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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON KORACH - 5768

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Rabbi Hershel Schachter - An Area Versus A Line

### **Rabbi Hershel Schachter** **An Area Versus A Line**

The Talmud (Berachos 8a) refers to the body of the halacha as “the four amos of halacha”. We had a rebbe at Yeshiva who was fond of pointing out that it's not “two amos” of halacha, but four. The Torah doesn't dictate to us to follow a straight and narrow line, but rather to stay within a certain area of acceptable behavior.

In this week's parsha Moshe Rabbeinu tells adas Korach that “in the morning” Hashem will demonstrate who the chosen individuals to serve as kohanim and leviim are (Bamidbar 16:5). Rashi, in his commentary on that passuk, quotes from the medrash that the phrase in the passuk has yet an added connotation: “boker – morning” indicates that just as Hashem has set borders between day and night, so too has He distinguished between kohanim, leviim, and yisraelim; and so too all of the Torah represents the boundaries distinguishing between the muttar and the assur. There is a broad two dimensional area of muttar, and not just a straight line. In the Torah way, we don't have to be careful not to get “out of line”, rather we have to be careful not to cross over the border (gevulos).

In the famous passuk at the conclusion of the nevua of Hoshea the prophet states, “the paths (in the plural) of Hashem are straight”. There are more than one lane in this wide highway. In the concluding lines of the classic work Mesilas Yesharim, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto points out that even someone who was compelled to enter into a very lowly profession has the ability to become a chassid[1] just like one who is only learning all the time. Hashem created a big wide world and He needs tzaddikim entering into all kinds of fields to accomplish a kiddush Hashem. The Talmud (Berachos 17a) records the statement that the Rabbis of Yavneh used to say: “I (the talmid chacham) am a creature of Hashem and the farmer is also a creature of Hashem; I do my work (of studying Torah) in the city, and he does his work on the farm. And no one should think that the talmid chacham will receive more reward, for the tradition has it, that whether one learns a lot or a little, if he plays his designated role in the world by accomplishing a kiddush Hashem in his field, all will receive proper reward.”

In Parshas Breishis the Torah mentions that Chanoch was an unusual tzaddik. There is a well known comment made by the Zohar that Chanoch

was a shoemaker by profession, and his unusual tziddkus consisted of the fact that he did his work in an honest fashion.

The midrashim have the famous comment that “just as the facial features of people are so different from each other, so too the way they think is also very different”. This statement was made by the rabbis in praise of the Creator. When people mint coins in a mold, all the coins come out the same. But the Creator made people in a similar mold, but each one is also dissimilar from the other (Sanhedrin 38a)! The Creator never wanted all of us to be gingerbread men – all exactly the same, because we conformed to the same cookie-mold.

To the best of my knowledge, the longest passage in the Midrash Rabba is the commentary on Parshas Nasso. All of the twelve nesiim (heads of tribes) brought exactly the same korbanos (during the first twelve days of Nissan) for the purpose of chanukas hamizbeach, but each one of them had totally different kavana (intention). Even where there is conformity, there is still much room for individuality. No two people think alike.

It is a serious mistake that many observant parents make, that they plan to raise all of their children to conform to the same single mold. Mishlei (22:6) tells us that we must educate each of our children according to his individual style. And each of them, in his own profession, has the ability to develop into a great tzaddik and even a chassid[1].

[1] Ed: “Chassid” here refers to an exceedingly righteous individual, and does not refer to the contemporary usage of the word to identify a specific subset of the Orthodox Community Copyright © 2008 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.

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**Rabbi Berel Wein** <[rbwein@torah.org](mailto:rbwein@torah.org)> to rabbiwein show details Jun 24 (3 days ago) Rabbi Berel Wein

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Parshas Korach 5768

### Man-Made Faith

Moshe, who is known as a person of limitless patience and tolerance, forgiving to all and the most humble of all humans, reacts apparently in an uncharacteristic manner to Korach's attack against his leadership of the Jewish people.

Moshe's aggressive stance against the rebels reveals a different motive for the attack than mere office-seeking on the part of the rebels. After all, it was Moshe himself who declared, “Would that all of the people of Israel become prophets.” He tells Yehoshua not to be zealous in defense of his personal honor.

And yet with Korach and his followers, Moshe adopts a hard line and uncompromising stance. The Torah always notes when the behavior of great people appears on the surface to be uncharacteristic of their nature and past performance. Part of the reason for the Torah's doing so is to alert us to a deeper, underlying issue. We must not be satisfied with the superficial and surface statement of facts.

The deeper issue here is that Korach wishes to convert Torah and Judaism to a man-made “democratic” faith, not its original and true source as a faith revealed to humans from on high, a faith and life system ordained in Heaven and revealed to humans. Therefore, it is not Moshe and his leadership that are the core issues in this dispute but the basic definition of Judaism – is it revealed and Godly or man-made and invented?

On that basic core issue of Judaism, Moshe sees no room for compromise or tolerance. It is not Moshe's status that is at stake here. It is the understanding and true meaning of Judaism. Its very future is now at risk.

Even though the Talmud teaches us that the dispute of Korach against Moshe is not one that was destined to last eternally, in the sense that I have described above, it has lasted until our very day. The struggle to maintain Judaism as a Godly revealed religion is an ongoing one. There are many forces within and without the Jewish world that have attempted and still attempt to remove the Godly revealed part from Judaism.

Even though all of Jewish history indicates the abject failure of such an approach, it still persists in our time. It is not an attack on the Orthodox establishment - Moshe, so to speak, as is presented here - though on the surface it may be seen as such. At the root of the dispute is the view that Judaism is given from Heaven to earth and not merely a clever invention and artifice of ancient rabbis and scholars.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch once characterized the difference between Judaism and other faiths. Judaism, he said, is a religion given by G-d to define man, while the other faiths were created by man to define God. G-d is beyond our meager abilities to define or understand. Therefore, He gave us a Torah, the Torah of Moshe, in order to aid us to live as proper human beings and as His devoted servants.

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

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Weekly Halacha Overview- The Melachot of Kindling and Extinguishing a Fire

**Rabbi Josh Flug**

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### **The Melachot of Kindling and Extinguishing a Fire**

Two of the thirty-nine melachot (categories of prohibited activities) on Shabbat are hav'arah (kindling a fire) and kibui (extinguishing a fire). In this week's issue we will discuss the parameters of these melachot. Additionally, we will discuss some contemporary practical applications of these melachot.

#### **Hav'arah for a Destructive Purpose**

One of the challenges in understanding the melacha of hav'arah is that it seems to contradict the principle of the Mishna, Shabbat 105b, that an act performed in a destructive manner cannot constitute a melacha. If an act is performed in a destructive manner, it is only prohibited on a rabbinic level. As such, the melacha of hav'arah should be limited to a situation where one lights a fire for a productive purpose. In fact, the Gemara, Shabbat 106a, cites a dispute between R. Yehuda and R. Shimon regarding this issue. According to R. Yehuda, one is only culpable for a violation of the melacha of hav'arah if he lights the fire for a productive purpose. One example is lighting a fire in order to produce ash. R. Shimon is of the opinion that both the melacha of hav'arah and the melacha of chovel (wounding) serve as exceptions to the rule in that they are both inherently destructive melachot. According to R. Shimon, one violates these two melachot even if the act is performed in a destructive manner.

Rashi, Shabbat 106a, s.v. U'Beraita, implies that R. Yehuda and R. Shimon dispute how to view lighting a fire in order to cook. According to R. Shimon, while one does positively benefit from the fire, the kindling of the fire is viewed as a destructive act because the fuel of the fire is consumed. According to R. Yehuda, even though the fuel is consumed, if there another positive benefit of the fire, it is considered a productive act.

Rashi's comments help explain Rambam's opinion. Rambam, Hilchot Shabbat 12:1, rules that one is only culpable for hav'arah if he lights a fire for a productive purpose such as producing ash. Yet, Rambam, rules that if one kindles a fire to produce light or heat, he is culpable for hav'arah. One must conclude that the reason why lighting a fire for heat or light is also considered for a productive purpose - even though the act destroys the fuel - is that the benefit of the light or the heat render the act a productive act.

#### **Kindling and Extinguishing Metal**

The Gemara, Shabbat 42a, states that if there is a glowing hot piece of metal in the public thoroughfare and there is a concern that it may cause

injury, one may extinguish it. However, if there is a wood coal, it is prohibited to extinguish the coal.

The Rishonim provide three reasons to distinguish between a wood coal and a hot piece of metal. First, Rashi, ad loc., s.v. Gachelet (and Shabbat 134a, s.v. B'Gachelet) states that the melacha of kibui is limited to materials that can produce charcoal through the extinguishing process. Since metals cannot become charcoal, there is no biblical violation for extinguishing metal. Therefore, the rabbis allowed violation of the rabbinic prohibition against extinguishing metal in order to avoid injury. However, the rabbis did not allow extinguishing a wood coal in order to avoid potential injury, since it produces charcoal which is a biblical prohibition. [The Gemara implies that according to the opinion that melacha she'a'ina tzricha l'gufa is not culpable, it is permissible to extinguish a wood coal in this situation. This concept is beyond the scope of this article.]

Second, R. Eliezer of Metz, Sefer Yerei'im no. 174, states that metal is not subject to the melachot of hav'arah and kibui. Therefore, extinguishing a hot piece of metal is only prohibited on a rabbinic level and is permissible to prevent potential injury. Since wood is subject to the melachot of hav'arah and kibui, it is prohibited to extinguish a wood coal in order to prevent potential injury.

Third, Rabbeinu Chananel, Shabbat 42a, s.v. L'Meimrah, states that the permissibility to extinguish the hot piece of metal is based on the fact that it poses a public danger. Although this is not a life-threatening danger, Rabbeinu Chananel permits violation of Shabbat in order to prevent public injury. The difference between metal and coal is practical in nature. When metal is heated it is not visibly hot and presents a greater threat than wood which is visibly hot.

According to Rabbeinu Chananel, metal and wood are equally subject to the melachot of hav'arah and kibui. According to Sefer Yerei'im, metal is not subject to either of these melachot. According to Rashi, metal is subject to hav'arah but not kibui.

In a previous issue, we noted that the status of metal vis-à-vis hav'arah and kibui is relevant to incandescent bulbs. R. Shlomo Z. Auerbach, Minchat Shlomo 1:12, notes that Rashi's opinion is the normative opinion. He compares the filament of an incandescent bulb to a glowing hot piece of metal and therefore rules that activating an incandescent bulb on Shabbat constitutes a biblical violation of hav'arah.

Regarding deactivating an incandescent bulb, R. Auerbach notes that according to Rashi, there is no biblical violation of kibui on metal. Therefore, deactivating an incandescent bulb would not constitute a biblical violation of kibui. Nevertheless, R. Auerbach suggests that perhaps the reason why extinguishing a hot piece of metal only constitutes a rabbinic violation is that the metal is only storing heat that it receives from a heat source. However, regarding an incandescent light bulb, the heat is produced by its own resistance to the flow of electrons. Therefore, it is arguable that extinguishing the filament by deactivating the light would constitute a biblical violation of kibui.

#### **Adding Fuel to a Fire or Removing Fuel from a Fire**

The Gemara, Beitzah 22a, states that one who adds fuel to a fire violates the melacha of hav'arah and one who removes fuel from a fire violates the melacha of kibui. In a previous issue, we discussed whether removing a pin from a timer so that a device connected to it will remain on longer is comparable to adding fuel to fire. We noted that many poskim are of the opinion that they are not comparable and that it is permissible to remove the pin from the timer.

Regarding removing fuel from a fire, there is a dispute between Tosafot, Beitzah 22a, s.v. V'HaMistapek and Rabbeinu Asher, Beitzah 2:17, concerning the nature of this prohibition. According to R. Asher, the reason why it is prohibited to remove fuel from a fire is that by removing the fuel, one causes the fire to extinguish earlier. Tosafot disagree and maintain that the prohibition cannot be causing the fire to extinguish earlier because that would constitute gerama (indirect action). Rather the reason for the

prohibition is that by removing oil from a fire, one is causing the flame to flicker slightly and that is a violation because it appears to look like kibui. [Tosafot imply that it is not a violation of the melacha of kibui but rather a rabbinic prohibition.]

Tosafot note that it is permissible to cut the bottom of a burning candle on Shabbat because that does not cause the flame to flicker. Rabbeinu Asher prohibits cutting the candle because it causes the fire to extinguish earlier. He explains that it is not considered gerama because gerama is not applicable when one manipulates the actual system. Gerama is only applicable when one manipulates a force external to the system.

R. Natan Z. Freidman, Netzer Matai 1:9, discusses whether it is possible to close the intake valve of the pipe leading to a gas stove on Yom Tov in order to cause the fire on the stove to extinguish. He notes that according to Tosafot, it is permissible since the remaining gas in the pipe of the stove will continue to flow and the fire will only extinguish moments later. Therefore, it is considered gerama. He then adds that even Rabbeinu Asher will agree because the gas that has not yet entered the stove is considered external to system and by closing the valve, one is merely preventing more gas from entering the stove.

R. Ovadia Yosef, Yabia Omer 3:30, notes that when R. Freidman's ruling was publicized many rabbinic authorities objected to his ruling. He explains that Rabbeinu Asher would not consider the intake valve external to the system because the gas is flowing continuously from the municipal gas reservoir directly to the stove. [It should be noted that R. Auerbach, op. cit., raises the possibility that deactivating an electric device is merely preventing additional electron flow and should be considered gerama. He summarily rejects this possibility because he views the device as receiving its electron flow directly from the battery or the power plant (even though it is alternating current). R. Auerbach would ostensibly agree to R. Yosef regarding a gas line.]

R. Joshua Flug is the Rosh Kollel of the Boca Raton Community Kollel, a member of the YU Kollel Initiative and senior editor for the Marcos and Adina Katz YUTorah.org, a division of Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future. To access the archives of the Weekly Halacha Overview click here. To unsubscribe from this list, please click here

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<http://openmindedtorah.blogspot.com/2008/06/modernity-is-hell-korach-and-hobbes.html>

Thursday, June 26, 2008 Modernity is Hell: Korach and Hobbes  
**Dr. William Kolbrener** <msbillk@yahoo.com>

I have plans to go to London in a couple of weeks for the International Milton Symposium. When people ask me about my upcoming academic trip, and I tell them I'll be speaking about 'Milton and Hobbes,' they gently correct me: 'you mean, "Calvin and Hobbes"?' No, it's not early senility, and not a slip of the tongue, and not a Bill Watterson spin-off, and not a tiger and a boy, but the poet, John Milton, and the philosopher, Thomas Hobbes. So, given my current scholarly interests and the time of year, I've been thinking a lot about Hobbes, and his predecessor in the desert, Korach. I'm picturing some of my graduate students now giving a collective eye-roll, and saying to themselves: 'there you go again Kolbrener, yoking the most heterogenous ideas by violence together!' Korach and Hobbes: p-lease...! And yet...

I sometimes wonder about interesting historical figures to have at my shabbos table (a strange thought, I know); I think Hobbes would be a great candidate--though he would probably scare the children. He scares me! Hobbes, the first philosopher of modernity, saw a world--or maybe he helped invent it--of only bodies, just an interacting 'motion of limbs.' Though Hobbes devotes half of his book to discussions of religion, he allows no place for spirituality among those limbs: there's just the physical world, nothing divine. Out of Hobbes's universe of only physical bodies and their conflicting desires comes the need for the Leviathan--who through his 'rule by the sword' provides the only barrier to endless war, and the life of

man which he describes (so very cheerfully!) as "nasty, brutish and short." In a world without spirit or common rationality, there are only competing political interests: she may dress up her interests in certain value systems and beliefs; and he in others, but everything always boils down to politics and interest. The sensible person (ie Hobbes) will say: in such a world of warring passions and interests, the best thing to do is to give into the authoritative and authoritarian Leviathan, and just let him keep the peace. In a world without anything else holding people together, raw authority holds sway. It's all power.

Enter Korach, the Leviathan of the desert. Korach questions Moses's authority, Moses--the most humble of all men, G-d's true prophet. And how does he challenge Moses? He says: 'You are a politician! you've set up your brother Aharon in a cushy position as High Priest; your nephew as next in line; and you take the leadership position for yourself! You're running a corrupt government based upon protexia (for non-Israelis, nepotism); and you benefit the most!' As a way of winning favor, Korach then morphs into Spinoza and says, 'we are all holy, Moses; not just you; spread some of the power around.' (I admit I'm being overly academic here, but for those not in the know, Spinoza was the seventeenth century philosopher--an honest to goodness heretic--who made possible the scene, centuries later, of Shirley MacLaine on an East Hampton Beach, shouting, "I am God!"). Korach doesn't believe in Torah min Ha'shmayim--Torah from Heaven: Korach 'deconstructs' Moses's actions, and finds their true meaning: 'It's your doing Moses!; your Torah keeps you in control!; your Torah reflects your preferences; you don't like cheeseburger's Moses; you are of the levitical class and like the day of rest; that's why you gave us this Torah of yours!' All Korach sees is his own desire for power, so he can't see anything else (everyone, I think, knows someone like this). So even in Moses, the spiritual man par excellence, he only sees politics and power.

Our sages tell us that there are two kinds of dispute, one for the sake of Heaven, represented in the dispute of Hillel and Shammai; the other of Korach and his followers. The dispute of Hillel and Shammai is beloved by G-d, because each are engaged and committed to bringing to light aspects of the Torah. And though they disagree--and sometimes say opposite things--they are united through their love and learning of the Torah. Here, we return to the mystical power of the number three. For two are transformed into one through the point that brings them together. In this way, as the Maharal puts it, three is at once less and greater than two. Jewish algebra: three unites into the number numerically less than two (one); but one is superior to two for representing unity. Hillel and Shammai are united in their disagreement (having a meaningful disagreement is hard to do!)--through the Torah.

Korach however is forever stuck in the world of two. He is not paired with Moses, but with his fellow politicians, the company of two hundred and fifty men who follow him to their death. Korach pursues not the unity which comes from dispute in the name of heaven, but the dispute of politics and division. The dispute which Korach pursues was created on the second day of creation, the day the waters above and below were separated (a cosmic division)--the only one of the six days of creation which G-d does not call 'good.' It is also the day, our sages tell us, when gehinom--hell--was created. Hell is the day of division without the hope of coming together, of separation and absence, a vacuum filled up only with the warring desires of men whose lives are 'nasty, brutish and short.' And so Korach projects a world based upon his own selfish desires and political machinations. But as Korach and his followers sink into the abyss of the fiery earth that swallows them, the rest of the people of Israel cry out, 'Moshe Emes, v'Toraso Emes,' 'Moses is True and his Torah is True!' The Torah of Moses makes possible a world where the division of two turns into the unity of three!

Hobbes describes a modern world in which many of us still live, a world without anything to unify but power, a world of politics and faction, self-interest and endless division. Korach's dispute provides a legacy for Hobbes which he gives to the modern world: Hell. Posted by WDK at 7:45 AM

"Professor Fox" PROFFOX@aol.com

"...va'yiplu al p'neihem..." "...and they fell on their faces..." (16:22)

When a group confronted Moshe and Aharon, HaShem's response was one of imminent judgment. The response of Moshe and Aharon was one of pleading for Divine clemency. This plea was offered with the posture depicted in our verse: they fell forward with their faces hidden against their outstretched arms. This pleading is known as techina, and that prayer posture is called Tachanun. The Recanati advises that a profound message is present here: the sequence which Moshe modeled for all time was that this prayer, pleading and supplicant posture are tandem processes. If there is to be a techina prayer, a tachanun posture is proper. This is related to a principle which we discussed in an earlier parsha email in explaining the principle of "somech ge'ula l'tefilla" - one must first assert a conviction in HaShem's promise of salvation before turning to Him in prayer. Likewise, prayer must precede the techina for forgiveness and clemency. We pray first, then we take the supplicant posture, then we plead for forgiveness and compassion. What are the metaphysics of this sequence? The Recanati explains that this is known as "assembling the tent into one entity," a kabbalistic way of saying that we are asserting our understanding that HaShem is One and that all of His attributes are unified. How so?

When we pray, we are turning to HaShem as we understand His middas rachamim. He is the source of kindness, and so we ask Him for the things we seek. In contrast, when we fall forward with techina, we express our awareness that there is also middas din, justice, with which His Presence in manifest in our world. The immediacy of tefila with techina in sequence proclaims our acknowledgment that He is One and that there are no separate factors or attributes. Even His judgment is a manifestation of kindness. This is how we "assemble the Tent into One entity." There is no distinction Above between HaShem and what we experience as His Presence, and there is no distinction Above between His Mercy and His Justice. It is for this reason, writes the Recanati, that we do not recite Tachanun at night. Nighttime is when middas din is often apparent in the universe. To devote a prayer focused on that midda would imply that din is separate from the other middos, which is a distorted belief which other faiths have that there is Good and there is Evil, there is the Kindness from Above and there is Harshness from elsewhere ch'v. To pray with a focused recognition of the middas din when the world is being judged might suggest that din has a power or is an entity unto its own. This is why we couple our rachamim-focused prayers with the din-focused techina. We know that din and rachamim are from a single and unified One Source. Good Shabbos. D Fox

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**Peninim on the Torah**  
**by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum - Parshas Korach**  
mailed-by shemayisrael.com

PARSHAS KORACH Korach, the son of Yitzhar, son of Kehas, son of Levi, separated himself. (16:1) Rashi comments: Korach placed himself at odds with the rest of the congregation to protest against Aharon HaKohen's assumption of the Kehunah, Priesthood. The emphasis here is on the fact that Korach started a machlokes, controversy. Chazal teach us in Pirkei Avos 5:17, "Any controversy that is l'shem Shomayim, for the sake of Heaven, ultimately achieves a lasting result; and every controversy that is not in the name of Heaven has ephemeral results in the end. Which controversy was in the name of Heaven? The controversy between Hillel and Shammai. And which controversy was not in the name of Heaven? The controversy between Korach and his followers. When one peruses this Mishnah, the first question that enters his mind is: Is this the only

difference between the controversy of Korach and that of Hillel and Shammai? Was everything else on the "up and up," such that the only ingredient that was lacking was l'shem Shomayim?

Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, considers Chazal's words very carefully when he says that Korach was not simply looking for a little more kavod, glory. Originally, his intentions were noble and even praiseworthy. He had sought a deeper understanding of mitzvot, a closer, more intense relationship with Hashem. Kehunah was a medium through which his dreams could be realized. He had high goals, noble objectives, and laudatory aspirations. There was only one flaw in his endeavor: he was not acting l'shem Shomayim. He was self-serving. Hillel and Shammai were in a bitter dispute. The Yerushalmi Shabbos 1:4 contends that their controversy was extremely intense and acrimonious. They each sought ruachniyos, spirituality, and each felt that his approach was more veracious. The only difference between Korach's dispute and that of Hillel and Shammai was the motivation. This is a significant difference. That one point drove Korach to tragic consequences. Why? Why should the motivation play such a critical role in the definition and ultimate consequences of the dispute?

Rav Yeruchem explains that machlokes is not a mitzvah like other mitzvot. Concerning other mitzvot, as long as the objective can catalyze a positive result, we are not concerned about the individual's motivation, whether it is lishmah or not. We then rely on the axiom, Mitoch shelo lishmah ba lishmah, "From the fact that it began with a motivation that was not for the sake of Heaven, it will eventually become lishmah." Perhaps, at the commencement, the individual did not have the positive motivation necessary for a mitzvah, but since it is a mitzvah and its ultimate goal is positive, eventually he will perform this mitzvah with a motivation that is for the sake of Heaven.

This rule does not apply to every machlokes, regardless of the noble goals. The mere fact that it is a dispute demands that it be one hundred percent for the sake of Heaven. Otherwise, it is absolutely forbidden to separate oneself and become embroiled in a controversy of any kind.

In an effort to better understand how the concept "for the sake of Heaven" impacts the dispute, transforming it into something acceptable and even laudatory, I cite Horav Meir/Marcus Lehmann, zl, who focuses on the Hebrew word machlokes. Indeed, several words other than machlokes express conflict and dispute, such as: riv, hisnagshus, vikuach, midanim. The root of the word machlokes is chalok, which means a division, or separation, leading in different directions. Thus, a difference of opinion is quite likely to stimulate divisiveness. The result of such a difference of opinion, if it is truly intended for the sake of Heaven, leads to the attainment of truth and, ultimately, is of benefit to both sides of the machlokes. A controversy of this nature is not really a conflict, because neither is the difference of opinion about the essence of the matter, nor does it affect the personal relationship of the contenders. They both seek the same goal: the truth.

This type of attitude characterized the halachic dispute between Bais Shammai and Bais Hillel. The Talmud in Eruvin 13b makes the following statement: Rabbi Abba stated in the name of Shmuel: For three years, a dispute between Bais Shammai and Bais Hillel ensued, the former contending that the halachah was in accordance with their view, the latter disagreeing and claiming that the halachah was in accordance with their view. Then a Divine Voice was heard, declaring, "The utterances of both are the words of the Living G-d, but the halachah is in consonance with the rulings of Bais Hillel." Whenever the Tannaim, Amoraim, Gaonim, Rishonim, or Acharonim differed in the interpretation of the law, their dispute was only in regard to its interpretation. Never was there any question whatsoever concerning the binding force of the law itself.

Interestingly, when the Mishnah mentions the example of a machlokes l'shem Shomayim, it mentions two contending parties. In the example of Korach, only one contender is mentioned. Why is this? Do two parties necessarily comprise a dispute?

Rav Lehmann explains that delving into Korach's character offers us an opportunity to better understand the controversy. Korach was a demagogue; he was ambitious and extremely resentful of Moshe Rabbeinu's position as leader of the nation. He so despised Moshe that he was obsessed with getting rid of him. This could only be done through a court of law, which he quickly convened, using his followers as judges. They would surely sentence Moshe to death once he applied some very convincing tactics. It was unanimous: they all voted for the death sentence. This presented a problem. According to Jewish law, a *bais din*, judicial court, which passes a unanimous verdict in favor of the death sentence, is considered biased and, thus, the sentence is rendered invalid. Korach was in a bind. Someone had to offer a dissenting opinion. It would have to be him. Imagine Korach, the individual who had started this entire mutiny, was now placed in the predicament of being the only one to "exonerate" Moshe. In other words, although Korach was compelled to "break" with his followers and contradict his earlier opinion, they were all actually of one mind and one position. This controversy was a far cry from that of Bais Hillel and Bais Shammai.

In his commentary, Horav Yitzchak Arama, zl, the Baal Akeidah, renders this Mishnah alternatively. "Any controversy whose goal is Heaven sake and is, therefore, conducted in a manner that bespeaks its goal is aimed at preservation. Conversely, any controversy which is not conducted for G-d's sake is not directed at preservation, but rather, at destruction." We now have a benchmark of values with which we can define a controversy to determine whether it is moral or immoral, constructive or destructive. This is especially true when one enters into the fray with an objective to correct a wrong, repair a defect, or to amend what seems to be deficient. He should be prepared with a plan of action for replacing what is to be destroyed if his efforts at change are successful. If he cannot, however, create something new and better, just simply to destroy, then he is fighting for one purpose: destruction. This type of contention is clearly not for the sake of Heaven.

We may suggest another approach to *sifah l'hiskayem*, "will in the end achieve a lasting result." If a *machlokes* is *l'shem Shomayim*, it will endure. Why? Perhaps the following episode illuminates this idea. There is a halachic dispute between two giants of Torah, a rebbe and his talmid, Torah mentor and his student, which lasted for quite some time. The Avnei Nezer contended with his talmid, the Chelkas Yoav, concerning one who places a pot of soup on the flame on Shabbos in such a manner that it will reach the shiur, measure, of bishul, cooking, only after Shabbos. In other words, the forbidden act of *bishul* occurs on Shabbos, but the consequence of his action does not occur until after Shabbos. Is the individual liable for transgressing Shabbos? This dispute extended to other forbidden labors on Shabbos. If someone lights a fire on Shabbos, is he liable for what burns after Shabbos? Rebbe and talmid were very close; nonetheless, this continued on for years with each one devoting extensive responsa to addressing the subject. Shortly before the Avnei Nezer's passing from this world, the Chelkas Yoav visited him as he lay on his deathbed. The Avnei Nezer asked his illustrious student, "Are you prepared to concede to me now, before I die?" The Chelkas Yoav replied, "Yes." The Avnei Nezer asked, "Are you doing this only because I am about to die?" "Yes, rebbe," the Chelkas Yoav answered. "How can you do this?" The Avnei Nezer exclaimed. "The Torah demands *emes*, that we maintain the highest standard of veracity. How can you rescind your opinion simply because I am sick and about to pass from this world? *Emes* must be *emes*." The dispute continued, with the Chelkas Yoav retaining his opinion. When a *machlokes* is *l'shem Shomayim*, and each contender seeks only the truth, the *machlokes* perseveres, regardless of the challenges - even death.

Korach, the son of Yitzhar, son of Kehas, son of Levi, separated himself. (16:1)

Quite an impressive lineage, but it stops short of Yaakov Avinu. Chazal tell us that this is by design. Our Patriarch blessed his children prior to his taking leave of his earthly abode. He prophetically saw that his great-great grandson, Korach, would instigate what would become the standard of a

dispute for personal gain. It would be devastating with consequences that were to be equally ruinous. He wanted no part of this tragedy. Therefore, he cried out, "With their congregation, do not join, O' my honor." (Bereishis 49:5) The sage wanted to divorce his name from inclusion in this sinful rebellion. We wonder about his purpose in disassociating his name from the family tree. By "covering up" his ancestry, was he accomplishing something? It is not as if Korach's lineage would not be exposed, preventing his great-great grandfather's name from surfacing.

In Rabbi Sholom Smith's latest anthology, Horav Avraham Pam, zl, cites the Mishnah in *Meseches Edyos* 2:9 that lists those features which a father endows his son: "A father endows his son with a handsome appearance, strength, wealth, wisdom, longevity, and with the number of generations before him." Whereas the first attributes are understandable, as that which a father carries in his genes will be transmitted to his son, likewise wealth, although not hereditary, is usually bequeathed from father to son. Additionally, a father's merit can catalyze all these attributes to be passed on through the generations. What seems difficult to understand is the phrase, "And the number of generations before him."

In his introduction to the Gaon m'Vilna's commentary to the Shulchan Aruch, Even HaEzer, Horav Yaakov Moshe, zl, son of Horav Avraham, zl, son of the Gaon, mentions that the Gaon addresses this question. In prefacing his commentary, Rav Yaakov Moshe writes that he feels himself to be unworthy of compiling and publishing his grandfather's works. He, therefore, appealed to Hashem in sincere prayer, that in the merit of the Gaon, he be protected from error. He writes that this might be the meaning of the Mishnah's words, "And with the number of the generation before him." It is not only a father who bequeaths wisdom and other characteristics to his son, but also, all the generations of previous ancestors share in this bequest. It might be a grandfather-- or earlier ancestor-- who does so or in whose merit the descendant is granted these qualities. This is why the Mishnah speaks in the generic, *ha'av zocheh l'ben*, a father endows a son, and not the word *libno*, to his son. This indicates that it is not only the father himself that endows the son. It might be any one of a number of ancestors who participate in this bequest.

Applying the insight of the Gaon's grandson, Rav Pam explains Yaakov Avinu's intentions in appealing to Hashem that his name not be included in the rebellion of Korach. Clearly, he was denying that he was an ancestor of Korach. He was trying to convey, however, that every person is affected to a certain extent by the characteristics of previous generations. Some pick up the positive attributes, while others might not be so fortunate. Yaakov wanted to make it clear that he bequeathed to his descendants only sparks of holiness - nothing more. Therefore, Korach's mutinous actions were not connected to Yaakov. His character flaws, which resulted in this debacle, should not be attributed to Yaakov. When the Navi in *Divrei HaYamim* (6:22,23) details the lineage of Korach's sons who sang on the Duchan, the platform upon which the Leviim stood, it says, "Son of Korach, son of Yitzhar, son of Kehas, son of Levi, son of Yisrael," because here we see Yaakov's sparks of holiness in action.

We wonder about our impact on the future. We see from here that our impact is quite compelling and has no limits in time. The spiritual composition of our descendants for generations to come can be greatly impacted by our own spiritual behavior. True, there might be a gap in the generations, but it will surface at times when we might least expect it. This brings me to the *baal teshuvah* movement, through which so many thousands, some from families that have been assimilated for generations, have returned to the faith to which their ancestors had adhered. After all, at one time, we were all *frum*, observant. In fact, Torah and mitzvos are an integral part of our lives. There really was nothing else. It is only after we were exposed to the glitter and enticement of modernity that some veered, others swayed, and yet others left the fold. They were, however, descendants of Jews who had been *moser nefesh* for their religion, whose dedication and self-sacrifice were not forgotten, but were bequeathed through time to their descendants, who had the presence of mind to realize

that they did not belong where they were. They came home, and Klal Yisrael is that much better because of it.

Dasan and Aviram had come out standing (defiantly) at the entrance of their tents, with their wives, children and infants. The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, as well as the people who belonged to Korach. (16:27, 32)

The punishment that Hashem meted out to Korach and his followers seems to be quite strong and perhaps a bit unfair. Why should innocent children be punished for the sins of their parents? Rashi takes note of this, explaining that this is the severity of machlokes, dispute. An earthly court does not punish the individual until he has reached the age of twelve or thirteen, and the Heavenly Tribunal does not issue punishment until the transgressor has reached the age of twenty. Yet, in this instance of machlokes, even the infants were punished. Why is this?

Rashi attributes the punishment of the wives and children, those who had no direct involvement in the mutiny, to the exigency of dispute. We can repeat this over and over again, but it still does not explain why innocent babies and children perished because their fathers set into motion the destructive fires of discord. Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, explains that some aveiros, transgressions, are different, and machlokes is one of them. He compares this to the ben sorer u'moreh, rebellious son.

In the Talmud Sanhedrin 107a, Chazal explain the juxtaposition of ben sorer u'moreh upon the yefas toar, beautiful captive, whom the Torah allows the Jewish soldier to marry by special dispensation. They derive from here that one who submits to his lust during the pressures associated with the battlefield will eventually gain nothing from this union. Ultimately, the child born to the woman he married by dispensation will be a wayward and rebellious child. Rav Chaim explains this based upon a principle derived from a pasuk in Devarim 29:17, Pen yeish bachem shoshonim poreh rosh v'laanah, "Perhaps there is among you a root sprouting gall and wormwood." The Ramban sheds light on this pasuk: "A bad root matures, and eventually bitter and evil buds develop. A father is the root and a child, whether good or bad, is the inevitable result of the planted seed."

There are many sins that, although committed by the fathers, do not have a punitive effect on their offspring. Contention is a notable exemption to this rule. There is something which lies at the core of strife which invariably leads to the sprouting of "gall and wormwood" in subsequent generations. It is for this reason that even babies were included in the terrible punishment that Hashem meted out to Korach and his followers. Why does controversy have such an all-consuming effect? Why should later generations be victims of its ramifications?

Horav Mordechai Miller, zl, cites the Maharal M'Prague, in his commentary to Pirkei Avos, 1:12, "Hillel used to say, 'Be of the disciples of Aharon; love peace and pursue it.'" On this verse he wrote the following: Dissension is a feature of this earthly world. By its very nature, this world is a place of division and dissension, and it is for this reason that friction is so prevalent. This is noted at the beginning of time, when two brothers feuded in such a manner that devastation ensued. This primordial conflict is an expression of the divisive nature of this world."

Why should this world by nature be prone to schism? The Maharal explains that we are enjoined to "love peace" and "pursue peace." To love peace means to prevent discord. To pursue peace is to do everything within our means to engage in conciliatory action in order to extinguish the fires of hostility and to put a stop to the controversy once it has already begun. When one is involved in an argument, he is automatically distanced from his antagonist. He must now pursue peace and actively "run" towards the fellow with whom he is in conflict.

Restoring peace is an act of kedushah, holiness. In fact, it is so characteristic of kedushah that shalom, peace, is one of Hashem's Names. Since kedushah lies in the spiritual reality outside the parameters of time, peacemaking must be undertaken immediately as befitting this spiritual endeavor. Chazal warn us against allowing our mitzvah observance to

become affected by the passage of time. A mitzvah is a spiritual endeavor, a spiritual opportunity and, hence, a sublime and G-dly entity, which should not be allowed to fester in this world, but should be carried out in the littlest amount of time. Thus, we pursue peace with quick action transcending time. This concept of spiritual unity, explains the Maharal, is the basis for shalom. We act quickly to repair the breach created by discord, which is not unusual in this world. We act expeditiously in this time-bound world to bring back the spiritual harmony ruptured by this dispute.

Before "time"/creation, everything was a unified success. With the advent of time, the world was subdivided into fractioned parts; day one, day two, etc. Time is the division into sections: past, present and future. In a world of "time," division reigns supreme. Divisiveness and schism are inextricably bound to this world. Hashem transcends time, and, thus, everything spiritual represents unity. When we perform mitzvos as soon as is necessary; when we act with zeal and alacrity, we connect with the spiritual realm on a plane above time. A delay in time, allowing for matzoh to extend beyond the eighteen-minute limit, causes a physical expansion which renders it invalid. So, too, when a mitzvah is delayed, it expands into the physical realm, stunting the ability of its performer to connect with the spiritual world which is the focus of the mitzvah.

Bearing the above in mind, we now understand how schism is the fabric of the universe, the opposite of spirituality. The more unified an entity, the greater its harmony, the closer it is to the spiritual world, to Hashem's unique Oneness. Korach's machlokes was one step back, deeper into the muck of separation and divisiveness, terms that are antithetical to spiritual growth. He was blending back into the constraints of the "nature" of the usual character of this world. The only way not to transmit natural characteristics to one's descendants is by connecting to the spiritual. Thus, one transcends nature. Divisiveness, a character of nature, is passed on to the next generation. It is in the genes. This is why the punishment is not limited exclusively to those who are actively embroiled in the dispute, but also to those who inherit their recessive genes.

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TORAH WEEKLY - For the week ending 28 June 2008 / 25 Sivan 5768  
- from Ohr Somayach | [www.ohr.edu](http://www.ohr.edu)  
-- Parshat Korach by **Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair** -  
[www.seasonsofthemoon.com](http://www.seasonsofthemoon.com) <http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/3555>

**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

Kosher Style "And Korach took..." (16:1)

"\$750 for a pair of tefillin! You must be joking! \$750 for a couple of leather boxes with some Hebrew writing in them! Why, for a fraction of the price I could get something almost identical! What do I need all this

crazy quasi-scientific precision for? What does it matter if there's a hairline crack in one letter? It's so small you can hardly see it! This is a typical example of the sort of nit-picking legalism that I hate in organized religion!"

"Open up your computer. What would happen if I took a very sharp x-acto blade and cut one of the wires here in the ADSL modem?"

"Well of course it wouldn't work. The modem won't receive anything."

"Tefillin are a spiritual 'modem'. They connect us to Something beyond this world. If there's the tiniest break in a letter, then the modem that we call tefillin won't receive anything."

Korach asked Moshe if a house full of Torah Scrolls still needed a mezuzah on the doorframe. Said Moshe "Yes." Korach started to mock him saying, "If a single mezuzah fixed to the doorframe of a house is enough to remind us of G-d, surely a house full of Sifrei Torah will do the job!" (Midrash)

Korach was saying that the mitzvot of the Torah are symbolic, devoid of absolute performance parameters. Moshe's answer was that they function within strict operational criteria. One mezuzah on the door is what connects us to G-d, no more and no less, even if a house full of Torah Scrolls may look more Jewish.

- Source: Based on a story heard from Rabbi Mordechai Perlman about Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz, zatzal

What's In A Name? "...Men of name." (16:2)

According to the religions of the East, 'When you define a thing you destroy it'. From the Jewish perspective, however, definition, far from being destructive, can put us in contact with the essence of a thing, with its interior reality.

The Torah tells that Adam gave names to all the animals. Adam didn't just pick arbitrary titles. He was able to express the essence of each life-force in its name. This is because the holy language (Biblical Hebrew) is like no other language. In all other languages names are merely conventional. A table is called 'a table' purely as a means of communication. The word 'table' itself, however, has no intrinsic connection to 'tableness'. It is only in the Hebrew of the Bible that names express essence.

This expression 'Men of name' is extremely rare in the Torah. There are only two places where the phrase appears. Once in the generation of the Flood, referring to the Nephilim: "They were the mighty, who, from old, were men of devastation (literally - 'Men of name'). The other place is in this week's Torah portion referring to Korach's accomplices who opposed Moshe.

The Zohar explains that when the generation who built the Tower of Babel said, "Let us make ourselves a name", their motivation was to exaggerate their importance. They meant to distort their name, to assume a name that did not define their essence.

Possibly this is why the Torah uses this expression here as well in connection with the rebellion of Korach. They were 'Men of name'; men who were trying to usurp the name of Moshe and Aaron — to usurp the name 'Kohen'. They thought that by stealing the name, maybe they could steal the essence.

We can never be something we're not. At best we can live up to our own name.

- Source: Based on Korban HaOni

Down On The Farm "...for the entire congregation, all of them, are holy." (16:3)

"All animals are equal except for some animals who are more equal than others". (George Orwell - Animal Farm)

Talmud (Sanhedrin 109): "Rav said: It was the wife of Ohn Ben Peles (one of Korach's co-conspirators) that saved him. She said to him "What's the difference who's in charge? Whether it's Moshe or Korach, either way it won't be you!"

The way of all autocratic tyranny is to start by preaching grass roots equality. Only when the new regime has replaced the old does it emerge that dictatorship has been replaced, not by democracy, but by just another dictatorship.

Author's note: It is nearly two years since my sister, Chaya Esther bas Rochma, was involved in a tragic accident that has left her in a coma until this day. My sister is breathing by herself but can only receive food intravenously. She seems to react only to the most basic stimuli of noise, light and pain.

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been praying for my sister's recovery. Not a word of prayer goes unheard. I trust and know that Hashem hears our prayers.

As time wears on, it becomes more difficult to sustain our prayers, but for those of you who are praying for my sister, please continue to pray for a refuah sheleima (complete recovery) for Chaya Esther bas Rochma, and of course, anyone who is reading this for the first time, I would so much appreciate your prayers, even on an occasional basis.

We all exist on Heavenly mercy, and I pray that Hashem in His mercy will see fit to restore my sister to full health amongst all those of our people who are in need of healing.

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

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<http://www.chiefrabbi.org/>

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 - 5766]

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

Korach

If you seek to understand an accusation, look at the accuser, not the accused.

Think, for example, about one of the most famous of anti-Semitic myths: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion (the classic account is Norman Cohn's Warrant for Genocide; more recently the distinguished Israeli jurist Hadassa Ben Itto published her own account, The Lie That Wouldn't Die).

According to the Protocols, Jews form a secret conspiracy that controls the world's banks, media, economies and politicians. To those who know the tragic depths of Jewish history, no myth could be more ironic. Jews have almost never united for anything for very long. Jewish history is a series of variations on the theme of disagreement and division. Though some individual Jews have from time to time held positions of power, the Jewish people as a whole has been marked by powerlessness. Indeed while the Protocols were being concocted, Jews were being slaughtered in pogroms throughout Russia. Most significantly, Jews constitute one of the few civilizations in history that has never dreamed of building an empire. From a Jewish perspective, The Protocols are unintelligible.

But from the perspective of its author it was very intelligible indeed. It was written — as newly published Russian archives confirm — at the turn of the twentieth century by a Russian aristocrat exiled in France, Mathieu Golovinski, who wrote it for the Russian secret police, to convince Czar Nicholas II that Jews were behind the political unrest in Russia and to persuade him to abandon liberal reforms. To do so, he plagiarized a satirical essay by French attorney Maurice Joly, The Dialogues in Hell between Machiavelli and Montesquieu (1864), replacing Napoleon III — the villain of the original text — with the Jews. It was a crude fabrication, exposed as a forgery by The Times of London in 1921, and a court in Berne in 1935. The fact that it is well-known to be a forgery has not stopped it being a best seller ever since, first in Nazi Germany, now throughout much of the Arab world.

Secret conspiracies and dreams of empire make no sense within Judaism's universe of thought. But to members of the secret police in the last years of Czarist Russia it made very good sense indeed. It was a projection onto an outsider of a fantasy they themselves held. If you seek to understand an accusation, look at the accuser, not the accused.

The Korach rebellion, the most serious of the many challenges to Moses' leadership, was a complex affair. As the commentators point out, there was not one party to the rebellion but three, each with its own grievance. There was Korach himself, Moses' and Aaron's cousin, indignant that the supreme leadership positions had gone to one family, the sons of Amram, while he, the eldest son of Amram's brother Yitzhar, had had no equivalent honour. There were the Reubenites, Datan and Aviram, who felt that their tribe – that of Jacob's firstborn son – had not received its due share of leadership roles. And there were the 250 community leaders who may have felt that they had not been given appropriate honour in the service of the sanctuary. Some suggest that they were representatives of the firstborn, who felt aggrieved that, after the Golden Calf, their priestly function was transferred to the tribe of Levi.

The precise details of the narrative are complex, but one thing is luminously clear: the accusation the rebels made against Moses and Aaron:

They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above (titnas'u) the Lord's assembly?" (Num. 16: 3) Two of the rebels, Datan and Aviram, went further:

"Isn't it enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the desert? And now you also want to lord it (tistarer) over us?" (16: 13) Applied to Moses, the accusations are unintelligible. This is the man of whom we read, a mere four chapters back: "Now Moses was a very humble man, more so than any other man on earth." That such a man would "set himself above" others, or "lord it over them" is palpably absurd. There is only one way of making sense of the rebels' claim. If you seek to understand an accusation, look at the accuser, not the accused.

Korach, Datan, Aviram and their co-conspirators saw leadership as status, power, dominance, superiority. That is what they sought for themselves. But Jewish leadership is not like that – on principle, it cannot be like that. Were it so, it would be unconscionable. Judaism is built on the premise of the non-negotiable dignity of the human person. No leader is allowed to "lord it over" those he or she leads. The Torah says of even a king of Israel that that he must not "act haughtily towards his fellows" (Deut. 17: 20).

The sages said the same. The Talmud (Hagigah 5b) says that "When a leader lords it over a community, the Holy One weeps every day because of him." The Midrash Tanchuma comments on the verse (Deut. 29: 9) "All of you are standing today in the presence of the Lord your G-d—leaders of your tribes, your elders and officials – all the men of Israel". The difficulty is obvious: the verse begins by talking about leaders, and ends by talking about "all the men of Israel". The Midrash reads it thus: "[G-d said to them], 'Even though I have appointed for you leaders, elders and officials, all of you are equal before Me' – that is why it says, 'all are men of Israel.'"

Few propositions proved to be more fateful to the history of Israel, because of one specific event. Towards the end of the reign of King Solomon, the people grew restless at the burden he had placed on them, in part because of the building of the Temple. When the king died, the people formed a delegation – led by an ambitious would-be leader, Jeroboam – to Solomon's son Rehoboam. They had a simple and specific demand:

"Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you." (I Kings 12: 4) Rehoboam told them to come back in three days' time and he would give them an answer. He then went to the elders who had been his father's counselors. "What would you advise me to say?" he asked. Their answer is fascinating:

"If today you will be a servant (eved) to these people and serve them (va-avad'tem) and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants (avadim)." (I Kings 12: 7) The task of a king, they said, is to serve the people, not to impose burdens on them. It was wise advice. Unfortunately, Rehoboam, young, impetuous, ignored it. Instead he asked his friends, with whom he had grown up. Their advice was the opposite. In effect, they said: Show them who is boss. Tell them: "My little finger is thicker than my father's waist. My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions."

Rehoboam did so. The result was predictable. The majority of the people followed Jeroboam. Only the tribe of Judah remained loyal to the king. The kingdom split in two. It was the beginning of the end of the first commonwealth. Authoritarian leadership – in which the leader sets himself above and lords it over the people – has never been acceptable in Israel.

There is a fascinating passage in the Talmud (Horayot 10 a-b) in which Rabban Gamliel wanted to appoint two rabbis, Elazar Chisma and Yochanan ben Gudgada, to leadership positions. They were reluctant to accept. Rabban Gamliel then said to them: "Do you suppose I am conferring rulership (serarah) on you? No: I am conferring service (avdut) on you."

A true leader is the servant of those he or she leads. That is what Moses understood, and what Korach and his fellow rebels did not.

RABBI ELI BARUCH SHULMAN

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Parshas Korach 5761

הם היו בעצה תחילה: tell us "הו"ל (parshas Pinchas 28:11) ובני קרה לא מתו, they were among the first to plot the rebellion. But then, at the time of the מהלוקת, they had second thoughts, הרהורי תשובה. And so when the earth opened up and swallowed קרה and his followers, they also fell into גיהנום, but a platform formed in גיהנום itself, on which they stood and said שירה - song to "הקב". And apparently they survived this experience, because later their descendants are found among the Leviim who served in the בית המקדש, and - indeed - among the composers of תהלים. For among the 150 chapters of תהלים, ten begin with the words: לבני קרה, a psalm of the children of קרה.

It is interesting to consider whether any mention of these amazing events that befell their ancestors can be found among these מזמורים of בני קרה. Certainly not on the surface. But one of my rebbeim, R' Shneur Kotler זצ"ל, used to point out one passage in these מזמורים in which, if we look closely, we can find an echo of these events.

In שיר של יום we read as follows: קאפטיל מ"ה which we say every Monday in the יום של יום we read as follows:

תהלתך על קצוי ארץ דימינו א' חסדך בקרב היכליך. כשמך א' כן

Which is usually translated as follows: We hoped, O G-d, for your kindness in the midst of your Sanctuary. Like your Name, O G-d, so is your praise; to the ends of the earth.

However, the word דימינו comes from דמיון, imagination; and it does not mean to hope, but to mistake, to imagine - as in: אל תדמי בנפשך להמלט בית. . המלך מכל היהודים. And so we might better translate these פסוקים as follows: We mistakingly imagined, O G-d, that your kindness is in the midst of your Sanctuary. But - in fact - your praise, like your Name, reaches to the ends of the earth.

And R' Shneur explained the meaning of these pesukim, and their connection to the parsha, as follows:

Korach and his followers, as we know, were up in arms because the כהונה had been given to אהרן. It's not fair, they said, that אהרן should monopolize the קדשים קדש - that only he should be the one allowed into the קדש קדשים, the Holy of Holies. After all, כולם קדושים, the entire people is holy; how can you deprive us of the opportunity to be close to Hashem, to have that feeling of intimacy, of closeness, to bask in the radiance of "הקב's goodness; how can אהרן monopolize that?

But קרה made a fundamental error. Because the fact is that "הקב's closeness is not limited to any one geographical location; not even to the קדש קדשים. Because "הקב reveals Himself primarily not through a place, but through His word, through Torah. And therefore "הו"ל tell us: יקרה היא: מפנינו מכה"ג שנכנס לפני ולפנים, that Torah is more precious even than the experience of the כהן גדול as he enters the Holy of Holies. Because through Torah "הקב allows us to come closer to Him than through any other means.

And therefore wherever Torah is learned "הקב is near. בכל מקום אשר אזכיר את שמי אבוא אליך, wherever my Name is mentioned - and the entire Torah, the Ramban teaches us, is the name of G-d - I will be there.

It was Korach's children who first understood that lesson. And they showed that by singing שירה in שירה גהנום. שירה is always an expression of the sensation of "הקב's nearness. And there is no place where "הקב seems so far away as in גהנום. Because גהנום, by definition, is a place where "הקב's goodness is not felt at all. And yet even in גהנום - Korach's children realized - שירה can be said; because there is no place where Torah cannot reach.

And that is the meaning of the song of the children of קרה:

דמיון - we had a דמיון, we imagined - we mistook. We thought that Hashem's חסד, the sense of His goodness and closeness, can be had only בקרב היכליך, in the משכן, in the קדש קדשים. But that is not the case. Your praise is like Your Name, to the ends of the earth. Just as your Name, your Torah, reaches to the ends of the earth.

so too your praise, your שירה, can be sung even at the ends of the earth, even in גהנום itself.

Korach's mistake did not perish with him. We also sometimes think that "הקב is to be found only היכליך, only in the sanctuary, only in shul.

Rabbi Emannul Feldman writes about one of his congregants who, upon leaving shul each Shabbos after the service, would say: Goodbye, G-d; I'm going home now. That is to imagine that בקרב היכליך, only in the sanctuary, only in shul.

teach us the opposite lesson. G-d's closeness and His Torah permeate every aspect of life; the shul, the home, and the workplace. Each one can be informed by Torah, and infused with קדושה. For כשמך א' כן קצוי ארץ תהלתך, על