

אור הצפון

Weekly

Parshas Korach | 6/11-12/21 |

Issue 1 | א תמוז | תשפ"א



Candle Lighting 8:07 PM	Mincha/Maariv 6:40 & 8:10 PM	Shacharis 7:45 & 8:30 AM	Zman Shema 9:09 AM	Daf Yomi 7:15 PM	Maariv 9:11 PM	Havdalah 9:17 PM
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The Rabbi's Drasha

Rabbi Lebowitz

The Jew's stay in the **מדבר** was certainly a tumultuous one. There were times that we did not live up to the billing as the **עם הנבחר** and certainly not as the **דור דעה**. We experienced a **חטא המרגלים**, **חטא העגל**, and **חטא המרגלים** complaints about a lack of meat, and fear of thirst. Yet with all of the troubles, which perhaps are a result of the frightening reality of a desert existence, there was only one full-blown rebellion. Each of the sins was a result of fear and instability. This rebellion, though, is different. It doesn't seem to be a reaction to anything. It is a calculated rebellion against the Torah leadership. **מעשה קרח** is unique in **חומש** in that it is not just a sin, but a rebellion. An analysis of this rebellion will shed light on all future rebellions against Torah authority and will allow us some insight into the psyche of those who chose to rebel. The specific arguments related by the **חומש** and **חז"ל** require analysis as well. The idea that the entire nation is holy - **כל ישראל אע"פ שחטא ישראל הוא** - is accurate. We are all the chosen people, and, yes, **כל ישראל אע"פ שחטא ישראל הוא**. Why was this such an error that we look back on it with disdain? Where was the mistake? For anybody learned in the area of halachic reasoning, Korach's other claims seem utterly preposterous. He reasons that because the garment is made entirely of **תכלת** it should be exempt from **ציצית**. That is like saying that because I have a palm tree with hundreds of branches I shouldn't have to take a lulav! It is obvious that the mitzvah does not require being near **תכלת**, but putting it on the corner of our garments. What was Korach's argument over here? The answer resides based on the timing of the rebellion. According to the Ramban, the **מעשה קרח** was precipitated by the promotion of **אהרן הכהן** to the **כהונה גדולה**. This meant that the **לויים** were left as nothing more than assistants to the **כהנים**. While this occurred a year before the actual rebellion, Korach understood very well that the time was not right for a rebellion as Moshe's popularity was at a peak. It would have been the equivalent of trying to rebel against President Bush or Mayor Guiliani on September 12th, 2001. In the Ramban's words "the people would have stoned him" had he tried to rebel at that time.

According to the Ramban, this part of the Torah is written in chronological order. The rebellion only began after the story of the **מרגלים**. God had just punished the people and Moshe was unable to undo the decree. A nation that was expecting to enter Israel in a matter of days now had 39 cold hard years of desert travel staring them in the face. This was the perfect time for Korach to make his move.

First, to pull off what he was trying to accomplish, Korach had to be singularly committed to this cause. He was intelligent and used every tool at his disposal: cajolery, persuasion, flattery, and sarcasm - even to the point of self-endangerment. When the Torah uses the unusual terminology **"ויקח קרח"** the implication is according to the Ramban, a tremendous mental resolve. But willpower and commitment alone do not make a movement. Korach, while driven by envy, needed a platform. He had to champion a cause if his movement would gain any lasting support. Korach chose two platforms - two ideological arguments - upon which to base his rebellion. One of these is explicit in the Torah and the other is related by **חז"ל**: Korach's first argument was a Jeffersonian, egalitarian, principle of democracy - all Jews are chosen equally. By what right do Moshe and Aharon raise themselves above other Jews? Where did Korach go wrong over here? Rav Soloveitchik explains that he did not recognize the double aspect of **בחר יהוה**. The Torah tells us **כי עם קדוש אתה ליהוה אלהיך וברך בחר יהוה**. Yet, Rashi points out, the pasuk is repetitive. It had already started **כי עם קדוש אתה** - why then does it need to say **וברך בחר יהוה**? In order to explain this repetition Rashi comments: **קדושת עצמך מאבותיך ועוד וברך בחר יהוה**. We have our **קדושה** because all Jews are holy. Korach was correct in this respect. **כל העם כולם קדושים**. What he did not realize was the second half of the **פסוק** - as individuals we must cause Hashem to choose us. We are an **עם קדוש** by virtue of the **בתרים בין הבתרים** - as a group when we remain together (the word **עם** can also be pronounced "im" as in "with"). This is true whether you are Moshe Rabbeinu or a lowly **ארוץ**. The second level of kedusha, though, is not universal. **וברך בחר יהוה ליהוה ליהוה** is something we have to become through effort, toil, and accomplishment.

A derivative of the idea that all Jews are equal is the notion that all Jews have an equal right to interpret halacha. This is where Chazal explain the second element of Korach's rebellion. The question of the **שכולו תכלת** not requiring **מציצית** and of the **מלא ספרים** not requiring a **ממוזה** was meant to illustrate that halacha should be determined by common sense. The halacha is there for a reason. We must find the inspiration that the halacha is meant to give us. If we have achieved that underlying inspiration, even if done through the experience of a **שכולו תכלת**, there is no need for the **מצוה**. After all, **ליבא בעי**! It was not a halachic argument that Korach posed, it was an argument illustrating how to undermine the halacha in the interest of the "bigger picture". In Hebrew, we have three distinct terms to describe intellectual superiority: **דעת**, **בינה**, **ודעת**. **דעת** is intuitive common sense - God-given intelligence. A **דעת** has basic street smarts and understanding of the world. **בינה** is a specialized area of knowledge. One can study the **חכמת הטבע** or **חכמת יונית** etc. **בינה** is an intellect trained in precision. Korach correctly pointed out that all Jews have **דעת**. We can feel out a situation and know if we have achieved what the mitzvah set out to do. To pasken, a halacha though requires - **חכמה** somebody with a specialized understanding of halachic logic - which as a distinct intellectual discipline often runs counter to common sense, and it also requires - **בינה** intense training in distinguishing different elements of a case. We too believe that the experience of Judaism is important. But whereas Korach allowed the experience to serve as the basis and the halacha to flow from it, we insist that the halacha serves as the base, and the experience flows from it. In Rav Soloveitchik's words: "To pray and to dance and sing - yes. To dance and sing in order to pray - no." We have halachos where there is an emotional - **קיום טוב**, **שמחת יום טוב**, **אבלות**, **תפילה**, **שבלב**, **קיום** are but a few examples. Through the mitzvah, we are elevated or relegated to very strong emotions. While Korach's stated goal was to stress the - **עדה** the group, his ideology leads to the destruction of any unified experience of Judaism because each person experiences their inspiration at their own time. There would be no standard behavior for any Jew in Korach's world. While Gothic cathedrals and temples are intended to arouse feelings of boundlessness and questing for the heavens, the Torah wants the experience to come from within - not from external stimulants. Traditionally, the architecture of the shul was not that important. The kohen gadol each morning would first fix the menorah, and only then cause the incense to ascend. The clarity of the light of Torah and mitzvos was the prerequisite to the mysterious **דבקות** achieved with the incense.

Torah From The BKNW Family

BKNW's Rebuttal Against Machlokes: OHT Weekly

By: Donny Simcha Guttman

Machlokes are perhaps one of the most inflammatory situations that exist. It exists to the extent that even children are killed with their "Machlokes-focused" parents as Rashi in this week's Parsha states. The Ramban elaborates that this reality exists because of the legitimate concern that these people's children were infused with Machlokes and are perhaps worse "Balei Machlokes." Throughout Tanach, we see the social distancing that even Yaakov took. Rashi says the reason why by the genealogy of Korach, Yaakov isn't mentioned is that he didn't want to be associated with Machlokes. Nevertheless, Mi'Tzad Sevarah, what is the deeper reason why Yaakov wanted to separate himself from Korach? The Mahral answers that if Yaakov would be remotely associated with Korach, the legitimacy of instigating Machlokes would have more grounds.

The deeper thought into this is that Moshe Rabbeinu clearly tried to put out the Machlokes and tense feelings. Whether it was delaying Hashem making "known" who Hashem wanted as a Shliyach in the morning to giving an "olive branch" to Dasan and Aviram. Rav Shwab asks based on a Mishnah in Pirkei Avos that states that a Machlokes which is done Le'Sheim Shamayim, the end result will be Le'Sheim Shamayim, those that aren't, won't have such a result. If defending the clear authority of Moshe is Le'Sheim Shamayim, what is the reason for everyone ranging from Yaakov to Moshe, to avoid fighting this apparent Le'Sheim Shamayim Machlokes?

Rav Shwab answers that if one of the sides or participants in a Machlokes is fighting not Le'Sheim Shamayim, then the Machlokes is deemed a non-Le'Sheim Shamayim Machlokes, irrespective of the other side's intentions. Machlokes is so toxic and inflammatory that it even affects people who weren't involved in Machlokes or were doing it even Le'Sheim Shamayim. Rav Shwab emphasizes that all those involved with Korach and his congregation were obviously only bad at this point. Rashi points out in Sefer Shemos supporting this, that only 20% of Klal Yisrael came out of Mitzrayim. That 20% were believers of the incoming Geulah, while the other 80% were nonbelievers. Despite Korach and his congregation being part of that minority of believers, their lack of belief in Moshe destroyed them. Machlokes destroys

In the Meir Einei Yisrael, it quotes a story of a fight that ensued in the Chafetz Chaim's Yeshiva. On day 2 of this Machlokes, the Chofetz Chaim came in with anger and passion in his face, rebuking the Yeshiva that the Yeshiva was built on peace and it would remain that way. We aren't talking about some random area where Machlokes was looked down upon, we are talking about the Chafetz Chaim's Yeshiva where it was looked down upon! If being a Talmid in the Chofetz Chaim's Yeshiva can't save you from the consequences of Machlokes, then what can?

We, Baruch Hashem, enter this Shabbos to rebut the Machlokes theme in this week's Parsha, with a Shul effort from all peoples and backgrounds providing Torah and insight to our Kehillah. Ohr Hatzafon Weekly is not a publication for one specific age, group, or even gender. It is and will be a Torah publication where the Kehillah can come together reading beautiful Divrei Torah from Balei Batim as well as teens. It will be a place where you can read a Drasha from the Rabbi, answer Parsha questions from Rabbi Balsam, and hear inspirational stories. This is and will be a publication where all are welcomed. We encourage all ages, groups, and genders to be part of this weekly shul effort to volunteer to write for a week. May our Achdus for the sake of spreading Torah and inspiration in our own Torah publication, be a true repudiation to the evils of Machlokes described in this week's Parsha.

If you would like to join, email bknwohtweekly@gmail.com.

Story for the Ages

The Way Rav Dessler Said Thank You

Told over by Michael Goldman

Rav Dessler had tremendous hakaras hatov to all those who helped him. He wrote many letters thanking his talmidim for the things that they had done for him, even acts as simple as bringing him a cup of tea. In 1948, Rav Dessler traveled to America. When speaking to his son, Nachum Velvel, who lived there at the time, he asked, "Who helped you throughout the years you spent alone in America?" His son mentioned several people residing in New York (where they were at the time) as well as Rav Eliezer Silver, the head of Agudas Yisroel, and the Rav of Cincinnati. Rav Dessler said, "We must thank him." His son offered to place a telephone call to the Rav but Rav Dessler wanted to show personal hakaras hatov to Rav Silver. Nachum Velvel and his father proceeded to take a nine-hour train ride to Ohio, arriving in Cincinnati at 5:00 a.m. From the train station, they went directly to Rav Silver's home and stood on his porch, waiting to meet him as he left his house for Shachris. After davening together, Rav Silver's two guests went back to the Silver home for breakfast. After a bite to eat, Rav Silver asked, "So, Reb Leizer, what brings you to Cincinnati?" Rav Dessler said that he had come to show his appreciation to Rav Silver for all that he had done for his son. Rav Silver thought about this and asked again, "What really brings you to Cincinnati?" Rav Dessler said that he had no purpose in coming to the city other than to show hakaras hatov. Rav Silver asked, "But what can I do for you?" For a third time, Rav Dessler repeated that he had only come because he wished to show gratitude in person. Rav Silver finally exclaimed, "This must be the greatness of Mussar!" Think about all of those who have done good to us. How can we show real appreciation?

Teen Inspiration

By: Daniel Lebowitz

Korach the son of Yitzhar, the son of Kehas, the son of Levi took [himself to one side] along with Dasan and Aviram, the sons of Eliav, and On the son of Peled, descendants of Reuven. They confronted Moshe together with two hundred and fifty men from the children of Israel, heads of the congregation, representatives of the assembly, men of stature. They assembled against Moshe and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for the entire congregation are all holy, and HASHEM is in their midst. So why do you raise yourselves above HASHEM's assembly?" (Bamidbar 16:1-3)

How can it happen? Korach had such a dramatic fall from grace?! He came from the loftiest of families and was inestimably great in his own right. He was already occupying one of the highest positions in the universe. Yet somehow there was a hidden, subconscious urge that began to percolate deep within his being. We can do the psychoanalysis thing here and try to figure out how that ulterior motive morphed into a tragic flaw. It may just be more practical to ask again, "How can it happen?" Maybe more important than how it happened is to simply know that it did happen and it can happen and it can happen to anyone! That may be the real practical point to ponder. The Talmud Brochos 29A makes the following most remarkable statement, "Do not believe in yourself until the day of your death! We see that Yochanan Kohein Gadol served as the Kohein Gadol for 80 years and he became a Tzadoki!" It's a mind-numbing notion to consider such a phenomenon!

Yochanan Kohein Gadol endured his encounter with the ultimate spirituality 80 times! He was thereby certified as one of the greats! How do we understand that in the end, he became a Tzadoki, a heretic!? The Kotzker Rebbe has a searing insight that may not be the simple meaning but it does breathe new meaning into this perplexing statement of the sages. What does it mean that he became a Tzadoki? He started to think he was Tzodek-right or righteous! He believed in himself! I'm Yochanan! I survived the Holy of Holies where others did not! There's room for a person to become intoxicated with their success! As the old saying goes, "Nothing fails like success!" Success can be as dangerous, if not more so, than failure! A person can believe in himself too much. So we should not be surprised that Korach fell, literally, so hard and so fast. When Rashi explains that "this world" is made with the letter "HEY" and why it works that way it sounds at first like a very cute visual game based on the pictographic nature of the Hebrew Language. A "HEY" is wide open on the bottom! There is plenty of room for a person and the gravity of life tends to exert pressure and pull a person downward. There is a slight opening near the top of the "HEY" for the one who wishes to do Teshuva and climb back to his original position. Returning, repairing, and regaining innocence requires a serious investment of sincere energy. The simple fact that Korach descended to the depths is no surprise. That piece of reality by itself is the greatest lesson. Nobody is entirely safe! When we hear that it happened, it's a shock but it shouldn't be a total surprise that it could happen. We have all been put on notice by Korach. Life requires eternal vigilance. We should not be caught off guard or be overly confident, awaking too late exclaiming, "Hey! What Happened?"

Staff

Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz

Mara De'Asrah

Donny Simcha Guttman

Yonah Lebowitz

Editors in Chiefs

Daniel Lebowitz

Teen Inspiration Coordinator

Tani Sussman

Printing Head

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The Parsha Corner

Rabbi Balsam

1. ראובן. (ד)זבולון (ע)לוי, (ב) יהודה? א) שבט was from קרח
2. Who was not part of 'קרח's group: א) אדון, (ב) אביהו, (ב)דתן, א) אבירם.
3. When משה was challenged by קרח, he responded by: א) trying to defuse the situation calmly, ב) screaming at קרח, (ב)קרח, challenging him to meet him in the morning, ד) challenging him immediately.
4. When משה called דתן ואבירם to try to talk to them they: א) refused to come, ב) agreed to drop out of the rebellion, (ב)קרח, heard משה's claims but still disagreed with him, ד) respectfully agreed with משה but stayed with קרח out of embarrassment.
5. What happened to קרח and his men: א) they died of choking, ב) they died of their tongues swelling, (ב)קרח, they were swallowed by the ground, ד) they were consumed by fire.
6. What happened to the men who offered the קטורת? א) they died of choking, ב) they died of their tongues swelling, (ב)קטורת, they were swallowed by the ground, ד) they were consumed by fire.
7. What happened to אהרון's staff? א) it ate the other staffs, ב) it blossomed, (ב)קטורת, it brought a plague, ד) it caused the ground to open.
8. What saved the people from a plague? א) the קטורת, (ב)קטורת, the משה's prayers, ד) אהרון's love for them.
9. Which מצוה is found in this פרשה? א) קרבן חגיגה, ב) קרבן עומר, (ב)קרבן חגיגה, (ב)קרבן חגיגה, ד) קריאת התורה. (ב)קרבן חגיגה, (ב)קרבן חגיגה, ד) קריאת התורה.
10. The פרשה ends with: א) קריאת שמע, (ב)קריאת שמע, (ב)קריאת שמע, ד) פרה אדומה, (ב)קריאת שמע, (ב)קריאת שמע, ד) פרה אדומה.