

BS"D



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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON **KORACH** 5767

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Rabbi Hershel Schachter **It's Just Plain Common Sense**

The rabbis in the midrash saw a connection between the end of parshas Shlach (where the mitzvah of tzitzis appears) and the beginning of parshas Korach (which describes the rebellion against the authority of Moseh Rabbeinu). Korach claimed that since all Jews have the same level of kedusha, everyone has the right to interpret the halacha as he sees fit. His argument against Moshe's halachic position had great appeal to the masses. It was based on common sense. He got two hundred and fifty Jewish leaders to wear four-cornered garments made of techeiles and to appear before Moshe, asking whether it was necessary to tie the techeiles strings (in tzitzis) to their garments. Common sense dictated that this was not necessary. If one string died techeiles takes care of a garment of any other color, then if the entire garment consists of techeiles strings, no additional strings of techeiles ought to be needed.

Moshe rabbeinu, on the other hand, argued that halacha is a self-contained discipline where common sense does not always play a role. In the discipline of biology the Talmud points out that one can not always use common sense; and the same is true of physics. Each discipline is self contained, and has its own style of logic. The same is true of the halacha.

This idea is well known at Yeshiva. Rav Soloveitchik's talk on this topic has appeared both in Shiurei Horav (edited by Joseph Epstein) as well as in Reflections of the Rav, volume I (transcribed by Rabbi Avraham Besdin).

In connection with this idea many will refer to the words of the Sema (in his commentary to Choshen Mishpat) that the "sechel of the baal habayis" is just the opposite from the "sechel of the Torah" (in yeshiva parlance a "baalebatish svora" usually refers to a common-sense argument.) In yeshiva circles a witty comment is attributed to the Ohr Sameach: when a talmid chacham can not figure out any given halacha, let him ask a baal habayis, and then do the opposite. The halacha will always be the opposite from what the baal habayis will think that it should be. The story goes that on one occasion the talmidei chachamim did not know what the halacha should be in a certain instance, they asked a baal habayis, and he happened to give the right answer. They approached the Ohr Sameach and asked him, but didn't you tell us that the sechel of the baalei battim will always be the opposite from the sechel of the Torah? Whereupon he answered that the baal habayis must have had a bad day! He was not thinking straight for a baal habayis!

I remember there was a student in Rav Soloveitchik's class at Yeshiva who would evaluate the shiurim. When everything made sense, there were no loose ends, and everything fit into place, that would be considered so-so. But when the svoros developed were not that compelling, and all the gemoras didn't really fit in well, that was tops - "real Brisk"!

In fact, in Lithuanian yeshivas there was such an exaggerated disdain for baalei batim, the "story" went around about two elderly gentlemen - baalei batim of course - who were both hard of hearing and made up to learn gemorrah together. One was using a gemorrah Eruvin while the other was using an Erchin. The chavrusa went very well, until they reached the forty-third daf, when one was already making a siyum on the smaller volume (Erchin), and the other still had another seventy blat to go!

This exaggerated attitude is the basis of the very fundamental philosophical question that bothered many of the Lithuanian yeshiva bochurim: why did the Borei Olam create baalei batim at all? We know that he didn't create anything that has no purpose!?

Needless to say, all of these exaggerations are ridiculous. The Sema never meant to say that the sechel of baalei batim is always the opposite from sechel haTorah. A layman who is not familiar with the intricacies of physics or biology will often be mistaken if he will apply common sense to those disciplines; and the same is true of the self-contained discipline of Torah. But very often we will use common sense in establishing halacha! The Talmud tells us that by way of sevorah we can establish a din de'oraaisa!

I recently met a young talmid chochom who insisted that a certain halacha in Shulchan Aruch must be understood literally, as applying in all cases, even when it made no sense. I argued that it was self understood that one use his common sense, and only apply the halacha when it indeed did make sense. (I later checked the Igros Moshe of Rav Moshe Feinstein and he wrote exactly the same in that particular instance). This young talmid chochom told me, no, we may not use common sense at all, and even though the halacha - as he misunderstood it - made no sense, he has "emunas chachomim." I told him that this was a Christian concept (the principle of the infallibility of the posek). Our Torah speaks of the theoretical possibility of a par he'elem davar shel tzibbur, a korban brought in a situation where all seventy one members of the Sanhedrin paskened wrong. The torah tells us that on one occasion Moshe Rabbeinu was about to issue an incorrect psak, until he listened to his brother Aharon and corrected his position.

In our religion, are we not permitted, or better yet - obligated, to ask questions when we come across a halacha that makes no sense? Isn't that what "lernin" is all about: to make sense out of the halacha! Our Torah is a Toras emes: it corresponds to reality, and does not contradict it! Rav Chaim Volozhener would often sign off at the close of a tshuva "Kel emes nosan lanu Toras emes, u'bilti el ho'emes eineinu - the true G-d gave us a truthful Torah and we always have to try to be honest to discover the true meaning of the halacha." If there are two ways to understand a halacha, one which makes sense and the other does not, of course we should choose the interpretation that makes sense!

Yes, indeed, emunas chachomim is a very fundamental principle in our faith: we believe Hakadosh Baruch Hu will give divine assistance to an honest and deserving talmid chochom that he should be above his personal negios in issuing a psak; he will not have an agenda. But it doesn't mean that we should believe in nonsense. Every exaggeration is by definition not true. It does not correspond to reality. The halacha is very nuanced because the world is very complex. Most simanim in Shulchan Aruch have many se'ifim. You can not cover all the cases in one short statement. The challenge of "lernin" is to be able to formulate the halacha precisely, without any exaggeration leaning in either direction, with "sechel".

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“RavFrاند” List - Rabbi Frاند on Parshas Korach

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 554 - The Kohain and the First Aliyah. Good Shabbos!

Korach and the Rebbe Reb Zusha: Opposite Ends of the Spectrum

Korach and his followers met a most tragic and unique fate following their abortive attempt to overthrow the leadership of Moshe Rabbeinu: “...the ground that was under them split open. The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, and all the people who were with Korach, and all their possessions.” [Bamidbar 16:31-32]

The general rule or presumption is that the Almighty administers punishment in a “measure for measure” fashion. What significance is there to the fact that the earth swallowed up the people who sided with Korach? Where is the “measure for measure” aspect of that punishment?

At the very beginning of the Parsha, Rashi comments on a point that bothers all commentaries: What is the meaning of the opening words: “And Korach took” (vaYikach Korach)? What did Korach take? Rashi’s approach is that Korach took himself off to one side, to be separate from the assembly of Israel by raising objections regarding the priesthood.

Rashi is pointing out that the first step in any communal dispute is when one party literally “takes himself to one side” — he separates himself from the rest of the community. He denies the unity of the “tzibur” [community]. As a result of this “striking out on one’s own”, everything else follows naturally. Inevitably, the next step will be something akin to “he was jealous regarding the fact that Elizaphan was appointed the Prince of the Tribe of Levi.”

Korach was bothered by the fact that he — the eldest of the second son of Kehas (Yitzhar) — was passed over for this prestigious job. He reasoned that the oldest son of Kehas (Amram) had two sons (Moshe and Aharon) who played major leadership roles in Klal Yisrael. It was only fair that Korach was next in line for the third leadership position in the tribe — that of being prince. Instead, the role of Prince of Levi was given to the son of Kehas’ third son (Uziel) — Elizaphan.

Once one fails to see himself as part of the tzibur, one becomes bothered by other people’s roles. If there is a sense of unity and community, it really does not make a difference “which role I perform and which role you perform”, as long as the job gets done.

Once, however, a person “takes himself to one side”, stepping out of the tzibur, it bothers him who is going to be the key player. If I’m NOT a team player, then MY role takes on extreme importance.

To appreciate the contrast between the two ends of the spectrum we should contrast Korach’s attitude with that of the Rebbe Reb Zusha. The Rebbe Reb Zusha was once asked if he would have liked to trade places with Avraham Avinu. He responded: “What difference would it make? The bottom line is that the Almighty would still only have one Avraham Avinu and one Reb Zusha? In the final analysis, the world would have been no better or worse. Things would be exactly the same whether I was Avraham and he was Zusha or I am Zusha and he is Avraham.”

This is a far cry from Korach. For Korach, it was vital that HE be the star. He wanted to be the Prince because he did not have a sense of community.

Rabbi Zev Leff explains that if this is the understanding of Korach’s sin, it makes perfect sense why his punishment was that the ground split apart.

What would happen to the earth if every grain of sand was not together, but separate? We would all sink into the earth. What makes the earth Terra Firma is that the ground sticks together. The fact that the sand and earth all combine together gives the earth its strength. If every grain of sand would separate, we would be left with one big sinkhole.

Korach’s “measure for measure” punishment was the lesson of what happens when individuals separate from one another when they should be

joined together. Together there is strength. Separated, we are all just bits of sand.

The Need To Preserve The Staff of Aharon

The Torah says that after the dispute of Korach, the symbol that the Almighty established to prove that Aharon and his descendants were His choice to be the priests was the Staff of Aharon. G-d made a miracle such that this staff sprouted almonds. This finally concluded the rebellion of Korach and allowed peace to be restored to Israel.

The Rambam writes: “There was a stone in the western side of the Holy of Holies upon which the Aron [Ark] rested. In front of it was the (memorial) jug of Mann and the Staff of Aharon. At the time King Solomon built the Bais HaMikdash [Temple], he knew that eventually the Bais HaMikdash would be destroyed, so he built a secret compartment in deep underground chambers. King Yoshiyahu commanded that the Aron be hid in the place that Shlomo prepared, as it is written... and they hid together with it the staff of Aharon, the jug of Mann, and the oil of anointing. None of these things returned at the time of the second temple...” [Hilchos Beis HaBechira 4:1]

The four things (the Aron, the Mann, the oil, and Aharon’s staff) are preserved until this very day. These are items that the nation of Israel needs for all eternity. If we were to take a poll and ask “What should be saved from the First Bais HaMikdash for all eternity — The Staff of Moshe or the Staff of Aharon,” I’m sure the response would be “The Staff of Moshe.”

Moshe’s staff was used to split the sea and to perform the miracles and plagues in Egypt. This is the staff that gave Klal Yisrael their freedom! Why is it that the staff that did all the miracles was not preserved, and yet the Staff of Aharon with which just one significant event occurred was preserved for all eternity?

The Mikdash Mordechai suggests that the Staff of Moshe was the staff of miracles. Miracles are significant but not crucial for the future of the Jewish people. The Staff of Aharon is the staff that brought peace to the Jewish people (following the Korach rebellion). Peace is needed until the end of time. Somehow or another, we will be able to exist without the Staff of Moshe and the miracles it represented. But there is something that Klal Yisrael cannot do without. It cannot do without Shalom [peace]. The instrument that brings Shalom must be preserved for all eternity.

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This week’s write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (# 334). The corresponding halachic portion for this tape is: Leaving a Chasunah Before Benching.

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From: Rabbi Yissocher Frand [ryfrاند@torah.org] Sent: Friday, June 30, 2006 [From last year]

To: ravfrاند@torah.org

Subject: Rabbi Frاند on Parshas Korach

“RavFrاند” List - Rabbi Frاند on Parshas Korach

The Choice of Ketores To Counter-Act The Plague

Following the incident of Korach and the complaints of the Children of Israel in its aftermath, the Almighty was prepared to unleash a plague that would, Heaven Forbid, wipe out the Jewish people:

“Hashem spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Separate yourselves from the midst of this assembly and I shall destroy them in an instant!’ They fell on their faces. Moses said to Aaron, ‘Take the fire-pan and put on it fire from upon the Altar and place incense (ketores) and take it quickly to the assembly and provide atonement for them, for the wrath has gone out from the presence of Hashem; the plague has begun!’” [Bamidbar 17:9-11].

Given the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu apparently took this initiative on his own, Rashi asks how it was that he specifically chose ketores as the antidote for the plague. Rashi answers that this was a secret Moshe learned from the Angel of Death himself during Moshe’s sojourn on Mt. Sinai. Namely, Moshe heard that ketores is effective in stopping plagues. Rashi adds that when a plague is unleashed, anyone is liable to be wiped out - whether righteous or wicked.

A plague is like a spiritual hurricane or tornado. Once it is unleashed, anything in its path is vulnerable. Once the destroyer has been given permission to destroy, no distinction is made between a tzaddik and a rasha.

What is so special about ketores that it serves as an effective antidote to a plague? I saw a very beautiful insight to this question from Rav Nissan Alpert.

Ketores is the antidote to a plague that does not distinguish between righteous and wicked because it is the one item in the Temple Service into which they placed a foul smelling scent. The chelbanah had a foul odor. Why on earth would a foul smelling ingredient be added to a compound striving to create a “pleasant aroma” before the Almighty?

The symbolism is that both the righteous and the wicked need to be taken care of. We specifically put in a foul smelling odor so as to include the wicked in our prayers. They need atonement as well.

This is akin to the symbolism of the Four Species on Succoth. The Esrog has flavor and aroma (representing both Torah knowledge and good deeds). The willow on the other hand has neither flavor nor aroma. It represents Jews who possess neither Torah nor good deeds. But even such people must be included in our prayers and so the four species representing the four categories of Jews are taken together on the holiday.

So too, the symbolism of the ketores in the Beis HaMikdash is that we must worry about the wicked as well. Let the righteous carry the wicked on their backs, so to speak.

Therefore, the antidote to the plague where both the righteous and the wicked suffer together is to bring the ketores compound that proclaims: When the wicked and righteous are bound together, the righteous will protect the wicked.

Beyond A Shadow of A Doubt

“Moshe spoke to the Children of Israel and each of their princes gave him a staff for each prince, a staff for each prince, according to their fathers’ house, twelve staffs; and Aharon’s staff was in the middle of the other staffs.” [Bamidbar 17:21]

Rashi comments on the words “and Aharon’s staff was placed in the middle of the other staffs” that Moshe placed the staff in the middle so that people would not say that the reason why it blossomed was because it was placed at the end - closer to the side of the Shechina (Divine Presence).

Rav Yeruchem writes that he was always amazed by the words of the Droschos haRan. The Droschos haRan writes that Moshe Rabbeinu was speech impaired (kevad peh) because had he been a great orator, people would say that he was able to sell Torah and Judaism to the Jewish people because he was a smooth talker. Therefore, despite the fact that all other physical ailments that anyone suffered were healed at Sinai, Moshe’s speech impediment remained with him his entire life.

Rav Yeruchem writes: How could it be after all that Moshe Rabbeinu did in terms of the plagues and the Exodus and the splitting of the sea and all

the miracles that we witnessed in the Wilderness - how could one imagine that anyone would claim that he sold us a bill of goods simply by virtue of his gift of gab? Would anyone be able to deny that Moshe is true and his Torah is true?

Rav Yeruchem answers: In fact, when G-d wants to prove something, he proves it in a way that even the greatest skeptic and the biggest cynic will not be able to deny. The same applies to the staffs. When Aharon’s staff blossomed and gave forth fruit, it was clearly an open miracle that changed the course of nature. No one could rationally argue that a 3 centimeter distance made the slightest difference between Aharon’s staff and the next one. And yet, G-d gives it to us on a silver platter so that no one with even the most ridiculous claims will be able to deny the truth.

The truth is that Aharon, representing the tribe of Priesthood, was the leader and the tribe chosen by the Almighty to serve Him in the Temple.

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Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

Sir Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[From 2 years ago - currently 5765]

<http://www.chiefrabbi.org/tt-index.html>

Korach

The Korach rebellion was the single most dangerous challenge to Moses’ leadership during the forty years that he led the people through the wilderness. The precise outline of events is difficult to follow, probably because the events themselves were tumultuous and disorderly. The narrative makes it clear, however, that the rebels came from different groups, each of whom had different reasons for resentment:

Now Korach, son of Izhar son of Kohath son of Levi betook himself, along with Dathan and Abiram sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth - descendants of Reuben - to rise up against Moses, together with two hundred and fifty Israelites, chieftains of the community, chosen in the assembly, men of repute. They combined against Moses and Aaron and said to them, “You have gone too far! For all the community are holy, all of them, and the Lord is in their midst. Why then do you raise yourself above the Lord’s congregation?”

Disentangling the various factions, Rashi suggests that Korach, prime mover of the uprising, was aggrieved that Moses had appointed Aaron as high priest. Moses was the child of Amram, Kohath’s eldest son. Korach was the firstborn of Kohath’s second son, Yizhar, and felt that he should have been made high priest. The fact that Moses had appointed his own brother to the role struck Korach as unacceptable favoritism.

The Reubenites, suggests Ibn Ezra, felt that as descendants of Jacob's firstborn, they were entitled to leadership positions. Ibn Ezra adds that the final straw may have been Moses' appointment of Joshua as his successor. Joshua came from the tribe of Ephraim, the son of Joseph. This may have revived memories of the old conflict between the children of Leah (of whom Reuben was the firstborn) and those of Rachel, whose child Joseph was.

The 250 other rebels, Ibn Ezra conjectures, were firstborn, still unreconciled to the fact that after the sin of the golden calf, the role of special service to G-d passed from the firstborn to the tribe of Levi.

Each faction had grounds for feeling that they had been passed over in the allocation of leadership positions. The irony of their challenge is unmistakable. They pose as democrats, egalitarians: "All the community are holy, all of them . . . Why then do you raise yourself above the Lord's congregation?" What they say is that everyone should be a leader. What they mean is: I should be a leader.

As for the timing of the revolt, Ramban is surely right in dating it to the period immediately following the debacle of the spies, and the ensuing decree that the people would not enter the land until the next generation. As long as the Israelites, despite their complaints, felt that they were moving toward their destination, Korach and the other malcontents had no realistic chance of rousing the people in revolt. Once they realised that they would not live to cross the Jordan, Korach knew that rebellion was possible. The people were disillusioned, and they had nothing to lose.

Thus far, the story of Korach is intensely realistic. A leader is able to mobilise a people by articulating a vision. But the journey from the real to the ideal, from starting point to destination, is fraught with setbacks and disappointments. That is when leaders are in danger of being deposed or assassinated. Korach is the eternal symbol of a perennial type: the coldly calculating man of ambition who foments discontent against a leader, accusing him of being a self-seeking tyrant. He opposes him in the name of freedom, but what he really wants is to become a tyrant himself.

What is exceptionally unusual is how the story ends. Moses had initially proposed a simple test. The rebels, and Aaron, were to prepare incense the next day. G-d would then signal whose offering He chose. Before this could happen, however, Moses found himself unbearably provoked by the contemptuous attitude of Dathan and Abiram. Sensing that the situation might be getting out of control, he sought an immediate and dramatic resolution:

Moses said, "By this you shall know that it was the Lord who send me to do all these things; that they are not of my own devising: if these men die as all men do, if their lot be the common fate of all mankind, it was not the Lord who sent me. But if the Lord brings about something unheard of, so that the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, you shall know that these men have spurned the Lord."

No sooner had he finished speaking, than the ground opened up and swallowed the rebels. The miracle Moses had counted on, happened. By any narrative convention we would expect that this would end the rebellion and vindicate Moses. Heaven had answered his call in the most dramatic way. He had been proved right. End of revolt. End of story.

This is precisely what does not happen - a powerful example of what makes the Torah so challenging, its message so unexpected. Instead of quelling the revolt, we read the following:

The next day, the whole Israelites community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. "You have killed the Lord's people," they said.

This time, it is G-d himself who intervenes. He tells Moses to take twelve staffs, one for each tribe, and deposit them overnight in the Tent of Meeting. The next morning, the staff bearing the name of Aaron and the tribe of Levi had sprouted, budded, blossomed and borne almonds. Only then did the rebellion end.

This is an astonishing denouement - and what it tells us is profound. The use of force never ends a conflict. It merely adds grievance to injury. Even

the miracle of the ground opening up and swallowing his opponents did not secure for Moses the vindication he sought.

What ended the conflict was something else altogether: the visible symbol that Aaron was the chosen vehicle of the G-d of life. The gentle miracle of the dead wood that came to life again, flowering and bearing fruit, anticipates the famous words of the book of Proverbs about the Torah:

It is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed. (Proverbs 3: 18)

Moses and Aaron stood accused of failing in their mission. They had brought the people out of Egypt to bring them to the land of Israel. After the debacle of the spies, that hope had died. The stick that came to life again (like Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones) symbolized that hope was not dead, merely deferred. The next generation would live and reach the destination. G-d is a G-d of life. What He touches does not die.

The episode of Korach teaches us that there are two ways of resolving conflict: by force and by persuasion. The first negates your opponent. The second enlists your opponent, taking his / her challenge seriously and addressing it. Force never ends conflict - not even in the case of Moses, not even when the force is miraculous. There never was a more decisive intervention than the miracle that swallowed up Korach and his fellow rebels. Yet it did not end the conflict. It deepened it. After it had taken place, the whole Israelite community - the ones that had not been part of the rebellion - complained, "You have killed the Lord's people." What ended it was the quiet, gentle miracle that showed that Aaron was the true emissary of the G-d of life. Not by accident is the verse that calls Torah a "tree of life" preceded by these words:

Its ways are ways of pleasantness, And all its paths are peace. (Prov. 3: 17)

That is conflict resolution in Judaism - not by force, but by pleasantness and peace.

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Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha

KORACH

Wednesday, June 13, 2007 Printer Friendly

The figure of Korach as it emanates from this week's Torah reading is a most enigmatic one. The rabbis chose to characterize his rebellion against Moshe not so much in terms of evil as in terms of ultimate folly. Rashi quotes the famous statement that "Korach was such a wise and clever person; what on earth possessed him to engage in such a foolish venture?" Rashi states that since Korach saw that the great prophet Shmuel would be one of his future descendants, he wrongfully assumed that he, Korach, was the rightful leader of Israel now in the desert. Such flights of fancy and folly are common in human behavior. People often feel that they are somehow mistreated by life events or by others and therefore take these frustrations out on others. Korach's disappointment at not being chosen for one of the high offices of the priesthood or the Levites turns into a personal vendetta against his own relative and mentor, Moshe. My long experience in the rabbinate has provided me many opportunities to see manifestations of such behavior. People's personal frustrations are somehow deflected towards leaders or institutions that are absolutely blameless but who are nevertheless handy targets to relieve someone's inner rage and conflict. Moshe states it clearly: "I am not guilty of ever harming you; Aharon is certainly innocent regarding any of your complaints against him. Your complaint is against God, against life's problems and disappointments! Deal with yourself and don't vent your rage on others." And this inability to do so is truly the source of Korach's great folly. The entire great Lithuanian Mussar movement founded by Rabbi Yisrael Lipkin of Salant was based on one overriding psychological principle - self-introspection. We always look outside of ourselves to deal with slights, real or imagined, and disappointments. Many times, if not most, the slight and disappointment is

really from within our own actions, personalities, and deeds. Korach's problem is not Moshe or Aharon. Korach's problem is Korach. There are commentaries that associate Korach's name with the Hebrew noun depicting baldness, emptiness. They comment, almost ruefully, that a hairpiece can certainly cover one's baldness and appear to the outside that the person is not bald. But the truth is that the person remains bald. Korach is bald, empty of self-introspection, looking for self advancement and self importance from others because it apparently does not exist sufficiently within him. When one needs validation and importance exclusively from outside sources then it inevitably leads to frustration, disputes and folly. Korach therefore serves as an example of the self-destruction that people can cause to their own selves. Moshe appeals to Korach and his cohorts, who also suffer from the same inner emptiness of worth and spirit, to save themselves and their families by looking within themselves first. I think that is what is meant by his statement that "you are complaining against God, not against my brother and me." The Godly soul that is within us must be regularly inspected and burnished by one's self. Then the outer world and its inevitable problems can be dealt with intelligently, wisely and, hopefully, in a successful manner. Shabat shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein.

Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to Peninim Jun 14 2007

Peninim Al Hatorah
Rav A.L. Scheinbaum
PARSHAS KORACH

And Korach separated himself. (16:1) Korach's mutiny was actually the first rebellion that impugned the integrity of the leadership of Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon Ha'Kohen in their stewardship of the nascent Jewish nation. Korach was not merely a misfit or member of the mixed multitude that tagged along with the Jewish people out of fear for their future in Egypt. He was a mainstream Jew, one of the carriers of the Aron HaKodesh. His envy and dissatisfaction with himself led him to lead this tragic rebellion. In an effort to convince the people and garner support for his cause, he presented himself as someone who was fighting on their behalf. He sought to usurp the present leadership and replace it with leadership of his choice, placing himself as the primary leader representing the entire nation.

His complaints seemed to garner support. After all, he presented Moshe as the king; Aharon, his brother, as the High Priest; and Aharon's sons as the Priests. Moshe was apparently taking it all for himself and his family. Furthermore, as Kohanim, Aharon's sons were privileged to receive the twenty-four gifts of Kehunah. To accuse Moshe of seeking glory was not only ludicrous, it was an outrage. Moshe was the *anav mikol adam*, the paragon of humility. That, however, is what *machlokes*, controversy, does to a person. He becomes blinded, ignoring the obvious and the rational.

Two glaring questions need to be addressed. First, why did it take so long to initiate the dispute that culminated in open rebellion? It is not as if something new had materialized. Moshe and Aharon had been serving in their positions of leadership ever since Klal Yisrael had left Egypt. What spurred Korach to act now? Second, why did he try to organize this meeting specifically after the episode of the *meraglim*, spies, who slandered Eretz Yisrael? Was there something about the spies' ill-fated mission and its tragic consequences that provoked Korach to proceed with his misguided goals?

The Ramban explains that a rebellion undertaken earlier would not have succeeded. The Jews were faring well in the wilderness. There was no dissent, no complaints against Moshe's leadership. He was highly admired and loved. Thus, Korach kept still, waiting for a breach in Moshe's popularity, for that moment when he could insert himself and succeed in undermining his leadership. Now that the nation had arrived in the desert of Paran, the trouble began. A segment of the people were burned in Taveirah,

while others perished in Kivros Ha'Tavaah, Graves of Lust. The Princes of Yisrael, distinguished leaders who had been highly respected, died as a result of their slander of the Promised Land, causing the people to lose their opportunity to enter Eretz Yisrael. The people were bitter. Depression was rampant. Dissent was soon becoming a way of life. Moshe and Aharon's popularity ratings were at an all-time low. Now was the time for Korach to act. His patient waiting was setting the stage.

This explains why Korach waited for this moment to initiate his rebellion, but why did he rebel against Moshe and Aharon? They had accomplished so much for the people: the exodus from Egypt, followed by the splitting of the Red Sea; the Revelation at Har Sinai with the Giving of the Torah; the manna; and so many other miracles in which Moshe played an integral role. How could he go up against them after all they had done for the People?

In his *Haamek Davar*, the *Netziv*, zl, explains that it all boils down to human nature. The overwhelming desire, drive and passion for power is often underestimated. This is especially true when it involves spiritual leadership. Who would not want to be the spiritual leader of the Jewish People? Imagine what this entails and the unique opportunity for personal spiritual elevation it affords a person. To become the *Kohen Gadol*, to be able to reach the ultimate, the zenith in spiritual ascendancy, is an opportunity from which one cannot easily shy away. It is not as if Korach wanted to be powerful and lead the people; he sought personal spiritual elevation. He felt he deserved it. The problem was that Aharon was an obstacle in his way. This would have to be rectified.

Korach's mistake was one that plagues many of us to this very day. There is no equality in *kedushah*, holiness. Hashem has clearly delineated various levels of sanctity, distinguishing one from another. There are the Yisrael, the Levi, the *Kohen Hedyot* and the *Kohen Gadol*. Each role has its own significance and demands. Each one must also recognize the individual character of the other. Hashem defines boundaries, parameters which must be respected, accepted and understood. The Levi is not a *Kohen*, and the *Kohen* is not a *Kohen Gadol*. A desire to become a *Kohen* is not sufficient. There can be only one *Kohen Gadol*, and this position is mandated - not bought or demanded. It must be earned through worthiness. Aharon was worthy of this position, and thus, Hashem chose him to be the first *Kohen Gadol*. Korach was not. It is as simple as that.

Why did Korach not accept this concept? What prompted him to undertake this blasphemy, to destroy himself so infamously forever? *Rashi* tells us that *eino hitaaso*, his eye misled him. He saw something in the future which he interpreted to be a supportive and positive sign, so he went for it. Regrettably, he looked with "one" eye, erring in his perspective. He saw *Shmuel HaNavi* descending from him. Obviously, he was correct in his endeavor. Otherwise, how could a leader of such high caliber be his descendant? Had he looked with "both" eyes, with a clearer, more objective outlook, he might have seen a different picture, another explanation. Regrettably, he saw what he wanted to see. Two eyes represent a balanced outlook. One eye signifies a biased, myopic viewpoint.

The *Kotzker Rebbe*, zl, explains that Korach saw how successful he was spiritually. As a Levi standing on the *Duchan*, singing the songs of praise that accompanied the sacrifices, he felt a yearning to strive higher, to reach beyond, to elevate himself to a position of greater spirituality, to become the *Kohen Gadol*. He erred in under-estimating the catalyst for his present success as a Levi. He was spiritually proficient in his position as a Levi only because Aharon was the *Kohen Gadol*. Aharon functioned deep within the recesses of the Sanctuary, in areas that the Levi was not permitted entrance, and it was from there that his spiritual influence emanated. It is only when each and every person mans his prescribed position, that all of them achieve success. When the laborer seeks to become the captain, when the student wants to replace the teacher, it indicates their short-sightedness.

Korach mistakenly thought that the secret to Moshe and Aharon's success was their title. Call yourself a *rosh yeshivah*, and you become a *rosh yeshivah*. How far this is from the truth! It is not the position that makes the person; it is the individual that gives sanction to the position. Korach was

not the Kohen Gadol because he was not worthy of that holy position. It would only have impugned the position. Moshe and Aharon were a perfect fit for their respective positions. Korach saw the holiness of the nation with one eye. Had he focused his other eye on himself, he would have perceived his own inferiority.

Korach separated himself. (16:1)

If we peruse history, we will note that some of the greatest movements and achievements were the endeavors of a single individual. This is true on the flip side. Negativity and evil have also been catalyzed by one person who succeeded in convincing others to follow his lead. Korach was a bright person, filled with wisdom and charisma. What caused him to go wrong, to veer away from the truth, to blaze for himself and his followers a path of infamy? Chazal teach us that his "eye" misled him. He saw among his descendants individuals that would achieve spiritual eminence. He must be right, or he would not have been destined to be the progenitor of such distinguished progeny, as Shmuel HaNavi. Surely, Shmuel was to be born in the merit of his ancestor, Korach.

Korach was seriously wrong. Along the way, between Korach and Shmuel, there was a righteous man, Elkanah, who also was an individual who would effect an incredible change. Chazal tell us that it was at a time in which the Jews had refrained from going on the mandated pilgrimage to Yerushalayim. He sought to change this apathetic situation. First, he gathered his family which included his wives and children and close relatives. He would enter a community and set up shop in the street. People began to question him, "Where are you going? Why are you doing this?" After all, it was something that people commonly did. Traveling with one's extended family was universal. His response made people think: "I am going to Shiloh to serve Hashem, to offer sacrifices, to imbibe Torah and kedushah, sanctity." When the people heard his sincere and poignant response, they began to cry. They had begun to lose touch with the Sanctuary. Complacency had set in, and slowly they had lost their desire to serve Hashem as in days of old. After such a speech, a few families would gather their members together and join Elkanah's entourage. This continued every year, with the number of people that joined him increasing. Each year, he would choose a different route to go to Yerushalayim, so that his message of hope would spread - and it did. Indeed, as a reward for his outreach to other Jews, Hashem blessed him with a prodigious child that would one day return the people to serve Hashem. Elkanah was the father of Shmuel HaNavi.

Prior to Elkanah's "arrival" on the scene, that generation of Jews had been lax in their observance of the mitzvah of going up to Mishkan Shiloh. Every man was comfortable in his home, his vineyard, his community. He saw no need to leave it all and "waste time" traveling to Shiloh for what might very well be a religious experience, but, one which he felt he could likewise experience at home. Elkanah changed all of that by infusing the people with spirit, with passion, with a drive to elevate themselves. As Horav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, Shlita, notes, Elkanah was a simple individual, who did not aspire to any specific greatness. He did what he felt should be done, and he transformed a world!

At first, he saw no siman brachah, positive sign, that his endeavor was Divinely blessed. Nonetheless, he acted and was satisfied with the five families that followed him. The following year that number increased until the word spread throughout Klal Yisrael. People saw his sincere devotion to an ideal. He slept in the street because he wanted to attract attention to himself and his mission. His plan worked, albeit slowly, but he succeeded. A single man had an ideal; a single man had a mission.

"What do you people benefit by staying home administering to your fields? Maybe you will earn a couple more dollars. You cannot take it with you. Why not involve yourselves in an endeavor that is simple and can earn eternity for you?" This is what he told the people. This is how this sincere, dedicated man changed their attitude and saved them from an insipid, meaningless life.

Rav Elyashiv distinguishes between Korach, the individual, and Elkanah, the individual. Korach's perspective was myopic and subjective. He saw only himself and what he wanted to see. His astigmatism made him see the world negatively and cynically, catalyzing him to attempt to usurp Moshe and Aharon's leadership of the Jewish People. What kept him going was his famous grandson, Shmuel HaNavi. How could he be wrong, if he was the progenitor of such an illustrious leader? He saw what he wanted to see. It never entered his mind that somewhere down the road another person would be worthy of fathering Shmuel. Yes, they were both individuals who transformed their worlds. Korach initiated the greatest controversy in the history of Klal Yisrael. His name has gone down in infamy. Elkanah saved Klal Yisrael. With his sincerity and dedication, he single-handedly brought people back to visiting the Sanctuary. He turned their ambivalence into devotion, their complacency into religious fervor. We should never forget that the Korachs of every generation might demonstrate temporary power, but it will not be sustained. They do not make it to the finish line, because they are not l'shem Shomayim, for the sake of Heaven. The Elkanahs succeed because this necessary ingredient is intrinsic to their mission.

And as for Aharon - what is he that you protest against him? (16:11)

In the Talmud Eiruvim 65b, Chazal say that a person is recognized by: koso, the way he holds his liquor; kiso, his wallet, i.e. how he spends his money and the manner in which he reacts to financial situations; and kaaso, anger, how he reacts when he is pushed against the wall, his self-control in circumstances that are agitating, antagonistic or infuriating. Horav Baruch Shimon Schneerson, zl, Rosh Yeshivas Tchebin, explains Moshe Rabbeinu's dialogue with Korach's assembly based upon this Rabbinic dictum. Moshe told them: "How will you determine Aharon HaKohen's character? You cannot investigate him based upon koso, because as a Kohen, he is not permitted to drink, lest he perform the avodah, service, in the Sanctuary, while inebriated. Kiso is also not a criterion upon which you might judge his character, since as a Kohen Gadol the community has already seen to it that he is financially secure. That leaves the last criterion of kaaso. Fine, attempt to infuriate him, and let us see if and how he will react. V'Aharon mah hu? If you want to know what Aharon is - then talinu alav - dispute him, try to anger him, and see if you will succeed in changing his pleasant demeanor.

Anger is the last and just standard for determining a person's ability to deal with people. This is especially true in the field of education, in which a rebbe must maintain his cool under situations that may often be extremely exasperating and provoking. One who loses his cool is apt to err in judgment, a situation that is hardly compatible with developing an amicable, nurturing relationship with one's students. It goes even further. Anger management is probably the most difficult emotional problem one encounters in life. Indeed, the proper management of anger is a component of spirituality. Animals react when they are provoked; humans should not. The spiritual dimension within the human being should kick in and prevent him from responding negatively.

This does not mean that, when provoked, a person does not become angry. Feeling anger is normal and, in most cases, spontaneous. It is how one responds to his anger that determines the character of the individual. A spiritual person understands that immediate gratification resulting from a spontaneous response to a provocation is short-lived and, in the end, something for which one pays dearly. Spirituality understands and focuses upon the long term benefit, the future, the enduring - not the ephemeral and fleeting.

A thinking person asks himself, "What do I have to gain? Better yet, what do I have to lose?" Chazal tell us that, "One who becomes angry - the Shechinah departs from him." A person who recognizes the Shechinah's Presence in his life will not react to provocation. It might bother him, but he will maintain control over his emotions. Life is filled with situations that incite and provoke, but if we remember Who is Above us, we will not react.

Then, there are those unique individuals who embody spirituality to the point that they not only do not react - they do not even become angry. The incitement passes right over them as if it did not occur - so connected are they to the Shechinah. Horav Mordechai, zl, m'Neshchiz had longed for a Tallis Katan made of wool produced in Eretz Yisrael. Finally, after much difficulty and great effort and expense, he procured a piece of wool. He gave it to one of his students to fashion for him a Tallis Katan.

Upon cutting the wool, he unfortunately folded the cloth one time too many, causing two holes to appear, rather than one. The student realized that he had just ruined his rebbe's Tallis Katan, for which he had waited so long. One can imagine the student's trepidation when he approached his rebbe with the bad news. He waited patiently for a severe scolding. Rav Mordechai looked at the ruined cloth very sadly, wiped away a tear from his eye, and smiled at his student. "It is quite alright," the saintly Rebbe said. "Do not be frightened."

"But rebbe, I have ruined your Tallis Katan for which you had waited so long," the student replied. "No, my son," Rav Mordechai said, "you see, this Tallis Katan was meant to have two holes. One is for an opening for the head, and the second is there to test whether Mordechai will lose his temper." How often do we lose it in the pursuit of performing a mitzvah? Lamentably, our religious fervor can cause us to transgress our sense of *mentchlichkeit*, humanness. As important as a mitzvah is, permitting one's anger to take control of the situation extinguishes whatever illumination the mitzvah provides. We must put our priorities in order. Mitzvos are a priority, but not when it is at the expense of another Jew's feelings.

Va'ani Tefillah Chasdecha va'amitecha tamid yitzruni. Your kindness and truth always guard me.

Tamid, always, means that there is no pause or hesitation in Hashem's kindness and truth. If for but one moment they would be interrupted, man would cease to exist. Indeed, our very existence is contingent upon Hashem's constant kindness and truth. Horav Avigdor Miller, zl, comments that when a mishap occurs, one should take stock and realize that up until now, every minute, every second, hundreds of thousands of times, Hashem's kindness and truth have protected and maintained him. We focus on the here and now, forgetting the past and all of the wonderful benefits that have sustained us. What does truth have to do with sustenance? Rav Miller explains that truth here refers to Hashem's steadfastness in maintaining His kindness even to those who do not deserve it. He does not seek ways to "get out of His covenant with us." Emes is truth. Hashem maintains His commitments to us, despite the times when we are not worthy of His kindness.

Yitzruni can also be interpreted as "create me." The Kedushas Levi explains that man is constantly being recreated as *h'p* is kept alive. Thus we say, Kol haneshamah tehallel Kah, "All souls praise Hashem." The Midrash adds, al kol neshimah u'neshimah tehallel Kah, "for each and every breath (neshimah) we must praise and exalt Hashem." How little do we realize and acknowledge this constant gift - until it is almost taken from us.

In honor of the Bar Mitzvah of our son Chaim Yitzchak Cyperstein Parshas Korach Rosh Chodesh Tammuz 5767 Aaron and Malki Cyperstein

Shabbat Shalom:Parshat Korach (Numbers 16:1-18:32)

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin 30 Sivan, 5767 - 16 June, 2007 Efrat, Israel -- "And Korach took..." (Numbers 16:1). Who is Korach? Usually he is perceived as one of the arch-rebels of all times within the Jewish camp. From Exodus onward, no one's reputation is as sullied as Korach's - his sin so ignominious that the episode recording his death would be carved into the psyche of the nation forever, the bowels of the earth having swallowed him and his cohorts alive. But exactly how does this unique punishment fit his crime? From the traditional perspective Korach is the perennial

instigator and rabble-rouser, the self-possessed revolutionary. According to the commentaries, the very first word in our portion establishes his character: "Vayikach Korach...Now Korach the son of Izhar, the son of Kohat, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab took." [Num. 38:1] The Torah doesn't spell out exactly what he 'took,' the object of the verb distinctly absent, which leads Rashi to quote the Midrash Tanchuma: ". 'And Korah took' -he took himself on one side with the intention of separating himself from the community so that he might raise a protest regarding the priesthood...." [38:1]. Of course, the Korach who inspires his self-serving mutinous rebellion couches his true purpose behind noble and inspiring language: "You take too much upon you, seeing that all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and G-d is among them; wherefore then lift you up yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?" [Numbers 16:3] Here we have the classic argument of democracy: since we're all equal, we're all carved from the same flesh and blood, why should, you, Moses, lord it over us? Why should you be the holiest of all? Aren't we not all descended from the same grandfathers?! Did we not all together hear G-d's voice at Sinai? Regardless of how we want to understand the mutiny of Korach, the majority of commentators agree that the word, 'And he took,' is where the problem begins. Korach was a taker, either by "taking" in the sense of manipulating the peoples' hearts and minds, or taking himself out of the community, in the sense of arrogating for himself a position of power, while lambasting Moses as being a separatist and chauvinist. To achieve his goal of power, he was willing to do anything, to make any claims, including posting a democratic ideal, in order to emerge a "leader" and denigrate the laws of Moses. Our portion follows immediately the commandment to wear tzitzit, ritual fringes to be worn on four cornered garments, the conclusion of last week's portion [Num. 15:37-41] of Shlach. Rashi connects these two segments, tzitzit and Korach's rebellion, by quoting the Midrash: "Then they came and stood before Moses and said to him, 'Is a garment that is entirely blue subject to the law of tzitzit or is it exempt? He replied to them: It is subject to that law.' Whereupon they began to jeer at him: Is this possible? A robe of any different colored material requires only one thread of blue attached to it in order for it to be exempt from the law of ritual fringes. Does it not then follow logically that a garment which is entirely blue ought automatically be exempted from the law of tzitzit!?"(16:1) Here we see how the plain meaning of the text is magnificently illuminated by the Midrash. Ostensibly, Korach's argument appeals to the democratic spirit: I understand the necessity of a single blue fringe - Moses - bestowing his royal-blue kingship upon the entire nation of commoners (the white garment, the many regular white fringes, made from the white wool of white sheep); but if all the people are "blue-blooded royalty", if the entire nation stood at Sinai, heard the Divine charge, entered the Divine covenant, what is the necessity for a single blue fringe, a solitary regal Moses, to stand isolated, separate and above a wholly royal nation, an entire kingdom of priest-teachers? Similar to this is the argument of the house filled with Bible Scrolls: I understand that a house devoid of any eternal verses of G-d's Word requires a mezuzah consisting of the Biblical portion of the Shema to make it worthy of habitation; but a house already completely filled with Biblical Scrolls, the House of Israel after the Revelation at Sinai in which every individual became filled to surfeit with G-d's words, certainly ought not require a separate G-d inspired individual like Moses, a distinct representative of one small portion of Biblical parchment, to establish its worthiness?! What Korach failed to understand was that every individual did not reach the same spiritual level as every other individual at Sinai; much the opposite, each person understood from the Divine sound (Kol) only as much as his previous spiritual, intellectual and ethical development would allow him to understand. Indeed, it was only Moses, whose active intellect had already achieved the ability to "kiss" the Active Intellect of the Divine before Sinai, who truly evoked from the Divine Kol (sound) precisely that which G-d wished to communicate. (Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed). Every Jew has the potential to be a leading member of the Kingdom of Priest-

Teachers, to become a second Moses in his/her own right; whether or not he/she achieves such a royal status, depends upon the degree of hard work each individual expends in pursuit of spiritual excellence. The Bible does not tell us that every Jew is holy; it rather commands each Jew to become holy! But Korah was not even himself serious about his argument. He was only using democracy to “take” (or rather grab) what he thought was his rightful place of leadership given his ancestry (yichus). And G-d punishes this “taker” by having the earth swallow him up. After all, every human being was created from the dust of the earth, so only the earth has the inherent right to “take” each and every one of us!

Shlomo Katz <skatz@torah.org> to hamaayan show details Jun 14
Hamaayan / The Torah Spring
Edited by Shlomo Katz Korach 30 Sivan 5767 June 16, 2007
Sponsored by the Sabrin family in memory of father Shlomo ben Chaim a”h (Sol Sabrin)

Korach’s rebellion, the focus of this week’s parashah, is different in several respects from the other mutinies that occurred in the desert. Firstly, it was the only one that was directed at Moshe personally rather than at some aspect of Bnei Yisrael’s desert experience (e.g., the food). Secondly, Korach’s rebellion elicited a response from Moshe Rabbeinu like no other mutiny described in the Torah. In every case in which Bnei Yisrael sinned, Moshe pleaded with Hashem in their defense. Not so in Korach’s case; to the contrary, Moshe called out to Bnei Yisrael: “Turn away now from near the tents of these wicked men and do not touch anything of theirs, lest you perish because of all of their sins.” Then, Moshe called upon G-d to bring about the deaths of Korach and his leading cohorts through an unusual means.

At first glance, Moshe’s response is shocking. After all, the Torah teaches that Moshe was the humblest of all men. Why, in the one case in which he was attacked personally, did Moshe react so forcefully?

R’ Ben Zion Rabinowitz shlita (the “Biala Rebbe”) explains that Moshe had the halachic status of a king. According to halachah, a king may never forgo or forgive the honor due him. Moshe was humble, but he, too, was bound by halachah. If he showed any mercy to Korach, he would, in effect, be abdicating his throne.

There is a practical lesson in this for every Jew, adds R’ Rabinowitz. Every Jew is a king in his own way. And, kabbalists teach that every Jewish soul has a spark of Moshe Rabbeinu within it. Thus, while every Jew is enjoined to be humble, that same Jew must stand up for his dignity like a king when the yetzer hara attacks.

(Mevaser Tov, Yeshuat Avraham p. 344)

From the Parashah . . .

“The earth covered them over and they were lost from among the congregation.” (Bemidbar 16:33)

The Talmudic sage Rabbi Eliezer taught, citing our verse: Korach and his congregation are “lost”; i.e., they will not return to life at the time of techiyat ha’maitim and will not be judged at the end of days. The sage Rabbi Yehoshua disagreed, saying that about Korach and his congregation it is written (Shmuel I 2:6), “Hashem brings death and gives life, lowers to She’ol and elevates.” Rabbi Eliezer asked Rabbi Yehoshua, “Then how do you interpret the verse [from our parashah], “they were lost from among the congregation”? Rabbi Yehoshua answered, “They were lost from that congregation, but not from the congregation of Olam Haba.”

(Pirkei D’Rabbi Natan 36:2)

R’ Shmuel Eliezer Eideles z”l (major Polish Talmud commentator, known as Maharsha; died 1632) notes that it is not a coincidence that Rabbi Yehoshua cites the prayer of Chana, mother of the prophet Shmuel, as proof that Korach is not lost forever. Our Sages ask, “What led an intelligent man such as Korach to rebel against Moshe?” They explain that

Korach saw prophetically that he would have a descendant - the prophet Shmuel - whom the verse equates to Moshe and Aharon combined (see Tehilim 99:6). Surely, Korach reasoned, an ancestor of Shmuel could not be subservient to Moshe and Aharon.

As Shmuel’s mother, Chana felt some responsibility for Korach’s error and his fate. Therefore, Chana prayed that Korach’s punishment not be eternal.

(Chiddushei Aggadot: Sanhedrin 108a)

[The Talmudic sage] R’ Nachman said: “I was once walking in the desert and an Arab said, ‘Come! I will show you where Korach’s gang was swallowed up.’ I saw two cracks in the ground and smoke rose from between them. He took a woolen cloth, dipped it in water, stuck it on the end of a spear and threw it into the smoke. When he took it out, the cloth was burnt. He said to me, ‘Listen to what they are saying.’ I put my ear to the ground and heard, ‘Moshe is true and his Torah is true, and we are liars.’”

(Gemara Bava Batra 74a)

R’ Yaakov Lorberbaum of Lissa z”l (early 19th century; author of Netivot Hamishpat) explains as follows: Korach was not a fool. His dispute with Moshe occurred because, like so many philosophers, his profound, but wrong, thoughts led him astray. Specifically, the two cracks in the earth represent the two foundations of Judaism which Korach and other philosophers denied: (1) The principle of prophecy; and (2) that Moshe was the teacher of Torah par excellence. The blinding smoke which came from between the cracks represents the fact that Korach was blinded by his own logic.

The white cloth represents a mind which is a clean slate, and dipping it in water represents teaching it Torah. When this cloth--i.e., the mind-- was hurled with force into the smoke, it was burnt. This happens because if a Torah scholar rushes into debate with a philosopher, the Torah scholar may lose. Rather, the arguments of a Korach (or any philosopher) must be thought through and refuted calmly and patiently. If you take the time to put your ear to the ground and listen very closely, then you can hear Korach saying, “Moshe is true and his Torah is true, and we are liars.”

(Emet Le’Yaakov)

“Hashem said to Aharon, ‘In their Land you shall have no heritage, and a share shall you not have among them; I am your share and your heritage among Bnei Yisrael.’” (18:20)

R’ Moshe Sofer z”l (the Chatam Sofer; Hungary; died 1840) comments: It is well known that it is difficult to keep one’s thoughts attached to Hashem at the same time that one is actively involved with people. For one who wants to cleave to Hashem, hitbodedut / solitude is the prescription. Aharon Hakohen, however, was able to accomplish both simultaneously. He was always involved with people--always trying to resolve conflicts and strengthen marriages. Even so, he never left his lofty and holy position. This is what the verse means when it says, “I [Hashem] am your share and your heritage [even] among Bnei Yisrael.”

(Torat Moshe)

From the Haftarah . . .

“For with fire Hashem will judge . . .” (Yeshayah 66:16 - haftarah for Shabbat Rosh Chodesh)

Rashi z”l explains: This refers to the fire of Gehinom. In his classic treatise on reward and punishment, R’ Moshe ben Nachman z”l (Ramban; 1194- 1270) writes: Since our Sages say that man’s final punishment is in Gehinom and his final reward in Olam Haba, it is incumbent upon us to explain what the judgment known as “Gehinom” is, of what the punishment consists, and when it will occur. [Ed. note: This article will not answer all of these questions.]

Ramban continues: It is apparent that the punishment of Gehinom is not a physical fire that consumes the flesh, as laymen portray it, for one can

exhume a wicked person's body and see that it has not been touched by fire. On the other hand, Gehinom clearly is not a purely spiritual concept with no physical reality. This is evident from several sources. First, the Gemara (Eruvin 19a) indicates that Gehinom has three openings. One of them is in the Sinai Desert, as we read (in this week's parashah - 16:32-33), "The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, and all the people who were with Korach, and their entire wealth; they and all that was theirs descended alive to She'ol [a synonym for Gehinom]; the earth covered them over and they were lost from among the congregation." Another opening is in Yerushalayim, in the area known to this day as Geh Ben Hinom [literally, "the Valley of the son of Hinom"]. The third opening is somewhere at sea. Second, the Gemara (Shabbat 39a) states, in the course of a discussion about the permissibility of cooking in the hot springs of Teveryah on Shabbat, that the source of the heat in those springs is the fire of Gehinom.

What then is the form that Gehinom takes? Ramban explains that there is an entire dimension of existence which is physical, but which ordinarily has no tangible qualities that we can discern. Among the creations which belong to this class are malachim (commonly translated "angels") and the neshamah (soul). Gehinom, too, belongs to this group. They are physical, they cannot be touched or, ordinarily, sensed. Moreover, these creations exhibit certain qualities which defy logic. For example, Gehinom is part of our world, but, says the Gemara (Ta'anit 10a), it is 60 times larger than our world. [Ed. note: To aid the reader's understanding, we note that physicists, too, now recognize the existence of entities that are part of the physical world, yet which can be discerned only by their effects. Likewise, physics recognizes the existence of entities - for example, light - which exhibits paradoxical physical qualities.]

(Sha'ar Ha'gmul)

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah"), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives are available starting with Rosh HaShanah 5758 (1997) at <http://www.torah.org/learning/hamaayan/> . Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.

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-- Parshat Korach

by **Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair** <http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/3148>

OVERVIEW Korach, Datan and Aviram, and 250 leaders of Israel rebel against the authority of Moshe and Aharon. The rebellion results in their being swallowed by the earth. Many resent their death and blame Moshe. G-d's "anger" is manifest by a plague that besets the nation, and many thousands perish. Moshe intercedes once again for the people. He instructs Aharon to atone for them and the plague stops. Then G-d commands that staffs, each inscribed with the name of one of the tribes, be placed in the Mishkan. In the morning the staff of Levi, bearing Aharon's name, sprouts, buds, blossoms and yields ripe almonds. This provides Divine confirmation that Levi's tribe is chosen for priesthood and verifies Aharon's position as Kohen Gadol, High Priest. The specific duties of the levi'im and kohanim are stated. The kohanim were not to be landowners, but were to receive their sustenance from the

tithes and other mandated gifts brought by the people. Also taught in this week's Parsha are laws of the first fruits, redemption of the firstborn, and other offerings.

INSIGHTS

Opening Gifts "...I have given them to you for distinction and to your sons as an eternal portion." (18:8)

In this week's Parsha the Torah lists twenty-four gifts that were given to the kohanim after the debacle of Korach.

Can it be mere coincidence that there are also twenty-four different types of service required of the kohanim in the Beit Hamikdash?

Everything is a gift. G-d gives us brains, talent, money, family, food, health, happiness. Every single thing we have is a present.

And the biggest part of the present is that the more we have, the more ways we can know G-d.

The prophet Yirmiyahu said, "Let not the wise man glorify himself with his wisdom, nor the strong man glory in his strength, nor the rich man in his wealth. In this alone may one glory: for contemplating and knowing Me." (Yirmiyahu 9)

The more I have, the more I can recognize its Source.

Two ideas are basic to a belief in G-d. First, nothing is automatic: Nothing has to be — except for G-d. Everything I have as an individual is considered a gift of G-d.

Second, every gift is to be opened up to reveal what's inside — a deeper awareness of the Creator.

Just as when the kohanim received twenty-four gifts they also received twenty-four ways to serve G-d, so too should every one of us see every gift as another way to connect to the Eternal.

- Sources: Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, Chovot HaLevavot Innuendo "And Moshe heard and fell on his face..." (15:4)

The Torah does not specify exactly what caused Moshe to fall on his face. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 109) explains that Moshe fell down when he heard that he was suspected of adultery.

It's difficult to see from the words of the Torah exactly where Moshe was accused of such a crime.

Often the most telling indictments are made without mentioning a word of reproof. In an argument between two people, when one says "I'm not evil," the implication is that "I'm not evil — but you are!"

When Moshe heard Korach say, "All of them (the Jewish People) are holy," the implication was that "they are all holy — but you aren't!" The diametrical opposite of holiness is immorality. When Moshe heard that implicit but inescapable accusation, he fell to the ground.

- Source: Mishkenot Yaakov HaSefardi in Mayana shel Torah

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

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