

Winning (the) Syndrome April 11, 2010 Rabbi Posen

Much of the world is composed of people who not only have to win by resolving their disputes with their neighbour, but in times of old had to go to war to show their “win” on the battlefield and today in the courtroom. Even “losers” have to win at least vicariously and this is the reason why spectator sports are so popular. One side always wins a sporting match so there is a 50/50 chance for the spectator to get that “winning feeling.” For those who don’t mind switching sides when the going gets tough for the side they are rooting for, the odds of getting that “winning feeling” are increased even more.

Our sages tell us that any dispute that is for the sake of “Heaven” will endure. Far better to be able to say, in my life, I never defeated anyone, and because of that, no one ever defeated me. It is far better to look a fool throughout one’s life rather than engaging in dispute (machloket) for even an hour as your reward is: Hashem provides you with the “cream of the crop.”

The story is told about the barren couple who for 20 years went to every fertility clinic they could find, spoke to the greatest counsellors and religious leaders around the world and yet remained barren. Finally they sought an audience with one of the greatest scholars of our time Rav Chaim Kanievsky who was such a busy man he could only spare the couple five minutes. When he heard their plight, he told them that they may never have a child. They were so heartbroken that the Rav took pity on them and told them to seek a blessing from someone who avoided a dispute (machloket) from occurring; maybe such a person’s blessing would allow their prayer for a child to be answered.

Not having much hope, but at the time the barren couple were living in Bnei Brak where another couple had been looking for an apartment for a lengthy period of time when they finally found one. They were just signing up with the vendor when a woman with a wild look in her eye burst into the Apartment and said don’t sign, I will sue you forever as the present owner built an addition illegally.

The stunned couple after being told by the vendor that he defeated the woman’s claim in court, went to their Rabbi. The Rabbi said I sat on the beit din (court case) and I ruled in the vendor’s favour so go ahead and buy the apartment.

The couple bought the Apartment. The following week they were invited to a Bar Mitzvah and while the Wife was meeting new people for the first time, the woman with the wild look in her eye burst into the room and yelled at the woman, I’ll sue you for everything you have. Just as the woman was to respond she felt a tap on her shoulder, it was the barren woman whispering don’t say anything, peace shall only be on your lips and Hashem will provide you with everything that is good. The woman held her counsel and when, requested to do so by the barren woman, she blessed her that she should have a child. Within the year the barren woman had a child.

The world exists only in the merit of one who controls himself during a dispute (machloket).