



הַמִּזְרָחִי

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PARSHA WEEKLY



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ISRAEL Parsha Picture

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

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בַּמִּדְבָּר ז' כ"ג

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
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120 YEARS OF RELIGIOUS ZIONISM

www.mizrachi.org
www.mizrachi.tv
office@mizrachi.org
+972 (0)2 620 9000
f t i n

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Mr. Kurt Rothschild

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Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, Mizrahi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. Mizrahi's role was then and remains with vigor today, to be a proactive partner and to take personal responsibility in contributing to the collective destiny of *Klal Yisrael* through a commitment to Torah, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.



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ASSOCIATE EDITORS
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Josh Maurer
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Ian Schwartz

GRAPHIC DESIGNER
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Why Them and Not Me?

Envy, Jealousy and the Destructive ‘Principle of Comparison’



Rabbi Doron Perez
Executive Chairman, World Mizrahi

In Professor Dan Ariely's best-seller 'Predictably Irrational', he tells the following remarkable story:

In the early nineties, the great discrepancy between the earnings of average Americans, as opposed to the average CEO, was becoming unacceptable to many. The average American was earning \$3,000 a year and the CEOs were around \$400K – 130 times more! Many public policy makers decided that even in a free-market capitalist economy there needed to be some regulation and checks and balances to address this inequality. In order to rectify this seeming inequality, they made the following drastic decision which is still in place today – the salaries of every employee of public companies, including the CEO, must be made public for all to see. Their rationale was simple – once the broader public sees how much more the senior management is earning compared to the others – social responsibility will kick in. Boards will push to bridge gaps – the average workers will begin to earn more relative to the CEOs.

Did it work? Absolutely not – it had the opposite effect!

A number of years later, when analyzing the expected success of the new regulation, the policymakers were horrified to find unexpected and alarming results. The salary of the average CEO had gone up so

much and was now 400 times more than that of the average worker!

What went wrong? What was it that they overlooked causing the exact opposite effect?

The answer is that they forgot the overarching power of **envy and jealousy**. They forgot that all the CEOs themselves were **also** reading the newspapers. For the first time, they became aware of what their fellow CEOs were earning and it simply did not always seem fair. A CEO could see that a counterpart of his or her's perhaps from the same class at school was earning significantly more. How could someone, seemingly less competent, with lower grades, managing a smaller company be earning more – Heaven Forbid! These CEOs could now go to their Boards with evidence of unfairness and demand higher salaries if they were to remain. Of course, as their salaries were raised so were others as all the CEOs were following the same pattern – salaries skyrocketed and the gaps tripled.

The Power We Grant Others Over Us

There are two critical lessons about how envy works to be learned from this story. The first could be referred to as the “principle of comparison”. The CEO may have been totally content with their life, earning a huge salary with large bonuses and shares – living the life and lacking for nothing. That was yesterday but then

suddenly everything changed – simply because of the mere knowledge of what others are earning! This little piece of information has rocked their world – now feeling short-changed, unnerved and lacking. They now feel compelled to demand more, are victims of injustice, and feel perhaps inadequate, jealous and envious of what others have. What incredible power this knowledge has – it has almost cast a spell on us transforming us from feelings of contentment to discontent, from gratitude to lacking – what we have is no longer enough. Such is the destructive power of ‘the principle of comparison’ – with jealousy and envy lurking.

Similarity Breeds Contempt

The second critical insight is regarding **who** is in fact of the object of our envy. Turns out we are not envious of those we perceive as significantly above or below us – only those who seem **similar** enough to us and are at a similar station in life. Using the example once again of wealth – those who are mega-wealthy and are far beyond our income bracket seem beyond us. Those who are poor, if we are privileged not to be in this position, are well below us. But those who are like us – perhaps neighbors or friends, people with similar income brackets and socioeconomic standing; perhaps with similar qualities, aptitude, age and abilities – why are they doing so much better than us! What do they have that we don’t? Envy takes root when there is a **basis** for comparison: where we feel that we **deserve** more than them. It is then that life seems unfair.

Korach – A Case Study

Korach is arguably the clearest tragic example of the destructive power of ‘the principle of comparison’ in all of Tanach.

Korach single-handedly initiated an audacious rebellion challenging Moshe’s leadership integrity and in the process causing not only his own death, and many of his fellow Levi’im but also 250 of the most distinguished leaders from all the tribes. What made him do it? Why would a man of great lineage and of the holy tribe



Why would a man of great lineage and of the holy tribe of Levi’im designated for privileged temple service, a grandson of the leading son of Levi, Kehat, and a person according to our sages, of prodigious talents and qualities instigate such a doomed rebellion?

of Levi’im designated for privileged temple service, a grandson of the leading son of Levi, Kehat, and a person according to our sages, of prodigious talents and qualities instigate such a doomed rebellion?

What was Korach’s motive? What could be so wrong that he needed to bring down the house in order to rectify it? Where the verses are silent, our Sages are crystal clear. Of course, envy and jealousy are masquerading through the destructive principle of comparison. Why was Korach not deserving to be Kohen Gadol? What did Aaron have that he didn’t? Why was he not at the very least made the head of the tribe of Levi?¹

He employed the ‘principle of comparison’ with his own logic. His grandfather Kehat was the most distinguished son of Levi. It would follow that Kehat’s first born son, Amram be rewarded that his brilliant Divinely hand-picked son – Moshe – be singled out for the #1 leadership position. Why should the other of Amram’s sons – Aaron – also be singled out for eternal priesthood as Kohen Gadol? One son – yes, both sons – questionable. It may even be understood that both sons, Aharon and Moshe are deserving, but there is certainly no justification whatsoever that the youngest of the four sons of Kehat, Uziel, should have his son Elitzafan, selected as the Head of Levi! After all, Korach was the oldest of the 2nd son of Kehat, Yitzhar, and certainly the next in line based on simple family pedigree – not to mention his prodigious personal talents. How could he have possibly been overlooked?

Instead of accepting that Hashem decides who is selected and not Moshe, his envy blinded him through employing the destructive comparison and feeling deserving and hence contempt of his close cousins – be it Aaron or Elitzaphan – who overshadowed him. His inability to accept his station in life and believing that those less worthy than him had unfairly usurped him drove him to his downfall. Rashi, citing the Midrash, states that it was undoubtedly this envy for the position which drove Korach and was the motivating force for the entire rebellion and in the process the death and demise of his entire band of followers.

The Sages in the Zohar capture this succinctly when they say regarding Korach: ‘Anyone who chases after that which is not designated for him, it flees from him. Furthermore, he eventually loses everything he already has. Korach pursued that which wasn’t his and in the process lost what was his and did not achieve that which was not (Zohar, Korach 176b).

The only way to deal with the twin formidably foes of envy and jealousy and avoid succumbing to the ‘principle of comparison’, the ‘contempt of similarity’, and the ‘destructive spiral of who deserves what’ is through great personal spiritual work. To dig deep and have absolute faith in Hashem that what we have right now is what Hashem wants us to have and what others have is, for whatever reason, what Hashems wants them to have. We can only do our very best to attempt to achieve what we desire and to pray that we are deserving. The outcome is not up to us. We live in Hashem’s world, not ours. Crossing lines through comparisons and who deserves what is not only futile but diabolically destructive.

Korach serves as a perennial reminder.

1. The simple reading of Moshe’s response to Korach ‘And you request also Priesthood for yourselves’ that Korach is perhaps after the office of the Kohen Gadol as explained by Ramban and Malbim. Rashi famously cites the view of the Midrash Tanchuma that it was the Elitzaphans position as head of Levi that he believed he deserved.

PIRKEI AVOT

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הוא (שמעון הצדיק) היה אומר, על שלשה דברים העולם עומד, על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים. (א:ב)

Torah

The second *mishnah* of Avot begins its description of the world's three pillars with Torah. Though all three pillars are important, Torah learning reigns supreme. We remind ourselves of this fact each morning when we conclude our recital of the berachot related to Torah learning with the *mishnah* in Pei'ah which teaches that “*talmud Torah k'neged kulam*” – the significance of Torah learning is equal to that of the aggregate of all other mitzvot. Understandably, the Gemara (Megillah 16b) tells us that learning Torah learning is more “*gadol*” – of greater value – than the building of the Beit Hamikdash, honoring one's parents, and even saving a life.¹

This explains why the world's existence hinges upon Torah learning. The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 3a) understands the Torah's formulation of the sixth day of creation as “*yom hashishi*” as opposed to “*shishi*” like the description of previous days as teaching that that Hashem conditioned creation on a future special sixth day – the sixth day of Sivan when the Torah was given. Had we not committed ourselves to Torah, the world would have been returned to “*tohu vavohu*” (nothingness). Rav Chaim Volozhin understood that creation not only hinged on the original *kabbalat HaTorah*, but also continues to rely upon continuous Torah learning – if there would be even one moment completely bereft of Torah learning, the world would cease to exist.

Talmud Torah is not just the world's purpose, it is also the unique purpose and mission of the Jewish people. As the *mishnah* tells us (Avot 2:8), “If you have learned much Torah, do not take special credit; it is simply why you were created.” The world was created to be a context for Torah learning; the Jewish people were created as the specific vehicle.

Why is talmud Torah so important? Firstly, it is the one pursuit we can (and should) devote our free time to. While chessed is performed in response to the situation of

another's need and tefillah is recited three times a day, Torah can be learned at any and every free moment. It is the constant that should fill our lives with meaning. Additionally, through Torah learning we transcend our world and meet Hashem through His wisdom. Though this is true, to a certain extent, for all mitzvot and forms of Avodat Hashem, when learning Torah, we connect with Him by immersing ourselves in His thought.

Avodah

Theoretical study is not enough for the world's and our own existence. They also require our demonstration of appreciation of and commitment to Hashem. A *korban* expresses this appreciation as well as our interest to give to and sacrifice for Hashem. As with all relationships,² we reinforce our commitment and closeness to Hashem through gift and sacrifice.

Kayin and Hevel were the first to bring *korbanot*. When Noach brought a *korban* upon exiting the *teivah*, Hashem responded with his promise to continuously sustain the world. When we show our appreciation of and commitment to Hashem, He commits to us and our world.

Of course, today, we are unable to offer *korbanot*. We offer our *tefillot* instead. The Gemara (Taanit 27) teaches that the *tefillot* of communities throughout Eretz Israel prayed during the offering of the *korban tamid* used to sustain the world; today, **our** *tefillot* play this role. In certain ways, *tefillot* are even greater than *korbanot*. Our petition of Hashem for our needs expresses our recognition of our dependence upon and our interest in a relationship with Him.

The Rambam extends the pillar of *avodah* beyond *korbanot* and *tefillah* by explaining that the *mishnah* uses *korbanot* as a paradigm for *mitzvot* in general. Ultimately, *korbanot* are significant because they are how we fulfill Hashem's commandment (to sacrifice

them). We serve Hashem in a similar way by observing any and all of the *mitzvot*.

Gemilut Chasadim

One might have thought that personal development and commitment to Hashem would be enough to sustain the world. Our *mishnah* teaches us that this is incorrect. In fact, Micha (6:8) presents care for others (in contrast to *korbanot*) as central to what Hashem wants from us in this world. *Korbanot* and *Avodat Hashem* are, of course, important, but Hashem wants us to serve Him (also) by caring about and for his creations – particularly those He created in His image.

Hashem created the world as an act of *chesed*. He, of course, does not need the world; He created it for us. Our deeds of *chesed* are our way of giving back. Rav Avraham Chaim Feuer explains that this is why the *mishnah* uses the term *gemilut chasadim* – our *chesed* is a way of “paying Hashem back” for His. By assisting others created in His image, we show our appreciation of the fact that we, too, were created this way.

Torah and Ma'asim Tovim

Chessed is an important complement to *Talmud Torah*. The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 17b) compares one involved in only Torah learning but not *chesed* to one who has no G-d. One focused only upon himself lacks a meaningful relationship with Hashem. As we saw, Torah learning can be “*gadlus*” – greater than other mitzvot, but if taken to a self-centered extreme, it can also be godless. Torah learning is *gadlus* when it inspires us to care for Hashem's other creations.

This is why we celebrate Torah and *ma'asim tovim* (good deeds) as the goals and epitome of life. The *mishnah* in the sixth perek of Avot tells of Rabbi Yossi Ben Kisma's rejection of a substantial monetary offer aimed at convincing him to move to a city lacking a strong Torah presence. Rabbi Yossi explained his refusal with the fact that we take only Torah learning and good deeds with us to the next world. This is why Torah and *ma'asim*

Continued on page 11

HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

Korach and the Call for New Elections – Deja Vu



Rabbanit Shani Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

This week's haftarah (Shmuel I, 11:14-12:22) shares many thematic connections with the primary story narrated in the parasha. The parasha and haftarah present a call to rebellion against the leadership of the time. The Korach rebellion is directed at Moshe and Aharon, the respective political and religious leaders at the time, demanding a replacement with a more democratic system. Shmuel recounts the nation's request for a new political system of kingship during his time, describing it as a religious mutiny against the kingship of Hashem. In contrast however, with what happened in the desert, where the rebels were unable to overthrow the leadership due to Divine intervention, in Shmuel's time, Hashem instructs Shmuel to appoint a king! This difference highlights the dissonance with the parshanut on the parasha!

The numerous parallels evident in Sefer Shmuel resonate with echoes from the Korach rebellion while simultaneously point out significant differences. Shmuel, for example, chooses to employ the expression – “Whose ox have I taken; whose donkey have I taken?” (12:3), reminiscent of Moshe's petition of Hashem – “I have not taken the donkey of any one of them” (16:15). Shmuel mentions Moshe and Aharon as G-d's handiwork of leadership – “G-d, Who made Moshe and Aharon” (12:6), to further his argument that he, like they, were chosen by Hashem as leaders and did not usurp any position of power. Just as Moshe performed wonders of the earth swallowing up Datan and Aviram and of a fire consuming Korach



Both signs were meant to demonstrate that different forms of leadership are necessary for different times (e.g. fire that comes to consume sacrifices is a blessing, and so is rain that comes in the proper season); and at the wrong time, these phenomena cause destruction.

and fellow incense worshippers, so too Shmuel performed an untimely wonder of rainfall during the wheat harvest! Both signs were meant to demonstrate that different forms of leadership are necessary for different times (e.g. fire that comes to consume sacrifices is a blessing, and so is rain that comes in the proper season); and at the wrong time, these phenomena cause destruction.

Though they both address the theme of Divine selection of leadership, Moshe and Shmuel do so differently. Moshe speaks of his discontent to the rebel groups but they refuse his reproach. Shmuel, in contrast, engages in ongoing dialogue with the nation. Moshe understands that although Korach, Datan and Aviram are presenting claims of democratic leadership – “It is too much for you, for the whole congregation are all holy, and G-d is in their midst. Why, then, do you elevate yourselves over G-d's congregation?” (16:3), their intentions were self-aggrandizing. Shmuel understands that the

nation declared what they truly desired – that a king be appointed over them.

Perhaps this is the reason for Hashem's affirmative response to Shmuel – “And G-d said to Shmuel, Listen to the voice of the nation in all that they say to you” (Shmuel I 8:7). The claims are in fact quite different; Korach argues that the entire congregation is holy and therefore it is unnecessary and unfair for individuals to rule alone. Ironically, the opposite demand is presented to Shmuel; there is a need for a single leader and concentrated ruling authority – “Let there be a king over us.” Albeit there is a danger of forgetting the sole leadership of Hashem, it is a much closer model to worship of a single Deity.

Shmuel, a descendant of Korach, (see Divrei Ha-Yamim I 6:18-23) closes the cycle and corrects the mistake of his forefather. Korach's claim was an important one – the whole congregation is indeed holy, and G-d really does dwell in their midst, so either eradicate mortal rulers or appoint others as kohanim. While they are punished during the time of Moshe, Shmuel succeeds in instituting a single human monarch while emphasizing – “But Hashem your G-d is your King!” (12:12) and remaining their religious prophet to calibrate national decisions. The final words of the haftarah thereby echo with Shmuel's proclamation – “For G-d will not abandon His nation for the sake of His great name...”

Halachic Q&A



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot

Question: Is it a problem for one to have a tallit katan with techeilet tied differently than it is tied on his tallit?

Answer: It seemingly is not an issue to have a tallit katan with one tie and tallit with another tie. However, if a person has techeilet on one but does not have techeilet altogether on the second, he should make sure to stipulate when he puts on the techeilet that he is not accepting upon himself to wear techeilet, and therefore he can have both.

Question: Can one use a dishwasher for milk and dairy?

Answer: A dishwasher can be used for milk after having been used for meat and vice versa under the following circumstances:

1. The leftover bigger pieces of milk or dairy are washed off before being put into the dishwasher (this is usually accomplished from a basic rinse).
2. The filter is checked before running that it has no leftover pieces.
3. Detergent is added both to the detergent compartment and also the main compartment where the dishes and utensils are.

For those who can, it is better to use the dishwasher for only dairy or meat. When you use it, put detergent in the main compartment as well, and if you ever really need to use it for the opposite, you can under the circumstances mentioned above. If 24 hours pass, that is of course another reason to be lenient to allow for this.

Question: Can one melt ice or freeze water on Shabbat?

Answer: The Gemara (Shabbat 51b) says that one is forbidden to crush ice on Shabbat. The rishonim discuss whether or not the prohibition is based on the action of turning the ice into water (which could be one of two issues), or the result of having a new form created on Shabbat. According to the first approach, leaving the ice to melt on its own would be fine because no action was done to cause the melting. According to the second approach, allowing the process to occur even passively is problematic.

Sfardim paskin like the more lenient approach and are therefore permitted to let ice melt (SA OC 318:16). Likewise, they hold there is no issue to freeze water which will turn into ice.

Ashkenazim, on the other hand, paskin like the stringent opinion. Therefore, they cannot put ice in a cup or vessel unless there is already liquid in it (Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata). Additionally, they may freeze ice before Shabbat but not on Shabbat. Nevertheless, when there is a need for that Shabbat, Ashkenazim may also rely on the lenient opinion and let something frozen melt or freeze water for use on Shabbat.

Question: How should one say tefilat haderech when driving alone in the car?

Answer: The Gemara in Brachot 30a brings a machloket whether one needs to get off of their donkey at the time of tefillah. The Shulchan Aruch in OC 94 paskins leniently. Therefore, a person could say tefilat haderech while he is driving, of course while ensuring he is focused on

the road. It is better for him to say it when he is stopped if he can.

Question: If a man lights Shabbat candles, does he have to shield his eyes like women do?

Answer: Women cover their eyes to prevent themselves from getting benefit from the candles, thus making their bracha over l'asiatan (prior to the action). They make the bracha after lighting because we are concerned for the opinion of Rabbenu Tam who holds that saying the bracha counts as accepting Shabbat. We are not concerned for Rabbenu Tam's opinion when it comes to men as men do not accept Shabbat through lighting candles. Therefore, men should make the bracha before they light and do not need to cover their eyes.

Question: Can one use a dishwasher with a Machon Tzomet certification on Shabbat? Can one use a non-certified dishwasher on Yom Tov with a timer?

Answer: When there is a Machon Tzomet certification, it can be used on Shabbat with a timer. One should put the detergent in before Shabbat. Additionally, you should wash off anything that may not be fully cooked before putting it in the dishwasher.

If there is no certification from Machon Tzomet, there is room to be lenient on Yom Tov when using a timer.

● Translated from Hebrew and abbreviated by Yaakov Panitch.

תקציר פרשת קרח

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את מקומו הרוחני האמיתי של כל אחד. לא כל אדם מסוגל לעשות עבודה פנימית כזו, של חיבור הנשמות אל שורשן, אלא רק אדם מיוחד שנבחר ע"י ה' לשם כך.

כאשר הקטרת נעשית ע"י האדם הנכון בצורה הראויה, היא מביאה לחיבור של כל בני האדם אל הקדושה, ומתוך כך מאפשרת גילוי שכינה.

אך גילוי שכינה עלול להיות גם מסוכן. אדם המקטיר קטורת באופן לא ראוי, ומתקרב אל גילוי השכינה בצורה לא נכונה, עלול להפגע ואף למות.

על ידי הקטרת הקטורת מתברר שאמנם כולם מחוברים אל הקדושה, אך יש דרגות בקדושה, ולא כל אחד ראוי ליצירת החיבור הפנימי בהקטרת הקטורת. על ידי אנשים מיוחדים שנבחרו על ידי ה', ולכן דווקא היא הראויה להוות מבחן המזהה את הראוי לתפקיד נשגב זה, של חיבור כל נשמות ישראל אל הקדושה.

מעבודה פנימית של האדם. לכן לאנשים שונים יש תפקידים שונים. לא כולם יכולים להיות מנהיגים, ולא כולם יכולים להתקרב אל הקודש באותה מידה. משה מוכיח לקרח את טעותו בעזרת עבודת הקטורת. מדוע נבחרה דווקא עבודה זו?

הקטורת היא עבודה פנימית משמעותית, הקשורה לגילוי שכינה. מי שאינו ראוי לעבודה זו וינסה לעשותה - ימות, מכיוון שהקרבה אל הקודש בצורה לא ראויה עלולה להמית.

לעומת זאת, מי שראוי להתקרב אל הקודש - יצליח להקטיר קטורת באופן שתתקבל לרצון לפני ה' (ואפילו יוכל לכפר על העם ולהצילו ממגיפה).

למעשה, אלה הם שני צדדיה של אותה מטבע. הקטורת יורדת אל השורש הפנימי, הטהור והקדוש של הנשמות, ומתוך כך היא מכפרת וגם מאפשרת גילוי שכינה. אך דווקא משום כך היא איננה מוחקת את ההבדלים הרוחניים בין בני האדם, אלא מדגישה

סיפור קרח ועדתו מופיעה פעמיים הקטורת. בפעם הראשונה - כמבחן ל-250 חשובי העדה, המוצאים את מותם במבחן זה; ובפעם השנייה - בסוף הסיפור, כאשר אהרון מציל את העם מן המגיפה בעזרת הקטורת.

מה משמעותה של עבודת הקטורת? ומה מקומה בבירור המחלוקת של קרח ועדתו?

קורח ועדתו טוענים טענה בעלת משמעות רבה: "כולם קדושים ובתוכם ה'". ואכן, טענה זו נכונה: כל ישראל אכן קדושים ומחויבים בשורש נשמתם אל ה'. אך מהי המסקנה המתבקשת מטענה זו?

לדעת קורח, אם כולם מקושרים אל ה' בשורש נשמתם, הרי שכולם מסוגלים להנהיג ולעבודת הקודש במשכן. זוהי טעותו של קרח.

למרות שכל ישראל מקושרים אל הקדושה בשורש נשמתם, במציאות יש **הבדלים** בין בני האדם, הנובעים **מבחירה אלקית, מתכונות מולדות, או**

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The Moment of Truth



Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir
World Mizrahi Scholars-in-Residence

Today all of us know how to explain Korach's mistake. It's terribly easy today to sit back and explain why most of the spies were in error and that it was a mistake to make the golden calf. But what would we have done had we been there? In the moment of truth, would we have chosen the truth?

Rav Hagai Lundin writes that when speaking about values, it's worthwhile to pay attention to the historical context: "Korach was the hero of the hour. His ratings and the spirit of the times were on his side. He had followers and admirers and the media embraced him as a brave man who fought against fossilized tradition. We read about him every year and are reminded of an important rule: a lie persists for a time, but not forever. Today we are still astonished to sometimes see how popular views based on lies and hypocrisy win, at least for the moment; it's enough to see the world's relationship with Israel as opposed to its relationship with her enemies. Every adult individual can talk about how medical, economic, and cultural lies – that rattled all of humanity at the time – eventually disappeared without a whimper. Sometimes it takes years, sometimes as in the case of Korach, the lie is swallowed up in the earth within a short time. But from an eternal perspective, good always triumphs."

■ ■ ■

It's fun to hear compliments, much less fun to hear criticism. Korach, in this week's Torah portion, has his gaze fixed on public opinion polls. Seeking strong populist support, he says to Moshe and to Aharon: "All members of the congregation are holy, and HaShem is in their

midst. So why do you raise yourselves above the HaShem's assembly?" (Numbers 16:3) According to Korach, everyone is holy, everyone is wonderful, and everyone is perfect. There is nothing that needs improvement. We have rights, but no obligations.

Moshe Rabbeinu, on the other hand, is not just complimentary but also demands something from us. When Moshe speaks to the people about holiness, he articulates this divine challenge: "You shall be holy, for I, HaShem your God, am holy." (Leviticus 19:2) This is the entire story: Are we focused on "all are holy" in the present or "you shall be holy" in the future? Are we perfect or is there always room for improvement? Do we look only at the "likes," or also at the criticism? Do we rest on our laurels or understand that there is always more work to be done?

It's more fun to listen to Korach, but more instructive to listen to Moshe Rabbeinu.

■ ■ ■

When external success does not match up with internal character traits there is a problem – whether we are talking about Korach or a football star on Maccabi Tel Aviv.

Korach was a man who was rich, successful and held an esteemed position in the community. But alongside his development as a knowledgeable person who knew how to get ahead, he forgot to develop positive character traits. Moshe and Aharon, on the other hand, were full of humility, love, and good-heartedness and only because of these qualities did they become leaders of the nation.

Rav Moshe-Zvi Neria writes: "The tragedy of humanity is that an increase in

knowledge and success does not parallel moral development. It's a disaster when a person rises to greatness without first investing the best of his powers in personal improvement."

Korach did not succeed in controlling his envy and his lust and this inability led him to a deadly confrontation. The fact that someone is a "network star," "a football star," or a "famous singer" does not tell us anything about what's going on inside of that person. (It must be said that sometimes the trial such a person must face is more difficult than that of ordinary people). Rabbi Nahman speaks about imposters whose claim to fame is superficial and cautions all of us to be aware of the gap between external success and internal failure that often ends – as in Korach's case – in tragedy.

■ ■ ■

It is difficult for us when our spouse is not happy with us, and Korach's wife wasn't happy. She thought that her husband had to receive a much higher-level role. Day and night, she dripped this venom in his ears: See the roles that Moshe and Aaron, your relatives, have, and see where you are. Move forward in life already! From here, things started going downhill, and fast. Korach declared a rebellion and fell into the abyss of total denial of the Torah and of Moshe Rabbenu's role.

But in the Portion, there is another character of a wife, a totally different one: Ohn ben Pelet's wife. Ohn himself had already been carried into the dispute led by Korach and was no longer able to look at things from the outside, with discernment. Here his wife played a reverse role to that of Korach's wife and managed with her wisdom to leave him out of the story.

Continued on next page

For the Shabbat Table



Rabbi Danny Mirvis

Deputy CEO, World Mizrahi

Rabbi at Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“**A**nd Korach son of Yitzhar son of Kehat son of Levi took (separated himself) with Datan and Aviram, sons of Eliav, and On son of Pelet, the offspring of Reuven. And they arose before Moshe with 250 men from the Children of Israel, leaders of the assembly, those called for meeting, men of renown. And they congregated against Moshe and against Aharon...” (Bemidbar 16:1-3)

At the beginning of this week's Parsha, Korach leads a rebellion against his cousins, Moshe and Aharon. Even when challenged by Moshe and informed that if proved wrong, he and his followers would die in phenomenal fashion, Korach refuses to step down from his revolt and leads his rebellious mob to doom.

The Mishna in Avot teaches us to ensure that unlike the dispute created by Korach and his assembly, all our arguments should be for the sake of Heaven:

"Any dispute that is for the sake of Heaven will have a constructive outcome. Any dispute that is not for the sake of Heaven will not have a constructive outcome. What is a dispute for the sake of Heaven? – The



Far from being a united entity, the members of Korach's mob were motivated by different and conflicting personal interests.

dispute of Hillel and Shammai. What is a dispute that is not for the sake of Heaven? – The dispute of Korach and all his assembly." (Avot 5:20)

The Malbim (Bemidbar 16:1) highlights the asymmetry of this Mishna. Concerning arguments for the sake of Heaven, we are given both sides involved in the dispute – "Hillel and Shammai". Maintaining this pattern, we would expect the Mishna to conclude, "What is a dispute that is not for the sake of Heaven? – The dispute of Korach and Moshe". Why does the Mishna only give one side of the argument – "The dispute of Korach and all his assembly"?

The Malbim answers that Korach's coalition was an inherently disunited force. Korach was upset that he was overlooked

for the positions of Kohen Gadol and leader of the tribe of Levi. Datan, Aviram and On, as descendants of Ya'akov's first-born son Reuven, were disgruntled that the priesthood was granted to the tribe of Levi and leadership of the tribes to Yehudah and Yoseph. The 250 men of renown were firstborns who saw the priesthood as their natural privilege, so joined Korach's rebellion against the leadership of the tribe of Levi.

Far from being a united entity, the members of Korach's mob were motivated by different and conflicting personal interests. The only unifying factor was their hatred of Moshe and Aharon. Reflecting this internal lack of harmony, the Mishna refers to "The dispute of Korach and all his assembly" as conflicting sides that would ultimately fight among themselves.

When joining together to build coalitions, communities or forces for good, it is essential that we are not driven by the desire for personal importance or glory, but are united for the sake of Heaven.

Continued from previous page

When Korach and his friends were swallowed up by the earth at the end of the tragic dispute, Ohn slept in his tent and stayed alive.

Usually, when people talk about the Korach affair, they talk about the big

things – dispute, peace, envy, and faith. But between the lines, we may discover that which exerts the biggest influence upon us in life: the messages that our partners convey to us, the atmosphere at home and where it directs us, and the

things that we say after a day of work, when the door of our home is closed, in the small talk in the living room and in the kitchen.

When Truth Is Sacrificed to Power



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

What was wrong with the actions of Korach and his fellow rebels? On the face of it, what they said was both true and principled. “You have gone too far,” they said to Moses and Aaron. “All of the community is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the Lord’s people?” (Num. 16:3-4)

They had a point. G-d had summoned the people to become “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,” (Ex. 19:6), that is, a kingdom every one of whose members was in some sense a priest, and a nation every one of whom was holy. Moses himself had said, “Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would place His spirit upon them all!” (Num. 11:29) These are radically egalitarian sentiments. Why then was there a hierarchy, with Moses as leader and Aaron as High Priest?

What was wrong with Korach’s statement was that even at the outset it was obvious that he was duplicitous. There was a clear disconnection between what he claimed to want and what he really sought. Korach did not seek a society in which everyone was the same, everyone the Priests. He was not as he sounded, a utopian anarchist seeking to abolish hierarchy altogether. He was, instead, mounting a leadership challenge. As Moses’ later words to him indicate, he wanted to be High Priest himself. He was Moses’ and Aaron’s cousin, son of Yitzhar, the brother of Moses’ and Aaron’s father Amram, and he therefore felt it unfair that both leadership positions had gone to a single family within the clan. He claimed to want equality. In fact what he wanted was power.

That was the stance of Korach the Levite. But what was happening was more

complex than that. There were two other groups involved: the Reubenites, Datham and Aviram, formed one group, and “250 Israelites who were men of rank within the community, representatives at the assembly, and famous” were the other. They too had their grievances. The Reubenites were aggrieved that as descendants of Jacob’s firstborn, they had no special leadership roles. According to Ibn Ezra, the 250 “men of rank” were upset that, after the sin of the Golden Calf, leadership had passed from the firstborn within each tribe to the single tribe of Levi.

They were an unholy alliance, and bound to fail, since their claims conflicted. If Korach achieved his ambition of becoming High Priest, the Reubenites and the “men of rank” would have been disappointed. Had the Reubenites won, Korach and the “men of rank” would have been disappointed. Had the “men of rank” achieved their ambition, Korach and the Reubenites would be left dissatisfied. The disordered, fragmented narrative sequence in this chapter is a case of style mirroring substance. This was a disordered, confused rebellion whose protagonists were united only in their desire to overthrow the existing leadership.

None of this, however, unsettled Moses. What caused him frustration was something else altogether: the words of Datan and Aviram:

“Isn’t it enough that you brought us out of a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the desert, and now you want to lord it over us! What is more: you have not brought us to a land flowing with milk and honey, or given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Do you think that you can pull something

over our eyes? We will definitely not come!” (Num. 16:13-14)

The monumental untruth of their claim – Egypt, where the Israelites were slaves and cried out to G-d to be saved, was not “a land flowing with milk and honey” – was the crux of the issue for Moses.

What is going on here? The Sages defined it in one of their most famous statements:

“Any dispute for the sake of Heaven will have enduring value, but every dispute not for the sake of Heaven will not have enduring value. What is an example of a dispute for the sake of Heaven? The dispute between Hillel and Shammai. What is an example of one not for the sake of Heaven? The dispute of Korach and all his company.” (Mishnah Avot 5:21)

The Rabbis did not conclude from the Korach rebellion that argument is wrong, that leaders are entitled to unquestioning obedience, that the supreme value in Judaism should be – as it is in some faiths – submission. To the contrary: *argument is the lifeblood of Judaism*, so long as it is rightly motivated and essentially constructive in its aims.

Judaism is a unique phenomenon: a civilisation all of whose canonical texts are anthologies of argument. In Tanach, the heroes of faith – Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, Job – argue with G-d. Midrash is founded on the premise that there are “seventy faces” – seventy legitimate interpretations – of Torah. The Mishnah is largely constructed on the model of “Rabbi X says this, Rabbi Y says that.” The Talmud, far from resolving these arguments, usually deepens them considerably. Argument in Judaism is a holy activity, the ongoing internal dialogue of the Jewish people as it reflects on the

terms of its destiny and the demands of its faith.

What then made the argument of Korach and his co-conspirators different from that of the schools of Hillel and Shammai. Rabbeinu Yona offered a simple explanation. An argument for the sake of Heaven is one that is about *truth*. An argument not for the sake of Heaven is about *power*. The difference is immense. In a contest for power, if I lose, I lose. But if I win, I also lose, because in diminishing my opponents I have diminished myself. If I argue for the sake of truth, then if I win, I win. But *if I lose, I also win*, because being defeated by the truth is the only defeat that is also a victory. I am enlarged. I learned something I did not know before.

Moses could not have had a more decisive vindication than the miracle for which he asked and was granted: that the ground open up and swallow his opponents. Yet not only did this *not* end the argument, it diminished the respect in which Moses was held:

“The next day the whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. ‘You have killed the Lord’s people,’ they said.” (Num. 17:41).

That Moses needed to resort to force was itself a sign that he had been dragged down to the level of the rebels. That is what happens when power, not truth, is at stake.

One of the aftermaths of Marxism, persisting in such movements as postmodernism and post-colonialism, is the idea that there is no such thing as truth. There is only power. The prevailing “discourse”

in a society represents, not the way things are, but the way the ruling power (the *hegemon*) wants things to be. All reality is “socially constructed” to advance the interests of one group or another. The result is a “hermeneutics of suspicion,” in which we no longer listen to what anyone says; we merely ask, what interest are they trying to advance. Truth, they say, is merely the mask worn to disguise the pursuit of power. To overthrow a “colonial” power, you have to invent your own “discourse,” your own “narrative,” and it does not matter whether it is true or false. All that matters is that people believe it.

That is what is now happening in the campaign against Israel on campuses throughout the world, and in the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) movement in particular.¹ Like the Korach rebellion, it brings together people who have nothing else in common. Some belong to the far left, a few to the far right; some are anti-globalists, while some are genuinely concerned with the plight of the Palestinians. Driving it all, however, are people who on theological and political grounds are opposed to the existence of Israel within any boundaries whatsoever, and are equally opposed to democracy, free speech, freedom of information, religious liberty, human rights, and the sanctity of life. What they have in common is a refusal to give the supporters of Israel a fair hearing – thus flouting the fundamental principle of justice, expressed in Roman law in the phrase *Audi alteram partem*, “Hear the other side.”

The flagrant falsehoods it sometimes utters – that Israel was not the birthplace

of the Jewish people, that there never was a Temple in Jerusalem, that Israel is a “colonial” power, a foreign transplant alien to the Middle East – rival the claims of Dan and Aviram that Egypt was a land flowing with milk and honey and that Moses brought the people out solely in order to kill them in the desert. Why bother with truth when all that matters is power? Thus the spirit of Korach lives on.

All this is very sad indeed, since it is opposed to the fundamental principle of the university as a home for the collaborative search for truth. It also does little for the cause of peace in the Middle East, for the future of the Palestinians, or for freedom, democracy, religious liberty, and human rights. There are real and substantive issues at stake, which need to be faced by both sides with honesty and courage. Nothing is achieved by sacrificing truth to the pursuit of power – the way of Korach through the ages.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you think Korach’s original claim had merit?
- What caused the resolution of the dispute among the Jewish people and their leadership?
- How do you imagine a place of learning such as a university can best function as a “home for the collaborative search for truth”?

1. A reminder of the context: this piece was written by Rabbi Sacks in 2015, although his timeless words continue to give us pause about such movements and their substantial impact.

Continued from page 4

tovim are the life goals we wish for a newborn baby and mothers daven for each week when they light candles. The two together are how we serve Hashem completely.

The Three-Legged Stool

Put together, these three foci — Torah, *Avodah*, and *Gemilut Chassadim* — are what the world exists for and what we, therefore, should be focused upon. May appreciating

this help us maximize our lives and our contribution to sustaining the world.

● *Transcribed by Yedidyah Rosenswasser.*

1. Though one should interrupt his learning to save a life, the action of Torah learning is of greater significance.
2. See [Talmud Bavli](#), Bava Metzia 32a which teaches that we combat feelings of dislike towards others through helping them.

Michtav M’Eliyahu points out that the relationship of strongest love for another — that of a parent towards a child — is fostered through complete (one-sided) giving. This is why the word ‘*ahava*’ centers upon the two letter word ‘*hav*’ which means to give. Lord Jacobowitz explained that this is why specifically the *Mizbei’ach* cries when there is a divorce (Gittin 90a). Marriage hinges upon sacrifice. When marriage fails because of the lack of sacrifice, the *Mizbei’ach*, which symbolizes sacrifice, cries.

Emunas Chachamim



Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

Rashi (Bamidbar 16:1) cites the comment of the Midrash that Korach ridiculed Moshe's ruling with respect to a garment completely made of techeiles-colored wool:

What did [Korach] do? He rose up and gathered together two hundred and fifty heads of courts ... and he clothed them in cloaks that were made entirely of techeiles. They came and stood before Moshe. They said to him, "Is a cloak that is entirely of techeiles obligated in tzitzis or exempt?" He said to them, "It is obligated." They began to jeer at him, "Is this possible? In a cloak of a different type, one thread of techeiles exempts it. In this one, which is entirely of techeiles, should it not exempt itself?!"

The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 18) records another argument: "Is a room filled with [Torah] scrolls exempt from a mezuzah?" When Moshe replied that it did require a mezuzah, Korach argued, "The two hundred and seventy five parshiyos [of the Torah] do not satisfy the room's requirement, but one parsha in the mezuzah does?!"

Rav Soloveitchik delivered a derashah (Reflections of the Rav, pp. 146-148) in which he portrayed the argument of Korach as the "Common-Sense Rebellion against Torah Authority." Oftentimes, balabatim who are not attuned to the halachic process complain that the ruling of the rabbi does not "make sense."

Regarding the passuk

לא תסור מן הדבר אשר יגידו לך ימין ושמאל -

"You shall not deviate from the word that they will tell you, right or left" (Devarim 17:11), Rashi comments, based on the Sifrei - אפילו אומר לך על ימין שהוא שמאל ועל שמאל - שהוא ימין -

"Even if he says to you about right that it is left and about left that it is right." The simple understanding of this comment is that even if the Beis Din HaGadol is mistaken, their ruling is binding. In fact, Herman Wouk related to his Literature class in Yeshiva University that the theme of his book *The Caine Mutiny* - that authority is binding even when it is in error - was based on this Rashi.

However, the Ramban (Hasagos LeSefer HaMitzvos LeRambam, shores 1) explains that this cannot be the meaning of the Sifrei, as the Mishnah in Horayos (1:1) clearly teaches that a member of the beis din or a student worthy of ruling who is convinced that the beis din had erred is obliged not to follow the beis din's ruling. If he does, he is responsible for his actions and must bring a personal Korban Chatas for kapparah. The ruling is only binding on the assumption that it is not mistaken. Instead, the Ramban (in his commentary on the Torah) explains that the actual text of the Sifrei reads,

אפילו נראין בעיניך על ימין שהוא שמאל - "even if it appears in your eyes about right that it is left," referring to a situation in which the layman believes that the rabbi was mistaken in his ruling. This language implies that it is only an appearance - "in your eyes" - that the Sanhedrin's decision is incorrect. The Ramban continues:

All the more so should you consider that they are, in fact, saying about the right that it is right and about the left that it is left, for the spirit of Hashem,

may He be Blessed, is on those who service His Sanctuary, and He will not forsake His devout ones; they will forever be protected from error and from stumbling.

Thus, this passuk imposes on the layman an obligation to have emunas chachamim and to assume that the rabbis ruled correctly.

Oftentimes, a doctor will prescribe a particular medication for a patient. A layman may disagree with the doctor's choice, since that medication is used for a different condition or set of symptoms. We understand that the layman, who is not familiar with the principles of medicine, is not entitled to render an opinion in this case. Every discipline has a self-contained logic, and only one with expertise in that discipline knows its system of thinking.

As in the case of the specialized fields of chemistry and physics, Halachah also possesses a self-contained logic. Halachah is not simply a compilation of religious laws; it is a specialized discipline, and it has its own methodology and means of analysis. The unlearned layman will ask, as did Korach, about the techeiles garment and the sefarim-filled room. To us, after studying the sections in the Shulchan Aruch dealing with Hilchos Tzitzis and Hilchos Mezuzah, the question seems ridiculous. Of course the Halachah dictates that the garment requires tzitzis and the room requires a mezuzah! People must realize that common sense does not necessarily carry the day when it comes to the halachic legal system. Halachah need not make common-sense any more than medicine, physics, or chemistry.

● From 'Rav Schachter on the Parsha'.

Taking Too Much



Rabbi Yisroel Reisman
Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

Let us share a beautiful thought from Rav Schwab, which can give us a new perspective on the complaint of Korach, and the Levi'im in general. We find that after the complaint of Korach and his congregation, Moshe responds to them with a phrase of “רַב-לְכֶם, בְּנֵי לֵוִי”. Moshe says that they already have so much, and they already have so much prestige for being Levi'im, why do they need to complain to get the Kehuna as well? Yet, later on in Sefer Devarim, when Moshe was davening to be allowed to go into Eretz Yisrael, we find that Hashem uses a similar phrase. In Parshat Ve'etchanan, Hashem says to Moshe “רַב-לֶךְ-אֶל-תּוֹסֵף דְּבַר אֵלֵי עוֹד, בְּדַבַּר הַזֶּה”, that it is too much and that Moshe should not add any more prayers to be allowed into Eretz Yisrael. It is explained there that this was מידה כנגד מידה – Moshe told the Levi'im that it was “רַב לְכֶם”, so Hashem told Moshe that it was “רַב לֶךְ”. The question now arises that seemingly, what Moshe said to the Levi'im was nothing bad at all, and therefore should not warrant a מידה כנגד מידה response from Hashem. Why was Moshe “punished” for telling the Levi'im in Korach's congregation that they had taken too much?

Rav Schwab explains that we can answer this question if we properly understand the reason behind the complaint of the Levi'im. Obviously what Korach and his congregation did was very bad, and ultimately they all disappeared from the



Why was Moshe “punished” for telling the Levi'im in Korach's congregation that they had taken too much?

Jewish nation. But if we can understand at least where their claim came from, we can explain why Moshe's response to them of “רַב לְכֶם” actually did warrant a response of Hashem of “רַב לֶךְ” to Moshe later on. Rav Schwab describes that every time the Jews were encamped, and then suddenly the ענני הכבוד lifted up, everyone had to quickly scramble to pack their bags and get ready to move. However, by שבת לוי, they first had the responsibility to run and pack up the Mishkan. Thus, they left the job of packing up their tents and belongings to the rest of their family. Likewise, after they finished traveling and the ענני הכבוד came to a stop, the rest of the nation began unpacking and setting up their new homes, but the Levi'im first had to go and unpack the Mishkan. However, the most difficult part emotionally for the Levi'im was that after all this hard work, and all this familial sacrifice, they were ultimately told to leave the Mishkan. When the Kohanim, who did not partake in this exhausting work of setting up the Mishkan, came to the ready Mishkan, they had to tell the Levi'im that they were not

able to stay in the מחנה שכינה, and they had to move out. The Levi'im felt as if they had done all the hard work, but ultimately the Kohanim were the ones who got all the glory. When Moshe told them “רַב לְכֶם”, he was telling them that they should appreciate their Schar, and that it was a big merit to what they were doing, despite not receiving any of the glory.

Now, if we go back to Parshat Ve'etchanan, we can now understand why Hashem was saying that same idea to Moshe. Moshe was praying to go into Eretz Yisrael, and Chazal explain that Moshe was complaining by saying that he had been through so many difficulties with the nation, and he had been through so many disputes, and he still cannot go into Eretz Yisrael? Therefore, Hashem had to remind him, מידה כנגד מידה, what he had told שבת לוי many years before. Hard work in עבודת ה' is always a tremendous זכות, and is something to strive for, even if you don't get the glory in the end. “רַב לֶךְ” – the merit that Moshe had gotten for being the leader of the nation for 40 years in the desert was great, even if he didn't have the glory of ultimately being the one to take them into the land of Israel.

● Edited by Jay Eisenstadt and Ari Levine.

A Wife Like On ben Pelet's and not a Wife Like Korach's!



Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef zt"l
Former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel

It says in Mishlei (14:1), "The wise among women, each builds her house, but the foolish one tears it down with her hands." Our Chachamim explain: "The wise among women, each builds her house", that is the wife of On ben Pelet, and "the foolish one tears it down with her hands" is the wife of Korach.

What had happened? Originally, On ben Pelet joined Korach's group, which he set against Moshe Rabbeinu, as the Torah explicitly tells us. After that, however, On ben Pelet's name is no longer mentioned in connection with Korach's group. Why? What had happened?

Our Chachamim explain that Korach did not initially argue with Moshe Rabbeinu, but when Moshe Rabbeinu was instructed by Hashem to take the Leviim "and shave them with a razor," Korach listened to Moshe and took a blade to his entire body, including his beard. He came home and when his wife saw him, she said to him, "What have you done?" He answered her, "This is what Moshe Rabbeinu commanded!" She replied, "Moshe? Do you think Hashem ordered everyone to shave their beards? How can that be? You are a fool!" And she began to mock him. This happened a few more times until her words penetrated Korach's heart, and he began to question Moshe's authority, out of hatred.

In contrast, On ben Pelet's wife said to him, "Listen, On, you know that Korach only cares about himself in everything he does, he really wants to be the cohen gadol. Think about it, if Moshe is the master, you are the student, and if Korach



Happy is the one whom Hashem has bestowed with a good wife, and he will merit a house of Torah, a house of wisdom, and a house of spiritual growth.

is the master, you are still the student. And if that's the case, why are you getting involved in this dispute? What do you personally gain by arguing with Moshe Rabbeinu, the man of Hashem?"

On answered her, "But I have sworn allegiance to Korach that I will see it through with him to the end." His wife said to him, "You swore? No problem, I'll release you from the oath!" He said to her, "What should we do?" She answered him, "Let us eat first." She served him food and gave him wine to drink and he became intoxicated until he became sleepy. She put him to bed where he fell asleep and covered him with a blanket so that he had a deep sleep.

"The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their houses along with all the men who were with Korach and their property" (Bamidbar 16:32). After this, On woke up and asked them all, "What has happened?" They told him that they were all devoured alive and you were saved! On saw this and began to cry. He said, "How could I have done such a thing? How could I join forces with Korach? And that is why he was called "On", because in Hebrew it means a state of mourning. He

was distraught over this terrible sin he had committed with Korach.

On's wife saved him: "the wise among women, each builds her house", but Korach's wife made sure that he disappeared completely from the world: "the foolish one tears it down with her hands". In the Gemara, the opinion is that Korach and his entourage have no part in the world to come, as the Passuk says: "They fell into the depths along with all that was theirs. The earth then covered them over, and they were lost to the community" (Bamidbar 16:33). "The earth then covered them over" in this world, "and they were lost to the community" in the world to come.

Anyone who wants to marry a lady should consider paying attention to her beauty: "Grace is false and beauty is vain" (Mishlei 31:30). The main thing is that the lady is righteous, a wise lady who will lead him on the right path. This is a great musar for a person, that when he marries a woman, he should act with foresight and pray to Hashem to prepare for him an eshet hayil who will not harm him like the wife of Korach, but on the contrary, she should be like the wife of On ben Pelet.

Happy is the one whom Hashem has bestowed with a good wife, and he will merit a house of Torah, a house of wisdom, and a house of spiritual growth. May Hashem grant us the merit of having our will coincide with His will.

Path to a Positive Impact



Rabbi Shalom Rosner
Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh

In this week's parsha we encounter Korach challenging Moshe's leadership. Korach does not act alone, rather he seeks to convince others to join him in his endeavor. Moshe, threatened by the very individuals whose lives he saved, realizes that only Hashem can defend the authenticity of Moshe's authority. Moshe's humbleness enables him to refrain from getting dragged into a *machloket* (dispute) and he quietly removes himself from the camp. Moshe could have easily reprimanded the rebellious individuals for their lack of gratitude for all he has done and sacrificed on their behalf and this is the way they express their gratitude – by challenging his authority? Yet, Moshe remained silent.

G-d then determines to not only punish the rebels but to do so in a manner that would clearly portray that it was an act of G-d, thereby convincing the nation that Moshe is indeed the selected leader of the nation.

A miraculous event occurs – the earth opens and Korach along with 250 rebels are swallowed alive. One would have thought that witnessing this extraordinary event would be de facto evidence of G-d's defense of Moshe. Yet, following this ground-breaking event (literally), the people turn to Moshe and accuse him and Aharon: "You have killed the people of G-d." (Bamidbar 17:6). Upset by their response, G-d inflicts the nation with a plague – killing 14,000, which later subsides only after Aharon sacrifices the *Ketoret* (incense).

Again, one would have thought that this sequence of events – a plague and miraculous ending of the plague, would have proven that Moshe and Aharon were



Why was it not enough for the people to witness the earth swallowing Korach and his rebels, or the plague and its abrupt ending with Aharon's offering of the Ketoret? Why was it only following the blossoming of the almonds on Aharon's staff that the nation was convinced of the authenticity of Moshe and Aharon's authority?

selected by Hashem and the rebels were punished by the hand of G-d. Yet, one additional step is required. The *nasi* of each tribe had to bring their staff along with Aharon's staff and the nation was told that they will be given a sign as to who is chosen by G-d to serve in the *mishkan*. Only after Aharon's staff blossoms, bearing forth almonds, did the nation understand that act as a confirmation that Moshe and Aharon's authority was in fact directed by Hashem. This was so significant that the staff that blossomed was then stored in the Aron for safekeeping as evidence for eternity.

Why were three stages required? Why was it not enough for the people to witness the earth swallowing Korach and his rebels, or the plague and its abrupt ending with Aharon's offering of the Ketoret? Why was it only following the blossoming of the almonds on Aharon's staff that the nation was convinced of the authenticity of Moshe and Aharon's authority?

Rav Pelkowitz in "Torah Talk" explains as follows. Miracles rarely have a lasting impact. They may capture the attention of the people and arouse man's marvel momentarily. However, miracles do not captivate the heart. Divine punishment does not create conviction in one's heart or mind. As the prophet Zecharia stated (4:6): "Not by military force and not by physical strength, but by My spirit..."

That is why the earth swallowing Korach and the plague inflicting the people did not convince the nation of Moshe and Aharon's authority. A positive, "fruitful" act, the blossoming of Aharon's staff, is what eventually convinced the people of the legitimacy of Moshe and Aharon's authority. That is why we never instituted any remembrance of the awesome miracle of the earth opening its mouth to swallow the rebels. We did, however, set aside Aharon's staff *limishmeret* - for safekeeping (Bamidbar 17:25), in the Aron to preserve the lesson of positive growth and productivity fresh and meaningful forever in the conscience of Am Yisrael.

This is a lesson for us to internalize. When confronted with rebellion by our fellow Jews, who are less affiliated, threats of divine punishment will have little impact on them. Attention, however, is paid and admiration (albeit begrudgingly), is evoked when the Torah community builds institutions, educates a generation and establishes homes and families that live lives based on Torah values, which are productive, decent and serve as models for society in general. Let's use the "constructive" rather than threatening approach to be able to influence others by serving as a positive example for those around us to mimic and from which to blossom.

Parshas Korach: Ruination Born of Strife



Michal Horowitz
Judaic Studies Teacher

In this week's *parsha*, *Parshas Korach*, Korach – a first cousin to Moshe and Aharon – begins an uprising against the leadership of his illustrious cousins, Moshe *Rabbeinu* and Aharon *ha'Kohen*. Not satisfied with being “only” a Levi, and wanting more *kavod* (honor) and *gedula* (greatness) for himself, the rebellion begins.

Wholly unsuccessful in his attempt to usurp their power, ultimately, the ground opens up and swallows him (and his accomplices) alive. As for the two hundred and fifty men who joined his rebellion, they are consumed by a fire (Bamidbar 16).

Once again, the story of Korach, and his downfall, remind us of the power of Chazal's words: *Who is a rich man? One who is satisfied with his portion* (Avos 4:1). When one is so busy obsessing over what his friend (or cousin) has, and what he lacks, such a person will never be satisfied or content. *Machlokes* (quarrel and strife) will never be far behind him, as he looks for ways to take power (or possessions) from others.

Hence, it is not for naught that the Sages further teach: *Any machlokes that is for the sake of Heaven, in the end will endure. And any that is not for the sake of Heaven, will not in the end endure. Which is a disagreement that is for the sake of Heaven? This is the disagreement of Hillel and Shammai. And which was a quarrel that was not for the sake of Heaven? This is the quarrel of Korach and his assembly* (Avos 5:17).

How often does man focus on, covet, and yearn for his friend's life, rather than focusing on the good in his own? It brought ruination to Korach, it brought *machlokes* to *Klal Yisrael*, and it is a sobering reminder of the importance of appreciating what we do have, and utilizing our own talents and capabilities to the fullest.

Commenting on the teaching in *Pirkei Avos* regarding disagreement for the sake of Heaven and quarrel that is not, R' Dr.

Tzvi Hersh Weinreb writes, “From this passage, it is apparent that our sages do not categorically oppose dispute, debate and argument. Rather, everything depends upon the motive. If the motive is a noble one, ‘for the sake of heaven,’ then debate is not only tolerated but is considered valuable. If the motive is ignoble, and certainly if it is merely contentious, it is strongly condemned.”

R' Dr. Weinreb quotes a fascinating Medrash, which expounds upon the word for quarrel or strife: *מחלוקת* – *machlokes*.

“An example of such a harsh condemnation is to be found in the Medrash on this *parsha*. The Medrash points out how each of the letters comprising the word *מחלוקת* represents a different vile trait. Thus, the first letter, *mem*, stands for *makka*, wound. The second letter *ches*, stands for *charon*, wrath. The letter *lamed* begins the word *lakui*, smitten. The letter *kuf* represents *klala*, curse. And finally, the *tav* stands for *tachlis*, which is often translated as goal or objective, but in this context means a final tragic ending.”

How amazing is *lashon ha'kodesh* and the teachings of our Sages! Embedded within the word *מחלוקת* – which comes from the root *ח.ל.ק*, to divide, or apportion, since *מחלוקת* causes a divide between members of *Am Yisrael* – is an acronym that reminds us how very dangerous division and strife are to our very existence as a unified people.

Continues R' Dr. Weinreb, “An objection has been raised to the criterion ‘for the sake of Heaven’ as a legitimate motive for dispute. Surely men have been motivated to commit horrible evil because they believed they were acting ‘for the sake of heaven’. One of the strongest arguments raised by free-thinkers against religion is the fact that so much blood has been spilled over the millennia by people who were convinced that they were performing G-d's will.

“It is to counter such an objection that the rabbis gave us Hillel and Shammai as appropriate examples of *מחלוקת* that is truly *l'shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven. The disagreements between these two sages and their disciples were characterized by tolerance and friendship. So much so that the Gemara records more than one incident when Hillel came around to Shammai's way of thinking, and vice versa.

“The disputes between Hillel and Shammai endure to this very day. Although we generally rule in accordance with the opinion of the former, we carefully attended to the arguments of the latter. I, for one, am convinced that we do so to perpetuate the attitudes of attentiveness and harmony, which both Hillel and Shammai advocated and enacted.

“Students of Torah must not only study the content of these ancient disputes; they must learn to recreate the atmosphere that prevailed among the disputants, one of civility and mutual respect, and a willingness to concede one's original position in order to achieve the truth” (The Person in the Parasha, p.449-451).

When one is content with his lot, and satisfied with his portion, he has self respect, as well as respect for others. This will lead to a disagreement for the sake of Heaven, for the sake of Truth, for the sake of sanctifying G-d's Name in this world. But when one lacks self-respect, and spends his life chasing after others – as did Korach – this invariably leads to strife and ruination.

As we enter the month of Tamuz, and the mourning of *Bein Ha'Metzarim* we would do well to remember this lesson. Our Temple was destroyed because of baseless hatred. Surely this includes *מחלוקת* that was not for the sake of Heaven. If we have any hope of rectifying the errors of our past, let us strive to ensure that all of our interactions bring honor and glory to Hashem, and to His people.

Fighting for a Common Cause



Rabbi Menachem Leibtag

Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

A cursory reading of Parshat Korach indicates that Korach, Datan and Aviram, and the 250 men all unite behind a common cause. Their censure of “bnei Levi” proves that Korach and his followers challenge the decision to limit the **kehuna** to Aharon and his sons. The dissidents demand that anyone who so desires should be allowed to offer “korbanot,” for **all** members of Israel are ‘spiritually equal.’

The Torah gives us the impression that everyone mentioned in the opening two psukim – i.e. Korach, Datan, Aviram, and the 250 men – join together in this protest. Hence, we should expect all of them to participate in this ‘showdown.’

However, as the narrative continues, a very different picture emerges: “And Moshe sent for **Datan and Aviram**, but they answered: **We will not come up...**”

Why must Moshe **send** for Datan and Aviram? From their response – “we will not come up” – it becomes clear that Datan and Aviram comprise an independent group. They remain in their own camp and refuse to even come near the Ohel Mo’ed.

Datan and Aviram don't seem terribly interested in ‘**spiritual** equality.’ As the narrative continues, we see that they have a very different complaint against Moshe, a more ‘political’ agenda. In this brazen defiance of Moshe's summons, Datan and Aviram totally reject Moshe's **political leadership**. In their eyes, Moshe has failed.

Clearly, this complaint differs drastically from Korach's initial objection to the **kehuna**! Korach and his cohorts challenge Aharon's exclusive status, but never question Moshe's leadership. After all, they all agree to the ‘test’ that Moshe himself

initiates. Datan and Aviram, however, challenge specifically Moshe's leadership.

Apparently, this is the story of **two** independent grievances, raised by **two** independent groups, situated at **two** different locations:

- Group One – the 250 men [“adat Korach”] protest **Aharon's** exclusive rights to the **kehuna**. They stand ready for their ‘test’ at the **Ohel Mo’ed**;
- Group Two – Datan and Aviram (and followers) complain against the **political** leadership of **Moshe**. They gather in the territory of **shevet Reuven**.

So where is Korach in all of this? Is he with Group I or with Group II?

Clearly, he leads Group One, which demands the “kehuna”. Yet, at the same time, he is so involved with Group Two that his name appears first on the banner in front of their party headquarters – “Mishkan **Korach** Datan v'Aviram!”

Korach ‘took’ two ostensibly legitimate protest groups and joined them together to form his own political power base. Whereas each group alone may have not dared to openly challenge Moshe and Aharon, Korach encourages them to take action. Datan and Aviram, ‘inspired’ by Korach, establish their own ‘headquarters’ in defiance of Moshe's leadership. Likewise, the 250 men are roused to openly challenge the restriction of the kehuna to Aharon.

Rather than encouraging open dialogue, Korach incites these two factions to take forceful action. Korach probably saw himself as the most suitable candidate to become the next national leader. To that end, he involves himself with each dissenting group. Korach is simply what we would call a ‘polished politician.’

The Mishna in Pirkei Avot (5:17) considers the rebellion of Korach as the paradigm of a dispute which was “shelo l'shem sha'mayim”. Why is specifically Korach seen as the classic example? After all, the arguments presented by Korach (“for the entire nation is holy,” etc.) seem to imply exactly the opposite – that it was actually an argument “l'shem shamayim”!

Pirkei Avot may be teaching us the very same message to which the Torah alludes through its complex presentation in our parsha. Precisely because Korach and his followers claim to be fighting “l'shem shamayim,” Chazal must inform us of Korach's true intentions. Korach may claim to be fighting a battle “l'shem shamayim,” but his claim is far from the truth. His primary interest is to promote himself, to build a power base from which he himself can emerge as the new leader.

Parshat Korach thus teaches us that whenever a dispute arises over community leadership or religious reform, before reaching conclusions we must carefully examine not only the claims, but also the true motivations behind them. On a personal level, as well, every individual must constantly examine the true motivations behind all his spiritual endeavors.

Tammuz and Jealousy



Rabbi Eli Mansour

Edmond J Safra Synagogue, Brooklyn

Our Sages teach that the divine Name of "Havaya," which is spelled with the letters "Yod," "Heh," "Vav" and "Heh," is the source of all blessing in the world. These four letters can be arranged in twelve different configurations, corresponding to the twelve months of the year, and each month is influenced by one configuration. The month of Nissan, for example, is under the influence of the straightforward spelling - "Yod," "Heh," "Vav" and "Heh." Nissan is the month of miracles when Hashem's presence is clear and obvious, and thus it is represented by the configuration that expresses the divine Name in the clearest, most straightforward manner. This spelling is alluded to in the verse in Tehillim (96:11), "Yismehu Ha'shamayim Ve'tagel Ha'aretz" ("The heavens shall rejoice and the earth shall exult"), as the first letters of these words are "Yod," "Heh," "Vav" and "Heh."

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the month of Tammuz - which we began this past week - corresponds to the reverse spelling of "Havaya" - "Heh," "Vav," "Heh" and "Yod." This is the month of crisis and calamity when Hashem is hidden and concealed when we are subjected to harsh judgment, and thus it is represented by the reverse of "Havaya." Interestingly enough, the verse that alludes to this month is a verse in Megillat Ester (5:13), in which Haman tells his family, "Ve'chol Zeh Enenu Shoveh Li" - "All this is worth nothing to me." The final letters of the words "Zeh Enenu Shoveh Li" are "Heh," "Vav," "Heh" and "Yod" - the configuration by which the month of Tammuz is



This is the time to remind ourselves that our goal and aspiration must be to bring honor and glory to G-d, and not to ourselves.

influenced. In this verse, Haman expresses his frustration over the fact that one man - Mordechai - refused to bow to him. Although Haman was the second-in-command in the largest empire in the world and enjoyed all the wealth, fame and prestige anyone could possibly hope for, he was not satisfied. He was infuriated by the fact that a single man refused to bow, to the point where everything he had was "worth nothing." As we know, this insatiable desire for honor, and Haman's overpowering jealousy, led to his swift downfall.

Our obligation during the month of Tammuz, then, is to reverse this quality of Haman, and thereby reverse the spelling of "Havaya," transforming Tammuz into Nissan - changing the month of calamity into a month of overt miracles. During Tammuz, we ought to be focusing our efforts on avoiding envy and self-aggrandizement. Appropriately, we spend much of this month thinking about and mourning the Bet Hamikdash, which was built to bring honor to Hashem. This is the time to remind ourselves that our goal and aspiration must be to bring honor and glory to G-d, and not to ourselves.

Not at all coincidentally, during this month we read Parashat Korah, which tells of the destructive power of jealousy. Korah, like, Haman, enjoyed prestige but was dissatisfied and envious. Our Sages explain that Korah was among the Leviyim who transported the Aron in the wilderness - a very coveted and prestigious position - but he felt envious of the fact that his cousin, Elitafan, was chosen as the leader of his group of Leviyim, a position he felt he deserved. These feelings of jealousy led him to the insensible decision to revolt against Moshe Rabbenu, a decision that cost him his life.

Let us learn from this story about the dangers of jealousy, and always remember that our goal as Jews is to work to bring honor to Hashem. If we conduct our lives with this objective in mind, we will avoid jealousy and resentment and will focus our energies on doing what is right, and not on what will bring us fame.

More of the Roses



Rabbi Moshe Weinberger
Congregation Aish Kodesh, Woodmere

The Chozeh of Lublin quotes the following Midrash: “Korach says, ‘Hashem wants [us] to burn incense before Him in firepans of gold and silver [rather than copper as commanded in the Torah].’ This is comparable to a king who asked his servants to make him a crown. [His servants desired] to affix in it all types of precious stones. The king said, “I do not want any of these. Rather, [make the crown out of] roses.’ The sons of Korach said [after falling into the ground with Korach but before entering Gehinom], ‘We are roses!’ Hashem said, “You have been victorious!’ This is what is meant by the pasuk, ‘For the conductor, on the roses, by the sons of Korach...’ The Hebrew word for “for the conductor, למנצח,” is related to the word for victory, which relates to Hashem’s message to them, “You have been victorious, ונצחתם.”

The Chozeh explains that Korach believed he was superior to Aharon Hakohein because he, Korach, was part of the tribe of Levi, which did not participate in the sin of the Golden Calf. Aharon, on the other hand, did participate in it on some level, though even Korach acknowledged that he did so with righteous intentions. Korach therefore looked down on Aharon. What is the significance of this?

The Zohar says that Korach included within himself all of the Levi’im. He was a great person and was quite proud of himself and his tribe, believing that they were sinless. Aharon, on the other hand, felt broken-hearted over his involvement with the Golden Calf. He felt completely unworthy and could not bring himself to approach the altar in the service of G-d (Rashi on Vayikra 9:7). He felt so unworthy that Moshe had to adjure him, “Why are you embarrassed? This is why you were chosen” (ibid.). The Ramban there explains that wherever Aharon looked, he saw the Golden Calf. On his level, Aharon’s sin saved him from the greatest sin, arrogance. Unfortunately,

because Korach believed himself sinless, he succumbed to arrogance, which led to the rebellion against Moshe Rabbeinu, as well as his own personal destruction.

Now we can understand why the Midrash says that Korach objected to the Torah’s command that the firepans be made of copper. He wanted them to be made of gold and silver. He believed that they should be constructed of the most precious metals, gold and silver, which correspond to the central attributes a Jew must have in his service of G-d – love and fear. He believed that a Jew must have perfect love and fear of G-d. He thought that Hashem only loves one who serves him perfectly and has never made a mistake.

Hashem’s response is that he wants a crown of roses. The Hebrew word for roses (שושנים) also means “those who change, ששונים.” It is wonderful to have some Jews who do not make mistakes and remain sinless. But Hashem knows the nature of the people He created. Therefore, what He wants more than servants who have never made a mistake is servants who are willing to change and turn themselves around after they have erred. He wants people who are willing to grow, change, and blossom if and when they do fail.

The Yisa Bracha of Modzhitz explains that wisdom means knowing what to do in the first instance. It means being careful so that one does not sin. But intelligence, שכל, means knowing what to do after he has sinned. It means knowing how to change, how to be a rose and do teshuva. The pasuk (Devarim 32:29) says, “Would that they were wise, they would understand [ישכילין] this; they would reflect upon their end.” In other words, ideally, “would that they were wise,” they would serve G-d with firepans of gold and silver.

The best thing is to be wise and avoid falling into sin to begin with. But even if the Jewish people have sinned, “they would

understand [ישכילין] this; they would reflect upon their end.” The greatest accomplishment for most people is to look intelligently at their end. At the end, after they have erred, they should consider the mistakes they have made and rectify them. They should change and recognize that Hashem desires their service with copper firepans as well. He does not only want gold and silver as Korach thought. They should recognize that if they can change, then they will smell as sweet as roses to Hashem. That will make their lives a “song of endearment.” Then G-d will say, “You have been victorious.”

Hashem reiterated his choice of Aharon and his sons as the kohanim with the miracle of the blossoms and almonds which sprouted from Aharon’s staff, but not the other tribes’ staffs (Bamidbar 17:23). The significance of both the blossoms and the almonds is illustrated in the following story:

Reb Simcha Bunim of Peshischa once asked the chassidim to bring him Reb Lazer Moshe of Vishgrad. Reb Lazer Moshe was about 100 years old, which is very rare nowadays, and was even more astounding then. When he arrived, Reb Simcha Bunim asked Reb Lazer Moshe, “Why does the pasuk say that Aharon’s staff blossomed? The fact is that it sprouted almonds. The nuts are the final product of the tree. Why was Hashem concerned that the staff should also produce flowers, blossoms, which seem secondary to the almonds?” Reb Lazer Moshe answered: “Sometimes a Jew gets to the end of his life and he has accomplished a lot. His life has borne fruit. He feels like an almond. By teaching that the staff sprouted blossoms as well, the Torah teaches us that even if a person feels complete and that his life has borne fruit, he must know that he should still produce flowers and blossoms. He must always continue growing and changing, no matter how complete he feels his life is.”

How to Change the World



Rabbi YY Jacobson
TheYeshiva.net

The Midrash relates that just prior to the Korach debacle, the Torah presents the commandment of tzitzis. One of the strings on each corner, the Torah instructs, should be of turquoise wool, known in Hebrew as techeiles. Now, Korach dressed two-hundred-and-fifty men who joined him in his debate with Moses, with four-cornered garments made completely of turquoise wool and then confronted Moses with the following question: Does a garment made completely of turquoise wool still require a single turquoise thread in its fringes?

Moses' answer was, yes. To which Korach, who was attempting to demonstrate the absurdity of Moses' law, responded: If a single strand of turquoise wool is enough for an entire garment made of a different color, does it not stand to reason that a garment of complete turquoise should not require one more strand of this wool?

Then, the Midrash continues, Korach asked Moses the following question: If a home is filled with many complete Torah scrolls, does it still require a mezuzah on its doorpost? Again, Moses' response was yes.

Once again Korach dismissed this verdict as absurd. If a single mezuzah suffices for an entire home, would not many complete Torah scrolls in a home suffice to create a "kosher" and holy space?

But why did Korach choose these two examples to "demonstrate" that the laws presented by Moses were illogical? He could have chosen myriads of biblical mitzvot that apparently have no place in logic.

Why does the Torah instruct the Jew to insert into each of the fringes one strand made of turquoise wool? The Talmud

explains that this color reflects the heavens, reminding the Jew of G-d's majesty and presence. Now, Korach and Moses debated the nature of spiritual leadership, how to impact and inspire physical human beings to refine their lives and to transform the world from a material, selfish planet, into a place of spiritual energy where the inherent spiritual organic unity of the universe is exposed.

Korach believed that you must impress upon the heart the stirring drama, depth, vision, and mystique of Torah's vision of the world. You need to shake people up and overwhelm them with the majesty, grace and splendor of G-dliness. Let their entire "garment," their entire identity, become all turquoise. Let them melt away completely and become fully enveloped by the "blue light" of heaven.

Moses disagreed. He said that to move people, to let their spirits soar, is splendid, but never enough. For inspiration to leave a lasting impact, it must find expression in individual and particular actions, words and thoughts. If you wish to make a real transformation in people's lives, it is not enough to generate a dramatic momentum, to make them cry, laugh and dance, to get their souls on fire and their minds aglow with inspiration. You must give them a single tangible act through which they can connect to G-d and bring His morality into the world. You need to inspire people to make one strand of their lives blue.

It was an argument about what should become the great emphasis of Judaism.

According to Korach, Judaism was about awakening a passion to revolutionize the universe. But Moses learned from G-d that in order to accomplish this goal, the primary focus of Judaism needed to be on

individual daily behavior, changing the world one mitzvah at a time.

Korach's message seemed logical. If we can electrify a soul with a passion for making the world a G-dly place, is the individual mitzvah ultimately relevant? Let us talk about changing people and changing the world, not about small individual acts!

Korach was a spiritual revolutionary, but Moses was a leader, a shepherd to his flock. Moses, to be sure, deeply identified with Korach's message. If anybody understood the value of impassioned idealism, it was Moses, a man who left everything behind in his quest for truth. But a leader is not an individual lofty soul; a leader is a collective soul, a person who encompasses within his own heart an entire nation, from the highest to the lowest, and who is deeply in tune with the reality of the human condition.

Moses knew that a message that inspires boundless awe and excitement, but that does not demand individual life changes, will not have a lasting impact in the long run. As the fiery inspiration dies down, as the coals dim their glow, black ashes are left behind. When the concert is over, and the lights go off, what remains from all of the ecstasy? An empty heart.

When an idealistic spirit speaks of transforming the universe and lifting all of humanity to heaven but fails to invest much focus on building the daily infrastructure that will harness their passionate energy, in the end, he might fall very low, perhaps even become swallowed by the abyss.

The lesson in our lives is clear.

We all struggle with the question of Jewish continuity. Many Jewish activists and leaders created programs that inspire

Continued on next page

The Jewish Soul Thirsting for Closeness



Rabbi Judah Mischel

Executive Director, Camp HASC; Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

Perek 42 is the first chapter in *Sefer Tehillim* that is attributed to *Bnei Korach*, the descendants of the notorious rebel who led a failed and tragic attempt to overthrow Moshe Rabbeinu. In our *Sedra's* graphic description of the punishment received by *Adas Korach* we are told that while Korach and his 250 followers were consumed, swallowed up by the ground (Bamidbar 26:10-11), *Bnei Korach Lo Meitu*, “the sons of Korach did not die.”

Rashi cites *Maseches Megillah* which explains that at the last moment, during their free-fall into the pits of *Gehinom*, the sons of Korach experienced a change of heart, and there were *Hirhurei Teshuvah b'Libam*, thoughts of Teshuvah in their hearts, and feelings of regret for their actions. In the merit of that last moment turn-around, they were graced with another chance; a ledge jutted out, they landed safely, and were spared.

The beautiful imagery expressed in Tehillim 42 of the Jewish Soul thirsting for closeness with God represents the yearning of *Bnei Korach* and that spectacular moment of Teshuvah:

K'Ayal Taarog al Afikei Mayim...

Like a hart thirsting for
fresh springs of water,
Tzama Nafshi l'Elokim...

Our Souls yearn for the Living God,
To experience *Dveikus*, to return to
connection with the Source of Life,
To “appear” before *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

This need to reach out and be close with Hashem is a Jew's most natural and essential desire.

In addition to the beauty of our calling out to G-d, *Perek 42* also describes the suffering and alienation of a people in exile — downcast, bitter and overwhelmed by torment and difficulty. This finally erupts as an impassioned plea for salvation:

Yomam Yetzaveh Hashem Chasdo...

(Let Dawn arrive); may Hashem
command His lovingkindness!

Omrah l'Keil Sal'i, Lamah Sh'chachtani

I will say to G-d, my Rock, why
have you forgotten me?!

In this extended exile, our souls are parched, we are exhausted and in desperate need of awakening and illumination. It is from within the

barrenness of this spiritual desert that our souls thirst for closeness and Teshuvah.

When we experience *Hirhurei Teshuvah*, we are consoled and we are encouraged to overcome our sadness and to never despair. Our prayers will surely be answered, and our Teshuvah accepted. We will be graced with a second chance:

Ki Od Odenu Yeshu'os Panai Veilokai

For I shall yet thank Him, my Salvation,
The Light of my Countenance,
and my G-d!

May we be inspired by the power of the *Hirhurei Teshuvah* and soulful yearning of *Bnei Korach*. May we honor the moments when we stop to reconsider our own lives, mortality and relationship with Hashem, and be strengthened with the knowledge that it is never too late to change. We are never too far away to return.

■ ■ ■

“And the essence of Teshuvah is the mere thought of Teshuvah in the heart alone! For by such a thought, someone can come to be called a complete Tzadik, even when prior to this he was a complete Rasha....” (Reb Tzadok haKohein of Lublin, *Takanat haShavin*)

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Jewish passion, Jewish awareness, *tikun olam* (healing the world), the love of peace, and the love of Israel. These are all beautiful, noble and idealistic missions, but they do not always create lasting change. Passion and excitement without tangible deeds on a daily basis are powerful but not everlasting.

The blue cloak is good but what we need most is a single strand of blue. Our youth needs to be taught the value and nobility of the performance of a single mitzvah on a daily basis. When the ideals of Judaism – the infinite dignity of the human spirit, the inherent unity of the universe, the presence of a living, loving G-d—are

translated into daily deeds, which we call mitzvot, they don't remain abstract celestial reflections, that can vanish momentarily, but rather become tangible and eternal realities in people's lives.

Awareness Amidst the Abyss

Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

Shofar blowing is one of the most intense spiritual moments of the entire year. In preparation for this elevated moment, Chazal instituted the recitation of Tehillim chapter 47, “Lamenatzeach livnei Korach mizmor”. Who were these sons of Korach? Why is it fitting to be reminded of them at this time and what message do they teach us that is applicable to tekiat shofar?

“Benei Korach lo maisu”, the children of Korach did not die (Bamidbar 26;11). Rashi explains that originally, they were part of the rebellion against Moshe Rabbeinu and thus were also swallowed by the ground with Korach and his following. It was only upon reaching the lowest level of Gehenom that they had thoughts of teshuvah and were granted an island of asylum to be saved from eternal extinction. The Saba of Slabodka further points out that it was only when they were amidst the fires of Gehenom and could not even open their mouths that thoughts of teshuvah, sufficient to make them worthy of salvation, came to them. Each person has the free choice to reflect on what Hashem wants at any given moment. Each of us can experience deep remorse for past behaviors and a desire to live differently in the present. These thoughts create a powerful transformation within a person. It is no wonder that the song of Korach’s sons is



It is no wonder that the song of Korach’s sons is highlighted at such a significant moment as it evokes the necessary inspiration for tekiat shofar.

highlighted at such a significant moment as it evokes the necessary inspiration for tekiat shofar.

Rav Shach adds that each of us is never alone; Hashem is found inside us always. Consequently, even a small thought of connecting to Hashem creates a boundless union. For example, Moshe Rabbeinu merely turned his head to see why the bush was not burning and was immediately granted prophecy. We are mistaken when we think it takes great strides and major changes to access closeness to Hashem. The Sefat Emet teaches that the word “ad” in “Shuva Yisrael ad Hashem Elokecha” (Hoshea 14;2), can be understood as “eid”, a witness. At times we may have a stirring of teshuvah deep in our hearts that could even be imperceptible to ourselves, yet Hashem is our witness. He considers these feelings as an indication of teshuvah and enables us to grow from them. When we are about to blow the shofar, we must

realize that any thoughts and desires of closeness are so beloved by Hashem and bring us that much nearer to Him. ?

Rav Reuven Melamed notes that Korach’s sons were only partially involved in the insurrection, it did not come from something deeply rooted within. They were therefore able to extricate themselves at the last moment to a haven of salvation. In contrast, says Rav Schwadron, the rest of the group was so entrenched in their rebellion that even when standing at the gates of Gehenom they could not do teshuvah. When one is controlled by their actions to such an extent, even when they may wish to do teshuvah, they have lost their ability to choose and are dragged down by the evil they have embraced. This too is an appropriate reflection for moments before tekiat shofar. We never want to reach a point when we are controlled by our impulses and actions and have lost the ability to direct our destiny.

Too Long Vacation



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi
Popular Torah teacher and author

When the government dissolved this week, many people felt very free. The teachers are finally gone, the institution we did not like is closed, vacation! And now what? What do you do on vacation? Elections again. An infinite number of possibilities.

How simple it was when G-d chose a leader! So it says in our parsha, “And the candidate whom G-d chooses, he shall be the holy one.” How simple when there is no election headquarters, but when a headquarters blossoms and proclaims the leader as Divinely chosen!

“Let G-d, Source of the breath of all flesh, appoint someone over the community,” asks Moshe, who knows that being a leader is a compulsion. It is difficult with him and impossible without him.

On this point, Sadyuk disagrees with Korach. He asks, “Who needs a leader?!” A house full of books – why do we need a mezuzah? Are we really a nation of sages, a kingdom of priests, a people of the book, and we should kiss the mezuzah? Sometimes the term “leader” is seen as feudal and outdated, especially in a generation where everyone has a community, is a leader on social media.

And that’s where Yonatan Ben Uziel comes in. He is trying to discover the leader who is “גדול מרבן שמר” – whose greatness exceeds all possible degrees. He will try to discover the day of the arrival of the Mashiach. Chazal describe how the earth shakes and G-d asks, “Who allowed you to find out when the



**Talk to me! Say something to me!
Answer me! Convince me of your
position! Women will ask. But if
there is no clear position – she has
no one to help her and no one to
face her and explain her position.**

Mashiach will come?” And Yonatan Ben Uziel replies, “It is revealed and known before You that neither was it for my honor that I acted when ostracizing him, nor for the honor of the house of my father that I acted; rather, it was for Your honor, so that disputes will not proliferate in Israel.” What does this have to do with anything?

Does Yonatan Ben Uziel know that in the days to come we will be divided into different groups and subgroups, the slave son and the noble son, blue and white, and that there will be no more right and left and everyone will lose their definition and the only definition then will be to quarrel with someone else?

It will be impossible to get married.

“And Korach wanted to replace the right with the left...for everywhere there is a middle ground between the right and the left, and Korach mixed the two...” (Zohar to Parashat Korach)

To marry, Yonatan Ben Uziel knows, one needs a clear right and a clear left. Only

in this way is it possible to connect and know the difference. If the freedom is too great and the whole community is against the whole community, many, many, many women will be left alone.

Because a woman is a “counterpart for him” and she must know what she is up against and who is against whom.

Moshe tries to explain his side to his opponents, but if they really have no side other than the desire to oppose him, it is impossible to build a house. It will not be possible to put up a mezuzah, because this house has no walls and no entrance and no exit. “And Moses sent to call Dathan and Aviram...Now Moses was very angry. He was very anguished. To what is this comparable? To a man who argues with his companion and reasons with him. When he answers him, he has peace of mind; but if he does not answer him, then this involves great anguish.” (Tanchuma)

Talk to me! Say something to me! Answer me! Convince me of your position! Women will ask. But if there is no clear position – she has no one to help her and no one to face her and explain her position.

Chazal call this place, “deeper than the netherworld” the “deep,” “that all who are invalid for marriage go there.”

Only a mezuzah defines what belongs to the house and what should remain outside. Only it would allow the possibility of a kiss in that separative place.

Hebrew Language in the Parsha



David Curwin
balashon.com

In Parashat Korach, after the dramatic opening of the earth to swallow Korach's assembly and the fire that consumed the 250 men bringing incense, there was still a need for Moshe and Aharon to show that they had maintained God's favor in a positive fashion. As a sign of who was chosen, God instructed Moshe to tell Aharon to place his staff in the tent, along with the staffs of the leaders of the other tribes. In a miraculous manner, the next morning only Aharon's staff had blossomed:

וַיְהִי מִמָּחֳרָת וַיָּבֵא מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אֱהֱרָאֵל הָעֵדוּת וְהֵנָּה פָּרַח
מִטֵּה-אַהֲרֹן לְבַיִת לְוִי וַיֵּצֵא פָּרַח וַיִּצְצוּ צִיץ וַיִּגְמַל
שְׂקָדִים:

"The next day, when Moshe came to the Tent of Testimony, Aharon's staff, of the house of Levi, had blossomed. It had given forth leaves, and was producing

blossoms and almonds were ripening on it." (Bamidbar 17:23)

The word translated here as "ripening" – וַיִּגְמַל – is an interesting one. It comes from the root גמל, which may also mean to ripen in Yeshaya 18:5. However, this is an uncommon meaning in biblical Hebrew. Far more common are the following two usages:

- to pay, reward, bestow: From here we later get such phrases as הַגּוֹמֵל לְחַיִּיבֵים טוֹבוֹת – "[God] rewards the guilty with favors" and גָּמְלוֹת הַסִּדִּים – "the bestowing of loving kindness."
- to wean: For example, we read about Yitzchak: וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד וַיִּגְמַל – "The child grew up and was weaned."

All three of these meanings – "to ripen," "to pay," and "to wean" – point to a common origin. Linguists suggest that the original root meant "to complete."

When something ripens, it achieves completeness. Similarly, when payment is given that indicates the deal is complete, and a weaned child is more mature (and less dependent) than an infant.

But what about the most famous use of the root: גָּמַל – "camel"? Scholars are divided about its etymology and connection to the verb גמל. Some say it is unrelated. Others suggest that the camel is "weaned" from water, or use a variation of the "pay" sense, "put plans into actions", and note that the camel is always ready to serve.

The shape of the camel's neck gave us the name of the third letter of the Hebrew alphabet: גִּימָל. That letter's name was borrowed into Greek as their letter *gamma*. Much later, גִּימָל entered Israeli military slang as the code for "sick leave," because that was the letter assigned to it on army forms.

Parsha Riddle



Reb Leor Broh
Mizrachi Melbourne

A string of nine consecutive words appears twice in the Parsha. What are the nine words, and where do they appear?

Answer to the Parsha Riddle

These 9 words appear in 16:21-22 & 17:10.
מִיָּמִן לְעֵלְיוֹתָיִם וְלִמְעַלְיוֹתָיִם וְלִמְעַלְיוֹתָיִם וְלִמְעַלְיוֹתָיִם וְלִמְעַלְיוֹתָיִם וְלִמְעַלְיוֹתָיִם וְלִמְעַלְיוֹתָיִם וְלִמְעַלְיוֹתָיִם וְלִמְעַלְיוֹתָיִם



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