצות אהבת ישראל.

4. Questions and Exercises

1. How does Rabbi Isaac Luria interpret the words "Between blood and blood, between verdict and verdict, between lesion and lesion, words of dispute in your cities?"
2. Is there anyone you don't speak to? Why?
3. Can you make up with them? What would it take? Why don't you?
4. Are there any fights in your family or circle of influence that you can quash?
5. Why is unity so essential to the Jewish people?
6. What is the cause of most fights and quarrels?
7. Why is infighting so destructive? Why does it produce such horrible results?
8. What, do you feel, is the worst conflict in the Jewish world today? How can it be solved?

9. Is a conflict among family, friends, or community ever justified? When?

Prepared and edited by Rabbi Avi Shlomo