

# Steer Clear!

written by Yehudis Golshevsky

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When Breslover chassidim would find one of their number on the margins of a conflict or controversy, they would offer gentle rebuke to discourage the friend from getting involved. “Rebbe Nachman once said, ‘In the ultimate future, there will be kings and leaders of nations who will want to avoid fighting any wars. All they wish for is peace and tranquility. They will not be able to do this, however. They will be grabbed by the hairs of their head and forced to fight against their will!’”

The same holds true for every conflict. Even though many people prefer peace, each side feels the need to convince others to join the fray, arguing endlessly until they feel they have convinced the wretched person to endorse their side. They desperately want to rope even the most passive person into their disagreement. We all need to keep this in mind and

avoid taking sides in any argument, ignoring whatever pressures one may have to bear.

The chassidim would continue, "You might wonder how to steer clear of dispute. The answer is to simply flee the scene of the conflict! If you can't run away, be careful to never express an opinion that seems to take one side over the other. Doing so can cause endless, unnecessary slander and heartache. It is so easy to take sides and become part of a dispute which really has nothing to do with you!"

Breslover chassidim were no strangers to opposition, so it seems difficult to understand how they managed against their opponents without arguing. Earlier chassidim laid out a general plan for dealing with those times when one's commitment to the Rebbe's path is under attack: "Unless you are certain that your words will make a positive impression, it is better to remain silent in the face of adversity. Better to swallow your words and silently bear insult than to amplify your negative traits by engaging in a fight."

Reb Aharon Kiblitsher said about an elderly man who had passed away, "Although he was persecuted by others, he never fought against anyone his entire life." This is high praise for a human being: to have lived without conflict in a world that is fraught with fighting and hatred.

*Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh IV:92, VII:147, VIII:117*