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יצחק אריה בן חנוך ע"ה



I find certain parts of the book of Bemidbar particularly difficult to read. Like a sports fan shouting at the replay of a match on their screen, who's frustration, however passionately felt or expressed, cannot change the reality of events past, I sometimes feel like raising my voice at Bnei Yisrael in the Midbar and asking them, "What are you doing?", "Why are you complaining again?", "Have you not learnt your lesson?", "Don't you know this won't end well?".

Yet, to complain about complaints is of minimal value. When reading the difficult sections of Bemidbar, we need to understand that if we were there at that time, facing the same challenges and uncertainties, who knows if our behaviour would have been any different.

I often think of our national journey in the Midbar as being like the development of a young child. As we left Mitzrayim we were in our infancy as a nation, overly dependent on authority figures for our sense of security, identity and self-worth. As we travelled through the Midbar, we tested boundaries and challenged authority in our "adolescent years", and then reached maturity as we entered the Land under Yehoshua's leadership.

Guiding our children and grandchildren to become independent, secure, thriving adults is a significant task at the best of times. In our Seudah Shlishit slot this week, Dr Tammy Templehof reflects on raising resilient children and grandchildren, with a particular focus on our current pandemic. She discusses how can we be a source of positivity and reassurance, when we ourselves face similar uncertainties and unknowns.

Tragically, challenges are not new to us a nation. At the same time, overcoming challenges is not new to us either. When watching the replay of our challenges in the Midbar once more, we can find great relevance for our experiences today.

# FOR THE SHABBAT TABLE



## Rabbi Mirvis

The Mishna in Avot teaches us to ensure that unlike the dispute created by Korach and his assembly, all our arguments should be for the sake of Heaven:

"Any dispute that is for the sake of Heaven will have a constructive outcome. Any dispute that is not for the sake of Heaven will not have a constructive outcome. What is a dispute for the sake of Heaven? The dispute of Hillel and Shammai. What is a dispute that is not for the sake of Heaven? The dispute of Korach and all his assembly" (Avot 5:20).

Whilst it is clear that Korach and his followers were wrong to stage their rebellion, is it fair to say that their argument was not for the sake of Heaven? After all, they were all motivated by the desire to serve Hashem in the Mishkan and each had their own claims to the priesthood.

Korach was upset that he was overlooked for the positions of Kohen Gadol and leader of the family. Datan, Aviram and On, as descendants of Ya'akov's firstborn son Reuven, were disgruntled that the priesthood was granted to the tribe of Levi and leadership to the tribes of Yehudah and Yoseph. The 250 men of renown were firstborns who saw the priesthood as their natural privilege. All they wanted was the opportunity to come closer to Hashem through the priestly service. Is this not an argument for the sake of Heaven?

In truth, the fact that they were religiously motivated does not automatically define their campaign as a dispute for the sake of Heaven. The sign of a purely motivated argument is that each side is prepared to listen to the other. The question of which side wins the argument is entirely insignificant. What is of paramount importance is that the correct outcome is reached. This was not the case with Korach and his followers:

"And Moshe sent to call Datan and Aviram, sons of Eliav and they said, 'We will not go up'" (Bemidbar 16:12).

Not only did Korach's followers refuse to listen to Moshe, they refused to meet him. Far from being interested in the truth, all they cared about was their selfish search for power and position. It is easy to fly the flag of religion and claim that Go-d is on your side, but when one side of an argument refuses to listen to the other, the argument cannot be for the sake for Heaven – it is only for the sake of man.

Even when motivated by religion, we must scrutinize ourselves to ensure our motives are pure.



### Reb Leor Broh

A string of nine consecutive words appears twice in the Parsha. What are the nine words, and where do they appear?

#### Answer to Last Week's Riddle (Shelach)

Find 4 consecutive words that have as their end letters, the letters of Hashem's ineffable Name (Yud -Kei- Vav Kei) in the reverse order.

This occurs twice in Shelach:-

נַעֲלָה וַיִּרְשְׁנוּ אֱתָהּ כִּי (13:30) Refer "Zera Shimshon" for reason  
 שָׁמָּה וַזָּרְעוּ יִרְשְׁנָהּ וְהִעֲמַלְקִי (14:24 -25) Refer Rabbenu Bechaye for reason



### Rabbi Mirvis

"And Korach son of Yitzhar son of Kehat son of Levi separated himself..." (Bemidbar 16:1).

At the beginning of this week's Parsha, Korach leads a rebellion against his cousins, Moshe and Aharon. Even when challenged by Moshe and informed that if proved wrong, he and his followers would die in phenomenal fashion, Korach refuses to step down from his revolt and leads his rebellious mob to doom. What led Korach to stage the rebellion in the first place? What claim did he have against Moshe and Aharon?

The Midrash Tanchuma (Korach 1) explains that Korach was angered by the appointment of Elitzafan ben Uziel to be the leader of the household of Kehat. Kehat, the son of Levi, had four sons: Amram, Yitzhar, Chevron and Uziel. Aharon, whose family took the Priesthood from the firstborns of the Nation, and Moshe, the leader of the Nation, were sons of firstborn Amram. When the time came to appoint a leader for the household, Korach, as the firstborn son of the

second brother Yitzhar felt it was only right for the honour to be his and was greatly angered when it was instead bestowed upon Elitzafan, son of his youngest uncle, Uziel. Not only did he feel that Moshe and Aharon took all the power for themselves and their families, they also snubbed him for the leadership of the household, so he led a rebellion.

The Midrash Rabba (Bemidbar 18:8) suggests a different (but not contradictory) explanation. Korach saw that great national figures such as Shmuel the prophet and members of the 24 watches of the Temple were to come from his offspring and thought that if such greatness was to come from him, he must also be destined for leadership. We can now understand why the threat of death did not quell his challenge, for he knew that his family had a future and it would therefore be impossible for them to die as Moshe had warned. What he did not know was that his sons were to repent at the last moment and it would be through them that great descendants would follow.

In this second explanation, Korach makes a fatal error of judgment. He thought that in order for greatness to come from his offspring, he himself would have to be a man of fame, position and power. In truth, it is not fame or public position that matter but pious and righteous deeds. When describing the birth of Moshe, note how the Torah describes his family background:

"And a man went from the house of Levi and he took a daughter of Levi" (Shemot 2:1).

The Torah is introducing the birth of Moshe Rabbeinu – our greatest teacher and prophet of all time. Why does it not mention his parents by name? The point is that it does not matter who they were. What was significant was their private act of tremendous courage. At a time of great oppression and suffering, when all newborn boys were to be drowned and all newborn girls would enter a Nation of downtrodden slaves, who would want to bring a child into the world? Nevertheless, "a man went from the house of Levi and he took a daughter of Levi" – One Israelite went and married another Israelite and despite all the possible reasons against, they insisted on ensuring Jewish continuity.

To achieve true greatness and perpetuate oneself, one need not run after fame and position. It is the pious and righteous acts behind the scenes, performed quietly and modestly in everyday life that can ensure true greatness for generations to come.

# SHABBAT AFTERNOON

## SHIUR



### Rabbi James Kennard

There can be few kindergarten children who learn the parasha, who do not know that Korach “fell into a hole”. But are they correct? Let us examine the evidence.

A close reading of Bemidbar Perek 16, shows that Korach’s rebellion was supported by two groups, each with a separate complaint against Moshe, each with a separate fate, and the narrative moves back and forth between them. One faction was the two hundred and fifty men who were angered by the selection of Aharon as Cohen Gadol, and wanted the Priesthood for themselves. They were instructed to bring pans of burning incense, and their punishment was to be consumed by fire. Alongside this “religious” rebellion there was a distinct “secular” insurrection. Datan and Aviram, the ever-present nemeses of Moshe (according to the Midrash), objected to Moshe assuming political leadership, complaining that he had no right to make himself a ruler. The earth opened underneath them and they were swallowed up.

A famous question is asked on the opening words of the parasha - וַיִּקַּח קֹרַח, “Korach took” (16:1) since the Torah does not say what it was that he took. One explanation is that he took both these groups (referred to separately in verse 1 and verse 2) together and made a coalition of rebels, even though their aims were contradictory and indeed mutually exclusive (Datan and Aviram wanted an end to hierarchical leadership; the two hundred and fifty men wanted a hierarchy with themselves at the top).

If Korach led each group, where was he when disaster struck? Verses 16: 31-35 describe the two punishments but do not mention Korach explicitly in connection with either.

The **Ramban** (13th century Spain and Israel) observes that the two hundred and fifty are commanded to bring incense to the Mishkan on two occasions: in 16:6-7 and again in 16:16-17, but with a difference between them. In the first instance, the instruction is “קחו לְכֶם מִחֲתוֹת קֹרַח” - “Korach and all his company should take firepans” (16:6). In the second, Korach is addressed more directly:

“חֲמִשִּׁים וּמְאַתָּים מִחֲתוֹת וְאַתָּה וְאַהֲרֹן אִישׁ מִחֲתוֹתוֹ”

“two hundred and fifty firepans, and you (Korach) and Aharon, each man with his firepan” (16:17).

Ramban explains that after Datan and Aviram refused to even speak to Moshe (16:12-14), Moshe wanted their fate to be an unprecedented opening of the earth, and for Korach not to be included. He therefore repeated the command regarding the firepans in order to specify that Korach was with the two hundred and fifty and not with Datan and Aviram. Korach was not swallowed by the earth.

This position is supported by the fact that Korach is not mentioned explicitly amongst those about to be swallowed by the earth in 16:27:

וַיֵּעָלוּ מֵעַל מִשְׁכַּן קֹרַח דָּתָן וְאַבִּירָם מִסָּבִיב וְדָתָן וְאַבִּירָם יָצְאוּ נְצִבִים פָּתַח אֶהְלִיָּהֶם וּנְשֵׂיהֶם וּבְנֵיהֶם וְטַפָּם.

So they went away from the tent of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood at the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little ones.

Nor is he listed in 16:32 amongst those who were actually killed in this way:

וַתִּפְתַּח הָאָרֶץ אֶת פִּיהָ וַתִּבְלַע אֹתָם וְאֶת בְּתֵיהֶם וְאֶת כָּל הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר לְקֹרַח וְאֶת כָּל הָרְכוּשׁ. וַתִּבְלַע הָאָרֶץ אֶת כָּל הָאֲנָשִׁים וְאֶת כָּל הָטַף וְאֶת כָּל הָרְכוּשׁ אֲשֶׁר לְקֹרַח וְאֶת כָּל הָרְכוּשׁ אֲשֶׁר לְדָתָן וְאֶת כָּל הָרְכוּשׁ אֲשֶׁר לְאַבִּירָם וְאֶת כָּל הָרְכוּשׁ אֲשֶׁר לְדָתָן וְאֶת כָּל הָרְכוּשׁ אֲשֶׁר לְאַבִּירָם.

**Rabbeinu Bachya** (14th century Spain) disagrees. He claims that there is no reason to mention Korach specifically in these verses, since the reference to his followers (Datan and Aviram) and “all who were with him” makes it obvious that their leader was with them too. This can be compared to Shemot 15:4, which tells of “the chariots of Par’oh and his armies” being thrown into the sea, which obviously includes Par’oh himself without needing to explicitly say so.

Rabbeinu Bachya brings support for his position from Bemidbar 26:10:

וַתִּפְתַּח הָאָרֶץ אֶת פִּיהָ וַתִּבְלַע אֹתָם וְאֶת קֹרַח בְּמוֹת הָעֵדָה בְּאֹכַל הָאֵשׁ אֶת חַמְשִׁים וּמְאַתַּיִם אִישׁ וַיְהִי לְנֹס.

and the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed them and Korach, in the death of the company, when the fire devoured two hundred fifty men, and they became a sign. (Bemidbar 26:10)

Whereas this verse is conclusive for Rabbeinu Bachya, it is not for the **Ibn Ezra** (11th century Spain). The latter argues that that verse should be punctuated with a comma after אֹתָם / them, meaning that “and Korach” is read together with “in the death of the company, when the fire devoured two hundred fifty men”. The trop (notes for public reading of the Torah) supports this position, putting an *אתנחתא* (major pause) under אֹתָם/ them.

Our final piece of evidence comes from another verse recalling this incident:

וְאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְדָתָן וְלְאַבִּירָם בְּנֵי אֵלִיאָב בֶּן רְאוּבֵן אֲשֶׁר פָּצְתָה הָאָרֶץ אֶת פִּיהָ וַתִּבְלַעֵם וְאֶת בְּתֵיהֶם וְאֶת אֶהְלִיָּהֶם וְאֶת כָּל הַיְקוּם אֲשֶׁר בְּרַגְלֵיהֶם בְּקִרְבָּם כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל.

and what he did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben; how the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and every living thing that followed them, in the midst of all Israel: (Devarim 11:6)

The absence of Korach from this list of who was swallowed by the earth implies that he was not among them.

As is often the case, each of these commentators can find a support for their position in the words of Chazal. The Gemara provides a source for suggesting that Korach was amongst those who were burned, and a source that he was swallowed. And neither. And both.

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 110a) states:

Rabbi Yochanan says, Korach was not amongst those swallowed and not amongst those burnt (Rashi – rather he died by plague) As it says (16:32) “and all the men that were with Korach” and not Korach.

(Rashi – there were two hundred and fifty excluding Korach, as it says “two hundred and fifty fire pans and you and Aaron, each with his fire pan)

And not amongst the burnt ones as it says (26:10) “and consumed with fire two hundred and fifty men” and not Korach.

In the Midrash it is taught: Korach was amongst those who were burnt and those who were swallowed. Amongst those who were swallowed, as it says “and swallowed them and Korach.” (26:10) Amongst the burnt ones, as it says “and fire went out from Hashem and consumed two hundred and fifty men” (16:35) and Korach was with them.

The **Maharal of Prague** (16th century) comments on this Gemara by analysing the motivation of the two groups of rebels. Datan and Aviram argued with Moshe because they wanted division and disunity amongst the people. Since argument leads to the negation of the community, the fitting punishment is the negation of the arguers themselves, by being swallowed by the earth and descending into nothingness.

But the two hundred and fifty did not seek division. On the contrary, they wanted to serve Hashem as Cohanim, in a way that He had not commanded and therefore was not fitting for them. As was the case with Nadav and Avihu, a desire for inappropriate service of Hashem is punished with fire (see Vayikra 10:1-2).

Thus concludes the Maharal, Rabbi Yochanan believes that since Korach was in both groups, he deserved both punishments. But had he been swallowed, he would have escaped the fate of being burnt and vice versa. Therefore he received neither. The alternative view, ascribed to the Midrash, is that he received both punishments because had earned them.

So it is not untrue to say, as we often teach children, that Korach “fell into the hole”. But it is not true either. The full picture, as discovered by a careful reading of the text and appreciating the words of the classical commentators and the Talmudic sages, is far more complicated, and far more profound.



**Dr Tammy Templehof, Clinical Psychologist**  
**Roots of resilience; empowering future problem solvers**

The buzz word at the moment is resilience. We all wish to raise happy and resilient children and grandchildren. But what is resilience? By definition, resilience is the capacity to rise above difficult circumstances, allowing our children to exist in this less-than-perfect world, while moving forward with optimism and confidence. Our role is to guide them to identify their strengths and their capacities to not only cope but flourish.

Across the span of Jewish history, Jews have experienced extensive suffering both as individuals and as a nation. After each catastrophe, there were undoubtedly those that questioned, but the unique nature of our make-up has been woven into the fabric of our heritage. Judaism's focus, both spiritual and practical, on helping people get on with living in the face of challenges, pain and tragedy has helped us to not only survive but thrive. How is it that we have become so skilled at harnessing these tools to our betterment?

For many, the atrocities of the Holocaust are raw in their minds and hearts. But for our younger generation they have been privileged to mostly live their lives with relative stability and good fortune. Recently the coronavirus has possibly been the most tangible test of resilience for many of our children and young people. Very often when dealing with our children's fears we do it at a distance. While we sympathise as adults having lived through them, we know they will move through this phase relatively unscathed. However, the uncertainty and the upheavals of the past few months in dealing with state-wide isolation has added complexity to the question of resilience. Being physically separated from our loved ones has made it more challenging to lend support and we have had to find new ways to connect and reassure one another. Also, we have found ourselves in the uncomfortable situation of not only supporting our children's potential fears and discomfort but we have done so whilst sharing in their fears without the certainty that everything will be all right at the other end. On reflection, perhaps this time has shown us as individuals, as families and as a community to be more resilient than we ever realised.

It is one issue to be thrust into a situation where your resilience is tested but as families, we play a vital role in proactively building resilience in young people. How can we, in our everyday interactions with our young family members actively seek to build their resilience? The term helicopter parent or lawnmower parent is well known in describing parents (or grandparents) that hover and do not allow their children to experience uncomfortable feelings. In doing so, they perhaps unintentionally smother their children's emotional equity. They protect their children from distress and ensure that the road ahead is always smooth. But does this help our children? Will this ensure they lead a life of fulfillment, happiness and contentment? The answer is no. To help our kids build resilience it is essential that they learn to sit with uncomfortable emotions and feelings. Always consoling your child or grandchild when they are upset, angry or experience a

setback may result in stunting their capacity to problem solve and employ self-help strategies. As parents and grandparents we all wish to ensure the best coping strategies to move forward in the world. In that case we need to allow them to experience the real world with our support while they are still young. We cannot shelter them forever (as much as you may want to). To really give our children and grandchildren the ability to feel inner strength, to feel inner peace, they too need to learn that their capacity to strategise through challenge allows them to experience feelings of achievement and success. Setbacks are impetus for improvement.

We can never underestimate the importance of modelling and talking about feelings to our children and grandchildren. We need to stop focusing on engendering emotions. We must let all young people know that expressing their feelings is not a sign of weakness but rather of strength, courage and growth. Of the 27 feelings in the world almost half of these are negative. It is simply impossible to ignore them and if we do, it increases the chances of a negative impact on our children's wellbeing. This parenting and grandparenting gig is so much easier once our kids can identify and express their feelings in a calm and productive manner. It is important be able to acknowledge their emotional discomfort and not feel like you have all the answers. If they learn how to manage these hard feelings, they will feel empowered.

Dr. Albert Ellis, in his ground-breaking work on resilience explains that the ability to cope with adversity is all dependent on what we think when we are met with challenges. Resilient people react to stress with a "can do" attitude because they "think" of themselves as capable and competent. They will then "feel" good about their abilities to manage their problems and they will then view their difficulties as opportunities to learn and grow. Identifying our thoughts, both positive and negative helps us to feel in control and have mastery over behaviours. It is sometimes hard to find the balance of allowing the negative feelings but also instilling in our children a sense of positivity and hope. During isolation it was not only enough to validate the challenges we all faced, but we also needed to model to our children and grandchildren our positive attitude and a belief that things will improve and get better. The power of our positivity must never be understated.

The simplicity of Gandhi's words resonates deeply. Keep your thoughts positive because your thoughts become your words. Keep your words positive because your words become your behaviour. Keep your behaviour positive because your behaviour becomes your habits. Keep your habits positive because your habits become your values. Keep your values positive because your values become your destiny.

Remember, empowering our children through the lessons of the past, reminding them of the resilience that the Jewish people have shown over the generations, will also help to ensure the continuity of our people for generations to come.