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ON **KORAH** - 5766

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From: [RabbiWein@jewishdestiny.com](mailto:RabbiWein@jewishdestiny.com) Sent:  
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**Rabbi Wein's Weekly Columns**  
**KORACH**

The Midrash goes to great lengths to extol the virtues, greatness and importance of Korach. It naturally does so in order to place into juxtaposition the foolishness and meanness of his behavior towards Moshe and Aharon, behavior that leads to his destruction. Yet, in describing the greatness of Korach – a leader of the tribe of Levi, one of the bearers of the holy Ark, the wealthiest man in Israel, a close relative of Moshe and Aharon – the Midrash is probing to discover the great fault and flaw in his character that eventually dooms him to destruction.

On the surface at least, there is little that separates him from Moshe and Aharon. His claim to leadership apparently has enough merit to it that hundreds of leading Jews join him in his complaint against Moshe's rule. His populist slogan, that all of the people are holy and worthy and Moshe has no right to rule over them in a single-handed fashion, resonates amongst the Jews. If all of this is the case then what is Korach's problem? Why does his seemingly justified stance lead to such an abysmal downfall? What trait of Jewish leadership is he so lacking that its absence negates all of the positive qualities that seem to surround him?

The simple answer to this question is provided in rabbinic writings, especially in the works of the great Chasidic masters as well as in the teachings of the men of Mussar. And that answer is that Korach is destroyed by his own hubris. He never doubts his holiness, he is smug in his righteousness, and he sees himself as being almost infallible. He is confident that G-d will follow Korach's plans, for how can it be otherwise? He is so convinced of his rectitude that he actually believes the inner voice that propels his quest for power and station is, so to speak, God's voice instructing him to rise up against Moshe's rule.

The Torah taught us a few weeks ago that Moshe was the most humble and modest human being on earth. Moshe's refrain, even in this crisis with Korach, is that he and Aharon are nothing. Moshe has no opinion of his own - he is only the faithful servant of God. Jewish leaders require self-confidence. But they should never confuse this confidence with infallibility.

Even after decisions have been made and policies actually executed, the leader must review his plans and ideas. He must always ask what does G-d want of me rather than what do I want of God. The essential difference between Korach and Moshe is reflected in their approach to this matter.

The rabbis in Avot warned us not to trust ourselves in our holiness and piety even to the last day of our lives. Self-righteousness breeds arrogance and hubris, which in turn spell disaster for the individual and the community. Modesty and humility can temper hasty and ill-advised policies and decisions. All of the Jewish people may be, in the words of Korach and his supporters, holy people. But unfortunately not all of them are blessed with the quality of modesty and true self-analysis that alone can save otherwise great people from unforeseen disaster.

Shabat shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein

**CHARITY**

**Rabbi Berel Wein**

One of the basic principles of Jewish life is charitable giving and behavior. The Mishna in Avot lists charitable behavior and giving as one of the three pillars upon which the world rests. Our father Avraham and his wife Sarah, the founders of the Jewish people, are distinguished not only for their spreading of monotheism in an otherwise pagan world, but, as importantly, for their charitable and hospitable behavior towards all human beings. The concept and value of charity has thus become ingrained within the Jewish psyche and has always been a distinguishing characteristic of Jewish society and individuality.

The Talmud records for us that one should not pray to G-d without first giving alms to the needy. This is in fulfillment of the verse "And I will view Your face, so to speak, through righteousness and charity to others." It is therefore perfectly understandable why the synagogue is always the first address to be visited by those who find themselves in need and financial distress.

At Jewish funerals, charity boxes are distributed and filled in confirmation of the verse "Charity spares one from death." At weddings and other festive occasions special arrangements are made for the poor and the needy and again the words of the rabbis of Avot ring in our ears: "May the needy be considered as members of your own household." In short, it is obvious that charity to others is the social basis of Jewish life and society. The Talmud lists it as one of the identifying qualities of a Jew.

The rabbis in the Talmud have detailed for us the exact rules regarding giving charity. A Jew is supposed to spend ten percent of one's income on charity. One is not to spend so much on charity as to endanger one's own financial stability. Being forced to depend upon others, even (or perhaps especially) on one's children or family is deemed to be a very negative matter in the eyes of the Torah. Thus the rabbis warned against spending more than twenty percent of one's income and assets on charity at one time.

To a great extent, Judaism believes in the adage that charity begins at home. One is not allowed to ignore the needs of one's own family and relatives in favor of others – "you shall not ignore the needs of your own flesh and blood." Support of the scholars of Torah is a priority in giving charity. Helping pay for the expenses of the wedding and the fundamental household necessities of a young couple starting out in their new life together is also high on the list of charitable projects. Support of the sick and the bereaved, the orphan and the widow, is mentioned often in the Torah.

Worthy of special charitable consideration is also the support of Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel and the strengthening of the Jewish community there. The giving of charity is seen to increase the likelihood of peace and harmony in the Jewish community. The rabbis felt that those blessed with wealth are therefore specially privileged but also specially obligated to contribute to charity according to the blessed means with which G-d has endowed them. Thus great individual philanthropy has always also been a staple of Jewish life and society throughout the ages.

The rabbis connected the willingness to give charity without hesitation and reservation to the observance of the laws of kashrut. Just as there exists a physical cholesterol that can block the arteries to one's heart, so too is there a spiritual cholesterol caused by non-kosher foods that eventually stops up the Jewish heart from being charitable. Though exact figures on this matter have not been published, anecdotally it can be said that the proportion and frequency of charity amongst Jews who observe kashrut is far higher than amongst the others. This generalization naturally has significant exceptions but in the main it is accurate. The numbers of people giving to charitable Jewish causes in the United States has declined over the past decades while the amounts raised nevertheless have stabilized or even increased.

The decline in numbers is directly traceable to the alarmingly increasing assimilation, intermarriage and rates of non-observance of Torah laws in that society. Giving charity requires effort, training, habit and belief. Otherwise the muscles of the heart and hand that have to sign the check atrophy and die, at least as far as charitable giving is concerned. And since the Torah guaranteed us that "the poor will never disappear from the face of the earth" it is obvious that the necessity and privilege of giving charity will also always be with us.

Shabat shalom. Berel Wein

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### **Peninim on the Torah** **by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum** Parshas Korach

Korach took (separated himself). (16:1) Korach's dispute superficially seemed focused l'shem Shomayim, for the sake of Heaven. He sought to elevate himself spiritually, to serve Hashem on a higher plane. The Kehunah, Priesthood, was the next step on the ladder of spiritual ascendancy. This is the medium that the yetzer hora, evil-inclination, employs when enticing us to sin. It is always l'shem mitzvah, for the purpose of carrying out a mitzvah. How can it be wrong? The yetzer hora convinces us to transgress, but it is most certainly in the guise of a mitzvah. Anyone who has a modicum of common sense can see right through its ruse. Regrettably, many of us are deficient in this commodity.

What is the litmus test? How does an individual distinguish between the yetzer hora's blandishment and the "real thing"? The Agra D'Kallah gives us a practical guideline towards differentiating between the truth of one's actions and the purity of his intentions. A person should cogently ask himself if his avodas Hashem, service to the Almighty, with regard to all other mitzvos has the same level of intensity as does this endeavor upon which he is now embarking. Does he observe Shabbos with the same devotion? Is his davening, prayer, attendance as fully committed? Does his general mitzvah observance parallel his present attitude towards this mitzvah? If he perceives a disparity between his general observance and his devotion to his present undertaking, he should see a red flag. Something is seriously wrong. This mitzvah is the work of the yetzer hora, and less of a mitzvah than he has been led to think.

The Satmar Rebbe, zl, noted that we often find people whose general commitment is, at best, lukewarm, but when the opportunity to fulfill certain mitzvos surfaces, they suddenly become filled with a newly discovered passion that is inconsistent with their overall relationship with Torah and mitzvos. That is the yetzer hora speaking, motivating them to commit to a certain endeavor, despite the misgivings of the gedolei Yisrael's, Torah leadership's, sage counsel. They are under the influence of the yetzer hora, which has captivated their minds and hearts.

Eisav ha'rasha was the paragon of evil. Yet, Chazal say that no one had ever been able to achieve his level of Kibud av, honoring his father. How are we to understand this? How could one who is the archetype of evil fulfill a mitzvah so well? Horav Chaim Mordechai Katz, zl, explains that when one chooses to fulfill one mitzvah out of the entire Torah, that is not mitzvah fulfillment. It is another form of worship - certainly not directed towards Hashem. We cannot pick and choose mitzvos out of convenience or personal affinity. One is either committed to Hashem, or he is not. While it is true that it is easier for us to relate to certain mitzvos, and certain mitzvos have greater appeal to human nature, one's attitude and level of commitment towards all mitzvos must be on the same level. Otherwise, he has lost sight of the meaning and purpose of the mitzvos.

Korach took (separated himself). (16:1)

Chazal teach us that prior to the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash, Klal Yisrael heard prophesy from three Neviim, prophets. The message was the same, although the venues were disparate. Yirmiyahu prophesized in the markets and the public square, where the people could be found. Tzephaniah went to the shuls and batei medrash to reach those who did not hear the message in the markets. Chuldah spoke to the women. The reason is that there was limited time. If Yirmiyahu had waited for the people to come to him, he would have had no listeners. He was compelled to go to the streets to reach the people. Tzephaniah communicated with those who were not in the market, but in the bais hamedrash. The women heard on their own turf. Chazal are teaching us that there were no listeners "waiting" to hear the dvar, word, of Hashem. The Neviim had to go to the people's home ground to reach them. Furthermore, one Navi was not sufficient. They needed three Neviim.

Horav Shlomo Y. Elyashiv, Shlita, notes the contrast between conveying dvar Hashem and, l'havdil, Korach's message. When Korach commenced with his demagoguery, he had no problem whatsoever convening a crowd. When the message is anti-Torah, the crowds flock to listen. Korach shared with his captivated crowd the following story: In his neighborhood, a widow lived with two orphaned daughters. She owned one small field. When she was about to plow, Moshe Rabbeinu told her, "You may not plow with an ox and a donkey together." When she was about to plant, he told her, "You may not sow an admixture of seeds." When she was about to harvest, Moshe informed her to leave over Leket, gleanings, Shikchah, whatever stalks she had forgotten, and Peah, a small corner of the field for the poor. As soon as she was about to store the crops in the silo, he instructed her to separate Terumah and the Maasros, various Tithes. She accepted the Divine imperative and gave and gave again. Finally, she had no recourse but to sell the field and purchase two sheep for their wool and the offspring they would produce. It was not much different with her newly-acquired property. Moshe was very demanding. The sheep gave birth, and Moshe demanded its firstborn. She sheared the wool, and Moshe was there to collect the Reishis HaGez, first shearing. Finally, she said, "I cannot take it any more. I am going to slaughter the sheep." As soon as she slaughtered the sheep, Moshe was there to demand the Zeroa, Lechayayim and Keivah, forearm, cheeks and stomach. This was the last straw. She could take it no longer. "I am accepting it upon myself as a cherem to consecrate it, and nobody will have it!" Moshe immediately responded, "Every cherem belongs to me." Moshe took "his" sheep and left the poor widow and orphans to their misery and tears.

This is the bleak - but completely distorted - picture that Korach painted of Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon HaKohen. Yet, the people listened. They believed that Moshe and Aharon had nothing else to do but to badger poor widows and orphans, to take their possessions for themselves and the members of their family. However ludicrous this was, the people were fuming at their spiritual leadership.

Let us turn to Korach. Here was a man who represented the zenith of material wealth. Indeed, Chazal say that his total liquid assets were incredible. If he had been aware of a widow who lived in such abject

poverty, why did he himself not help her? Furthermore, while he was criticizing the Torah's laws regarding Leket, Shikchah and Peah, he conveniently forgot to mention that these laws were specifically designed for the sake of the poor. Human nature is that way. People listen to what they want, and the sound of a poor widow and her orphans tugs at the heartstrings. Korach had it all in his favor. He could have won. His mistake was that he did not take into account the one factor that could thwart all of his evil machinations: Hashem.

This is the way it has been throughout the millennia. Those who seek to undermine the Torah, to impugn its veracity and values, often appeal to human nature and innocence. They may seem to be on top momentarily, to see their evil schemes triumph, but in the end they will fail as miserably as Korach did.

How does one battle the effects and influence of the Korachs of each generation? The only way is through mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice, and determination to adhere to the truth. When people see that the expositors of Toras Hashem steer a course of integrity and devotion, they will eventually take their heads out of the ground and respond to the truth. Indeed, this is why we are still here today - growing, thriving and achieving new successes every day. The truth always prevails.

...  
Dassan and Aviram went out erect at the entrance of their tents, with their wives, children and infants. (16:27)

Dassan and Aviram left their tents in defiance of Moshe Rabbeinu. They stood there, cursing and taunting, refusing to display any form of respect, acting as the total miscreants that they were. The Torah adds that they were not alone. They brought their entire families with them. Rashi adds that the sin of machlokes, unwarranted dispute, unmitigated controversy, has greater ramifications than other sin. While for other sins Bais Din does not punish a child until he or she matures into legal adulthood, concerning the sin of controversy, even the infants were punished. Yet, we must understand why. What is there about machlokes that affects even one's children? After all, they are infants. Why should they be held liable?

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, cites the Ramban in his commentary to the beginning of Parashas Netzavim (Devarim 29:17), concerning the pasuk, "Perhaps there is among you a root flourishing with gall and wormwood." Ramban writes that a deficient root within the father, can, over time, bloom and flourish within the offspring to produce children that have the same bitterness and evil. The evil root can spawn generations of continuing evil.

Thus, Rav Zilberstein asserts that when the fathers are baalei machlokes, individuals embroiled in controversy, who seek and promote discord, who thrive on dispute and strife, their children will outshine them and achieve a greater nadir in creating disunity and destroying relationships. It is, therefore, better that they are removed while they are still innocent, before they have the chance to destroy the lives of others. This is no different than an infection filled with bacteria. It must be eradicated, or else it will spread and destroy healthy tissue.

The Maharam Schick, zl, was once asked concerning an individual who was infamous for causing much discord in his community, who had donated an ornament for the Sefer Torah and a "Shivisi" plaque for the shul. This scoundrel made sure to let everyone know that he had a greater share in the shul than they had. The Maharam Schick rendered that the value of these two objects be returned to the man, so that he not have a share in the sanctity of the shul. In contrast, the Maharam Schick clearly states in a previous responsa that the shul may accept a "Shivisi" plaque from one who is non-observant. The reason for this is that by reaching out to him and accepting his gift, it might create a feeling of harmony which will catalyze his eventual repentance and return to observance. Regrettably, the same is neither true of nor applicable to the baal machlokes.

What is the difference? Why is there hope for the sinner and not for the baal machlokes? I think that the answer lies in the root of the problem. The sinner has fallen under the control of his yetzer hora. He has fallen prey to

its blandishments, and, thus, must overcome them to regain his position of commitment. This is achievable. Indeed, it happens all of the time. The baal machlokes, however, is a sick, insecure person, who preys on others and achieves satisfaction from destroying lives and sowing discord. This is an illness for which the therapy is much more intense. This is a sickness that, regrettably, destroys all parties.

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From: Kol Torah [[koltorah@koltorah.org](mailto:koltorah@koltorah.org)] Sent: June 15, 2006 11:43 AM Subject: Kol Torah Summer Issue Torah Perspectives on Insurance

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### **Torah Perspectives on Insurance by Rabbi Chaim Jachter**

Introduction Insurance is a fundamental aspect of almost every individual and family financial plan. If one is young and has a large family, adequate insurance to protect the family is essential. In addition to discussing Torah perspectives on insurance for individuals and families in this issue, we will also present and expand upon a proposal made by Rav J. David Bleich concerning the purchase of insurance as a community. We will begin by discussing the permissibility of acquiring insurance and the possibility that in certain cases insurance may be required.

The Permissibility of Purchasing Insurance – Rav Moshe Feinstein and Rav Ovadiah Yosef Both Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim 2:111) and Rav Ovadiah Yosef (Teshuvot Yechaveh Daat 3:85) were asked whether or not Halacha permits acquiring insurance, because perhaps insurance indicates a lack of trust in Hashem. Both of these authorities wholeheartedly permit one to acquire insurance. They state that insurance is a legitimate business venture and does not demonstrate a lack of faith in Hashem. Rav Moshe points out that Hashem endowed humanity in recent generations with the idea of establishing insurance. Moreover, Hashem provides the individual with the intelligent idea to purchase insurance. As long as we grasp that Hashem deserves the credit for giving us these ideas, Hashem credits us with having complete faith in Him. This idea is expressed in Targum Onkelos to Devarim 8:18, where the Torah states, "And you shall remember Hashem, your God, because He is the One Who gave you strength to make wealth." Onkelos translates this Pasuk as commanding us to recall that Hashem presented us with the idea to acquire property. Rav Moshe notes that we should have faith that Hashem will provide us with the means to pay the insurance premiums each payment period. Rav Moshe extends this Heteir to life, fire, theft, and car insurance. Rav Ovadiah Yosef (among other authorities) cites Tosafot (Kiddushin 41a s.v. Assur LeAdam) as a precedent to permit the purchase of insurance. The Gemara (ad. loc.) states that it is forbidden for a father to marry off his daughter when she is a minor (Kiddushei Ketanah) unless the girl is old enough to express her wish to marry a specific individual. Tosafot, in turn, record that the practice among Jews in his time and area (twelfth-thirteenth century France-Germany) was to marry off their very young daughters, against the Gemara's recommendation. Tosafot explain that since they live in time of distress (apparently referring to the Crusades), they must seize an opportunity to marry off a daughter because if one had sufficient funds to provide a dowry, he did not know if he would have those funds when the girl would come of age. Tosafot do

not condemn such behavior as lacking Bitachon (trust in Hashem); rather, they sanction this practice as a prudent financial precaution. Rav Ovadiah argues that purchasing an insurance policy may be evaluated in a similar manner. Similarly, Rav Ovadiah cites Tosafot (Bava Metiza 70b s.v. Tashich) who adopt a lenient approach regarding another matter due to the socioeconomic pressures of the time. The Gemara (ad. loc.) records that some say there is a rabbinic prohibition to charge interest even when lending to Nochrin under certain circumstances. Tosafot, however, cite Rabbeinu Tam who defends the practice of that time to lend money to Nochrin with interest in all situations. He argues that since it is impossible for us to survive in business unless we charge interest to Nochrin, we may rely on the lenient opinions that permit such lending. Once again, Tosafot do not advocate simply relying on miraculous intervention to earn an adequate living, or exhort us to bolster our faith in God's ability to deliver us from economic distress. Rather, they condone relying on lenient opinions when necessary. Interestingly, Islamic Law, LeHavdil, forbids the institution of life insurance. Life insurance is illegal in Libya and Iran. Furthermore, an editorial appeared in the New York Times February 23, 1853 condemning the use of life insurance as leading to laziness. Many Christian theologians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries condemned it for similar reasons. Rav J. David Bleich (Tradition 31:3, page 61) notes that these non-Jewish objections to life insurance are not reflected in the rabbinic literature from the time of the Rishonim until today. Indeed, both Rav Moshe and Rav Ovadiah note that common practice even among the most pious of individuals is to purchase insurance, a further indication of the permissibility of this venture. He cautions, however, that the policy should be in harmony with Halacha and not violate the prohibition to charge interest or require an autopsy in case of death.

**Hashkafic Lessons Gleaned from Rav Moshe's Teshuvah** We should take note of Rav Moshe Feinstein's assertion that Hashem has endowed mankind with the idea of establishing insurance. This expresses a major idea in Torah thought – that divine revelation continues until this very day (albeit in a subtle manner). Indeed, on Shabbat and Yom Tov we specifically request from Hashem such revelation, beseeching Him to "enlighten our eyes in [His] Torah." This may be understood as asking HaKadosh Baruch Hu to provide us with novel insights (Chiddushim) in Torah. Moreover, Rav Moshe's statement teaches that such revelation is not limited to Torah matters, but also applies to non-spiritual matters. We seem to daven for such revelation in the fourth Berachah of the weekday Shemoneh Esrei in which we ask Hashem for intelligence. Based on the Targum Onkelos that Rav Moshe cites, we may also say that when we pray for Parnassah (sustenance), we are not only asking Hashem to create opportunities for us to earn money, but also requesting an endowment of intelligence to make the appropriate business choices. In addition, I once cited this Teshuvah in a response to a Talmid who asked what spiritual value lies in the study of history. At first, I responded that in studying Jewish History one is presented with an opportunity to perceive the hand of Hashem preserving Am Yisrael in its struggles throughout the millennia (see Aruch HaShulchan ( O.C. 1:10). Subsequently I added that Rav Moshe's assertion about continuing divine revelation teaches that the study of history actually is the study of the ongoing divine revelation in all areas of life. This is especially true according to the Ramban (Devarim 17:15) and the Zohar (in "Berich Shemei," which we recite when we open the Aron HaKoshesh to remove a Sefer Torah), who teach that Hashem controls both the appointment and actions of leaders. We should note, in fairness, that although the ideas expressed in this Teshuvah may be marshaled to encourage secular education, Rav Moshe in this Teshuvah writes that one should prepare to earn a living only when the need presents itself.

**Requirements to Purchase Insurance** Rabbinic authorities not only permit acquiring insurance, but even require it in some cases. For example, Teshuvot Beit Shlomo (Choshen Mishpat 48) rules that since it is customary to acquire insurance, one partner who pays the premium for fire

insurance may recover half the cost from the second partner. He cites as precedent the Mishnah (Bava Batra 7b) which states that all residents of a town are required to contribute to the construction of a protective wall around the town. He reasons that insurance costs fall under the same category as expenditures for protecting a city. (See Rav Bleich's essay for further sources regarding authorities who seem to either support or disagree with the Beit Shlomo's ruling.) Rav Bleich notes that "Beit Shlomo's analogy of insurance to the erection of fortifications for the defense of a city certainly indicates that seeking protection against financial loss is ideologically no different from seeking protection against marauders."

**Communal Insurance** Rav Bleich (in the aforementioned article, pp. 62-66) writes that the Jewish community should purchase medical and life insurance as a group. He cites as precedent the aforementioned Mishnah in Bava Batra that requires all residents of a town to contribute to the erection of a protective wall. Rav Bleich notes that the Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat 163:1) rules that even a minority of the residents may insist that a levy be imposed upon all townspeople in order to raise funds for such purposes. The Rama comments that this rule applies to any communal need. In addition, he rules that townspeople may compel one another to contribute to a fund to provide for the needs of strangers in their midst and to provide charity for the poor. Rav Bleich states the well-known fact that people who lack adequate medical insurance often are denied access to first-class medical care. He cites studies that demonstrate that people without proper insurance have a much higher mortality rate than those who have medical insurance. He therefore concludes, "The community clearly has an obligation to provide for the medical needs of the indigent. This establishment of a fund to defray medical expenses represents both a needed social amenity as well as a charitable obligation, and the community is fully empowered to levy a tax for either purpose." Rav Bleich continues: "A quite similar argument might be made for a communal policy requiring mandatory life insurance coverage. Sadly, there have been cases in which a young breadwinner has died at an early age leaving a widow and minor children destitute. The support of the widow and orphans then becomes a communal burden. The community certainly has a charitable obligation with regard to their support. It also has the authority to impose a tax in order to establish a charitable fund in anticipation of such needs. It would appear that the community would also have the right to use those funds to defray the cost of a group life insurance policy for each of its members, if for no other reason than on the grounds that such an arrangement is cheaper, more efficient, and more dignified than simple charity." It also seems that communities in which most members are homeowners should establish communal mortgage insurance policies. This can avoid foreclosures in the wake of tragic deaths of young breadwinners.

Another consideration in favor of establishing such policies is the extraordinary high cost of Orthodox living outside of Israel. Yeshiva tuition and other costs are spiraling out of control, and the need to find innovative solutions to the growing financial pressures is great. Jewish schools should purchase insurance, security, and many other items as an organized group in order to benefit from volume discounts. Jewish organizations must explore ways to purchase communal insurance policies as well as other items in a vitally necessary effort to reduce the high costs of Jewish living.

**Conclusion** Rav Bleich writes that even if the community fails to organize as a group to establish such insurance policies, smaller communal groups should establish such policies. Synagogues and Jewish organizations must do their best to implement these essential plans.

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From: Aish.com  
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**By Rabbi Boruch Leff** (parsha insights based on & inspired by teachings of Rav Yaakov Weinberg OBM)

Killing With Love

[http://www.aish.com/torahportion/kolyaakov/Killing\\_With\\_Love.asp](http://www.aish.com/torahportion/kolyaakov/Killing_With_Love.asp)

We know that sometimes people ignore the message and kill the messenger. Judaism actually teaches that we must ignore the messenger and apply (or sometimes kill) the message. Our Parsha, Korach, discusses this concept.

Korach engineered a rebellion against Moshe's authority and leadership. Included in the rebellious group were Dasan and Aviram. Moshe summoned them to appear before him to discuss their complaints but they flatly refused. They railed at Moshe saying:

"Isn't it enough that you took us out of a land of milk and honey (Egypt) to cause us to die in the desert? Now, you want to lord over us? You have not brought us to the land of flowing milk and honey (Israel), nor did you give us a field and vineyard! Even if you would threaten to send someone to gouge out our eyes, we will not go up (to you)!" (BaMidbar 16:13-14).

Talk about Jewish chutzpah! Dasan and Aviram lace into Moshe, cynically calling Egypt and not Israel, 'the land of milk and honey.' Then they brazenly blame Moshe for the sin of the spies and his 'failure' to lead the Jewish People to conquer the land of Israel, not to mention their accusation of Moshe 'lording' over them for his own honor. This was surely a devastating, albeit untrue, critique of Moshe.

How does Moshe react? Seemingly, like any one of us. "Moshe became infuriated" (BaMidbar 16:15). But Rashi steps in to show us how radically different and how amazingly beautiful Moshe's response actually was. "He was pained greatly." (Rashi, Bamidbar 16:15). Rashi seems to be saying that Moshe was not angry; rather he was upset and saddened.

But what would be wrong if Moshe was angry? While it is true that Moshe is called the most humble of men (BaMidbar 12:3), humility does not mean that you should be meek, especially when faced with such rebellion and brazenness. What is Rashi trying to convey?

The solution is this. There is a world of difference between those who hate and kill and those who kill out of necessity. The difference lies in whether when we see evil perpetrated by criminals and oppressors, we react by hating the perpetrators or hating the evils committed. Do we hate the person, or the action? If we hate the person, then our response will be based primarily on personal revenge whereas if we detest only the evil action, we will react with a strong desire to root out only the evil deeds.

There may not be a physical or active difference between these two approaches on the ground. In both cases, great battles will need to be waged to fight the evil and sometimes wars and killings will be involved. But this differentiation of intent when fighting evil is immense.

We must feel pained and distressed in our rooting out of evil and our punishing of perpetrators. We must not let our personal feelings of anger and fury dominate us. If we don't accomplish this, we risk killing and punishing for all the wrong reasons. We risk losing control of ourselves and fighting in ways that are completely personal and not for G-d and truth's sake at all.

One of the tremendous lessons that we have learned about the nation of Israel throughout the terrible crisis and war that we have experienced since September 2000 is how deeply humane we are. Even in enduring deaths of over 500 and thousands of injuries (many serious) to Palestinian terrorism, we have remained humane on the battlefields and in our society.

Far from the incitement, demonization, hatred, and glorification of the killings of innocent civilians that plagues Palestinian society, Israel has never taken pride or satisfaction in fighting or killing its enemies. Israel's wars and violent struggles are always fought with goals of preventing future terror attacks and saving lives. In fact, in an amazing show of Israeli society's intolerance toward hatred for hatred's sake, The Jerusalem Post, May. 27, 2002, reported:

"Five Israeli soldiers have been sent to prison for looting and vandalizing Palestinian property during a six-week Israeli offensive in the West Bank. The soldiers, who were sentenced to up to five months in a military jail, were also dropped to the rank of private, the army said in a statement. Another 20 soldiers are being investigated on similar charges, the army said, adding that some of them are also suspected of violent acts. A platoon commander is being investigated on charges he abused a Palestinian while searching his home, the army said."

Can we ever imagine similar investigations taking place in the courtrooms of our enemies?

Yes, we must indeed wish for evil to cease, but not the evildoers. This often entails destroying and killing the evildoers but we mustn't kill with glee; only with a heavy heart. The Talmud in Brachot 10a expresses this idea and states:

"The verse in Psalms (104:35) says that 'sins should perish,' not sinners. We must pray for the sinners to repent where possible, not for their death and demise."

Returning to Parshat Korach, Moshe is not angry with Korach, Dasan, Aviram, or any of the rebels. His feelings are not personal. Moshe is distressed, saddened, and depressed that these people have steeped themselves into the depths of sin. As Rashi explains, Moshe is not infuriated (as the verse implies on first glance). He is upset and disturbed at the face of evil, but not at the evildoers.

This approach helps explain an event at the end of the Parsha as well. After Korach and his followers have been killed by God's plagues and punishments, the people shockingly complain to Moshe and Aharon saying, "You have killed the people of God!" First, G-d sends more plagues that destroy many of the complainers, but then He commands Aharon to take a staff, along with the princes of each of the 12 tribes, and place them in the holy tent of the Tabernacle. "It shall be that the man whom I choose, his staff will blossom, and I will remove the complaints of the Jewish people!" (Bamidbar 17:20, translated loosely). Aharon's staff blossoms with buds and almonds the next morning and the complainers are silenced and placated.

What was the complaint of the Jews against Moshe and Aharon? Didn't they understand the seriousness of Korach and his followers' crimes of rebellion? And however we answer that question, how did Aharon's almond blooming blossoms pacify them?

The Jewish people were lamenting the loss of so many of their brethren and their leaders to Korach's folly and they blamed these horrible events on Moshe and Aharon. They surely knew that Korach's revolt had to be put down strongly but they questioned the methodology. They wondered out loud why Moshe and Aharon didn't pray for Korach and his followers to repent (as cited earlier from Brachot 10a). Was Korach's evil so great that repentance could not have helped? And since Moshe and Aharon did not pray for Korach, doesn't that suggest that they simply wanted Korach dead and 'out of the way' for their selfish and personal interests?

The beauty of the almond blossoms symbolized that Moshe and Aharon acted beautifully, peacefully and lovingly. If indeed Korach had the potential for repentance and change, then Moshe and Aharon would most certainly have prayed for it. But such was not the case. Korach had to be

killed because that was the only course of action possible to eliminate his evil.

When we criticize, is our goal to 'pay back' the perpetrator with rage or to change his ways with love?

We must apply the lessons of Moshe in his very difficult saga with Korach. We must learn to act forcefully when necessary, but always with love in our hearts, not hatred.

We must hate actions, not people.

At times, we may be forced to kill, but let us do it with love.

This article can also be read at:

[http://www.aish.com/torahportion/kolyaakov/Killing\\_With\\_Love.asp](http://www.aish.com/torahportion/kolyaakov/Killing_With_Love.asp)

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**Rav Hershel Schachter**

**V'Kidashto: Preserving our Kedusha**

I In Parshas Emor the Torah enumerates the women whom a kohein may not marry. The halachah does not permit a kohein to marry a woman who converted, even if her conversion took place before she was three years old[1]. There is a minority opinion among the poskim that a convert, who never had relations with a non-Jew, is only rabbinically forbidden to marry a kohein[2].

Years ago there was a popular notion among achronim that all kohanei chazakah today (kohanim who can not produce documents to prove their status, and are merely assumed to be kohanim), are only safek-kohanim[3].

Some put two and two together and came up with the following conclusion: any kohein today, who is only a safek-kohein, may marry a gioret who was converted as an infant, based on the principle that in any instance of a safek in a din derabbonan, we go lekulah (and follow the lenient position).

This position is not correct. First of all, since the days of Rav Akiva Eiger and the Chasam Sofer, the position of Rav Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, that kohanei chazokah are considered vadai Kohanim, has been accepted and as such, they are only rabbinically prohibited from offering the korbanos in the Beis Hamikdosh[4].

Furthermore, the Talmud[5], when discussing the prohibition of a kohein marrying a chalutza, states that because the prohibition is only derabbonan, if a kohein went ahead and married a woman who is a safek chalutza, b'dieved (after the fact) we would say that they need not get divorced: safek derabbonan lekulah. But l'hatchila we would not permit a kohein to go ahead and marry a safek chalutza. (A safek kohein marrying a vadai chalutza is the equivalent of a vadai kohein marrying a safek chalutza.)

The same would be true according to the minority opinion, that a gioret who was converted as an infant (who clearly had never had any relations with a non-Jew), is only rabbinically forbidden from marrying a kohein. We would not permit the safek-kohein to go ahead l'hatchila and marry that gioret. However b'dieved, if they already got married, we would apply the rule of safek derabbonan lekulah, and the couple would not be required to divorce.

II Every so often we have a situation where an observant kohein falls in love with a gioret. An honest bona-fide Orthodox rabbi would encourage that kohein to fall out of love and look for someone else. In recent years there have been some "Orthodox" rabbis who have stood on their heads in order to come up with a "hetter". The latest "work around" ("pattent" in modern Hebrew) runs as follows: a) we know that if a kohein marries a woman whom he was forbidden to marry, his children will be "chalolim"; b) a "cholol" is void of kedushas kehuna and may even marry a divorcee or go to a cemetery; c) a kohein may not marry a woman who was held captive in a non-Jewish prison (technically known as a "shvuya")[6]. Hence it follows (that  $2 + 2 = 22$ ) that all children born after the shoah to parents where the father was a kohein and the mother was a "shvuyah" (held prisoner by the Nazis) will be chalalim, and be allowed to marry all sulei kehunah.

This logic, however, is incorrect. a) After WWII the major poskim permitted all those women who were held in prison by the Germans to marry kohanim. They did not consider them shvuyos for various reasons[7].

b) Even if one were to assume that these women should have the status of "shvuyah", and should not have been allowed to marry kohanim, because the prohibition of shvuyah is only miderabanan (rabbinical), their children would only become chalalim miderabanan. As such they would not be allowed to marry a gerusha or gioret, since that constitutes a Biblical prohibition. Only one who is a chalal on the d'oraysa (Biblical) level is considered totally void of kedushas Kehunah and permitted to marry pesulei kehunah d'oraysa.

c) Even if one were to adopt the minority opinion and assume that the prohibition for a kohein to marry a gioret who converted as an infant is only miderabanan, one should not assume that one who is a chalal miderabanan may marry a woman who is only forbidden to him miderabanan. Poskim[8] discuss whether one who is a ben chalutza (who is only a chalal miderabanan) may marry a chalutza. One might have argued that since that kohein is a chalal miderabanan, and the prohibition against a kohein marrying a chalutza is also only miderabanan, it should be allowed. But most have not adopted this position. One who is a chalal miderabanan, but is still a kohein kasher min haTorah, should still be treated as a kohein, even with respect to marrying a chalutza.

d) Even if one were to assume that the chalal miderabanan should be allowed to marry a chalutza, the child of a shvuya will not be permitted to marry a chalutza! Not all rabbinic prohibitions are on the same level[9]. The prohibition of shvuya is on a lower level of severity than the prohibition of chalutza. Shvuya was initially introduced as a chumra[10]. The son of the shvuya would only be a lower level chalal, and would not be permitted to marry a chalutza (and certainly not a gioret) which is of a higher level of severity.

The Torah commands us specifically to preserve the sanctity of the kohanim[11]. In the opening posuk in Parshas Kedoshim the Torah commands all Jews to act in a fashion of kedusha. Rashi (in his commentary on that posuk) quotes from the medrash that a major aspect of "kedusha" involves refraining from forbidden marriages. Instead of treating the halachic system as a game and always searching for "a hetter", we ought to train ourselves in self-restraint. Rather than trying to impose our desires on the Torah, we must curb our desires to conform to Hashem's will as he expressed it in the Torah[12]. Furthermore, one should not be concerned that by adhering to the laws of the Torah he will become scarred emotionally. "The paths of the Torah are all most pleasant, and all her ways are peaceful.[13]"

[1] Kiddushin (78a-b) [2] See Otzar Haposkim, Even HoEzer (6:49) [3] Pischei Teshuva to Even HoEzer (6:2) [4] See Rav Zvi Hirsch Kalischer's "Drishas Zion". His suggestion was accepted by Rav Akiva Eiger (his rebbe) and the Chasam Sofer (the son in law of Rav Akiva Eiger) [5] Yevamos (24a) and Even HoEzer (6). See Otzar Haposkim there (#8) [6] Shulchan Aruch Even HoEzer (7) [7] Teshuvos Chelkas Yaakov (vol. 1, #16); Teshuvos Minchas Yitzchok (vol. 1, #87) [8]

Teshuvos Chelkas Yoav (Even HoEzer, #35). This topic is known as "mima nafshach derabanan". Rav Yosef Engel dedicated an entire essay to this theme in his sefer Lekach Tov (#13). See also Avnei Nezer Yoreh Deah (vol. 1, #124) where he demonstrates based on a Tosefta that we cannot say mima nafshach on a d'oraysa level. [9] See Tosafos, Menachos 31a, s.v. kasavar [10] See Otzar Haposkim to Even HoEzer (7:2) [11] V'Kidasho - Vayikra (21:8) [12] See Avos (2:4), "bateil retzoncha..." Also see the famous comments of the Ibn Ezra (Shemos 20:14): the farmer knows he can never marry the king's daughter, so he will never develop a desire for her. One can not develop a desire for something which is clearly out his reach. A relationship that is forbidden by the Torah must be understood to be out of our reach. [13] Mishlei (3:17)

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From: [hamaayan-owner@torah.org](mailto:hamaayan-owner@torah.org) on behalf of Shlomo Katz [[skatz@torah.org](mailto:skatz@torah.org)] Sent: June 29, 2006 2:06 PM To: [hamaayan@torah.org](mailto:hamaayan@torah.org)  
Subject: HaMaayan / The Torah Spring - Parashat Korach

**Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by Shlomo Katz**

Sponsored by Irving and Arline Katz on the yahrzeit of his mother, Sarah Katz (Sarah bat Yitzchak Hakohen a"h). And by R' Yaakov Chaim Katz and family on the marriage of their daughter Esty to Mordche Schwartz

In this week's parashah, we read of Korach's uprising against Moshe and Aharon. In Pirkei Avot (chapter 5) we learn: "Any machloket / dispute that is for the sake of Heaven will stand. Any machloket that is not for the sake of Heaven will not stand. What is a machloket that is for the sake of Heaven? The halachic disagreements in the Talmud between Hillel and Shammai. What is a machloket that is not for the sake of Heaven? The dispute of Korach and his cohorts." R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l observes: This Mishnah seems to imply that the disputes between Hillel and Shammai are fundamentally comparable to the machloket of Korach and his cohorts, except that the former were for the sake of Heaven and the latter was not. Is that really true? R' Auerbach explains: All machloket is inherently bad (hence the similarity between the disputes of Hillel and Shammai and the dispute of Korach and his band). Thus, our Sages have taught (in the very last teaching in all of Mishnah): "Hashem found no better vessel for holding blessing than peace." Indeed, Bnei Yisrael merited to receive the Torah only because they were: "As one man, with one heart." (See Shemot 19:2 and Rashi.) However, if a machloket is for the sake of Heaven, then it has the potential to ultimately increase unity. Specifically through this machloket, each participant's attachment to the Torah is revealed and is strengthened. And, that attachment forges a common bond between the disputants, thus leaving them as closer friends. (Quoted in Avot MiShulchan Rabbotainu)

"Korach, son of Yitzhar son of Kehat son of Levi, took . . ." (16:1) Rashi writes that Korach took his cohorts and attired them in robes of pure techelet wool (i.e., the color found in tzitzit according to Torah law). They then came and stood before Moshe and said to him, "Is a garment that is entirely of techelet subject to the law of tzitzit, or is it exempt?" Moshe replied to them, "It is subject to that law." Upon hearing this, Korach and his cohorts began to jeer at him, "Is this possible? On a robe of any different colored material, one thread of techelet attached to it exempts it. Should not this robe made entirely of techelet exempt itself from the law of tzitzit?" R' David Hanania Pinto shlita (a contemporary French rabbi) observes that Korach's troubles started when he attempted to delve into the logic of the mitzvot. Indeed, his name "Korach" has the same Hebrew letters as the word "choker" / "philosopher." Korach could not accept the fact that some mitzvot are decrees. Thus, the first word of the parashah-"Va'yikach"-has the same Hebrew letters as the expression "Vay chok" / "Woe to us from a decree." What was Korach's end? He caused "machloket" / "dissension" which has the same Hebrew letters as "lakach mavvet" / "He took death." (Pachad David)

The midrash asks: Why did Korach use this stratagem to challenge Moshe? Why didn't he just go debate Moshe? The midrash answers that Korach knew he could never win a debate against Moshe. Therefore, he decided to ridicule Moshe instead. R' Gershon Henach Leiner z"l (the 19th century Radzhiner Rebbe who attempted to renew the practice of putting techelet on tzitzit and was successful in some communities) writes: In addition to the many errors that are commonly attributed to Korach by our Sages and by the classical commentaries, he made another mistake. He had what he believed was a legitimate opinion on a Torah matter, and he suppressed it. This is not the Torah way. Rather, a person who is competent in matters of halachah is obligated to make his views known. Then, if he is defeated in debate, he should rejoice that the truth has been revealed. (Ein Ha'techelet p.8)

"The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, and all the people who were with Korach, and the entire wealth." (16:32) The Gemara relates that the sage Rabbah Bar Bar-Chanah once was traveling in the desert when an Arab offered to show him the hole into which Korach had been swallowed. Rabbah saw a fissure from which smoke was rising. He took a ball of wool, soaked it in water, stuck it on the end of a romach / spear, and then lowered it into the hole. When he removed it, he saw that the wool had been singed by fire. The Arab told him, "Put your ear to the ground and hear what they are saying." Rabbah did so and he heard, "Moshe is true, his Torah is true, and we are liars." What was Rabbah teaching by this story? R' Yitzchak Shmelkes z"l (19th century rabbi of Lvov, Galicia) explains that Rabbah wanted to indicate the seriousness of fomenting in machloket / strife. First, he took wool, which represents tzitzit in particular and mitzvot in general. (Tzitzit, through their blue color, also remind us of the heavens, and therefore of G-d's "Throne.") Next, he dipped the wool in water, which is frequently used by our Sages as a metaphor for Torah. Then, he stuck the water-logged wool on the end of a romach / spear, alluding to the 248 limbs and organs of the human body. (The gematria of "romach" is 248.) By this, he represented a person whose entire being, all 248 limbs and organs, are steeped in Torah and mitzvot. Finally, he lowered the spear into Korach's hole and, when he removed it, it was singed by fire. This demonstrates that even if a person is entirely devoted to Torah and mitzvot, once he becomes involved in machloket, it is impossible to emerge unscathed. (Bet Yitzchak Al Ha'Torah)

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Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Korach

TORAH WEEKLY

-- Parshat Korach

by **Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair**

**OVERVIEW**

Korach, Datan and Aviram, and 250 leaders of Israel rebel against the authority of Moshe and Aharon. The rebellion results in their being swallowed by the earth. Many resent their death and blame Moshe. G-d's "anger" is manifest by a plague that besets the nation, and many thousands perish. Moshe intercedes once again for the people. He instructs Aharon to atone for them and the plague stops. Then G-d commands that staffs, each inscribed with the name of one of the tribes, be placed in the Mishkan. In the morning the staff of Levi, bearing Aharon's name, sprouts, buds, blossoms and yields ripe almonds. This provides Divine confirmation that

Levi's tribe is chosen for priesthood and verifies Aharon's position as Kohen Gadol, High Priest. The specific duties of the levi'im and kohanim are stated. The kohanim were not to be landowners, but were to receive their sustenance from the tithes and other mandated gifts brought by the people. Also taught in this week's Parsha are laws of the first fruits, redemption of the firstborn, and other offerings.

## INSIGHTS

### No Object Of Desire

"And Korach...took" (16:1) "And G-d said 'Let Us make man in Our image.'" (Bereishet 1:26)

Artists throughout the ages have taken this verse and stood it on its head: Man has 'created' G-d in his image. The G-d of Michelangelo, Donatello et al, appears as no more than a venerable grandfather, complete with a long white beard and robes. Save for a few thunderbolts, their G-d looks like an Italian zeide in fancy dress.

What does the Torah mean when it says that G-d created man "in His image?"

When G-d created man, He gave him two powers: the power of giving and the power of taking. The power to give is the elevated quality that imitates G-d, for G-d is the Ultimate Giver — there is nothing you can give Him in return. He already owns everything. Man is created specifically to imitate G-d by being a giver.

The desire to take is the antithesis of G-d's purpose in creating man. Furthermore, taking is not about amassing a vast fortune, or a fleet of Porsches; it's not a matter of "He who dies with the most toys, wins." In truth, the desire to take has nothing to do with toys, or trophies, or physical objects at all.

The desire to take is the dark side of the power to give. It is the anti-world of giving, its negative doppelganger. The desire to take is never satisfied by the object of its desire. It's amazing how quickly the sheen wears off a pristine new computer, or a new car, or a new wife (if that's your view of marriage). For once the object becomes our possession it ceases to interest us, the desire is gone, and we focus on something else. Why?

The desire to take is never satisfied by the object of our desire because the desire to take is really the desire to enlarge ourselves, to make ourselves more, to take up more real estate in reality — to exist more.

And that desire is insatiable.

All physical desires have their limits — there's just so much *pâté de foie gras* you can consume, but the desire to be more, the dark side of giving, is insatiable.

This week's Torah reading starts with the following sentence, "And Korach (the son of Yitzhar, the son of Kohat, the son of Levi) together with Datan and Aviram (the sons of Eliav) and On ben Pelet (sons of Reuven) took." There is no object in this sentence. It just says that "Korach ...took..." without revealing what, or whom, he took. What then, is the object of the sentence?

What did Korach take?

Korach "took" the entire sad episode that followed. His rebellion and demise are the objects of the first sentence of the parsha.

Korach was the quintessential taker. What he wanted was more, more and more.

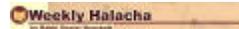
Korach wanted to devour the world.

And thus it was apt that the earth opened its mouth and devoured him.

- Based on Rabbi E. E. Dessler's *Kuntras HaChessed* and Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch

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WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5766

By **Rabbi Doniel Neustadt** Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights  
A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav  
SHE'ALOS U'TESHUVOS

**QUESTION: How long should the tzitzis strings [on a tallis gadol or katan] be? Is a tallis kosher if one or more strings tears either partially or completely?**

**DISCUSSION:** Once the tzitzis strings are looped through the hole on the corner of the garment and knotted, the length of the strings - from the top of the first knot to the end of the string(1) - should be no less than 11.4 inches.(2) The first third, approximately, is the *gedil*, the top segment which is composed of wound and knotted strings, and the lower two thirds, where the strings hang loose, is the *anaf*.(3) But the strings need to be no less than 11.4 inches in length only when they are attached initially to the garment. Attaching strings that are shorter than the prescribed length onto the garment renders the tallis *pasul*. If, however, the strings were the proper length when attached to the garment, but only later were cut or shrunk, the tallis is still kosher as long as the *anaf* is at least 1.9 inches(4) long. The following rules apply to tzitzis strings that fall short of the original requirement:

\* If one - but not more - of the eight strings snaps off completely and loses its *anaf* entirely, the tallis remains kosher *l'chatchilah* and the proper *berachah* is recited when it is donned.(5)

\* If more than one of the eight strings snaps off completely, or even if more than one string is less than 1.9 inches long, the tallis should no longer be worn.(6)

\* If one or two of the eight strings shrank but is still at least 1.9 inches long, the tallis remains kosher *l'chatchilah* and the proper *berachah* is recited over it.

\* If three or more [or even all eight] strings shrank but are still at least 1.9 inches long, the tallis remains kosher, but it should be replaced or repaired. If, however, this is the only tallis available, it may be worn and a *berachah* recited over it.(7)

Note: Our discussion pertains to strings that were cut, got torn or shrank in the *anaf* portion of the string. If, however, even one string was severed at the point where the tzitzis are attached to the garment [until after the first knot], the tallis is *pasul*.(8)

**QUESTION: What are the correct dimensions for a tallis katan?**

**DISCUSSION:** There is a wide range of views in the *poskim* regarding the proper length and width of a tallis katan: Some hold that there is no minimum at all and a tallis katan of any length or width is acceptable,(9) while others require an extremely long tallis katan, one that will reach below the knees.(10)

The view of most *poskim*, however, falls somewhere in between these two extremes. The general consensus(11) is that it is appropriate for a G-d fearing individual to wear a tallis katan which is two *amos* long and one *amah* wide. Using the middle-of-the-road view as to the exact length of an *amah*, it follows that the preferred tallis katan is at least 42.5 inches long [front to back ,(12)] and 21.3 inches wide.(13)

While this is the preferred size, *Mishnah Berurah*(14) rules that one may wear a tallis katan which is only an *amah*-and-half long by three-quarters of an *amah* wide - 32 inches long by 16 inches wide.(15)

Note: *Chazon Ish*(16) rules that each side (shoulder) of the tallis katan by itself must be wider than the opening for the neck. If, for instance, the opening is 15 inches wide, then each side of the tallis must be at least 15 inches wide for a total of 30 inches. Most other *poskim* do not mention this requirement.

**QUESTION: Should men recite the blessing of *al mitzvas tzitzis* when they put on their tallis katan in the morning or not?**

**DISCUSSION:** In order to understand the different rulings on this issue, the following background information will be helpful:

In past generations, the widely accepted practice was not to recite a berachah on a tallis katan at all; instead, the berachah that was said on the tallis gadol - which was put on later - was intended to retroactively cover the tallis katan as well. While the concept of a berachah retroactively "covering" a mitzvah is quite unusual, the custom developed (17) because many poskim were hesitant about reciting a berachah over a tallis katan. In order to avoid the risk of a berachah levatalah, they advised that the berachah over the tallis gadol include the tallis katan as well. The reasons for their reluctance to recite a berachah over a tallis katan were:

- \* Often, the tallis katan was of questionable size or material.(18)
- \* The tallis gadol was usually donned at home (before going to shul), right after the tallis katan was put on.(19) The poskim felt that reciting two berachos [over the same mitzvah] one right after the other is akin to reciting a berachah she'inah tzrichah, an unnecessary blessing.(20)
- \* Many people go to sleep in their tallis katan.(21) When that happens, it is questionable whether or not a berachah may be recited over the tallis katan the next morning upon arising.(22)
- \* Sometimes the tallis katan is put on either before daybreak, before using the bathroom or before washing the morning netilas yadayim. If so, the berachah is not recited at that time.(23)
- \* Because of these and other reasons,(24) the blessing of Al mitzvas tzitzis over the tallis katan was hardly ever recited.(25) Nowadays, however, conditions have changed and several of the reasons mentioned above no longer apply. Contemporary poskim debate whether we should continue a custom which was established long ago, or if the present circumstances warrant changing the custom and reciting a berachah over the tallis katan under the right conditions.(26)

Harav S.Z. Auerbach(27) opined that the custom should not be changed, and those who wear a tallis gadol should have in mind the tallis katan when they recite the berachah over the tallis gadol. Obviously, all those who do not wear a tallis gadol should recite the berachah over the tallis katan at the first possible moment.

The Steipler Gaon, Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky,(28) however, made a distinction between those who go to shul to daven Shacharis as soon as they are dressed and ready, and those who rise early to learn [or recite selichos, etc.] before davening. The first group should not recite a berachah over their tallis katan, since they are going to be reciting the other berachah in short order. The second group, however, who are not going to recite the berachah on the tallis gadol for quite some time, should recite the berachah over the tallis katan.

It seems that the opinion of Harav M. Feinstein was even more inclined toward reciting the berachah over a tallis katan. When asked whether or not to recite a berachah over a tallis katan if there will be a break of twenty minutes between donning the tallis katan and donning the tallis gadol, he answered in the affirmative.(29)

But whichever opinion one follows, a berachah over the tallis katan cannot be recited before misheyakir, which is approximately 45 minutes(30) before sunrise.(31) Nor can the berchaha be recited if one has not used the bathroom and washed his hands for the morning netilas yadayim.(32)

In the event that the tallis katan is put on before misheyakir or before using the bathroom and washing the hands, the berachah is deferred(33) until the appropriate time. At that time, there is no need to remove and put on the garment again; simply looking at the strings(34) and touching them(35) is sufficient.

**FOOTNOTES:** 1 The section of string between the hole and the first knot does not count towards the minimum length of the tzitzis strings. 2 O.C. 11:4, based on the measurements of the Chazon Ish. According to the calculations of Harav A.C. Naeh, the length may be no less than 9.5 inches. 3 O.C. 11:14. See Shiurin shel Torah, 6, that the third to two thirds ratio need not be exact. 4 According to the measurements of the Chazon Ish. According to Harav A.C. Naeh, it is about 1.6

inches. 5 O.C. 12:1. It is a Middas chassidus, however, to repair such strings immediately; Eishel Avraham O.C. 12 and Kaf ha-Chayim 12:12. See also Mishnah Berurah 15:3. 6 Depending on the exact method used for attaching the tzitzis to the garment, it is possible that a tallis will remain kosher even if more than one [or even four] string snapped off completely. We refer here to the case where the method is unknown, e.g., a tallis that was bought with the tzitzis already attached to the garment. 7 Mishnah Berurah 12:11;13 and Beur Halachah s.v. v'halchah. 8 Mishnah Berurah 12:13; Chazon Ish O.C. 3:6, 13. 9 Aruch ha-Shulchan 16:5; Hisorerus Teshuvah 3:38. See Igros Moshe Y.D. 3:52-2 for an elaboration. 10 The view of the Gaon of Vilna, as quoted by his disciples; see Keser Rosh 4, and Da'as Torah 16:1. See also Kaf ha-Chayim 16:2 quoting the Arizal. 11 See Mishnah Berurah 16:3; Chazon Ish O.C. 2:9; 3:31. 12 Whether or not the neck opening is included in the minimum size is disputed by the poskim. Mishnah Berurah (8:17; 16:4) holds that it does not count, while Chazon Ish (O.C. 3:30) rules that it does, and that there is no need for stringency on this issue. 13 We have calculated the amah according to the measurements of Igros Moshe O.C. 1:136. According to Chazon Ish, the preferred size is 48 by 24 inches, while according to Harav A.C. Naeh, 38 by 19 inches will suffice. 14 8:17; 16:4. 15 According to Harav A.C. Naeh, the minimum size would be 30 by 15 inches. 16 O.C. 2:9; 3:31. See also Igros Chazon Ish 1:10. 17 Dating back (at least) to the days of the Rama; see Darkei Moshe 8:3. It went on to become universally practiced, both by Ashkenazim and Sefaradim. 18 Mishnah Berurah 8:24. 19 Rama O.C. 25:2 and Mishnah Berurah 11. 20 Mishnah Berurah 8:24; 8:30. 21 As recommended by the Arizal, quoted by Mishnah Berurah 21:15. 22 Mishnah Berurah 8:42. 23 Aruch ha-Shulchan 8:16. 24 See Mishnah Berurah 8:7 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 8:16. 25 See Tzitzis-Halachah Pesukah 8, note 122, that the Chazon Ish did not recite a berachah over the tallis katan even on Friday afternoon when he put on a fresh tallis katan in honor of Shabbos. 26 See Siyah Halachah 8:47,5-6 for an elaboration of this debate. 27 Halichos Shelomo, Tefillah, 3:10. This is also the opinion of Yechaveh Da'as 5:2, based (in part) on the view of the Eishel Avraham (Tanyana 16) and other poskim who hold that nowadays no berachah is recited over a tallis katan no matter what its size, since adults are embarrassed to be seen in the street wearing such a garment; see Rama 16:1 and Peri Megadim, Mishbetzos, 1. 28 Quoted in Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 1, 48. 29 Oral ruling heard by Rabbi B. Hirschfeld. 30 There are several views among contemporary poskim as to when, exactly, misheyakir occurs, ranging from 60 to 35 minutes before sunrise. 31 Mishnah Berurah 18:10. 32 Mishnah Berurah 4:60. 33 Alternatively, those who put on a tallis gadol can wait until that time to include the tallis katan. 34 O.C. 24:3. 35 O.C. 8:10. See Igros Moshe O.C. 4:7. Weekly-Halacha, Copyright © 2006 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. The Weekly-Halacha Series is distributed L'zchus Doniel Meir ben Hinda. Weekly sponsorships are available - please mail to [jgross@torah.org](mailto:jgross@torah.org). The series is distributed by the Harbotzas Torah Division of Congregation Shomre Shabbos, 1801 South Taylor Road, Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118 HaRav Yisroel Grumer, Marah D'Asra. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 (410) 602-1350 Baltimore, MD 21208



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### **United in Soccer by Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky**

If the point that unites a group defines its essence, what does the World Cup say about humanity?

According to National Geographic, "Soccer [is] Uniting the World." The World Cup is even bringing together members of enemy countries to play it out on the soccer field.

In a world that is so torn by war and terror, this is definitely a welcome change. Even if a soccer match ignites a few ugly brawls, it is still a vast improvement over the alternative.

But a deeper issue lurks in the background. For unity means a lot more than a lack of aggression or cooperation in a mutually beneficial venture. Unity is an established common denominator between distinct parties. For example, what unites the United States is the common thread of a certain sense of individual rights and democratic process etc.

The point that unites a group -- its common denominator -- defines its essence.

In its broadest sense, our definition of mankind is defined by its common denominator. If mankind had been united by the plight of starving people in Africa or the genocide in Darfur, we would conclude that altruism or concern are the common denominator for humans.

Had great works of science or philosophy created such a universal cohesion, then intellectual advancement would be humanity's central defining feature.

What does it say about humanity that it's the kicking of a ball between the goal posts that equally arouses the English gentleman, the French artist, and the Swiss financier?

"Unity" is a term that carries an aura of sacredness. There are two events in the Jewish conscience that bespeak of such a unity. One was the Revelation at Sinai.

The Talmud tells us that the Jews camped around the mountain in total unity -- "as one man with one heart." The central feature isn't just unity, but more importantly that the common denominator that bound every Jew together was the desire to study and understand God's will.

A small reflection of this kind of unity was witnessed a number of months ago. Around 100 years ago, a great rabbi instituted a unified study plan for Jews the world over to study the Talmud at the pace of a page per day, completing the cycle every seven and a half years. Whether the Jew from Paris travels to London, Johannesburg or New York, wherever he goes he will find other Jews gathering around to learn the same page of Talmud.

Last year's celebration marking the completion of the Daf Yomi drew close to 100,000 participants. The event, linking Jews around the world via satellite, was very moving -- so many people, united by such an elevated undertaking.

The second expression of unity occurs on the High Holidays, when at the core of our innermost prayers we whisper, "and may [all Your creations] form a unity [whose purpose] is the wholehearted accomplishment of the Divine Will ... and may every one of Your creations recognize that it is You Who created them."

The vision is the unity of mankind, united by the most profound vision of man -- the search for the Divine imprint on each one. Of course we do not seek to impose the truth we recognize by the sword; G-d needs no coerced minds. Rather, we pray that each being recognizes from within himself the profoundest of human recognitions, and let that unite mankind.

In a world filled with killing, cruelty and plunder, any cessation of violence, any encouragement of peace is welcome. And if soccer can do that, then let me contribute a ball as well.

But it's also a good time to expand our vision of unity. Are the feet the only common denominator of mankind? Let us pray for the day when the hearts and minds of people unite in pursuit of understanding and kindness, and our common denominator will be the Divine image of every human being.