

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON PARSHAS KORACH - 5757

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OU Online Torah Insights for Shabbat Parashat Korach

The rebellion of Korach and his followers brings out a side of Moshe Rabbeinu that has not yet been seen. Moshe's role is usually that of caring shepherd and intercessor for Klal Yisrael when they sin. On their journey from Mitzrayim to Eretz Yisrael, Moshe always pleads with Hashem to be understanding and merciful, to forgive the offenses committed against Him. Now, however, Moshe's attitude seems to change. When Korach questions his authority, Moshe seeks only justice! Why, asks Rabbeinu Bachya, does Moshe respond differently than he did by the sin of the golden calf and the sin of the spies, when G-d's supremacy was challenged? It is possible that Moshe is more protective of his own honor than of Hashem's? Undoubtedly, the Jew's faith in Hashem, which should have remained firm after all they had witnessed during the exodus, was sorely lacking during the sin of the golden calf and the sin of the spies. These two sins surely mark two of the lowest moments in our people's collective history. These situations, orchestrated by Hashem, gave the Jewish people opportunities to succeed and grow. Whether at the shores of Yam Suf, the foot of Sinai, or the border of Israel, Klal Yisrael is challenged by Hashem to rely on Him and Him alone. These circumstances can be viewed as tests from Hashem, tests that the Jews failed one hundred percent, causing the sinful behavior that followed. Yet, in their defense, the Jewish people perceived themselves during those periods as being in a state of national crisis. Was it easy for a nation so dependent on Moshe to deal with the possibility of continuing on in the wilderness without his leadership? Was it easy for a people, unaccustomed to fighting, to envision conquering the land of Israel? They may have done poorly on these exams, but even the process of failing can be a source of future strength. Moshe, therefore, pleads again and again with Hashem to give them another chance. Korach and his followers, though, did not deserve that second chance. It is one thing to face a challenge and fail. But to create a crisis, to sow the seeds of disunity within the Jewish people, to generate strife and unnecessarily challenge the leadership of the Jewish people, these sins cannot be excused or forgiven. Korach took his personal agenda and planted it on the national stage. He put Klal Yisrael at risk. This type of threat can not be overlooked or tolerated.

Rabbi Marc Penner

Rabbi Penner is Rabbi of the Young Israel of Holliswood, Holliswood Jewish Center, Holliswood, Queens, N.Y.

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ohr@jer1.co.il (Ohr Somayach) weekly@jer1.co.il Insights

Cliffhanger 1 "For the entire assembly -- all of them -- are holy, and Hashem is among them." (16:3) On Simchas Torah there is a widely-observed custom to jump up and down while singing "Moshe is true and his Torah is true!" What is the source of this custom? In this week's Parsha, Korach and his cohorts were swallowed alive by the earth after Korach tried to supplant Moshe. In the Talmud (Bava Basra 73b), an Arabian merchant takes Rabba bar Bar Chana to a place in the desert where there are fissures in the ground. Fierce heat pours from these cracks. They put wool that was soaked in water onto sticks, and hold them over the crevice. Immediately, the wool goes up in flames. The Arabian merchant beckons Rabba bar Bar Chana closer. He motions to him to be silent and listen. From under the ground he hears voices saying "Moshe and his Torah are

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true and the others are liars!" Korach and all his household went down into the abyss. However, his children were not consumed. At the last second, they repented and a small promontory jutting out of the rock was created for them. Onto this small ledge, they jumped. When we jump up and down in shul on Simchas Torah, we are imitating Korach's children, who leaped onto the ledge and were saved from the abyss. Korach's claim was that all Jews are equally holy. Therefore if we are all equally holy, no one can be greater than anyone else. But as we dance in that circle on Simchas Torah, there can be both young students and great rabbis dancing together. In some ways, we are not all equal. And in other ways, we are. In the future, Hashem will make a circle-dance for the righteous and the Divine presence will be at its center. No one will be jealous of his neighbor, for everyone will see that he is equidistant from the center -- from Hashem. And those who saw themselves as diametrically opposed to each other will realize that they have always been equidistant from Hashem. "And Hashem is among them..."

Cliffhanger 2 "Korach, son of Yitzhar, son of Kehas, son of Levi..." (16:1) Only someone who knows what it means to be alone can really talk about loneliness. Only someone who has walked through the darkest night, can talk about what it means to long for the day. Yaakov Avinu was the Patriarch who is the model of the Jew in exile. He was forced to leave the holy soil of Eretz Yisrael and dwell with Lavan. Before he went into exile -- an exile which was to last 20 years -- he instituted the evening prayer that we say to this day -- Maariv. Maariv is the prayer of longing. It is the prayer of the night -- when we feel most alone. It is then that we turn to G-d out of our very loneliness and we find that He has been there with us all along. When the Torah delineates Korach's ancestry, it traces him back only to his great-grandfather Levi, but it stops short of linking his name one generation further back to Yaakov himself. Interestingly though, in the book of Chronicles, Heman, a descendent of Korach, and the main singer in the Beis Hamikdash of King Shlomo, is traced all the way back to Yaakov Avinu. Why should it be that Heman was linked back to Yaakov through Korach, but Korach himself was not? Korach's sons had originally joined in their father's plot. They realized the enormity of the schism that they were helping to create and they repented. When Korach was miraculously swallowed up by the earth, they were miraculously given a refuge within the cavern. Here, on the brink of oblivion, they sang. They sang songs of exquisite yearning for Hashem. Their songs bespeak the closeness that is borne of distance, of the longing to be close to G-d, that only someone who is very far away can adequately express. In this, they were reflecting the very essence of their forefather Yaakov, who had himself stood on the edge of the precipice of exile and prayed to G-d the prayer of the evening. Maariv. The prayer of exile. The prayer of longing.

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 Torah scrolls still needed a mezuzah on the door frame. Said Moshe "Yes." Korach started to mock him saying "If a single mezuzah affixed to the door frame of a house is enough to remind us of Hashem, surely a house full of Torah scrolls 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, no more and no less, even if

a house full of Torah scrolls may look more Jewish.

Haftorah: Shabbos-Rosh Chodesh: Yishayahu 66:1-24 When Rosh Chodesh fall on Shabbos, the regular Haftorah is replaced by a special Haftorah -- the last chapter of the Book of Yishayahu (Isaiah). This chapter was chosen because of its penultimate verse which links Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh: "And it shall be that, from New Moon to New Moon, and from Shabbos to Shabbos, all flesh shall come and prostrate themselves before Me, said Hashem." (66:23) This verse is also repeated after the end of the reading. Happy Birth Day "Shall I bring (a woman) to the birth stool and not have her give birth?" (66:9) When we look at the situation today, it's easy to despair. The strident metallic clang of materialism and selfishness seem to swamp out the message of the Torah and its People. The sensuous siren call of the media surrounds us all with a CD world of illusion. Virtual Reality masquerades as the real thing. The world seems to be deaf to morality, to modesty, to the values that are rooted in the Torah. The motto of the time is "Let it all hang out." In a world where there is nothing to be ashamed of, nothing brings shame, and thus anything is possible. And what is possible -- happens. Those who stand for the eternal values of our people are despised as fundamentalists and violent barbarians. Everything has been turned upside down. The prophets speak in many places about the coming of Mashiach in terms of childbirth. Someone ignorant of the process of childbirth who sees for the first time a woman in labor would be convinced that she is about to die. And the closer the actual moment of the birth, the stronger that impression would become. Then, within a couple of minutes, seeming tragedy has turned into the greatest joy. A new life has entered the world. This is exactly the way Mashiach will come. The worse things become, the more painful the birth-pangs, the nearer is his coming. Until, like a mother who had delivered, all the tears and pain will be forgotten in the great joy of a new life.

Sources: o Cliffhanger 1 - Rabbi C.J. Senter, Rabbi Zev Leff o Cliffhanger 2 - Rabbi Moshe Eismann, heard from Rabbi Moshe Zauderer o Kosher Style - Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz, heard from Rabbi Mordechai Perlman
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PARASHAT KORACH SICHVA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL
SHLIT" A

Dispute and Harmony

Summarized by Dvir Tchelet

"Vayikach Korach ben Yitzhar ben Kehat ben Levi..." (Bamidbar 16:1) Rashi points out to us that in the genealogy of Korach, Yaakov is left out, since he prayed that his name not be mentioned in connection with the Korachites' quarrel. His name is, however, mentioned as Korach's ancestor in the list of meshorerim (singers) which appears in Divrei Ha-yamim I (6:23). If we are told that Korach was a Levi, then obviously we know that he was a direct descendant of Yaakov! Is there really such a difference if Yaakov is mentioned or not? In order to answer this question, we must briefly examine some of the characteristics of Am Yisrael. The three most basic traits we know of are being rachmanim, bayshanim and gomlei chasadim (merciful, bashful, and benevolent). In a more amusing sense, another well-known trait is our great ability to argue with each other! The story is told of a ship-wrecked Jew who is finally saved by a ship sailing to his island. Upon coming ashore, the crew is treated to a scenic tour by the Jew of all the things he had built while on the island. He points out two structures and explains, "This is the shul where I pray and that other building - that is the shul I don't go to!" Of course, it's true that Am Yisrael has not had a shortage of machloket (dispute) over the years, but this can be understood. There are two main causes of machloket: concern for one another, and the need for absolute truth. Once every Jew feels a responsibility towards his fellow, he is

inevitably caught up in his friend's affairs. In the Western world today and especially in the United States, these values are played down by pluralism - everyone is an individual and everyone is right. Instead of respecting each others' views, people are indifferent to their fellow - "You do it your way and I'll do it mine!" Objective truth is lost. Too many truths eventually lead to a confused and contentious society. Judaism's search for absolute truth leads us to a point of achdut, a state where one accepted truth prevails. Rav Kook in Orot Ha-kodesh (Ma'amar Ha-shalom Ch. 11), explains that Am Yisrael cannot stand to be in a state of confrontation and disharmony since our nature is one of peace and unity. Therefore all our arguments are temporary, our goal being complete harmony - to become a "goy echad ba-arets." The midrash speaks of Avraham, whose distinguishing trait was chesed (lovingkindness), as being like a mountain, overlooking and open to the whole world. Yitzchak, representing gevura (self-conquest), was more concerned with personal achievements; he was likened to the sadeh, a flat field unseen by others. If Avraham was the thesis and Yitzchak the antithesis, then Yaakov, who according to Kabbala has the trait of tiferet (splendor, harmony), was the synthesis. Yaakov is called bayit, a house which can be seen by those sensitive to such harmony.

It is obvious to us that Korach, being a Levi, was a descendant of Yaakov, but Yaakov specifically asked not to be mentioned here since he realized that Korach's intention was in fact to cause machloket among Bnei Yisrael. Korach's interest in argument was not based on a genuine search for truth but rather a desire to cause disharmony and divide the nation.

In Divrei Ha-yamim, when Yaakov is mentioned in connection with Korach, the reason is clear: here we are talking about the duties of the Levi'im - one of these duties being the "shir," the song which they would sing in the Temple. Here a sensitivity to harmony is indeed necessary. The ability to pick out the wrong notes from within the tune brings the song to a point of refinement.

With regard to learning Torah, one must also realize the necessity for argument. The most constructive form of learning is opposition. If you don't agree, argue! Don't just accept, otherwise you will never understand the 'din' from all its perspectives. The previous Rosh Yeshiva of Chevron once remarked: "The tzadikim are ruining my yeshiva!" Those "tzadikim" who refuse to argue with their colleagues because they feel "He is greater than me - after all who am I?!", lose sight of the deeper meaning to the machloket - combining and sifting all the differing opinions to form one harmonious truth. The mishna in Avot tells us that the machloket of the Korachites was not an argument for the sake of Heaven, since it was rooted in the desire to cause disharmony. On the other hand, the machloket of Hillel and Shamai is called an argument for the sake of Heaven since its goal was harmony, unity, and absolute truth. A rabbi and a student can argue fiercely over a gemara, but they dare not close their books until they reinstate their love and respect for one another, until they transform their machloket into a point of meeting, a point of truth. (Originally delivered at Seuda Shelishit, Shabbat Parashat Korach 5755.)

"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frاند on Parshas Korach

Where's the 'Lemon?' The parsha begins with the famous words "VaYikach Korach." Literally translated, this means "And Korach took." All the commentaries, going as far back as the Talmud, are bothered by this expression. The Torah never tells us what Korach took! In the Talmud, Resh Lakish [Sanhedrin 109b] teaches, "he took a bad deal for himself" ('lakach' meaning 'to buy'). In effect he bought a lemon! He made a real bad deal for himself. Although Resh Lakish is trying to solve the problem of the strange language, it would seem however, that he really is not helping us very much. Korach did not buy anything here. Why should the word 'vaYikach' indicate a bad business deal? Where is the 'lemon' that Korach supposedly purchased for himself? In order to answer this question, we need to understand another aspect of the incident of Korach. Rash"i asks, "Weren't the 250 people who joined Korach, in effect, fools? And Korach was a wise man -- how did he do such a stupid thing?" Moshe Rabbeinu warned them that G-d would only choose one person. The odds of any of Korach's followers being chosen were

at best 1 in 250! One has to be a fool to take such odds. Even in Russian roulette (spinning a revolver with 6 barrels and 1 bullet and then firing at one's head), although one may be foolhardy to play, he doesn't have to be crazy -- the odds are 5 out of 6 in his favor! Rash"i wants to know how Korach could have done such a crazy thing. Rashi answers that his eyes misled him. He prophetically saw a chain of greatness descending from him (including Samuel the prophet, who was equated with Moshe and Aharon, and twenty-four Mishmaros who were blessed with Ruach HaKodesh [Divine Inspiration]). Based on this, he felt he had personal greatness and could in fact be the 1 out of 250 who G-d would choose. The question then becomes a different one. We now understand how Korach could have been misled. But why in fact did he merit having a descendant like Shmuel HaNavi? How does such a wicked person like Korach, who the Talmud says is judged in Gehinom every thirty days, have hundreds of offspring who possess the holy spirit, if he was so evil? Rav Yosef Salant quotes in the name of the "precious of Jerusalem" that if a person does a good thing in this world, G-d must pay him reward. Korach did a wonderful thing in this world: He made a tremendous Kiddush HaShem and proved Moshe Rabbeinu right. By standing up and challenging Moshe's prophecy and demanding a proof from G-d that Moshe was entitled to his role, Korach -- despite the audacity of his actions -- did make a great Kiddush HaShem. Everyone saw that Moshe was True and His Torah was true. After that, no one doubted Moshe Rabbeinu's leadership. After that, no one doubted the Master of the World. That was a tremendous Sanctification of the Divine Name! Because G-d does not neglect the reward due to any living creature [Pesachim 118a], Korach's payment -- as poor as his intentions were, and he certainly did not do it for the right reasons -- was having these great and distinguished descendants. If that is the case, we can now understand what Resh Lakish means by saying that Korach made a bad deal. Yes, Korach merited Samuel the prophet and yes he merited all the offspring that had Ruach HaKodesh, but what price did he pay? He paid for it with his life, his Olam HaZeh, his Olam HaBah, and with all his property. Yes, Korach bought something -- wonderful grandchildren. But he paid a terrible price. The price was his own life and all that he possessed, both his Gashmiyus and his Ruchniyus. The purchase was not worth the price. He got a bad deal!

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weekly-halacha@torah.org WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5757

SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS KORACH

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

And Korach took... (16:1) Korach asked... A house full of Seforim, does it require a Mezuzah? (Medrash Rabbah 18:3)

THE MITZVAH OF MEZUZAH: THE BASIC OBLIGATION By pointing out the "absurdity" of affixing a Mezuzah to the door of a house filled with holy sefarim, Korach hoped to discredit the legitimacy of Moshe as the agent through whom Hashem transmitted His will to the Jewish people. Korach claimed that laws that did not make sense to him were not of Divine origin but formulated by Moshe. When the earth swallowed Korach and his followers, their blasphemous claim was demolished by Hashem Himself with utter finality: All mitzvos were given by Hashem to Moshe at Har Sinai, complete in all their aspects and transmitted exactly as they were received; we submit to all Divine commandments regardless of how sensible they seem to our limited and imperfect understanding. As the halachos of mezuzah were targeted by Korach as an object of derision, we shall discuss hilchos mezuzah.

THE OBLIGATION: It is a Biblical obligation for all adults, men and women(1), to affix a mezuzah to the right post of each doorway of their home. One who fails to do so transgresses a positive command(2). The

mezuzah also serves as protection for a home(3) and safeguards the well-being of one's little children(4). The intention that one must have, however, when affixing the mezuzah to the door, must be "for the sake of the mitzvah of mezuzah(5)." Indeed, it is prohibited to consciously have in mind that the mezuzah is for the purpose of protection. Such an intention detracts from the essential character of a mitzvah, which is to fulfill Hashem's will with no other considerations(6).

Many poskim hold that it is rabbinically prohibited to live in a home which does not have proper mezuzos, just as it is prohibited to wear a four-cornered garment without tzitzis(7). These poskim rule that if another house is available, one must move out of his home as soon as he realizes that it is lacking proper mezuzos. He is permitted to temporarily remain in his home only if he is unable to obtain a mezuzah on the spot, or if he found out on Shabbos that his home has no mezuzah(8). Other poskim are somewhat more lenient and do not require the residents to move out if they have already moved in(9). All agree that the problem must be rectified immediately. There is absolutely no excuse for delaying the purchase and placement of a mezuzah for several days or weeks.

One may enter another Jew's home even though there are no mezuzos on his door(10). It is clearly prohibited to nail a mezuzah case to a door post on Shabbos and Yom Tov(11). If the mezuzah case was nailed in before Shabbos or Yom Tov and remains intact, but the mezuzah parchment fell out, some poskim permit replacing the mezuzah in the case while others prohibit it(12). In any case, the mezuzah parchment does not become muktzeh and it may be picked up so that it does not lie on the floor in disgrace(13).

WHEN DOES THE OBLIGATION OF MEZUZAH BEGIN? Contrary to what is commonly believed, the obligation begins as soon as one moves into his own home. By the first day or night that a home will be occupied, or by the first day or night that an addition to a home will be used, every doorway must have a mezuzah. [Indeed, many poskim hold that one should not affix a mezuzah before actually moving into a house(14) [even though he owns it and plans to move in in the near future], and certainly the blessing should not be recited until the actual move(15). Other poskim hold that once he has moved his belongings into the house, the mezuzah may be affixed with a blessing(16).] It is only when one rents [or borrows] a home from another person [outside of Eretz Yisroel] that a thirty day(17) waiting period is allowed until one becomes obligated to affix a mezuzah(18). The rishonim argue as to the reason for this exemption. Rashi (19) explains that until thirty days have elapsed, one can easily change his mind about the rental; thus the house is not really "his" until thirty days are over. Tosfos explains that the first thirty days of residence are considered as "temporary dwelling," and temporary dwelling does not obligate one to affix a mezuzah. Based on Rashi's explanation, it follows that when a long-term contract is signed which legally obligates the renter for an extended period of time, then the obligation of mezuzah takes effect immediately(20). Moreover, if upon moving into the house, the renter fixes it up in a manner which shows that he is planning to remain there for a long while, logic dictates that a mezuzah be put up and the proper blessing recited. This, indeed, is the view of some poskim(21), and one may conduct himself in accordance with this view(22). But many poskim advise that although the mezuzah should be affixed immediately upon moving in, the blessing should not be recited until the thirty day period is up(23). At that time, it is proper to remove one mezuzah, recite the blessing, and return the mezuzah to its proper place. If it is difficult or bothersome to do so, then the mezuzah need not be removed - merely touching it is sufficient for the blessing to be recited(24). [An exception to this is when one rents a bungalow or a summer home for a short stay. In such a case, the poskim agree that thirty days should elapse before a mezuzah is affixed(25).] If the thirty-day period is up on Shabbos or Yom Tov, the mezuzah should be affixed on Erev Shabbos or Erev Yom Tov before lighting candles. The blessing should be recited at that time(26).

FOOTNOTES: 1 Y.D. 291:3. 2 Sefer ha-Chinuch 423. See Menachos 44a where it states that two positive commands are transgressed. See also Teshuvos Binyan Tzion 7. 3 Tur Y.D. 285 based on Talmud Avodah Zarah

11a. 4 Shabbos 32b. 5 Tur Y.D. 285; Aruch ha-Shulchan 285:3. 6 Sdei Chemed (Mem-114) quoting Derech ha-Melech, based on Rambam (Hilchos Mezuzah 5:4) and Kesef Mishne, *ibid.* See also Igros Moshe Y.D. 2:141 who explains this issue at length. 7 Magen Avraham O.C. 13:8 as explained by Pri Megadim O.C. 38:15; Avnei Nezer Y.D. 381. 8 Pischei Teshuvah YD 285:1 quoting Pri Megadim; Aruch ha-Shulchan 285:5; Ben Ish Chai (Ki Savo). 9 See Sdei Chemed (Mem-115) Kuntres ha-Mezuzah (pg. 6 and pg. 128) and Tzitz Eliezer 13:53 who quote several poskim who hold that the Rabbis did not prohibit entering a house that has no mezuzah nor did they require one to move out of his dwelling when he realizes that there is a problem with the mezuzah. 10 Sdei Chemed (Mem-115) quoting Ruach Chaim. 11 Mishnah Berurah 313:41; 314:8. 12 Sdei Chemed (Mem-115) quotes both views. See Binyan Shabbos pg. 27 for an explanation. Tzitz Eliezer 13:53 rules leniently, while Mezuzos Melachim 286:19 is stringent. 13 Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 28). 14 See Chovas Hadar 9:1. 15 Mishnah Berurah 19:4. This is the proper way - Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (oral ruling quoted in Avnei Yashfei 2:80). 16 Harav C. Kanievsky (Mezuzos Bei'secha 276:78) quoting the Chazon Ish. This also seems to be the view of the Aruch ha-Shulchan O.C. 19:3. 17 The day of the move, even if it is close to night, is day number 1. 29 days later, the obligation takes effect. 18 Y.D. 286:22 19 Menachos 44a. 20 Siddur Derech ha-Chayim quoted in Pischei Teshuvah 286: 18. 21 Several poskim quoted in Sdei Chemed (Mem - 115) and Chovas ha-Dar pg. 31. 22 Aruch ha-Shulchan 286:49. See also Chayei Adam 15:22. 23 Pischei Teshuvah 286:18; Nachlas Tzvi; Sdei Chemed (Mem-115); Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:179. 24 Igros Moshe, *ibid.* 25 Igros Moshe, *ibid.* 26 Kuntres ha-Mezuzah, pg. 82. Another option is to nail the mezuzah case to the post before Shabbos and insert the mezuzah on Shabbos (Chikrei Leiv Y.D. 128). But, as stated earlier, some poskim do not allow this act on Shabbos.

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parasha-page@jer1.co.il Intriguing glimpses into the weekly Torah reading
P * A * R * A * S * H * A - P * A * G * E

by Mordecai Kornfeld of Har Nof, Jerusalem (kornfeld@virtual.co.il)
Dedicated to the memory of Dina bas Menachem Aryeh, mother of my uncle,
Mr. Naftoli Bodner of Queens, N.Y. Her Yahrzeit is on 14 Sivan.
Parashat Korach 5757

NOT EYE!

Moshe sent a messenger to call Dan and Aviram the sons of Eliav. They brazenly disregarded his summons, saying, "We will not come to you! Is it not enough that you took us out of a land of milk and honey (Egypt!) in order to kill us in the desert? Must you also lord over us? You have not brought us to the Land of Milk and Honey, nor have you given us fields and vineyards. Will you gouge out those men's eyes? We will not come up!" (Bamidbar 16:12-14)

Datan and Aviram's choice of threat is rather strange. Who ever mentioned gouging out anyone's eyes? And to which men were Dan and Aviram referring, when they mentioned "those men's eyes?" The Midrashim and Torah commentators have proposed various explanations for this verse. Here are three of my favorites.

II TARGUM YONATAN (ad loc., as embellished by Kli Yakar) explains as follows: Dan and Aviram were accusing Moshe of not being able to bring them to Eretz Yisroel because the inhabitants were too powerful -- as the Jewish spies had claimed in last week's Parasha. In truth, there was of course nothing to be afraid of. Moshe had promised the Jewish People that no matter how powerful the inhabitants of Eretz Yisroel were, they would be easily conquered by the Jewish nation because Hashem would

send hornets into Eretz Yisroel "to sting the Canaanites in their eyes and blind them," humbling them before the Jews (Shmot 23:28, according to Gemara Sota 36a). Dan and Aviram doubted Moshe's word. They were taunting him, saying, "Will Hashem really send hornets to gouge out the eyes of the Canaanites, as you promised, so that we can get our promised fields and vineyards? Since it does not look like He will, our nation certainly will not "go up" to Eretz Yisroel (Aliyah = going up)!"

III Alternatively, Dan and Aviram were telling Moshe that he had nothing to threaten them with. The nation had already been warned that they would not enter the Land of Milk and Honey (they would step foot no further than "Ever Hayarden," or the eastern Trans-Jordan, which lacked "milk and honey" according to the Sifri's comment on Devarim 26:9) -- hence, "You have not brought us to the Land of Milk and Honey." In Ever Hayarden, Moshe would not be the one to "give out" "fields and vineyards" to the nation (since the Jewish People conquered it on their own, without Moshe's explicit command -- Sifri *ibid.* 26:10), hence "Nor have you given us fields and vineyards." There was only one thing that Dan and Aviram could still be threatened with: Moshe could prevent them from even "seeing" Eretz Yisroel from the outside -- something that Moshe Rabbeinu would later yearn for, and be granted (Rashi Devarim 3:27). This is why they exclaimed, "Even if you were to threaten us with gouging out our eyes, so that we would not be able to behold Eretz Yisroel, we still would refuse to listen to you!" (MESHECH CHOCHMAH, 16:1. This explanation is based on Rashi's contention -- 16:14 -- that "their eyes" refers to Dan and Aviram's "own" eyes. When referring to calamity a person will talk in the third person even though he really is referring to himself.)

IV We may suggest another approach. Moshe Rabbeinu had relayed Hashem's promise to the Bnai Yisroel, that He would bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey. Dan and Aviram were upset that they were not yet brought to such a land. It occurred to Dan and Aviram that Moshe could counter that they already "were" in a land "flowing milk in honey." Although they were encamped in the desert, the divine Manna fell around their camp every day. The Manna tasted as sweet as honey and was white as milk (Shmot 16:31), and when the sun rose every morning, what was left in the fields melted into rivulets that flowed through the desert (Rashi *ibid.*). Moshe could therefore claim to have brought the Jewish People to a land "flowing with milk and honey"! Dan and Aviram prepared themselves for such an argument. They told Moshe Rabbeinu, "You haven't brought us to a "real" land of milk and honey -- you haven't given us a land with "fields and vineyards", just a barren desert!" What difference did it make to Dan and Aviram if the Manna was their milk and honey or if they received "true" milk and honey? Didn't the Manna taste just as good as milk and honey? In fact, we are told that any taste one would desire could be tasted in the Manna (Rashi Bamidbar 11:5). Why should Dan and Aviram be disappointed? The reason they were disappointed could only have been because they in fact did not enjoy the Manna quite as much as true delicacies, since all they could "see" when eating was the bland-looking Manna. Part of the pleasure of fine dining is enjoying the "sight" of the food (Yoma 74b, with regard to the Manna). This, then, may be the meaning of the concluding statement of Dan and Aviram. Their complaint was based on their lack of visual pleasure. They arrogantly added, "Even if you gouge out our eyes so that we have nothing more to complain about, since we won't have visual pleasure even from the fruit of fields and vineyards, we still won't heed your requests!"

Mordecai Kornfeld [Email: kornfeld@virtual.co.il] T1/Fx(02)6522633
6/12 Katzenelenbogen St. | kornfeld@netmedia.co.il US:(718)520-0210
Har Nof, Jerusalem, ISRAEL | kornfeld@shemayisrael.co.il | POB:43087,
Jrslm

Peninim on the Torah Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Hebrew Academy of Cleveland

Parshas Korach

And Korach ben Yitzhar ben Kehas ben Levi separated himself (16:1)

Korach was not simply another hatemonger who sought to usurp Moshe and Aharon as a result of intense feelings of envy. Korach was among those who "carried" the Aron Ha'kodesh. He was obviously sensitive to the fact that the Aron was in reality carrying those who attempted to carry it. It would be unrealistic to think that an individual who was so aware of Hashem should stoop to such machlokes, controversy, unless something "noble" motivated him. The Kotzker Rebbe, zl, explains that Korach sought Kehunah, He felt that he could serve Hashem better if he were a Kohen. His complete devotion to serve Hashem drove him to act the way that he did. Let us analyze this further. Korach knew that Moshe was chosen by Hashem to lead Klal Yisrael. He was also acutely aware that Hashem implemented the many miracles connected with Yetzias Mitzrayim, the exodus from Egypt, and the daily existence in the desert through Moshe's agency. The Agra D'Kalach claims that while Korach was exempt from the service of offering korbanos because he was not a Kohen, he was nonetheless troubled about his lack of participation in this lofty service. Korach agonized over his lack of inclusion in the Kehunah to the point that he was driven to machlokes. What went wrong with Korach? His intentions were noble. How did he become the paradigm of conflict? The answer, claims the Agra D'Kallah, lies in Korach's approach towards effecting his goal. The most noble mitzvah loses its sanctity if it is involved with strife. No position, regardless of its distinction, has value if it was stimulated by strife. If divisiveness is the means, if contention coupled with slander are the tools for erecting the edifice, then it has no meaning. It is not a mitzvah; it is transformed into a contemptible aveirah. Korach thought his yetzer tov, good inclination, had inspired him to challenge Moshe. He did not realize that his "frumer" yetzer hora, evil inclination, was spurring him on. The yetzer hora is very clever. Why should it attempt to convince us to sin if it can convince us that the aveirah we are about to perform is a mitzvah; the individual we are about to disparage is an obstacle in the way of our spiritual progress. A mitzvah that is created through an aveirah is not in fact a mitzvah. This represents the yetzer hora's ultimate triumph: distorting a person's mitzvos, for then he has nothing. While contentiousness and strife have been with us for a long time, nothing is as reprehensible as the self-righteous type of machlokes that some justify in the name of a mitzvah. Perhaps, people who behave in this manner should evaluate their idea of what constitutes a mitzvah. This article is provided as part of Shema Yisrael <http://www.shemayisrael.co.il>

ohr@jerl.co.il (Ohr Somayach) parasha-qa@jerl.co.il Parshas Korach

Parsha Questions 1. According to Rashi, where can you look to find a nice explanation of this week's Parasha? 2. What did Korach "take"? 3. Why is Yaakov's name not mentioned in Korach's genealogy? 4. What motivated Korach to rebel? 5. What warning did Moshe give the rebels regarding the offering of the incense? 6. Who was as great as Moshe and Aharon? 7. What event did Korach not foresee? 8. What lands are described in this week's Parsha as "flowing with milk and honey"? 9. What did Korach do the night before the final confrontation? 10. Before what age is a person not punished by the Heavenly Tribunal for his sins? 11. The censers used by Korach's assembly were made into an overlay for the mizbe'ach. This was to serve as a warning. What was the purpose of the sign? 12. What happens to one who rebels against the institution of kehuna? Who suffered such a fate? 13. Why specifically was incense used to stop the plague? 14. Why was Aaron's staff placed in the middle of the other eleven staffs? 15. Aaron's staff was kept as a sign. What did it signify? 16. Why are the 24 gifts for the kohanim taught in this week's Parsha? 17. Who may eat the kodshei kodashim (most holy sacrifices), and where must they be eaten? 18. Why is Hashem's covenant with the kohanim called "a covenant of salt"? 19. What is a "yekev"? 20. If a levi comes to the pile of grain on the threshing floor before terumah gedolah has been separated, what must he do before receiving his own tithe?

Bonus QUESTION: "But if Hashem creates a new phenomenon, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them... then you'll know that these

people have rebelled against Hashem." (16:30) What was so unusual about the ground opening up and destroying Korach's followers? Aren't earthquakes somewhat common?

I Did Not Know That! Korach's followers attacked Moshe with their mouths by making fun of him and provoking rebellion against him. Their sin was compounded by their lowly spiritual stature compared to that of Moshe. Therefore, they were punished measure for measure: The "lowly of lowlies" -- the ground -- opened its mouth and swallowed them. Abarbanel

Recommended Reading List Ramban 16:21 The Sin of the Congregation 16:29 The Sin of Dasan and Aviram 16:30 A New Creation 18:7 The Gifts of the Kehuna 18:20 Inheritance of the Kehuna Sefer Hachinuch 389 Defined Roles 394 Service of the Levi'im 395 Ma'aser Rishon (The First Tithe) Sforno 16:15 Nullifying Atonement 16:32 Why Also Their Possessions

Answers to this Week's Questions All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated 1. 16:1 - Midrash Rabbi Tanchuma. 2. 16:1 - He "took himself" out of the community in order to incite dissension. 3. 16:1 - Yaakov prayed that his name would not be mentioned in connection with Korach's rebellion (Bereshis 49:6). 4. 16:1 - He was jealous that Elzaphan ben Uziel was appointed as leader of the family of Kehas instead of himself. 5. 16:6 - Only one person would survive. 6. 16:7 - Shmuel HaNavi. 7. 16:7 - That his sons would repent. (Shmuel and the 24 groups of Levi'im were their descendants.) 8. 16:12 - Egypt and Canaan. 9. 16:19 - He went from tribe to tribe in order to rally support for himself. 10. 16:27 - Twenty years old. 11. 17:3 - To serve as a remembrance of the challenge to the kehuna and that the rebels were burned. 12. 17:5 - He is stricken with tzara'as, as was King Uziyahu (Divrei HaYamim II 26:16-19). 13. 17:13 - Because the people were deprecating the incense offering, saying that it caused the death of two of Aharon's sons and also the death of 250 of Korach's followers. Therefore, Hashem demonstrated that the incense offering was able to avert death, and that sin, not incense, causes death. 14. 17:21 - So that people would not say that Aaron's staff bloomed because Moshe placed it closer to the Shechina. 15. 17:25 - That only Aaron and his children were selected for the kehuna. 16. 18:8 - Since Korach claimed the kehuna, the Torah emphasizes Aaron's and his descendants' rights to Kehuna by recording the gifts given to them. 17. 18:10 - Male kohanim may eat them and only in the azara (fore-court of the Beis Hamikdash). 18. 18:19 - Just as salt never spoils, so this covenant will never be rescinded. 19. 18:27 - The vat in front of the wine press into which the wine flows. 20. 18:29 - He must first set aside 1/50th of the pile -- the average amount given as terumah gedolah -- before taking his tenth from the pile.

Bonus ANSWER: In the case of Korach's followers, "the land covered them up and they were lost from among the community (16:33)." Usually an earthquake results in a gaping chasm, but here the earth opened like a mouth, swallowed them, and closed again, leaving no trace of the people. Abarbanel

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Reuven Subar General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman Production Design: Lev Seltzer (C) 1997 Ohr Somayach International
