

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET
ON PARSHAS KORACH - 5756

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mj-ravtorah@shamash.org Shiur HaRav Soloveichik ZT"L on Parshas Korach

The Rav noted that the Korach event was not a simple story. Many of the concerns and complaints that people voice against Torah Shebeal Peh are mentioned in Korach. The story is very appropriate to modern times. The Korach event was unique. Prior to the Korach event the people protested and complained spontaneously in reaction to their situation. They were faced with biological or physical challenges, Amalek, drought, the wilderness itself. Primitive man complains when challenged in these ways. The Torah says that Bnay Yisrael lifted their eyes and saw Egypt chasing them. They were confronted with fear. When they came to Marah and could not drink from the bitter waters, the people complained to Moses. The people complained about the loss of the fleshpots of Egypt. Then in Refidim they needed water again and quarreled with Moses. These were not political disagreements or ideological controversies. These were complaints by the people on being subjected to discomfort in the first years of their journey. Even the golden calf was not precipitated by idolatrous ideas that corrupted the people. The golden calf was precipitated by the feeling of terror similar to that felt by the sheep that is lost in the wilderness. They responded instinctively to the perceived loss of their leader Moshe. They requested from Aaron to make for them a god who shall lead them because they lost their leader Moses. All these episodes were spontaneous reactions to situations that they had to confront but did not know how to react to them. They suggest a mob mentality that gets easily excited by stress and does not know how to respond but yet easily regains its equilibrium after the episode. The Korach controversy was of a totally different character. The rebellion was not due to ungratified physical desire like hunger. There was no mob involvement at all. Unlike the golden calf and the episode at Refidim where the people requested water and resulted in an attempt to stone Moses and Aaron, the people in general did not participate in the Korach controversy. Those episodes were incidents where the term AM, the nation which derives from the word with, is used. The mob was involved and complained against Moshe. Even in the case of the meraglim, there was no conspiracy among the people. It was a spontaneous reaction to the fear of the story about the giants and the impossibility of conquering Eretz Yisrael.

The Korach insurrection was well thought out and a real rebellion. This rebellion was an organized movement well planned and painstakingly prepared. It was a Korach Conspiracy. In the Korach Conspiracy, only individuals, 250 people, mostly of the intellectual aristocracy (as the Torah says they were the princes of the congregation), were involved. What psychological reason led Korach to this rebellion? The Ramban is indispensable here. Apparently Korach began to hate Moses when Aaron was selected as the High Priest over the Levites who were to be mere servants in the sanctuary. This happened a year earlier. Despite the fact that Korach was angry at Moshe he did not immediately rebel against Moshe. He realized that at the time the people were very devoted to Moshe. Any attempt to unseat Moshe would be fought by the people. Korach decided to wait for an event that would undermine Moshe's authority. He hated Moshe and waited for the opportune moment of rebellion to arrive.

This moment arrived sooner than Korach anticipated, with the Meraglim incident. This was the most tragic event in Moshe's life. The decree of death for the older generation was a hard blow to Moshe and to his prestige. Moshe promised, on behalf of Hashem, that the slaves in Egypt who were working so hard for Paroh, would eventually enter into the promised Land. They were ready to invade via the Negev in the second year. Moshe tells his father in law that they are ready to enter Eretz Yisrael at that time. They would have entered from the south not the east. Suddenly their stay in the wilderness was extended 38 more years. Suddenly all the hopes and dreams were shattered. No land of milk and honey, no promise of Vhayvaysi. Many more years will have to pass before the people will enter the promised land. They asked each other "where is the promise of Moshe that they will enter the land of their fore fathers?" Where is Moshe's prophecy? How could they endure hardship in the wilderness for another 38 years? The people complained spontaneously. Moses popularity sank to a low level.

Korach recognized that the time had arrived for him to reveal his plans against Moshe. He recruited others to join him in his plans to remove Moshe. The Ramban emphasizes that this story happened after the Meraglim story. As Dathan and Aviram said: you did not bring us into the land of milk and honey. Your promise, Moshe, did not come true.

The word Vayikach is interesting. It is interpreted 2 ways by Rashi. He took himself to one side with the intention of separating himself from the community so he could argue over the priesthood. Until Korach's rebellion, no one dared to challenge the authority of Moshe. They stood in awe of Moshe. Korach was the first one to argue with Moshe and to separate himself from the community that revered and loved Moshe, despite all the hardships. The Rav said that Vayikach implies that he dedicated himself completely to the goal of unseating Moshe and undermining his exalted position among the people. However, until this time, it was an individual affair. He decided that he hated Moses and did not reveal anything to prospective conspirators. However once the 40 year sojourn in the wilderness was decreed, Korach revealed his plans to Dathan and Aviram.

The second interpretation from Rashi of Vayikach is that he used fine words to attract the heads of the Samhedrin. As Chazal describe Korach as a clever man because he presented intelligent arguments. They succeeded even with the heads of the courts. He now began to conspire and to criticize and ridicule Moshe. He played the role of the persecuted with some. With others he was the champion of justice and equality. He knew when to play the appropriate role and say the right thing to attract people.

Bnay Reuven were attracted to him as it says woe to the wicked and woe to his neighbor. The Ramban says that Reuven's children nursed a grudge against Moshe. Yaakov stripped Reuven of the kingdom and High Priesthood and they transferred their anger to Moshe. However in order for any rebellion to succeed, no matter its motivation, it must develop an ideology. A spontaneous rebellion does not require an ideology. However Korach planned an anti Moshe movement. Such a movement can not succeed without the proper ideology. A motto is indispensable. Korach did supply the philosophy of the rebellion. The Torah tells us not only the events that transpired but also the ideology that inspired it. The Torah distinguishes between Moshe's approach and Korach's approach to certain situations. Korach had one strong argument against Moshe which he used in other areas as well. This is the first argument mentioned by the Torah, the most potent of all arguments against Moses: Vayikahalu Al moshe Val Aharon etc. Kulam

Kedoshim lamah Tisnasu Al Kehal Hashem. Korach argued that all the members of the congregation are holy and Hashem dwells among them as well. Why do you elevate yourself above the rest of the people. Korach painted Moshe as someone who usurped authority. He challenged his authority with simple yet powerful argument: that the entire congregation is holy and that every Jew possesses an inner charismatic quality that elevates him above all other people. There was no difference between Moshe and the lowest wood chopper as far as the inherent Kedusha of a Jew. Therefore what right did Moshe and Aaron have to lead and guide and rule above all others? It was the age old conflict of the equality of all men versus election and singling out of an individual.

Korach was absolutely wrong because he was unaware of the 2 fold character of Kedushas Yisrael. Had he known of this 2 fold Kedusha, he would not have advanced this argument. The Torah says (Reeh) Ki Am kadosh Atah Lhashem Elokecha Ubecha Bachar Hashem. Rashi is bothered by the apparent repetition in the verse. Rashi says that the Torah formulates a 2 fold Kedusha in that Ki Am Kadosh Atah refers to the holiness that comes to you from your fathers. In addition to that Kedusha, Hashem has chosen you to be a cherished people unto Him. Rashi thought that there is a 2 fold idea of Kedushas Yisrael. The first is derived from the community of Israel itself, Knesses Yisrael, as an entity, a living personality the community as a whole is holy (as the Ramban mentions in Chayey Sarah). There is a genetic code of Kedusha that is transmitted from our patriarchs through the genes or the soul. If not for this code, we would not be able to speak of inheritance. For example a baby born to a Jewish mother inherits Kedushas Yisrael from its mother. The individual who wishes to lay claim to the collective Kedusha must draw it from his association with the community, as the community is the holy entity. It therefore follows that the parts that comprise that entity are holy as well. The people, Am, by being together are holy. It is not an individual or personal or separate holiness. It is a together holiness, through association with the whole people. I am holy because I am child of parents who inherited Kedusha from their patriarchs.

Korach reiterated that the entire people are holy, Am Kadosh Lashem Elokecha. He did not agree with Jeffersonian philosophy of the primacy of the individual over the community. Rather Korach said that the community is primary over the individual. The individual Kedusha is derived from the Kedusha of the community. Hence the derived Kedusha attributed to Moses is equivalent to that attributed to the wood chopper. There is no differentiation of Kedusha from the point of Am Kadosh Lashem Elokecha. However Judaism was not satisfied with this Kedusha alone. If the community was the sole source of kedusha then each person would be deprived of his individuality and potential for greatness. Under such a theory, the outstanding person can not develop into a great leader because the community Kedusha argues that he is no greater than anyone else. The second kedusha of Becha Bachar Hashem Elokecha is personalistic and unique to each individual. No one else has the same Kedusha as I do. It is exclusive. As Chazal expressed it, just like the faces of people are all different, their level of individual Kedusha is different as well.

The Kedushas Haam is integrated and based on the accumulated individual Kedusha of the people. The Torah says that you are a component part of a great holy community. However at the same time, Hashem has chosen you as an individual to be a source of Kedusha. Before your selection by Hashem, the main thrust of Kedusha was that the people preceded the individual. Now that Hashem has chosen you, the individual is charged with creating his own level of Kedusha. Each person endowed differently. The individual kedusha he attains is proportionate with the dedication to the ideals of Kedusha. The statement of Korach that the entire community is holy is correct as long as we talk about the Kedusha that derives from our ancestors. Moshe and the wood chopper have equivalent Kedusha from the community. But when we shift the Kedusha analysis to the individual endowment, then it is absurd to think that are all equivalent. Korach's argument was solid as long as he only recognized the Kedusha of the community, of the whole. Had he recognized the second aspect of individually endowed Kedusha, he would not have argued with Moshe.

Moshe responded to Korach that in the morning Hashem will show who is endowed with Kedusha. Korach speaks of the community as the source of Kedusha which means that all must share alike. Moshe answers that the

selection of the one to lead depends on the Bechira of an individual by Hashem. Here each is different. It is interesting that Moshe uses the word Boker, in the morning, it will be known who Hashem selects. Boker, derives from the word to discriminate, to differentiate. Boker means the period of clarity to distinguish. Erev implies a time of uniformity, monotony. Everything merges into a single amorphous mass, when all individuals merge to a single personality. Moshe told Korach that his concept of kedusha was equivalent to Erev when there is a monolith community without sight of the individual. There is another idea of kedusha that exalts the individual, that discriminates between the Kedusha of the individual as a unique greatness. This is the holiness of the morning, Boker, when the world emerges into a uniquely identifiable state. The kedusha of the individual is based on the fact that there are aspects of Kedusha that only he can perform.

Conversion with its 2 required acts of Milah and Tevilah represents these 2 types of Kedusha, the community and individual based Kedusha. Milah unites the convert with the community and integrates him with the identity of the people. This gives him the opportunity to draw on the communal Kedusha and to contribute to the communal kedusha as well. Tevila refers to the individual Kedusha, It is indicative of the personal rather than the communal commitment of the convert to Hashem. To keep the mitzvos. This can be attained only when the convert retreats from the community for a short time and hides as an individual in the water of Tevila to accept his individual responsibility.

Korach thought that Moshe and Aaron were power hungry to elevate themselves above the people. Korach said Lamah Tisnasu. This term is used when the claim is unfounded. Korach identifies the exercise of power with kingship. The relationship of the people to such a king is purely political. The covenantal community has no use for the role of king who is a political leader and politizes the relationship between himself and the people. The covenantal community is first and foremost a teaching community. The teacher, not the warrior or king, has always been the central figure. The people in the covenantal community are not subjects or servants, they are disciples. The covenantal community is not connected with violence or sanctions. It is characterized by a complete willingness to submit to a teacher. The disciple can terminate his relationship with his teacher whenever he wills it.

Judaism has disapproved of politicization and the attitude of man to be a king. On Rosh Hashanah we refer to man as Melech Evyon. The notion of human as king is incongruous with the reality that he is flesh and blood. The only power recognized by the Halacha is that between teacher and student, based on the covenantal community. Moshe is known to us as Moshe Rabeinu, the greatest of all teachers, even though he was also the greatest of warriors. Aaron was not simply a priest. He was also the teacher par excellence. They were charged with teaching the people Uvasa El haKohen asher Yihye Bayamim Hahaym. The community did not raise Moshe above all others because of political reasons. Rather Moshe was elevated by the people out of recognition of him as teacher. He did not have to be Misnase, to make himself raised above all else. Rather the people saw to it that their teacher should be raised above all.

The second argument of Korach is not mentioned explicitly in the Torah. Rashi quotes the humorous story from Tanchuma that Korach dressed the heads of the Sanhedrin in clothes that were woven completely of Techeles and asked Moshe if such a garment is subject to the law of Tzitzis or exempt. Moshe said that it was subject to Tzitzis. They jeered him based on the logic that if a single thread of Techeles renders a garment acceptable then one that is completely of Techeles should not require it at all!

The second question was does a house that contains Sifrei Torah require a Mezuzah? Moshe answered yes and they jeered him with the logic that if 2 chapters from the Torah are sufficient in a Mezuzah then of course a room that contains many sections of the Torah should be absolved of the obligation of Mezuzah. What is the meaning of these apparently humorous stories?

The Rav explained that Korach wanted to not only succeed Moshe as king and leader but also as teacher. He tried to challenge Moshe's halachic authority as well and to show the people and the 250 scholars that Moshe is incapable of interpreting the law. The 250 scholars decided that Moshe was wrong and they jeered him. Korach argued that the study of the law and its interpretation are democratic acts which every intelligent person may lay claim to. Moshe's claim to be the sole interpreter of the law was unfounded.

The consequence of such a democratic philosophy is disastrous. It is the same argument that is advanced today by groups that seek to legitimize themselves as valid interpreters of the law. They try to interpret the law and offer viewpoints without investing the time and effort required to fully understand the law.

We find that the term Daas indicates intelligence. Chacma and Binah refers to a trained intellect that is exposed to the exacting and critical method of study. Korach and his group argued that Daas, common sense alone, was sufficient license for each Jew to interpret the law as he understands it. All reform movements have argued that common sense should be used to interpret the law. (e.g. the Tzedukim argued that any litigation regarding the estate of a father between his daughter and daughter of his son should be judged in favor of the daughter who is the daughter of a son. The Perushim argued that it goes to the grand daughter. From a common sense perspective, the argument of the Tzedukim makes sense. Yet it is not acceptable according to the Halacha.)

Korach argued that why should a garment require Tzitzis with a thread of Techeles if it is completely made of Techeles? Common sense dictates that it should not require a strand of Techeles. However, Torah Shebeal Peh can not be identified simply with Daas, common sense. It has its own method of conceptualization and abstraction that go beyond the common sense approach. Halacha works like the mathematician. Torah Shebeal Peh does not study reality. It applies abstract principles to reality.

Torah Shebeal Peh is not simply a corpus of laws. It is a method of thinking, thought structures and unique logical categories. Womens liberation movement argues that the Torah discriminates against women, pointing out places where Halacha distinguishes between men and women. They are mistaken as the Torah teaches that man and woman were created by Hashem. They are of equal importance. However, for example, women may not bear witness. This is not discrimination against women. For example a king may not be a witness, or 2 brothers. Even though they are all intelligent people, the Torah has decreed that they are unacceptable witnesses.

Existentialism says that the mitzvos are supposed to reflect the inner experience felt by the Jew. The mitzvos have an external action that corresponds to the mood that they are supposed to express. Hence the Mitzvos must avail themselves of the media of expression that is best suited to reflect the inner experience. They also argue that the scholars live in a world of abstraction. Only common sense can utilize the therapeutic energy of each Mitzvah in the most efficient manner. Korach says to Moshe that the blue thread is intended to make us think of something: the infinity of Hashem. Why should we limit this symbolism to a single thread? Korach said that if our intention is to provoke a religious experience in the Jew, a whole garment of blue might have a more profound impact on the individual. Judaism has 2 parallel religious orders, objective and subjective. Judaism consists of divine disciplines (Shulchan Aruch) and great romance between Hashem and man. This romance is expressed in Shir Hashirim. Both experiences are united. An act that has only one of these aspects is incomplete. Actions and deeds must be combined with an inner love for Hashem. The Halacha is cognizant of this dual mode. Certain Mitzvos consist of experience. Krias Shema is strictly identified with recital of a Parsha in the Torah yet the Kiyum Mitzvah is Blev, like Tefilah, Aveylus, Simchas Yom Tov. The Mitzvah is consummated in an experience. The formal abstract Halacha recognizes the importance of the religious experience. However in the halacha, no matter how great the experience is to man, the point of departure must always be the objective eternal act. It does not always express or interpret the experience. Korach thought that the experience defines the act, that the experience is superior to the act. The religious emotion is volatile. Each individual experiences Hashem in the religious world in a unique way. If the religious experience defined the Mitzvah then there would be no way to have a common religious act for all. What is religious experience for me may not be for someone else. We could not have a single religious community. Moshe answered Korach that we have 1 Hashem 1 Kohen Gadol and 1 form of worship as opposed to the non-Jew who has many of each. Monistic worship is constant and not exposed to the winds of change. Otherwise it would be idolatrous. We can never determine what is a religious experience as opposed to hedonic emotions. We know that hedonic emotions are powerful. It is easy to replace the religious emotion with secular

emotions. The pagans of old indulged in hedonistic practices and took them for religious practice. The Torah says that you should not copy how the pagans worshiped their idols. The Torah wanted to make sure that we do not follow their example and confuse the aesthetic experience with religious experience. Some use an organ in a religious service to prepare a mood, to allow a religious experience to take hold. However the music is a secular not religious experience. You expect that it will pave the way for a religious experience, but it will never happen. It is idolatrous to allow the secular to pave the way for religious experience. Judaism wanted the religious experience to evolve on its own without any outside influence. It is idolatrous to allow the secular notion of love to influence our religious experience. This notion of aesthetics experience with the goal of a religious one is seen in the gothic cathedrals where the art was intended to arouse in the human personality the feeling of infinity and of questing up into the heavens. It may provoke such a quest, but it is an artistic quest not a religious one. To substitute the secular for religious is idolatrous. The shul was never intended to be aesthetically beautiful in order to attract people into it in order to stimulate an artistic aesthetic experience in the hopes of stimulating a religious one. The religious experience must be free flowing. It must follow the objective act. It is acceptable to dance after prayer. However it is futile to dance in order to pray. Judaism expected the religious experience to follow the act.

Moshe says that if one objectively fulfills Mitzvas Tzitzis then a glance at the Techeles thread might provoke a subjective thought of infinity and our link with Hashem. However if one fails to conform to Halacha, and avails himself of a common sense approach, subjectively looking at the Techeles will not provoke an objective religious act. Subjective experience of Techeles that follows Kiyum Hamitzvah is a great experience. Without the Kiyum it is a vulgar, idolatrous experience.

When people talk of unfreezing the Halacha to make it meaningful in modern times, they are following Korach in an attempt to give a common sense approach to Torah. They rebel against the institution of Lamdus without working at it to master it. They want to make Torah and Halacha a shallow discipline. Moshe won against Korach as we say Moshe Emes Vtoraso Emes. The study of Halacha will continue forever.

The Torah says that Aaron shall burn incense in the morning and evening together with the lighting of the Menorah. There is a separate kiyum of doing them at the same time. the Menorah represents clarity of concept and depth of understanding of the Torah. Ktores represents the hidden and mysterious of Maasey Hashem, The cloud of Ktores covered the ark. Ktores and its covering of the ark is a symbol of the subjective human experience trying to join with Hashem. The objective, clear religious understanding based on the Halacha is symbolized by the Menorah. There is a parallel order of romance and deed. Ktores can not be separated from Neiros. The subjective must never be isolated from the objective. Ureysem Oso Uzechartem cant be separated from Psil Techeles.

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Torah Weekly - Korach "Ohr Somayach <ohr@jer1.co.il>" * TORAH WEEKLY * Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion with "Sing, My Soul!" thoughts on Shabbos Zemiros Parshas Korach For the week ending 28 Sivan 5756 (5 Tamuz 5756)* 14 & 15 June 1996 (21 & 22 June 1996)

Summary

Korach, Dasan and Aviram, and 250 of the leaders of Israel rebel against the authority of Moshe and Aaron. The rebellion results in their being swallowed up by the earth. Many people of the nation resent the death of Korach and his followers, holding Moshe responsible. Hashem's `anger' is manifested by a plague which besets the nation, and many thousands perish. Moshe intercedes once again for the people, instructs Aaron to make atonement for them, and the plague is halted. Hashem then commands that a staff inscribed with the name of each Tribe be placed in the Mishkan, the

Tabernacle. In the morning, the staff of Levi, bearing Aaron's name, sprouts, buds, blossoms and yields ripe almonds. This provides Divine confirmation that the Tribe of Levi is selected for the Priesthood, and also verifies Aaron's position as the Kohen Gadol, the 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 concerning the first fruits, the redemption of the firstborn, and other offerings.

Commentaries

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 words. This is because the holy tongue 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 Parsha referring to the cohorts of Korach who assembled themselves in opposition to Moshe. The holy Zohar explains that when the generation who built the Tower of Bavel said "Let us make ourselves a name," their whole motivation was to glorify and amplify themselves. To distort their name. To assume a name which 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" -- only in name. They tried to usurp the name of Moshe and Aaron, to usurp the name `Kohen.' By stealing the name, maybe they could steal the essence... But you can never be something you're not. All you can ever be is the best version of yourself that you can be. And live up to your own name. (Based on Korban HaOni)

KOSHER STYLE "And Korach took..." (16:1) "\$500 for a pair of tefillin! You must be joking! \$500 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! If the whole point of tefillin is to be a reminder, 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! It's 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 modem?" "Well of course -- it wouldn't work -- the modem won't receive anything." "It's exactly the same with tefillin -- if there's the tiniest break in a letter, then the spiritual modem called tefillin won't receive anything." Korach asked Moshe if a house full of Sifrei Torah still needed a mezuzah on the doorframe. Said Moshe "Yes." Korach started to mock him saying "If a single mezuzah affixed to the doorframe of a house is enough to remind us of Hashem, surely a house full of Sifrei Torah will do the job!" (Midrash) In a way, Korach was the first `non-halachic Rabbi' -- the first proponent of `Kosher Style Glatt Treif.' "As long as it looks Jewish from the outside it's fine." In other words according to Korach the mitzvos are only symbolic, devoid of absolute performance parameters. Moshe Rabbeinu's answer was that the mitzvos of the Torah function within strict operational criteria: One mezuzah on the door is what the Torah requires, nor more and no less, even if a house full of Sifrei Torah may look more Jewish... (Based on a story heard from Rabbi Mordechai Perlman about Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz zt"l)

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." (Animal Farm)

The Talmud in Tractate Sanhedrin (109) states:

"Rav said: It was the wife of Ohn Ben Peles (one of Korach's co-conspirators) who 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.

Haftorah: Shmuel 11:14-12:22

"Then Samuel said to the people `Come, let us go to Gilgal, and let us renew the kingdom there.'" Rashi: "Because they were making claims against it." Rosh Hashana is a coronation. We crown Hashem as our King. But really, isn't our duty to acknowledge Hashem's kingship every single day of the year? What is special when we `crown' Hashem on Rosh Hashana? In this week's Haftorah, as Rashi tells us, Shaul had to `renew' the kingdom -- revitalize and re-secure it -- because people were making claims against it. Similarly, on Rosh Hashana arraigned against us are the accusing angels which have been created by our own transgressions. They accuse us, as it were, of being disloyal to the king by failing to observe his commands. And as it says `there is no king without a people.' So Hashem's Kingship is, as it were, `threatened.' This accusation of our disloyalty forces us to re-new our commitment to Hashem as our King, and thus we `renew the Kingdom.' (Based on Admor M'Gur zt"l in Mayana shel Torah)

Sing, My Soul! Insights into the Zemiroh sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations. Menucha V'Simcha - "Contentment & Gladness..."

With double loaves and a great kiddush With lavish delicacies and a spirit of generosity Three levels of celebrating Shabbos are mentioned. "Double loaves" refers to the Jew who cannot even afford wine for kiddush and must recite it over the "double loaves of challah." The more comfortable Jew has the means for a "great kiddush" while the more affluent one can indulge in "lavish delicacies" to honor Shabbos. The common denominator, points out the Divrei Yechezkel, is the spirit of generosity which each type of Jew brings to the honoring of this holy day according to the best of his ability. Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman Production Design: Lev Seltzer (C) 1996 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

National Council of Young Israel Divrei Torah - Korach
Parshat Korach 5 Tammuz 5756 Saturday, June 22, 1996

Guest Rabbi: Rabbi Sholom Steinig Young Israel of Bayside, New York

In recounting the story of Korach, those of us interested in human psychology (that is to say, all of us) must ask the question: What is it that drove Korach and his followers to launch such a nasty rebellion? Did they truly believe that Moshe Rabbeinu was not HaShem's designated leader of the Jewish People? Could they honestly say that they truthfully thought that Moshe Rabbeinu was misusing his authority? Were they really that hungry for power as to cause all the trouble that they did? Why did they do it? Korach's problem is dealt with in all the major commentaries. Korach felt slighted at not being appointed Nassi (governor) over the Levitical family of Kehas. He was jealous of Aharon, wishing to be a Kohain himself, and was resentful of Moshe for Aharon's appointment, even though it was HaShem Himself who ordained it. He did feel cheated. Korach's inventory of justifications for challenging Moshe was long and comprehensive. He was a worthy insurrectionist, as the Midrash points out: "Our Sages said, Korach was a great chochom (wise man')." Using his wisdom, he was able to come up with a long list of reasons to challenge Moshe - he was able to "prove" that each and every one of the major leadership appointments had been assigned in error, and that there were other more worthy individuals (such as himself) who deserved to be in command. His arguments seemed cogent, and yet were mere justifications. With jealousy and anger driving him, a man finds himself able to justify the most bizarre accusations. Accusing Moshe of selfishness and nepotism, of inventing Halachot that were not logical, leading Moshe actually to feel that he had to defend himself against charges of embezzlement, shows just how far Korach was prepared to go in his own search for honor and power. Now, granted that Korach was

obsessed with gaining power for himself, how was he able to entice others to follow him? If he sought command for himself, where did Dosson and Avirom fit in? Where did the two-hundred-and-fifty additional communal leaders who sided with Korach fit in? They couldn't all rule! And yet they all were ready to go along with his scheme!

What were they thinking? Why did they do it? The words of the Midrash Rabbah on this account are very telling: "Alas (literally, Oy) for the wicked man, alas for his neighbor. The followers of Korach brought about the most horrible end for themselves. Their destruction included not only themselves, but their families, including infants, reminds the Midrash Tanchuma, and they are remembered today as the essence of self-motivated conflict, not for the sake of Heaven (Pirkei Avos, 5:20). They are recounted in the Gemara Sanhedrin as not having any place in the World to Come. How did these poor individuals get caught up in Korach's plan and bring such a horrible end upon themselves? As members of the tribe of Reuven, Dosson and Avirom (who were already known troublemakers) were living in the southern portion of the encampment of Israel, right next to the portion of the Levitical family of Kehas, Korach's neighborhood. We can understand how easy it might have been for a fanatical and self-obsessed demagogue like Korach to convince his next-door neighbors, members of the tribe whose founder had been first-born but then was pushed aside, that the status quo for leadership was just not acceptable. Korach had aspirations for himself, but he was not above duping his neighbors into believing that he was also fighting for their rights as usurped leaders as well. The additional two hundred and fifty followers were, according to the commentaries, either of the tribe of Reuven also, and thus resentful of having been bumped from their status as first-born of Jacob, or first-born sons within their own families, potential Kohanim and leaders whose authority was rescinded after the affair of the Golden Calf. By stirring up feelings of indignation and anger among these also-rans, Korach was able to assemble quite an impressive looking gathering, both as far as numbers as well as genealogy were concerned. Dosson and Avirom were, as stated earlier, well-known rabble rousers in the Jewish community. We remember the treachery with which Dosson was able to betray Moshe by informing Pharaoh that Moshe had been the one who killed the Egyptian taskmaster, when it was Dosson being beaten by the taskmaster that induced Moshe to get involved in the first place!

The next day it was Avirom's turn to be saved by Moshe. Defending his sister's honor to Dosson, her husband, Avirom found himself being beaten nearly to death by his brother-in-law, until Moshe intervened. Repaying kindness with betrayal, Dosson and Avirom informed on Moshe to Pharaoh, and later attempted several challenges against Moshe's authority. They endeavored to turn the Israelites against Moshe when the slaves' tally of bricks was increased, tried to convince the escaping Israelites to return to Egypt, sought to make Moshe look foolish by sprinkling manna on the ground on Shabbos, and were the first ones to join up with Korach, even though Korach's goal was to put himself, not them, into power. They were among the leaders of the Golden Calf incident, and viewed themselves as the natural choices to take over after deposing Moshe and Aharon--Dosson as leader and Avirom as High Priest. As former overseers of the Jewish slaves in Egypt, Dosson and Avirom were accustomed to giving orders to others, and were not above hurting others to bring about their return to power. They were just waiting for someone like Korach to start something against Moshe, so they could jump in and assist in Moshe's downfall. The Gemara tells us that these two quislings are the individuals that are referred to anytime the words Natzim or Nitzavim, quarreling or standing in contention, are used in the words of the Torah text. What a legacy! Even still, Moshe Rabbeinu tried to save them from themselves. Seeking to meet with Dosson and Avirom to discuss the issues, Moshe sent them a summons. Their response was curt and disrespectful, "we will not go up". The Apter Rav, Rabbi Avrohom Yehoshua Heshel, known as the Ohaiv Yisrael, the "one who loves Israel," puts an interesting twist on Dosson and Avirom's chutzpah. In saying that they would not go up, rather than simply saying they would not go, Dosson and Avirom betrayed their intentions. They knew that Moshe Rabbeinu was indeed trying to get them to go up, that is, to get out of their spiritual and psychological malaise and lust for power, but they refused his offer to help. "We will not go up" told Moshe that Dosson

and Avirom knew that there was no spiritual reason for their rebelliousness, and they were literally admitting to the fact that their challenge was indeed shallow and selfish. Refusing to relent, they were swallowed up along with Korach.

The two hundred and fifty other men are a more tragic group. They were idle spectators, until the fury of Korach's attack somehow inspired them to join in. Unbelievably, Moshe did not resent them for this betrayal, and protects their anonymity by refusing to list their names in the context of this horrible affair, and by rightfully describing them as having been "leaders of the assembly" and "men of renown." That their end was to be completely obliterated by a heavenly fire serves as a warning to those who jump haphazardly into machlokes (strife and argument) that does not involve them. Anger between people must be put down and allayed, not egged on by an ignorant mob. For their inflammatory participation, they paid the ultimate price. How must we respond when we see Machloket? One final word on this frightening Parshah. After the destruction of Korach and his followers, we see the contentious spirit has not left Israel. Protesting the deaths of the renegades and thus bringing upon themselves HaShem's anger, a plague breaks out among the people. Moshe tells Aharon to put fire from the altar along with incense on a firepan and to hurry with it to the assembly of people. We note that Aharon is told to hurry only in going to the congregation, but not in preparing the incense. Even in case of saving lives, when haste and urgency are required, we may still not hurry through the service, but only through the coming and the going. If we only could all keep this in mind the next time we have a "life threatening emergency" to take care of right after davening--rush in the coming and going, but not in the service!

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COMBUSTION

"Any quarrel," says the Mishnah in Pirkei Avos (5:20) "that is made for the sake of heaven shall, in conclusion, last. However, if the argument has selfish motivation it shall not last." The Mishnah offers Hillel and Shamai as an example of heavenly opponents. Their arguments will last forever.

On the other hand, Korach and his congregation are the examples given for those whose debate stemmed from egotistical motivations. "Those types of disputes," says the Mishnah, "are doomed to fail."

The Mishnah, is of course referring to the episode in this week's portion. Korach, a first cousin of Moshe, contested the priesthood. He gathered 250 followers, formed a congregation, and openly rebelled against Moshe and Ahron, claiming that Moshe and his brother underhandedly seized both temporal and spiritual leadership. Moshe, in his great humility, offered a solution in which divine intercession would point to the true leader. Korach and his followers were swallowed alive by a miraculous variation of an earthquake.

Yet two questions occur on the Mishnah. By using the expression that, "an argument for the sake of heaven will last," it seems to show that an ongoing argument is a proof of its sanctity. Shouldn't it be the opposite?

The other anomaly is that in referring to the kosher argument, the Mishnah refers to the combatants, Hillel and Shamai. Each was on one side of the debate. Yet, in reference to the argument that is labeled as egotistical, it defines the combatants as Korach and his congregation.

Weren't the combatants Korach and Moshe? Why is the latter part of the Mishnah inconsistent with the former?

On the week following Passover 1985, I began my first pulpit in an old small shul in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The scent of herring juice permeated the building, and the benches did not creak as they swayed, they krechtsed. As old as the furnishings were, the membership was older. But the Congregation's spirit of tradition of was feistier than its physical appearance. My first week, I was asked to bless the new month of Iyar, Mevarchim HaChodesh. Then the trouble began. Every Shabbos, a somber prayer, Av HaRachamim, which memorializes Jewish martyrs during the era of the crusades is recited. On holidays or other festive occasions such as Shabbos Mevarchim, in deference to the spirit of celebration, the prayer is omitted. However, the month of Iyar is considered a sad time for Jews. 24,000

students of Rabbi Akiva perished in that period. Many congregations recite Av HaRachamim on Shabbos Mevarchim for the month of Iyar. I assumed my new congregation did the same and began reciting, " Av HaRachamim." Immediately I heard a shout, and an uproar began.

"We don't say Av HaRachamim today. We just blessed the new month," announced the President.

"We say it this month! It's sefirah, a period of mourning," yelled back the Vice-President.

" You know nothin'. We never ever say it when we bench (bless) Rosh Chodesh," yelled the Treasurer.

"We always did!" asserted the Gabbai.

The argument was brewing for five minutes when they all began to smile and instructed me to say the prayer as I had planned. Before I continued the service I sauntered over to the old Shammash who was sitting quietly through the tumult and asked, "what is the minhag (custom) of this shul?" He surveyed the scene and beamed. "This shul is 100 years old. This is our minhag."

The Mishnah gives us a litmus test. How does one know when there is validity to an argument? Only when it is an argument that envelops eternity. The arguments of Shamai and Hillel last until today, in the halls and classrooms of Yeshivos and synagogues across the world. Each one's view was not given for his own personal gain, it was argued for the sake of heaven. However, Korach's battle with Moshe was one of personal gain. Moshe had no issue with them. It was a battle of Korach and his cohorts. Each with a completely different motivation -- himself. It did not last. A battle with divine intent remains eternal. In a healthy environment there is room for healthy differences. And those differences will wax eternal. Good Shabbos Dedicated in honor of the anniversary of Joel & Robbie Martz by Mr. and Mrs. Perry Davis

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SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS KORACH

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

They should safeguard your charge... they as well as you (18:3). >From here we derive the source for the singing of the Leviim... (Erchin 11:1)

Singing Along With the Shliach Tzibbur

QUESTION: Is it permissible to mouth the words of the Davening when singing along with the Shliach Tzibbur during Kedusha, Hallel or other Tefillos? May the Shliach Tzibbur repeat words to enhance his singing?

DISCUSSION: The Tefillos and Brachos that were instituted by Chazal are worded with the greatest precision. When one adds or repeats words he is, in effect, ruining the intentions and layers of meanings that Chazal incorporated into the Davening. It is not proper for the Shliach Tzibbur to repeat words, and a Shliach Tzibbur that does so "does not find favor in the eyes of the sages"(1).

If a Shliach Tzibbur does repeat words [as many Chazanim do], is the repetition considered a Hefsek - which, if done intentionally, invalidates the Bracha and requires repeating it from the beginning(2)? There are Poskim(3) who hold that repetition is not, Bedieved, considered a Hefsek. Other Poskim(4) rule that any repetition is considered a Hefsek and invalidates the Bracha. Harav Moshe Feinstein ruled(5) that only when the repetition falsifies the meaning of the sentence or renders it meaningless is it considered a Hefsek and requires repetition of the Bracha. When the repetition does not falsify or alter the meaning, although the Shliach Tzibbur acted improperly, there is no obligation to rebuke or silence him.

Although most Shuls today recognize that the Halacha does not look favorably upon a Shliach Tzibbur repeating words, there does exist a problem concerning some members of the Tzibbur. Since, obviously, the Halachos of Hefsek apply equally to the Shliach Tzibbur and the members of the Tzibbur, it would seem that those who sing along are also forbidden to repeat words that they have already recited.

Note, however, that not all parts of Davening have the same Halacha. It

has become customary for the Shliach Tzibbur to sing, and for the Tzibbur to sing along, in various parts of the Davening. Let us review the various areas: Lecha Dodi - This is not a Bracha or a Tefillah, but a Piyut (liturgical poem) composed about 500 years ago by the Mekubalim of Tzfat as a poetical greeting to the Shabbos. It may be sung over and over and no question of Hefsek applies. It is permitted for the Shliach Tzibbur to repeat words while singing [as some congregations do], as long as he does not pervert the order or the meaning of the words.

E-I Adon - This is part of Birchos Krias Shema, which are subject to the laws of Hefsek. Repeating words that were already recited is forbidden and is considered a Hefsek.

Kedusha - It is forbidden to speak during Kedusha(6). However, only the first three verses of Kedusha (Nekadesh... Kadosh... Baruch...) are considered as part of Kedusha. The fourth verse (Yimloch...) and certainly the additional verses that are added on Shabbos and Yom Tov are not an integral part of Kedusha(7). Repeating words and singing them along would, therefore, be permitted(8).

Hallel - It is forbidden to speak during Hallel, even when half Hallel is said(9). It is, therefore, forbidden for the Shliach Tzibbur to repeat words or for the Tzibbur to verbalize the words when singing along with the Chazan.

HALACHA is published L'zchus Hayaed Doniel Meir ben Hinda.

FOOTNOTES:

1 Igros Moshe OC 2:22.

2 Some hold that the Bracha needs to be repeated from where the Hefsek took place (Gr"a); others hold that one must go back to the beginning of the Bracha (Taz, Derech Hachayim), while others hold that the entire Shmone Esrei must be repeated (Magen Avraham. Chayei Adam). The Mihsna Berura (104:10 and Biur Halacha) does not render a final ruling.

3 Aruch Hashulchan OC 338:8. Note that his view is written as a Limud Zchus, and is not Halachically preferred.

4 Maharam Shik OC 31; Harav Yosef Engel in Ben Poras 2:7; Toras Chaim (Sofer) 53:25; Yabia Omer 7:OC 14.

5 Igros Moshe, ibid. It is quite possible that the Aruch Hashulchan would also agree that when the meaning is falsified, the repetition would be considered a Hefsek. 6 Rama OC 125:2.

7 Mishnah Berurah 66:17; 125:1.

8 During the first three verses of Kedusha, no singing should take place even if the Tzibbur does not repeat the words, since there may be people Davening Shmone Esrei who would like to hear the Kedusha being said by the Shliach Tzibbur - see Igros Moshe OC 3:4. 9 Biur Halacha 422:4.

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Parashat Korach 5756 The Secret of the Ketoret

Moshe said to Aharon, "Get the pan, put fire from the altar on it, and put Ketoret [= incense] in it. Take it quickly to the congregation and atone for them, for the anger of Hashem has begun to take effect; the plague has begun!" Aharon took what Moshe had told him to take and ran into the middle of the congregation, and he saw that the plague had begun among the people. He placed the Ketoret [in the pan] and atoned for the people. He stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was halted.

(Bamidbar 17:11-13)

"And atone for them" - When Moshe ascended to the heavens (to receive the Torah), the Angel of Death revealed to him the secret that Ketoret is capable of stopping a plague.

(Rashi to v. 11)

Moshe knew that only the burning of Ketoret would be able to stop the plague that was raging among the Bnai Yisrael. What is it about Ketoret that gives it the mysterious power to halt plagues?

Another interesting Midrash regarding Ketoret is cited by Rashi elsewhere:

"[On the second day of the dedication of the Mishkan, the leader

of Yissachar brought as his offering] one golden spoon weighing ten (units), full of Ketoret." (Bamidbar 7:18).

"One golden spoon ("Kaf")" - This represents the Torah, which was given to us by the hand ("Kaf") of Hashem.

"Weighing ten (units)" - Representing the Ten Commandments.

"Full of Ketoret" - The Gematria [= numerical value of the letters] of the word Ketoret is 613, which is the number of Mitzvot in the Torah -- provided that the letter "Kuf" (the first letter of the word Ketoret) is replaced by the letter "Dalet,"

using the At-Bash system (whereby the first and last letters of the Alef-Bet are interchanged, and so too the second with the second to last, etc.).

(Rashi to Bamidbar 7:20, based on Bamidbar Rabba, 13:15-16)

Rashi presents us with a most unusual form of Gematria. Instead of taking the straightforward Gematria of the word Ketoret, which would be 709, we are told that we should first change the Kuf (the fourth letter from the end of the Alef-Bet) of "Ketoret" into a Dalet (the fourth letter of the Alef-Bet), and only then add up the values of the letters to get 613. Although the Midrash often brings out an exegetical point by changing the letters of a word into their At-Bash equivalents, it is highly unusual for a *Gematria* to be calculated in this manner. Even more remarkable is the fact that the At-bash system is used for calculating the value of *only one* letter of the word, while the values of the remaining letters are calculated in the normal manner. What is the basis for calculating the Gematria of "Ketoret" in such a peculiar manner?

II

The Gemara in Sukkah describes a unique quality of the prayers of the righteous:

Rebbi Elazar said: Why are the prayers of the Tzaddik [= righteous person] compared to a pitchfork? (i.e. the root of the word used for "prayer" [ATaR] in connection with the prayers of numerous righteous people, c.f. Bereishit 25:21, is the same as the word for "pitchfork" [ATaR] - Rashi.) It is in order to teach you that just as a pitchfork is used to turn over bushels of grain and move them from place to place, so does the prayer of a righteous person "turn over" ("Hofech") the disposition of Hashem from the attribute of strictness to the attribute of kindness.

(Sukkah 14a)

(See also Rashi and Tosafot to Ta'anit 20a, s.v. Vene'etarot, where it is again noted that the root ATaR has the connotation of turning over or reversing.)

It is interesting to note that in Yechezkel 8:11 the root ATaR is again used, but this time it is describing Ketoret: "A thick cloud ("Atar") of Ketoret rose up." Apparently Ketoret too has the power to "reverse" the anger of Hashem and transform it into mercy and kindness. In fact, a comparison is clearly drawn between Ketoret and prayer in Tehillim 141:2, "May my prayer be accepted like Ketoret before You."

Of course, the Ketoret is only effective when it is brought by someone who is righteous, just as prayer can only bring about a change in Hashem's administration of the world when it is offered by the truly righteous. Indeed, as Rashi points out in his commentary to Bamidbar 17:13, the very same Ketoret which brought death and destruction when it was offered in an inappropriate situation (in the case of Nadav and Avihu and in the case of Korach and his band of rebels), effected atonement and granted life when it was offered by Aharon.

How does the offering of Ketoret cause Hashem to change His attitude towards us? The good deeds of the righteous are often metaphorically compared to the scent of incense. For instance, Rashi to Bereishit 25:1 tells us that Hagar is referred to as "Keturah," because "her actions were as pleasant as Ketoret" (see also Bamidbar Rabba 13:14: "The deeds [of the sons of Yehudah] were as pleasant as the scent of Ketoret"). In Shir Hashirim Rabba 1:3:3 Avraham is compared to a barrel of perfume because of his deeds of kindness. The basis for this comparison is that just as a scent brings benefit to all those in its vicinity without those people taking away from the substance of the scent, so too the people in the vicinity of a righteous person benefit and learn from his good deeds without detracting from his merit. Thus, when a righteous person offers Ketoret to Hashem it

serves to recall before Hashem that person's kindness and mercy. This is what prompts Hashem to reconsider His attitude of strictness toward the world and to arouse His Own attributes of kindness and mercy.

III

This, then, was the secret that the Angel of Death told Moshe. Ketoret, like the prayer of the righteous, has the power to reverse the disposition of Hashem. A plague comes about as an expression of Hashem's anger with the people, and the Ketoret is able to transpose this anger into Divine mercy.

Perhaps this too is why Chazal saw fit to analyze the Gematria of the word Ketoret the way they did -- by inverting the first letter of the word via the At-Bash system into a Dalet. This hints at the hidden secret of the Ketoret's power -- it causes an "inversion," or reversal, of Hashem's attitude towards us.

Of course, the sins that have been committed cannot be made to disappear, just as the good actions of the righteous cannot be annulled. When Hashem treats someone with mercy, He simply takes note of the person's good deeds and delays punishing the person for his evil deeds until some future date. This allows the sinner to repent and mend his evil ways in the interim. It is for this reason that only one of the letters of the word "Ketoret" is inverted to its At-Bash equivalent. The inverted first letter is combined with the other, normal letters, to equal 613. This suggests that due to the *reversal* of Hashem's attitude towards a person which is brought about by the Ketoret, Hashem looks at the positive side of a person's actions, (i.e. He notes those of the 613 Mitzvot that *have been* kept), and He relaxes His Rod of Justice for the while.

IV

Using the "Remez" approach to Torah (see Parasha-Page Terumah 5756, section II), we may delve yet deeper into the story of Aharon's Ketoret. The Vilna Gaon (Divrei Eliyahu, Parashat Pinchas) points out that the word "Chamati," which is used to denote the wrath of Hashem (as in Bamidbar 25:11), may be analyzed as follows. The word is made up of four letters. The "inside" letters are Mem and Tav, which spell "Met," or "dead." The "outside" letters are Chet and Yud, which spell "Chai," or "alive." The letters of "Chai" are separated from each other by the two letters of "Met" which are joined. The whole word thus depicts death breaking apart life. This, the Gaon says, intimates that during the events which are incurred due to the wrath of Hashem, "life" is disrupted by death -- i.e. a plague rages. (See Bamidbar ibid., see also Mishlei 16:14, "The anger of ["Chamat"] the king is like angels of death.")

How does one put an end to such a plague? By breaking up the letters of "Met" with the insertion of the letter "Tzaddik," which is accomplished through acts of charity, or "Tzedakah." When acts of selflessness and righteousness are wrought, says the Gaon, Hashem's wrath recedes. The reversal of the attribute of "Chamati" through Tzedakah is depicted by the word "Machatzit" (meaning "half"). This five-letter word has the two letters of "Met" (Mem and Tav) as its *outermost* letters, while the letters of "Chai" (Chet and Yud), which are in close proximity to each other, prevent the Mem and Tav from joining together to spell death. The letters of "Chai" are joined to each other by the central "Tzaddik."

This, he explains, is hinted at in a verse in Shmot 30:12 -- "They shall give half a shekel... so that there will be no plague among them when they are counted." The Tzedakah [= charitable donation] of *Machatzit* Hashekel (a half-shekel) is the antidote to a plague. Tzedakah alters the "Chamati" which causes a plague by bringing the letters of "Chai" together, while driving the letters of "Met" far apart.

This may be explained as a reflection of the same principle that we have described in regards to the Ketoret and the prayers of the Tzaddik. The righteous deeds of the Tzaddik have the power to cause a *reversal* in the disposition of Hashem, just as the letter Tzaddik causes the reversal of the words "Met" and "Chai." It is interesting to note that the quantity of Ketoret which was burned in the twice-daily Ketoret service in the Bet Hamikdash was a "Pras," or "*half* of a measure" (Yoma 43b). Perhaps this arrangement hinted that the power of the Ketoret lay in its ability to transform Chamati into *Machatzit*, meaning "half."

This may be the key to understanding the events which took place in this week's Parasha. We are told that Aharon took the Ketoret and ran into the middle of the congregation. This selfless act of heroism -- placing himself

right in the middle of a raging plague in order to effect an atonement on behalf of his people -- checked the anger of Hashem. Aharon added the Tzaddik to "Chamati," bringing about atonement by forming the word "Machatzit." As the Torah describes it, "He (i.e. Aharon, the Tzaddik) stood between the dead and the living (i.e. between the letters Mem-Tav which spell "Met" or death, and the letters Chet-Yud which spell "Chai" or life), and the plague was halted!"

May the righteous deeds of the Tzaddikim of our generation protect us in our times of need today as well!

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"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frاند on Parshas Korach -

Moshe Sees Korach as a National Crisis; Not as a Personal Crisis

The pasuk [verse] says, "And G-d said to Moshe: 'Bring back the staff of Aharon before the Testimony as a safekeeping, as a sign for rebellious ones; let their complaints cease from Me that they not die'" [Bamidbar 17:25] After the rebellion of Korach, G-d performed a miracle with the staff of Aharon, thereby proclaiming the authority of Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon. This signified that the leadership of Moshe Rabbeinu should never again be challenged and that Korach and all of his compatriots were wrong. Moshe is the Divinely chosen leader and Aharon is the Divinely chosen Kohen Gadol. The next pasuk continues "Moshe did as Hashem had commanded, so he did". Clearly there is a redundancy here. First the pasuk says Moshe did what G-d commanded him, then it says "that's what he did". How many times does the Torah need to tell us that he did it? Why the emphasis? There is an interesting Medrash on the pasuk "And Korach gathered the entire assembly against them (Moshe and Aharon)" [Bamidbar 16:19]. The Medrash says that Moshe trembled because of the controversy. He fell to the ground, seemingly losing all strength. Chaza"l explain that Moshe reacted in this way because this was already the fourth offense of the Jewish people which had caused Moshe to beg for mercy from Hashem on their behalf. The Medrash gives a parable. A prince offended his father, the King. The King's friend begged for mercy in behalf of the son and the King was appeased. This happened a second and a third time. When it happened the fourth time, the friend of the King became exasperated saying, "How many times can I bother the King?"

Moshe Rabbeinu felt the same way. They sinned by the Golden Calf and Moshe prayed for them. They sinned complaining for meat and Moshe prayed for them. They sinned with the incident of the Spies and Moshe prayed for them. Concerning the argument with Korach Moshe said, "How many times can I bother G-d?". Therefore, when Moshe heard the argument of Korach "he fell upon his face".

Moshe Rabbeinu was the leader and the teacher of the Jewish people. The sins of the Golden Calf, of the complainers, and of the Spies were not challenges to Moshe's leadership, per say. But, by Korach, we have a direct frontal assault to the leadership of Moshe.

What would be the reaction of any normal leader? He would feel stressed and depressed and perhaps powerless "because they are attacking ME". What concerned Moshe Rabbeinu? It did not bother him that he was being attacked. What bothered him is "What will be with Klal Yisroel? How many times can I go back to G-d for Klal Yisroel?"

"What do you mean 'Klal Yisroel'? What about yourself, Moshe? It's your prestige that's on the line! Aren't you worried about that?"

The Medrash says, "No!" Moshe was not concerned about his image or about his stature. He wasn't concerned about his position. There was no personal crisis. There was only the national crisis. Moshe fell on his face strictly out of concern for his people.

This, then, is perhaps what the pasuk is telling us. When G-d told Moshe to place the staff so that the entire Jewish people could see it and know that he was chosen to be their leader, Moshe's reaction was not that of a normal leader. The normal reaction would have been "I'm right! You see -- I told

you all along! I'm right! You had no reason to question me!"

The Torah tells us, therefore, that G-d commanded Moshe to put the staff there, and that is the only reason that he put the staff there. He did not put it there as justification for his position. That did not bother him in the least. Moshe did not put the staff there to rub it in their faces or to prove his authority; he put it there only because he was commanded to put it there by G-d.

This is the greatness of Moshe Rabbeinu. This is why he is the Rabbi of all of Israel. Because he had the ability to elevate himself above his own personal needs and his only concern was the needs of the Jewish people.

How Good and How Beautiful ... Brothers together; Oil on the Beard

The Medrash says on this week's parsha (also a Gemara in Kerisos [5b]) "Come and see the piety of Aharon, for at the moment that Moshe poured the Oil of Anointing on his head, Aharon trembled fearing that he was not worthy of being anointed with the Oil of Anointing (due to his involvement with the sin of the Golden Calf) and consequently was inappropriately using the holy Oil (transgressing the sin of me'ilah).

Therefore, the verse testifies, [Psalms 133:2] 'How good and pleasant is it when brethren are sitting (peacefully) together, like the Oil of Anointing on the beard of Aharon, like the dew of Hermon on the mountains of Zion'. Just like the dew of Hermon is not subject to the laws of me'ilah, so too the oil on the beard of Aharon was not subject to the laws of me'ilah."

We understand that the latter phrases of the pasuk teach that Aharon was, in fact, worthy to be the High Priest, by indicating that just as there is no trespass dew, so too there was no trespass with the oil that dripped on Aharon's beard. But what does the first part of the pasuk -- brothers dwelling together -- have to do with this?

The answer is that the Rabbis are telling us how to achieve a state of peace between brothers. This is a state which we as parents and we as human beings and we as siblings try so very hard to achieve. This is a very difficult state to achieve. Any person who has children knows that it is virtually impossible to achieve "brothers dwelling together peacefully". Anyone who himself comes from a larger family and looks back at the fights that he had with his brothers and sisters knows that "Behold how good and how pleasant..." is not an easily obtainable goal.

So what then is the key? The key is the following: The reason there is sibling rivalry, the reason why all of us as 'brothers' cannot live together peacefully is because we are always worried that 'I deserve more'. It starts out with "Why is he getting the candy bar? Why is he getting the cookie? Why is he going with Daddy?" and it grows into bigger and better things -- "Why is he making more money? Why is he receiving more kavod?"

It belongs to me! I'm no less worthy!" The reason for the lack of peace between brothers is because people are always thinking that they deserve more.

Our Rabbis tell us that one who has the attitude of Aharon the Kohen that says "Maybe I'm not worthy; maybe I shouldn't be the High Priest; maybe there shouldn't be the Oil of Anointing on my head; maybe there's me'ilah involved here" will be able to achieve "How good and how pleasant is it for brothers to live together".

When people can live together and they are not always out for 'Number One'; not always going around complaining above their breath or below their breath "Why not me?"; when they are willing to see their faults and say "Maybe I'm not worthy," such an attitude, the Torah tells us, breeds an atmosphere of "How good and how pleasant is it for brothers to live together".

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Please pray for the speedy healing of Yehuda ben Baila Rus, Rachel Tova

bat Zipporah, Chaim Yaakov Nachmiel Ben Sarah Dubah, Eliyahu ben Chana, Menachem ben Chaya Basya, Etah Bas Fruma D'vorah, Sarit bat Esther, Esther Miriam bat Aliza Geulah, Zvi Yehuda ben Chaya Esther, Asher ben Sarah, Fayge bat Sussel, and Yonason haCohen ben Rochel Leah.

"And Korach the son of Yitzhar, the son of K'has, the son of Levi, and Dasan and Aviram the sons of Eliav, and On the son of Peles, the sons of Reuven, took [themselves to the side]; and they rose up against Moshe, along with men of the Children of Israel, 250 princes of the congregation, honored by the assembly, men of a good name." [16:1-2]

Korach rebelled. He was joined by 250 leaders, and by Dasan and Aviram, all united against the leadership of Moshe and Aharon. They claimed that their intent was good, but the Torah tells us that their argument was for their own benefit, or simply for the sake of arguing - they are used by our Sages as the classic example of an argument not made for the sake of Heaven.

The Yalkut Shimoni observes that Moshe tried repeatedly to reason with Korach, and yet we find no response at all. The Yalkut explains that Korach realized that if he were to respond, he would fail. "I know that Moshe is extremely wise. He will enlighten me with his words, and I will be forced to agree with him. Better I should ignore him entirely." When Moshe realized that speaking with Korach was useless, he turned instead to Dasan and Aviram - but they also did not bother to respond.

It is interesting that the Yalkut says that Dasan and Aviram did not respond, because we find that they said, "we will not come up. Is it a small thing that you have brought us up from a land flowing with milk and honey, to put us to death in the desert, that you must also lift yourself up over us?" [16:12-13] They did respond, didn't they?

No. Repeating the same argument, and failing to reason and address the other opinion, is no response at all. Korach, Dasan, and Aviram all preferred to make speeches than to actually address what Moshe was saying. This was an argument which was not for the sake of Heaven.

In Sichos Mussar, Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz zt"l analyzes the difference between Korach's rebellion, and the arguments of the students of Hillel and Shammai, which are the classic example of an argument which is for the sake of Heaven. The latter were willing to understand and address the other opinions. They did not disagree for personal gain or simply to create an argument, but because they honestly differed about which opinion was correct and true. The Halacha was decided like the students of Hillel, and our Sages say that this was because these students were so concerned for the truth that not only did they teach the opinions of Shammai, they taught those contrary opinions before teaching their own! This was total dedication to truth.

The Chasam Sofer, in his Toras Moshe commentary on the Torah, says that Korach, the 250 leaders, and Dasan and Aviram were actually not making the same argument. Korach acknowledged the special holiness of the tribe of Levi, but he argued against the leadership of Moshe. Rather, he claimed that the leader should be the oldest son of Amram, namely Aharon, and the High Priest should be the oldest son of Yitzhar - Korach himself. For this reason, the Torah says concerning Korach and his closest allies, Dasan, Aviram and On ben Peles, that "they arose against Moshe" [16:2], because Korach had no argument against Aharon.

The 250 leaders, on the other hand, rejected the entire special nature of the Levites. They were the first-born of their families, and the special service had been the responsibility of the first-born until G-d selected the tribe of Levi "in exchange." For this reason, when the 250 are mentioned, the Torah says "they assembled together against Moshe and against Aharon" [16:3].

In the final confrontation, Dasan and Aviram did not take pans of incense like the 250 first-born. The Chasam Sofer concludes that they were not interested in claiming the honors desired by the first-born, or by Korach himself. They simply wanted to rebel, and claim that Moshe was a charlatan (Heaven forbid). For themselves, they had no interest in the Temple service whatsoever.

I believe that the existence of great differences between Korach, the first-born, and Dasan and Aviram, are also an indicator of an argument "not for the sake of Heaven." What would have happened if Moshe had "lost the argument" (Heaven forbid)? Korach would have assumed control, and immediately there would have been a fight between Korach and the 250

first-born! They had no agreement with each other - they were "united" only because they each disagreed with Moshe.

The text in the Sayings of the Fathers [5:17] reads, "which is an argument for the sake of Heaven? This is the argument of Hillel and Shammai. And not for the sake of Heaven? This is the argument of Korach and his entire congregation." Note that there is no parallel between the two cases - the latter should read "Korach and Moshe." The Medrash Shmuel explains that while the motivations of both parties were the same in the first case, this was not true in the latter. For this reason, Moshe and Aharon - whose motivations were pure - could not be classified together with Korach.

Using the Chasam Sofer, I think we understand why the Mishnah says "Korach and his entire congregation." They also argued with each other, and they did share the same motives - selfish gain, not for the sake of Heaven! There is a parallel between the two cases in the Mishnah - the latter is the argument of Korach and the 250 first-born, not that of Korach and Moshe! In any case, it is clear that Korach and the 250 first-born were not concerned for truth, for if they were, they never could have presented a "united front" against Moshe, given their own fundamental differences of opinion. If even they could not agree, how could they argue with certainty that Moshe was wrong? And as for Dasan and Aviram, they really didn't care - they just saw an opportunity to rebel.

It was a simple "marriage of convenience," which we unfortunately see all too often today. The Torah says that a disagreement is only valid when you argue out of a sincere concern for truth, and you are willing to consider all serious opinions - and all the more so must one first decide how things should be, before arguing about changes. Anything else is a self-serving argument, which brings nothing but destruction in its wake.

Good Shabbos, Rabbi Yaakov Menken

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PARSHAT HASHAVUA PARSHAT KORACH by Menachem Leibtag

This week's Parsha opens with a pasuk which appears to be grammatically incorrect: "Va'yikach Korach..." - And Korach the son of Yizhar, the son of Khat, the son of Levi **TOOK**, and Datán and Aviram the sons of Eliav and On the son of Pelet the sons of Reuven."

This sentence is missing an object, i.e. it does not explain **WHAT** Korach took! Almost every commentary attempts to fill in the missing detail. The basic question, nevertheless, remains: why does the Torah begin this Parsha in such an ambiguous manner?

There are many other peculiarities in the Torah's presentation of the story of Korach's rebellion. This week's shiur analyzes the parsha's special style and offers an explanation.

INTRODUCTION

From a cursory reading of Parshat Korach, it appears that Korach, Datán & Aviram, and the 250 men are united behind a common cause. Their joint criticism against the leadership of Moshe and Aharon in the opening psukim (16:1-3) supports this understanding. However, a careful reading of the continuation of the Parsha reveals that two independent grievances are raised by two separate groups:

- 1) Against the **PRIESTHOOD** - by the 250 men;
- 2) Against the **POLITICAL LEADERSHIP** - by Datán and Aviram.

In our shiur, we will first prove this distinction, then we will discuss Korach's involvement with each group.

THE OPENING COMPLAINT - GROUP ONE

Let's begin with a quick analysis of the opening protest:

"...and they gathered against **MOSHE AND AHARON** saying: You have taken too much - for the **ENTIRE COMMUNITY IS HOLY** and God is in their midst, why then do you **RAISE YOURSELVES ABOVE** God's congregation?" (16:3)

From this complaint it appears that the primary grievance is against the

priesthood (= "kehuna"). These dissenters demand that anyone who so desires should be allowed to offer "korbanot", for every member of Israel is 'spiritually equal'. They question Moshe's decision to limit the priesthood to Aharon and his sons.

In response, Moshe suggests a 'test' which would take place in the Mishkan, through which it can be established who indeed is "kadosh" (see 16:5-7), i.e. whomever's "ktoret" (incense) offering God will accept. Despite Moshe's rebuke (16:8-11), they accept the proposal. [Note that the Torah consistently refers to this group as "adat Korach" (see 16:5,6,11).]

ENTER - GROUP TWO

Up until 16:11, the psukim leave us with the impression that everyone mentioned in the opening two psukim (i.e. Korach, Datan, Aviram, and the 250 men) have joined in this complaint. However, as the narrative continues, a very different picture emerges:

"And Moshe sent for DATAN & AVIRAM, but they answered: WE WILL NOT COME UP (to the Mishkan). Is it not enough that you took us out of a land flowing with milk and honey (Egypt!) to die in the desert AND NOW YOU WANT TO CONTINUE TO BE LORD OVER US... WE WILL NOT COME! (16:12-14)

If Moshe, who was just talking to Korach in front of the Ohel Moed, must SEND for Datan and Aviram, then obviously Datan & Aviram did not gather at the Mishkan for 'the test' together with "adat Korach" (the 250 men). Instead, it appears that they remain in their camp. Moshe summons them, but they brazenly reject to even meet him.

From their response, it is clear that Datan & Aviram totally reject Moshe's position as the political leader of the nation. They justify their position by claiming that Moshe has failed to fulfill his promise to bring Bnei Yisrael to a land flowing with milk and honey (see Shmot 3:16-17, 4:30-31). Furthermore, he has also caused a national calamity, for everyone is now destined to die in the desert.

Unlike his response to "adat Korach", Moshe does not respond to Datan & Aviram directly, for this complaint challenges his own leadership. Instead, he requests that God not accept their prayers (or korbanot - see Ramban 16:15), reminding God that he has been a selfless leader (16:15).

At this point, the narrative abruptly returns to the original confrontation between Moshe and "adat Korach" concerning the "kehuna". Moshe informs Korach that Aharon will also participate in the 'test' and that they should prepare themselves (16:16-17). Korach and company comply. The next morning, he and the 250 men are standing in front of the Ohel Moed (the Mishkan), ready with their "machtot" (fire-pans) and "ktoret". Korach assembles a mass crowd to watch (16:18-19).

Thus, we can conclude that two distinct groups exist at two separate LOCATIONS, each with its own complaint:

- 1) "Adat Korach" at the OHEL MOED (see 16:7,16-19) - against the kehuna of Aharon.
- 2) Datan & Aviram (and their followers) in the CAMP OF REUVEN - against the leadership of Moshe. This location is later referred to as "Mishkan Korach Datan v'Aviram" (see 16:24-27).

TWO GROUPS - TWO PUNISHMENTS

At this point, God intervenes. He decides to punish the entire congregation (16:20); however, Moshe prays that only those who are directly guilty be punished. [See Further Iyun section for a discussion concerning precisely who God planned to punish and the nature of this "tfila".]

Each of the two groups receives its own punishment. First, God sends Moshe to 'Group Two', i.e. to Datan and Aviram, to warn them and their followers:

"And Moshe got up AND WENT TO Datan & Aviram... and he said to the people: MOVE AWAY from the tents of these wicked people..." (16:25-26)

Note that Moshe must LEAVE his present location (at the Ohel Moed) and GO TO "Mishkan Korach Datan v'Aviram" (further proof that two separate groups exist). This location - "Mishkan Korach Datan v'Aviram" - seems to be 'party headquarters' for this rebellious group, now offering alternative leadership. Datan & Aviram and those followers who did not listen to Moshe's warning are swallowed up by the ground (16:27-34).

What happened in the meantime to "adat Korach", to the 250 men

participating in the 'test of the ktoret' in the Ohel Moed? The Torah leaves us in suspense until the very last pasuk of this perek:

"And a fire came forth from God and consumed the 250 men who were offering the ktoret." (16:35)

Thus we find that not only are there two groups in two separate locations, but each group receives its own punishment:

- 1) CONSUMED BY FIRE - the 250 men at the Ohel Moed
- 2) SWALLOWED UP BY THE GROUND - Datan & Aviram in the camp of Reuven.

KORACH - THE POLITICIAN

To which of these groups does Korach belong? To appreciate Korach's involvement, we must first review the nature of each group and the apparent legitimacy of their respective claims.

Group One consists of the 250 men who challenge the restriction of the "kehuna" to the family of Aharon. They assert their right, as well as the right of others, to offer korbanot. The intention of these 250 men seems to be sincere, for they desire that the entire nation attain the level of the God's covenant with Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai:

"And you shall be for Me a 'mamlechet kohanim v'goy Kadosh' - a Kingdom of Priests and a holy nation." (Shmot 19:6)

To test their claim, they offer ktoret at the Ohel Moed. Later, this group is consumed by fire at that location.

In contrast, Group Two, led by Datan and Aviram, challenges and refuses to accept the political leadership of Moshe. As Moshe has failed to bring the nation to the Promised Land, they now demand new leadership. This group claims to be concerned about the welfare of the entire nation. Later, this group is swallowed up by the ground at their 'party headquarters' in Shevet Reuven.

The following table summarizes these differences:

GROUP ONE	GROUP TWO	Members:	250 men	Datan & Aviram + followers
Claim :	priesthood	new political leadership		
Against:	Aharon	Moshe	Reason: equality	failure of leadership
Location:	Ohel Moed	Mishkan Korach	Datan Aviram	Punishment: consumed by fire swallowed by the ground

Even though Group One appears to have little in common with Group Two, the Torah presents this story in a manner which leaves the reader with the impression that only one group exists. This is accomplished by the narrative 'jumping' back and forth from one group to the other. Although the Torah carefully presents each confrontation separately, it deliberately and delicately COMBINES both conflicts!

The following chart (of perek 16) illustrates this 'textual see-saw':

PASUK	GROUP	TOPIC	f==	f==	f=	1-2	both
Introduction	5-11	ONE	Complaint of those who want 'kehuna'				
12-15	TWO	Summons of Datan & Aviram and their refusal				16-19	
ONE		The test of the "ktoret"	20-22	both?	Moshe's tfila that God punish only the guilty	23-34	TWO
followers	25	ONE	Punishment of Datan, Aviram & followers				
							25
							ONE
							Punishment of the 250 men

What is the reason for this unusual structure? To understand its significance, we must examine Korach's involvement with each group.

KORACH - WHERE ARE YOU?

So where is Korach? Which group does he belong to?

1) He is clearly the leader of the group which claims the "kehuna" (see 16:6-8,16-19).

2) Although he, himself, is not mentioned with the group of Datan & Aviram (Read 16:23-34 carefully!), their party headquarters carries his name: "Mishkan KORACH Datan v'Aviram"! Furthermore, many of his followers - "ha'adam asher l'Korach" - are swallowed up by the ground (16:32).

It is not even clear precisely how Korach died. Was he swallowed by the ground or consumed by the fire? [See Sanhedrin 110a. Note also Bamidbar 26:9-10, from where it appears as though Korach was indeed swallowed up; and Dvarim 11:6, which implies that only Datan & Aviram were swallowed up.]

What can we learn about Korach's involvement from this style of the presentation of the rebellion?

COALITION POLITICS

This 'see-saw' style points to a coalition between two groups that have little

in common besides discontent. Who motivated the joining of these two forces?

The answer is clear: KORACH. The question remains: Why? What was his motivation?

The ambiguity of the very first pasuk of the Parsha, as mentioned in our introduction, acutely raises this very question. "va'yikach Korach" (16:1) - what did Korach take?

This ambiguity together with the 'see-saw' structure (explained above) may allude to the answer. Korach 'took' two ostensibly legitimate protest groups and joined them together to form a political power base. [see Ramban 16:1]

Despite their prior discontent, each group alone may have not dared to openly challenge Moshe and Aharon. Now, Korach encourages them to take action. Datan and Aviram, 'inspired' by Korach, establish their own 'headquarters' - "Mishkan Korach, Datan, & Aviram". Likewise, the 250 men, including members of Shevet Levi, are roused to openly challenge the restriction of the 'kehuna'. Instead of open dialogue, Korach convinces them to take forceful action and increase the number of their followers in order to overthrow the current leadership. Korach, possibly, saw himself as the most suitable candidate for national leader. To that end, he involves himself with each dissenting group. [Anyone familiar with political science or history can easily relate to this phenomenon.]

Chazal arrive at a similar conclusion (see Ibn Ezra 16:35). The Midrash asks: "Was Korach among those who were burned (s'rufim), or among those who were swallowed up (b'luiim)?" The Midrash concludes that Korach received both punishments: "He was first consumed by the fire at Ohel Moed (Group One); afterward his body rolled to the camp of Reuven where it was then swallowed up by the ground (Group Two).

From where do Chazal draw this conclusion? Most probably from the same analysis elucidated above: Korach must receive both punishments since he masterminded the coalition between the two groups.

A LESSON FOR ALL GENERATIONS

The Mishnah in Pirkei Avot (5:17) considers the rebellion of Korach as the paradigm of a dispute which was "sh'lo l'shem sha'mayim" (an argument not for the sake of Heaven). Why is specifically Korach chosen as the paradigm case? After all, the arguments presented by Korach ("for the entire nation is holy", etc.) seem to imply exactly the opposite - that it was actually an argument "l'shem shamayim" (for the sake of Heaven).

By this example, Pirkei Avot may be teaching us the very same message that the Torah is alluding to in its unique style. It is precisely because Korach and his followers claim to be fighting "l'shem shamayim" that Chazal must inform us of Korach's true intention, i.e. to garner power and usurp leadership - "sh'lo l'shem shamayim".

We can learn from this Mishnah and Parshat Korach that whenever a dispute arises over community leadership or religious reform, we must carefully examine not only the claims, but also the true motivation behind the dispute. Likewise, every individual must constantly examine the true motivations behind all his endeavors.

In many realms of Jewish life, especially communal, we often find ourselves involved in many activities whose general purpose is "l'shem shamayim". Nevertheless, we must not allow our involvement to deteriorate into power struggles and selfishness "sh'lo l'shem shamayim". Only constant introspection will assure that all our deeds will remain "l'shem shamayim".

shabbat shalom, menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. Note - on methodology. There are always two stages in analyzing a Parsha. The first step is to discern the content and structure. This is technical and therefore relatively objective. The second step is to find the significance of that structure. This stage is obviously more subjective.

See if you can discern at what point we proceeded from stage one to stage two in the above shiur.

B. An ambiguity arises in 16:20-22 (see chart in the above shiur). Note that these two psukim constitute a separate 'parsha', and are introduced just as we are left in suspense regarding the fate of the 250 men offering the ktoret (group one). God tells Moshe that he wants to kill the entire "aydah"; 1. To whom specifically is "aydah" referring:

a) just the 250 men,

b) those who Korach gathered around to watch (see 16:19),
c) the entire nation of Israel?

(see Ramban) 2. More puzzling is Moshe's supplication: "Should one man's sin prompt the punishment of the entire 'aydah'?" (16:22).

a) Does 'one man' refer solely to Korach?

b) does it also relate to Datan & Aviram

c) does it relate to the 250 men? Relate your answer to the question 1 above. 3. In 16:1-2, everyone is introduced, Korach, Datan, Aviram, and the 250 men. Read 16:2 carefully! Who are the leaders and famous people - just Korach, Datan, and Aviram, or also the 250 men?

How does your answer to this question affect your answer to questions 1 & 2 above.

How does this relate to the magnitude and severity of this revolt against Moshe and Aharon?

4.. Why is there no answer to Moshe's prayer (in 16:22), or should we maintain that the following 'parsha' (16:23-35) constitutes the answer?

What is the answer to Moshe's question?

5. EXTRA CREDIT -

Note how Moshe opens his tfila with "kel elokei ha'RUCHOT l'chol BASAR" - Based on the context of this tfila, relate this appellation to the entire narrative of Bamidbar 11:1-35, especially in relation to how the "mitavim" are punished.

The only other use of this appellation is in Bamidbar 27:16, when Moshe asks God to appoint a leader who will replace him. Relate that parsha and its context to Bamidbar 11:14-17!

C. Although Korach challenges the 'kehuna' and the political leadership for the wrong reasons, many generations later his descendent, Shmuel Ha'Navi - the great grandson of Korach (see D.H.I 6:3-13) - repeats this very same reform for the correct reasons. He challenges the corrupt 'kehuna' of bnei Eli: Chofni & Pinchus, then later reforms the political leadership of the country, becoming shofet and afterward setting up the first monarchy. 1. Note the similarities between Parshat Korach and this week's Haftara, especially Shmuel 12:3. See also 3:19-20, 7:3-17. 2. What similarities are there between Shmuel and Moshe & Aharon? 3. In what manner does Shmuel, who is a Levi, act like a Kohen?

(relate to Shmuel 3:1-3, 13:8-12)

D. In earlier shiurim (Yom Kippur and Parshat Tzaveh), we discussed the special nature of the ktoret and its purpose as a protection from the consequences of "hitgalut shchinah". Recall also the events which led to the death of Nadav & Avihu. 1. Why do you think Moshe suggested that the 250 men offer ktoret to prove if they are chosen? Is his idea or God's? (16:5-7)

See Ramban (as usual). 2. Do you think that Moshe was aware of the potential outcome that all 250 men would be consumed by fire, or was he trying to convince them to remove themselves from Korach's revolt?

Relate your answer to your answer to question #1. 3. Why do you think the nation immediately accused Moshe of causing their death (see 17:6-15)? Why is 'davka' the ktoret used to save the people from their punishment?

E. In order to prove that Moshe was the chosen leader, it is necessary for Hashem to make a 'briyah'. 1. Where is the first time (and last time) in Chumash that the word 'briyah' is mentioned? 2. Who exclusively can perform an act of 'briyah'. 3. Why do you think 'davka' this type of punishment is necessary?

F. Recall Shmot 2:14, when Moshe admonished two quarrelling Jews in Egypt, they answered: "mi samcha sar v'shofet ...". Chazal's identify these two men as Datan & Aviram. Use the above shiur to support this Midrash.

G. Towards the end of Parsha, all the "mateh shel Aharon" is chosen over the 'matot' of all the other tribal leaders.

1. Where is that 'mateh' to be kept afterwards?

For what purpose? (see 17:24-25)

2. Is this 'mateh' ever used later on for that purpose?

3. Before reading this question, which 'mateh' did you think Moshe used to hit the rock at "mei m'riva"?

Look carefully now at 20:8-11.

4. How does this explain Moshe's statement of "shimu na ha'morim"? [cute?]

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"Bircas Hatorah <bircas@jer1.co.il>" Weekly Words of Torah from Bircas H

Selected, translated and arranged by Rabbi Dov Rabinowitz Korach
The Sfas Emes explains that the essence of the dispute of Korach was in his assertion: "The whole congregation are all sacred, and HaShem is among them" (16,3). Moshe Rabeinu replied: "The man whom HaShem chooses, he is sacred" (16,7).

For the truth is that all sanctity is drawn (down) from above, as our sages said on the possuk: "And you shall make yourselves sanctified, and you shall be sanctified . . ." (VaYikra 11,44) - (if) a person sanctifies himself below (in this world DR) by a small amount, he is sanctified from above by a great amount (Yoma 39a, quoted by Rash"i on this possuk). A person must realize that all of the meagre (portion of) sanctity that he possesses, (was acquired) with the help of (HaShem) above.

Korach acquired (literally took) sanctity for himself, as it says "And Korach took . . ." (16,1). He considered that because of this sanctity (which was acquired) from below, there prevailed (a status of) "HaShem is among them." But it is not so.

The Midrash (VaYikra Rabba 24,9) states: " 'And you shall be holy' (VaYikra 19,1) - you might imagine (that this means) 'like Me'; this is not so, as it says 'for I am Holy' - My sanctity is exalted above your sanctity." What is this Midrash coming to teach us? Is it not (explicitly) written: "To whom will you compare Me and I will be (found) equal" (Yeshayahu 40,25)? The explanation is that (any) sanctity which a person has, is (actually) drawn (down) in essence from the Force (of Sanctity) Above. Our endeavours below (in this world, serve) merely as a preparation to enable us to receive this sanctity.

It was (regarding) this ability (to receive sanctity from Above) that Korach blundered. (He believed that the sanctity which was self-induced was the same as that which came from HaShem DR).

. . . It is true that the souls of the Children of Yisroel have (the ability to) arouse sanctity, . . . but despite this, 'My sanctity is exalted above your sanctity.' In all our endeavours (to sanctify ourselves by serving HaShem), the predominant (aspect) is the Force that comes from Above.

"And in addition you have not brought us to the land flowing with milk and honey, and given us a heritage of fields and vineyards" (16,14).

Rav Yehonasan Eibeshitz (Tiferes Yehonasan) explains that they (Dassan and Aviram who were challenging Moshe Rabeinu here - see 16,12 DR) asserted: if you (Moshe Rabeinu) claim that through our being taken out of Mitsraim, we have acquired great (wealth from the) spoils (of Mitsraim) . . . Before (they came out of Mitsraim) they had been poverty stricken, as our Sages tell us: 'Dassan and Aviram lost all their wealth' (see Rash"i Shmos 4,19), and thus they (challenged Moshe Rabeinu) claiming that all their (newly gained) belongings were of no value (as long as they did not have) land (fields and vineyards) that endures . . .

"And those who died in the affliction (numbered) fourteen thousand and seven hundred" (17,14).

The Meshech Chochma observes that we can understand this number (if we consider) that (the people who died) had rebelled against the chosen status of the tribe of Levi, (claiming) "The whole congregation are all sacred" (16,3). This challenged the final request of Yaakov Avinu that Levi should not carry his coffin, as (his descendants) were destined to carry the Aron (Ark of the Covenant) . . . as our Sages described (BaMidbar Rabba 2,7 quoted by Rash"i Bereishis 50,13). Thus 147 hundreds were punished, corresponding to the age of Yaakov Avinu (147 years - Bereishis 47,28).

This (explains why the Torah) continues: "in addition to those who died in the incident of Korach," (17,14) (setting apart the fatalities of the two episodes DR); this refers to the dogma of Korach, who did not rebel in his heart against the (special status of) the Tribe of Levi (as he himself was a Levite DR) but rather against the (choice of Aharon as) the Cohen Gadol (high priest).

"dmgreen@skynet.net (David Green) dvartorah@torah.org Parshas Korach

It's Ways Are Ways of Peace

Korach was jealous of his cousin who was appointed to a job which he expected to receive. Being a very influential person, he gathered a group to himself, and took on Moshe and Aharon for the leadership.

Among those involved were two of history's earliest recorded trouble-makers, Dasan and Aviram. Dasan and Aviram refused to come to see Moshe after he requested that they come to see him. "Even if you will poke out our eyes we will not come (to see you)" was the message they sent back to him (according to Rashi).

The Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan, 1840-1933 approx.) writes on this as follows. Come and see how far the fire of Machlokes (dispute and discord) reaches, to the point that they did not even listen to the words they themselves spoke. The Chofetz Chaim used to tell a story which happened in a small city in Europe.

Once a major disagreement took place between a certain government official and his neighbor. As is common in such circumstances, the neighbor threatened to report the government official to the higher governmental authorities regarding some less-than-legal activities he had been involved in. The neighbor's wife attempted to convince her husband not to report the man to the authorities. Her valid argument was that the very same official he was planning on reporting helped them to keep their own children out of the armed forces. If this man would be arrested for his wrongdoings, it would put them in danger of being caught and arrested as well. "It's all worth it", said her husband, "that you, I, and our children should go to jail just so this man should lose his high position."

From here we see that once a person gets into dispute with others, it has the potential to remove all reason and rationality from him. People can become so deeply involved, and impassioned in a dispute, that they throw all cares to the wind, and come what may, they are going to win.

On the other hand, Moshe, the humblest of men, was only interested in peace. He went to them instead. He was not interested in perpetuating the argument. He could have written them off. He knew he was right, and he knew what would happen to them, but he threw aside his own honor, and went to see them to try to reconcile. He saw the bigger picture. Winning was not important to Moshe Rabbainu.

The beautiful lesson we learn from this event is relevant in our dealings with our spouses, our children, our extended family members, and many others. With everyone we meet, our priority should be peacefulness and cooperation. Good Shabbos.

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B"H Torah Studies Adaptation of Likutei Sichos by Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of Great Britain Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion Korach

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The Sidra of Korach concerns the revolt of Korach and his followers against the Priesthood of Aaron and his sons. But what exactly was Korach's aim? On the one hand, he voiced protest against the whole institution of priesthood or at least against its carrying any special status. On the other, it is clear from the narrative that he was seeking the High Priesthood for himself. Can we make sense of his apparently contradictory aims?

This is the central point of the Sicha's inquiry. And as a result of its analysis we can understand two further difficulties:

Why "Korach," the name of an inciter to dissent, is eternalized by making it the name of one of the sections of the Torah, and why this one Sidra contains two such seemingly opposite themes: Korach's revolt, and the conferring of the "twenty-four Gifts of Priesthood" on Aaron.

THEMES AND OPPOSITIONS

Each of the 53 Sidrot of the Five Books of Moses has a central theme:

One that is carried through each of its verses, from first to last, and which is suggested in the name it bears.

This connecting motif is so strong, that the thematic link between the first and last verses of a Sidra is stronger than that between the ending of one Sidra and the beginning of the next, even though it may continue what appears to be the same narrative.

In fact, the very existence of a break between two Sidrot indicates that there is some discontinuity between them sometimes going so far as to point out an opposition.

As we see in the ending of Behaalotecha, where Miriam was punished for her evil report against Moses; and the beginning of Shelach, where the spies about to be sent to Israel saw the punishment and did not take heed of it, ultimately to repeat the sin.

On the face of it, this general rule seems hard to apply to the Sidra of Korach, which begins with the accusation of Korach and his followers against Aaron and the priesthood, and ends with G-d giving the "twenty-four Gifts of Priesthood."

The initial accusation and the ultimate validation seem to stand as opposites to one another; and yet it is not merely that the latter is the outcome of the former. Rather, we must search for a way in which the "Gifts of Priesthood" are an integral part of the story of Korach. For the Sidra is called by his name - and this is where the core of the Sidra lies.

But the search is beset by this problem:

The insurrection of Korach was an opposition to the priesthood, as it stood in the hands of Aaron; while the "twenty-four Gifts" were, as Rashi says, a way of "writing and sealing and recording in the court" the gift of priesthood to him.

THE NAME OF KORACH

There is an additional difficulty. How came the Sidra to be called Korach in the first place?

For, on the verse "The name of the wicked shall rot" the Talmud comments, "Their names shall decay for we do not mention (the wicked) by name." If we should not mention the wicked by name in ordinary conversation, still less should a Sidra of the Torah be named after one of them, for this is a way of perpetuating a name!

And there is no saving grace in Korach, for though, as Rashi tells us, his sons repented, he himself did not. In the name itself there is no hint of righteousness: It means a bald spot, and as the Midrash explains, it has the connotation of making divisions - creating a bald spot between two factions where previously there had been unity.

Rambam writes that the Torah "was given to make peace in the world." How then should a portion of it be called by a name that suggests divisiveness?

Korach's Claim

And finally, there is an apparent inconsistency in the very claim that Korach made.

On the one hand it appears that he was set against the very institution of the priesthood, or at least its special status, for he said: "For all the congregation is holy, and the L-rd dwells in their midst; and why therefore do you elevate yourselves above the congregation of the L-rd?" On the other hand, it was apparent that Korach and his followers sought the priesthood for themselves, as Moses explicitly says to them.

One explanation is that they did not want the status of the priesthood to be abolished, merely that they did not want it confined to Aaron. They wanted many High Priests; they sought to be included in that rank. And yet it is clear from Rashi's commentary that Korach sought the High Priesthood for himself alone: He thought that he alone would be vindicated in the trial that the accusers were to undergo. If he had this ambition, why then did he say, "Why do you elevate yourselves?" - for he had reason to wish to see the priesthood elevated.

The Firmament Which Divides The Waters

The opening words of our Sidra, "And Korach took," are translated in the Targum as "And Korach divided," and in the book Noam Elimelech, Rabbi Elimelech of Liszensk compares Korach's dissension to the firmament which G-d created on the second day to divide between the higher and lower waters. What is the analogy?

One difference between the priests and the rest of the children of Israel was that the priests were withdrawn from the affairs of the world and entirely

taken up with their holy office.

Especially the High Priest (against whom Korach's accusation was primarily intended), of whom it is written that "he shall not depart from the Sanctuary." But despite this, he was not uninvolved with the rest of the people: On the contrary, he exercised his influence over them all, drawing them up to his own level of holiness.

This was symbolized by the kindling of the seven branches of the Menorah. Aaron's special attribute was "Great, or everlasting Love" - and he drew the people near to this service.

But Korach did not see this. He saw only the separation between priest and people. And viewed in this light, he saw that just as the priests had their special role, so too did the people, in enacting G-d's will in the practical world, which was, indeed, the whole purpose of the Torah. Seen as separate entities, the people had at least as much right to honor and elevation as the priests.

And this removes the inconsistency from his claim. He sought the priesthood, but as an office entirely remote from the people. Hence his accusation, "Why do you elevate yourselves?" In his eyes, the two groups, utterly distinct, each had their special status.

In this way Korach was like the firmament: His aim was to divide the people, like the waters, and sever the connection between the Sanctuary and the ordinary world.

DIVISION AND PEACE

On the second day of creation we find that G-d did not say: "And it was Good." The Rabbis explain that this was because division (the firmament) was created on that day. It was not until the third day that this judgment was pronounced and repeated, once for the creation of that day, and once for the firmament, which was purified and its division healed. Thus we learn that in the Divine scheme, there has to be a division between the things of heaven and those of earth, but that its consummation is in their re-uniting. And just as on the third day, so too in the third millennium Torah was given to bring together heaven and earth, G-d descending and Israel ascending to union.

The same applies to the children of Israel.

Although there are those who are totally involved in holy service and "do not depart from the Sanctuary," and those whose service is in the practical world ("In all your ways, know Him"); the one must not be separate from the other, but the former must lead the latter, in the manner of Aaron, ever closer to G-d. This the man of the world, the businessman etc., reaches through setting regular times for study of Torah. And this study should be of such intense concentration, that he is, at that time, as one who never departs from the Sanctuary!

And just as the work of the second day was consummated on the third, so did G-d allow the division caused by Korach, so that it would reach its fulfillment in the "twenty-four Gifts of Priesthood." For the priesthood was established as an everlasting covenant in a way that could not have happened had Korach not raised dissent about it previously.

This is the connection between the beginning and the end of our Sidra.

The dissension, although it seems on the face of it to be opposed to the covenant of priesthood, was in fact a precondition of it.

And this is why the name of Korach is perpetuated by standing as the name of the Sidra. Even though Korach represents division and Torah represents peace, the peace and union which Torah brings comes not merely in spite of, but through, the medium of division: That though there is a heaven and an earth, worship and service bring them together until G-d Himself dwells in our midst.

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. VIII, pp. 114-9.)

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Parashat Korach Enayim LaTorah Publication of Student Organization of Yeshiva University Candle lighting: 8:13 pm

Parashat Korach concludes with the mitzvah of terumat maaser, the portion of the tithe that the Leviim must give to the Kohanim. There are two questions that need to be addressed. First, how is this mitzvah a fitting conclusion to parashat Korach? More fundamentally, what is the nature of

this mitzvah?

The Torah presents the mitzvah in the following manner: When you take the tithe from Bnei Yisrael, that which I have given you from them as your inheritance, remove from it the gift of G-d, a tithe from the tithe. (18:27)

The mitzvah is paradoxical. On the one hand it is like teruma -- the gift which every Jew, including the Leviim, gives to the Kohanim. Just as a Jew from one of the other tribes gives teruma from his produce, so too a Levi gives a teruma from his produce. Furthermore, terumat maaser has the same sanctity as teruma; it can only be eaten by Kohanim, while a non-Kohen who eats it is condemned to death. On the other hand, terumat maaser is also like maaser because it is an exact amount, 1/10th of the produce, while teruma can be any amount. Moreover what is the role of the maaser dimension? maaser is a gift to the Leviim, not to the Kohanim. How can we explain this hybrid gift?

We might gain insight into these questions by examining the beginning of the parasha. Korach approaches Moshe with a challenge: ... You take too much upon you, all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them; why then do you raise yourselves up above the congregation of the Lord (16:3)

Korach asks, Why has the institution of the kehuna been given exclusively to AharonEs family; are we not deserving of serving G-d in this capacity? Korach, as a Levi, wasn't satisfied with this role. He wanted more; he wanted to be a Kohen. In response, Moshe remonstrates him on his unchecked ambition and asks Korach and his followers to offer the incense along with Aharon the next morning. G-dEs reply, the acceptance of AharonEs incense and the fiery consumption of KorachEs cohorts, indicates that Aharon and his descendants have indeed been chosen as Kohanim. This point is brought home later on in the parasha when the leaders of the twelve tribes and Aharon, representing the tribe of Levi, place their staffs before the aron, and AharonEs staff alone blooms.

These two signs, the acceptance of AharonEs crifice and the blooming of AharonEs staff, are two distinct statements, addressing two different audiences. KorachEs destruction and the acceptance of AharonEs offering were a clear response to the challenge of Korach and the Leviim who sided with him against the kehuna of Aharon. But what of the other members of Israel who sided with Korach? What of Datan and Aviram and the Bnei Reuven? Their challenge is not explicitly expressed. We can conjecture that, as plain Yisraelim, they were not interested in the kehuna, but rather in the levia. This is more plausible if we consider that the rebels were from Reuven, the tribe of the firstborn. Just as the firstborns were given the Temple service in times past, why not now give that service to the tribe of the firstborn? It was for this group that AharonEs staff blossomed. When Aharon placed his staff by the aron he did it not as a Kohen, but rather as the leader of the Levite tribe, just like the other tribe leaders placed their staffs by the aron. Consequently, the blossoming of his staff demonstrated to all of Israel that it was the Leviim, not the firstborns, who had been chosen to play a unique role in the service of the Mikdash.

The special role that G-d assigned to the Kohanim can now be seen in two ways; it may be a role independent of their status as Leviim, or it may be a role which is conferred upon them specifically because they are Leviim. We can rephrase this by focusing on Aharon in particular, rather than on all Kohanim in general. Why was Aharon chosen to be a kohen: because he was Aharon, or because he was the leader of the Leviim? Before parashat Korach we would have undoubtedly thought the former, but this parasha casts Aharon in an unfamiliar role; he is not only a kohen -- he is the leader of the Leviim. Which preceded which is not so clear -- was he leader because he was kohen, or was he kohen because he was leader? This duality applies to all Kohanim as well. They are Kohanim on their own right, but they are also Kohanim because they are Leviim. All Leviim were chosen for service in the Beit Hamikdash; the Kohanim, as a subset of the Leviim were chosen for the central service, for the actual offering of the sacrifices. The Kohanim can thus be seen as Leviim par excellence, or, as the Torah calls them elsewhere, as Kohanim haLeviim.

The commandment of terumat maaser follows naturally. The Leviim have a twofold relationship to the Kohanim. There is an acknowledgement of the different roles that the Kohen and Levi are to fulfill; the Levi acknowledges

the KohenEs independent status by the giving of teruma just as all Israel does. In addition, the Leviim must also realize that the Kohanim are the representatives of their tribe; Kohanim are Leviim! This acknowledgement is made through the giving of a maaser - a gift to the Kohen qua Levi. Thus terumat maaser acts as both a teruma and a maaser; it is holy and it is a tenth; it is given to the Kohen qua Kohen and to the Kohen qua Levi.

"Kollel Toras Chesed <kollel@mcs.com " haftorah@torah.org"
MESSAGE FROM THE HAFTORAH PARSHAS KORACH

Shmuel 1 11:14

This week's haftorah shares with us a significant perspective about the Jewish government in Eretz Yisroel. The Jewish people had recently approached the prophet Shmuel and requested the appointment of a king over them. The prophet acquiesced to their request and transferred his mantle of leadership to the most worthy candidate in all of Israel, Shaul. Shmuel then proceeded to express to the Jewish people strong words of disturbance over the request. He reviewed with them his personal years of service as their judge and prophet and challenged them to find any fault in his faithful fulfillment of his mission as their leader. After their attesting to his perfect qualities of leadership Shmuel then reviewed with them all of Hashem's favors in always appointing the most capable and appropriate leadership for them. Shmuel said "And now here is the king which you chose and requested; behold Hashem has given you a king. If you revere Hashem, serve Him and follow His voice and you don't rebel against His words you and your king will merit to follow after Hashem. And if you don't adhere..."(12:14). The Malbim understands these passages to mean that if the Jewish people closely follow the path of Torah, Hashem, in effect, will be their leader. But if they don't follow His path closely they will not merit Hashem's guidance and leadership and Hashem will severely punish them for their wrongdoing.

The prophet continued and stated, "Is today not the harvest season? I'll call upon Hashem and He will bring heavy rain. You should see and know the great evil you have done requesting a king for yourself." (12:17) Shmuel admonished the Jewish people for their basic request for a king and regarded it a sinful act. Why would a request like this be considered so wrong? After all, doesn't the Torah provide for this system and dedicate a full section in Parshas Shoftim to the rules and regulations of a Jewish commonwealth? The Malbim explains that in the proper time the notion of a kingdom is certainly acceptable and appropriate. However, during the lifetime of Shmuel Hanavi this request was considered a rejection of Shmuel and the Torah he represented. Shmuel had been faithfully serving his people and judging them with all the fairness the Torah required of him. In Shmuel's eyes, the Jewish people's request indicated a rejection of the perfect system of the Torah and a desire to establish their own control over the land. The Malbim deduces this from the pointed words in their initial request, "Now bestow upon us a king to judge us like all the nations." (8:5) He explains that the Jewish people desired to establish their own judicial system whereby they could have total control of the development of their country. They yearned to be like all other nations whose control over their destiny was in their own hands. They no longer appreciated subjugating themselves to the dictates of the Torah and following the secret revelations of Hashem to His prophets.

The Malbim concludes that in truth timing was the key factor in this request. Had they waited until the passing of their faithful prophet and judge, Shmuel, the request for a king would have been in line. With the passing of the last of their shoftim a sincere need for direction and leadership would have arisen and the request for a king would have been forthcoming. However, now while remaining under the devoted leadership of Shmuel such a request was inappropriate and sinful. It reflected a new direction for the Jewish people and a sincere interest to be released from the tight control of Hashem. Shmuel responded by asking Hashem for a demonstration of fierce thunderstorms. During the summer months it was customary to dry the fruits of the land on the open fields. The appearance of rain during that season was certainly untimely and was not looked upon favorably. Although rain in general is viewed as a great blessing and necessity, during the wrong times it is considered a sign of rejection and displeasure (see Tractate Sukkah 28b). Shmuel showed them that their request for a king, like rain, was a sign of

rejection when not presented in the proper time.

The prophet added in his admonition, "And if you don't adhere to the voice of Hashem but rebel against Him the hand of Hashem will be upon you and your ancestors." Our Chazal (Yevomos 63b) explain this peculiar notion of Hashem's hand plaguing our ancestors. They profoundly state, "Through the sin of the living the deceased are desecrated." The sinfulness of an inappropriate government in Eretz Yisroel is responded to with such severity that it can even provoke the desecration of the deceased. The Mahral (Chidushei Agados ad loc.) explains the association between the desecration of the deceased and the establishment of an improper government in Eretz Yisroel. He explains that the desecration of the deceased is viewed as total disorder. After someone parts from this world he is entitled to rest in peace without disturbance and the desecration of his remains is a violation of his basic human rights. In this same vein it is expected and only proper that the governing principles of Hashem's land should be established by Hashem. Any violation of this and in particular the establishment of an independent control over the land divorced from Hashem is also viewed as total disorder. The Maharal concludes that in Eretz Yisroel total disorder of the deceased comes as a natural result from the total disorder demonstrated by the living.

In these recent weeks we have merited a reversal in the governmental structure in Israel. Let it be the will of Hashem that His Torah be fully respected in His land, the Land of Israel, and that all disorders amongst the deceased and the living be restored to their proper order.

Rabbi Dovid Siegel

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Parashat Korach Author: dlebor@jer1.co.il at Internet

Dear alumni and friends,

I hope you enjoy this week's d'var Torah. If you have any questions or comments please feel free to send them to me. Please address any messages to shaalvim@jer1.co.il (there is no apostrophe in shaalvim). Shabbat Shalom. Sincerely, Aaron Weiss

Parashat Korach: Tshuva II -by Aaron Weiss (A chumash Bamidbar is helpful but not essential for this d'var Torah.)

According to the Ramban, the story of Korach took place after the sin of the M'raglim, as its placement in th Torah indicates. Only because of B'nei Yisrael's despondency, caused by the revelation that they would remain in the desert for forty years, unable to enter Eretz Yisrael until the existing generation died out, was Korach able to muster support for his revolt. It was complaint that Danan and Aviram insolently sent as a reply to Moshe's attempt at reconciliation. "...We will not come (to speak with Moshe). Is it not enough that you brought us out of a land flowing with milk and honey (Egypt) to kill us in the desert, that you also make yourself a lord over us?! Even to a land flowing with milk and honey (Eretz Yisrael) you will not bring us, nor give us an inheritance of field and vineyard; Should you put those people's eyes out will will not come! [Bamidbar 16:12-14]"

However, based on Korach's contention with Moshe, and Moshe's response to Korach, as well as Hashem's response to the complaints of B'nei Yisrael, the Eben Ezra concludes that the story of Korach took place much earlier, when the Kohanim and Levi'im replaced the Bchorim (first born son's) as priests and temple functionaries. According to the Eben Ezra, the two hundred fifty leaders of B'nei Yisrael that went along with Korach were Bchorim that felt cheated out of their positions. For this reason the test that Moshe set for them was taking incense pans and offering incense before Hashem, just as a Kohen does.

Korach came to Moshe and Aharon and complained, "You take to much for yourselves, for all of the congregation is holy, and Hashem is among them, so why do you raise yourselves above the assembly of Hashem? [Bamidbar 15:3]" To this Moshe replied that the test of who is in fact the chosen of Hashem will be for each of the two hundred fifty men, and Korach and Aharon as well to take incense pans and offer incense before Hashem the

next morning, and let Hashem make known who is His choice.

Additional proof that the elevation of Shevet Levi was the cause of the revolt is the test of the staves. After the men who offered incense were burned to death by a heavenly fire, B'nei Yisrael Gathered around Moshe and Aharon, and accused them of killing Hashem's people. Hashem responded to their complaints with a plague that killed 14,700 people. The plague was only brought to an end by Aharon taking his incense pan an offering incense to hashem at Moshe's command. Afterward hashem commanded that the leader of each tribe give Moshe his staff, with Aharon giving his staff as the leader of Shevet Levi. Moshe put all of the staves in the Mishkan over night. The next morning Moshe entered the Mishkan "and behold, the staff of Aharon budded for the tribe of Levi, and it flowered and bloomed and bore ripe almonds. [Bamidbar 17:23]" Moshe brought out all of the staves for all to see, and each man came and took his staff. Hashem chose to silence the complaints of B'nei Yisrael in this manner because the basis of their complaint was that the elevation of Shevet Levi was Moshe and Aharon's own doing, and not the command of Hashem.

The Ramban accepts the explanation of the Eben Ezra as to the complaint of B'nei Yisrael, but rejects the possibility of these events taking place at the time of the elevation of the Levi'im because of where the story is recounted in the Torah, as well as because of the complaint of Danan and Aviram which shows that they already knew that they would not enter Eretz Yisrael. He therefore explains that although people had these complaints from the beginning, they did not voice them until after their punishment for the sin of the M'raglim put B'nei Yisrael in the mood to go along with the rebellion.

Unlike the Ramban, the Eben Ezra is not bothered by the placement of the story because according to his own understanding, the stories of the Torah are not necessarily written in order (Ein mukdam u'm'uchar batora). (The Ramban holds that the Stories of the Torah are in order unless the Torah specifically states otherwise.) However, if the events described in parashat Korach took place before the decree that the generation that left Egypt would not enter Eretz Yisrael, then why did Danan and Aviram accuse Moshe of bringing them into the desert to die instead of leading them into the promised land?

We can suppose that even according to the Eben Ezra there is a connection between the story of Korach and that of the M'raglim. If there was not there would be no reason for the Torah to put the two stories next to each other. The other obvious connection to the story of Korach is the sin of the Golden Calf, which was the reason the Bchorim lost their position to the Kohanim and Levi'im in the first place. Only Shevet Levi was totally free of the sin of the Golden Calf, and so only they responded to Moshe's call to arms to punish the sinners. It was this merit that they took the Bchorim's place as the the ones dedicated to Hashem.

After the sin of the Golden Calf, there was a another change besides the elevation of the Levi'im that was of at least equal consequence. At Mattan Torah B'nei Yisrael reached the spiritual level of human perfection (shleimut). This perfection was expressed in the "crowns" they were given. (Mattan Torah was their crowning moment.) After the sin of the Golden Calf B'nei Yisrael were commanded to remove these crowns, as they were no longer worthy of this symbol of perfection. These two changes caused B'nei Yisrael to experience great anxiety and self-doubt. They felt that they were some how second class Jews, that the Levi'im were insiders and the rest of B'nei Yisrael were outsiders.

Because they felt that they were flawed, many people also felt that they were never going to be able to enter Eretz Yisrael. Before the sin of the Golden Calf, the way things were supposed to work was that after Mattan Torah B'nei Yisrael would reach spiritual perfection, and then they would conquer Eretz Yisrael and build the Beit Hamikdash, which would lead to Yemot HaMashiach (the coming of the Mashiach and the "end of days"). Many people felt that they would need to regain their spiritual level before they would be able to enter Eretz Yisrael. In that way they could then proceed with the rest of the original plan. Because they doubted their ability to ever regain that level, (in fact they never did) they thought that they had lost the opportunity to enter the land, and would consequently die in the desert. This was the what stood behind Danan and Aviram's reply to Moshe.

Just as the people thought they needed to regain their spiritual level, they

also thought the the elevation of the Levi'im was a stop-gap measure that was taken to fill the void left by absence of worthy Bchorim, but that eventually the Bchorim also would regain their place, and in fact had the potential to do so.

The revolt of Korach and the two hundred and fifty Bchorim addressed these points exactly, and correctly opposed the idea that there were two classes of Jews, one close to Hashem and the other outside of Hashem's circle. Korach claimed that "all of the congregation is holy, and Hashem is among them." He therefore contended that the Bchorim should be able to take their rightful place, and that Shevet Levi should not be raised over the rest of the people. According to Korach, the difference between the spiritual status of the Levi'im and that of the rest of B'nei Yisrael on the one hand, and the Kohanim and that of the Bchorim on the other, was one of degree. If there were Bchorim that were men of spiritual stature then they should be able to perform the same duties as the Kohanim.

The fallacy of Korach's claim was that after the chait Ha'egel things were to be different, and the Bchorim would never again become Kohanim, just as B'nei Yisrael would never again reach the spiritual status of Mattan Torah in the desert. He did not believe that this had been decreed by Hashem, but rather that Moshe was using the temporary downfall of the Bchorim to permanently take their position for his own tribe.

The danger of Korach's claim was not the revolt in itself so much as the idea that even after the sin of the Golden Calf things remained basically unchanged, and therefore entering Eretz Yisrael was beyond the reach of Am Yisrael. If the people believed that they truly might never be able to enter the land. For this reason the revolt of Korach was put down very harshly. Korach and the two hundred fifty Bchorim were burned by a heavenly fire. Datan, Aviram, and the followers of Korach were swallowed alive by the earth. The people who continued to believe in the claims of Korach even after the two hundred fifty Bchorim were burned, were killed in a plague.

Unfortunately, because Korach's revolt was put down with force, instead of by explaining to him and the people the mistake that he was making, (Moshe did try to talk to them, but they wouldn't listen) the surviving members of B'nei Yisrael were left with the impression that Korach was totally in error. Korach's claim, however, was essentially correct, "all of the congregation is holy, and Hashem is among them." It was his conclusion that was the problem, "Why do you raise yourselves above the assembly of Hashem?"

As a result, there remained a large number of people who felt that they did not have Hashem on their side, and were therefore sure that they would not be able to enter Eretz Yisrael. This culminated with the Chait HaM'raglim, where B'nei Yisrael refused to enter Eretz Yisrael because they thought that Hashem would not fight for them.

Sending the M'raglim was in fact an attempt by Moshe to resolve the fears of B'nei Yisrael. Moshe knew even before he sent the M'raglim that they would bring back a report that would somehow state that it was not possible to enter Eretz Yisrael. (See Rashi on Yehoshua's name change [13:16] and Kalev's visit to Hevron [13:22], and Rashi on Hashem's reason for allowing the M'raglim to be sent {13:2}.) Moshe was waiting for them to come back with their negative report so there could be a public debate that would clear the air. If there was enough support for entering the land then they would indeed be able to enter. Unfortunately there were too many people who strongly doubted their own spiritual positions, and yet another change in policy was necessary.

There are (at least) two lessons to be learned here. The first is about the way to handle opposition to the Torah. There may be times when it is necessary to forcefully put down opposition, but even those times more harm than good can come of it.

The second is not to make the mistake that B'nei Yisrael made at the time of Korach's revolt and the Chait HaM'raglim. Too often we think that we need to return to "the way things were". Because that is usually impossible we become discouraged and give up hope. In the case of Eretz Yisrael the Torah tells us what to do. We need to first enter the land and then prepare ourselves for Yemot Hamashiach. When it comes to other spiritual goals we need to find the way ourselves, but the idea remains the same. In order to return to a previous spiritual level, we need to first return to the practice, and then we can work on our hearts. Shabbat shalom.