

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT KORACH · VOL. 16 NO. 34

FOR THE WEEK ENDING 28 SIVAN - JUNE 20 IN ISRAEL AND 5 TAMMUZ - JUNE 27 OUTSIDE OF ISRAEL

PARSHA INSIGHTS

SARDINE SAGA

"...all of them are holy... Why do you exalt yourself over the congregation of G-d?" (16:3)

Times were tough in the “tzena” – the period of rationing that followed the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. A black market for luxury goods flourished. Of course, “luxury” is an infinitely elastic term; back in those days even a can of sardines would vie with a pair of silk stockings or perfume as a “luxury”.

Shmerel had such a can of sardines and he sold it to Beryl for a tidy profit. Beryl sold it to Bunim giving the price a healthy bump along the way. Bunim sold it on to Mendy, and Mendy to Chatzkel — with more hefty dividends on the investment.

Not wanting to consume his rare prize immediately, Chatzkel placed his can of sardines on the shelf as a trophy for all to see. After a couple of weeks, however, he could bear it no longer. He brought down the can of sardines and proceeded to open it with great ceremony.

The smell that emanated from the can defies description. The fish inside smelled like they had been in there since the Flood – if not earlier.

Furious, Chatzkel rushed over to Mendy’s house.

“Mendy! Mendy! Those sardines you sold me! They were rotten!”

“Chatzkel? You opened the can?”

“Well of course I opened the can!”

“But Chatzkele, didn’t you know? Those sardines weren’t for eating, they were for *selling!*”

An idea can be like fish. If people don’t open it up and examine it, you can probably sell it down the line.

Thus it was with Korach.

Korach’s resentment against Moshe began either when Aharon was made Kohen Gadol, or when Elitzafan ben Amihud, their cousin, was made head of the family of Kahat – and thus Korach’s superior. Korach felt that Elitzafan had usurped his rightful place as head of the family.

At the time, Korach didn’t dare criticize Moshe, beloved as he was by the Jewish People. But after the debacle of the spies and

the ensuing sentence that the entire generation should die in the desert, Moshe’s popularity “ratings” had slipped considerably.

Korach took advantage of this and sold the Jewish People an idea — that Moshe had no right to be their leader. This was plausible enough if you listened to Korach’s rhetoric, but it was as “rotten” as a can of ancient sardines if you bothered to open up the argument and examine it with your nose.

“An idea can be like fish. If people don’t open it up and examine it, you can probably sell it down the line.”

PARSHA 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 which 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.

ISRAEL Forever

POWER CORRUPTS

In his rebellion against the authority of Moshe, Korach employed demagoguery to incite the people by accusing Moshe of exploiting his power for self-interest.

As Jews hear the Torah reading this Shabbat of Korach's uprising they cannot help but wonder how he was successful in developing a following with such preposterous charges.

'Power corrupts,' it has been said, "and absolute power corrupts absolutely".

While the impeccable honesty of Moshe was vindicated

by the earth swallowing his opponents, the general impression remains that people of lesser stature are extremely vulnerable to corruption when they are in power.

How unfortunate it is that so many of Israel's foremost politicians have been investigated on charges of breaking the law. It is to be hoped that the public attention created by these investigations will serve as a deterrent to those who are tempted to place their own interests above those of the nation. Uncorrupted leadership is certainly an important factor in protecting Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND- THE PLACES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

CHATZOR HA-GELILIT – TOMB OF THE CIRCLE MAKER

When Jews in Eretz Yisrael were in desperate need of rain they turned to the saintly Choni Ha-Me'Aggel to pray on their behalf.

His name – "The Circle Maker" – stems from his practice of drawing a circle around himself and refusing

to leave it until rain came pouring down.

His tomb in the northern city of Chatzor adjoins those of two of his grandsons, Abba Chilkiyah and Chanan HaNichba, who also achieved fame for their ability to bring rain through their prayers.



לע"נ

הרה"ח ר' אהרון בן ר' עמרם יצחק ז"ל

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why did Datan and Aviram join Korach?
2. Why is Yaakov's name not mentioned in Korach's genealogy?
3. What motivated Korach to rebel?
4. What did Korach and company do when Moshe said that a *techelet* garment needs *tzizit*?
5. What warning did Moshe give the rebels regarding the offering of the incense?
6. Did Moshe want to be the *kohen gadol*?
7. What event did Korach not foresee?
8. What does the phrase *rav lachem* mean in this week's Parsha? (Give two answers.)
9. What lands are described in this week's Parsha as "flowing with milk and honey"?
10. When did Moshe have the right to take a donkey from the Jewish community?
11. What did Korach do the night before the final confrontation?
12. What sin did Datan and Aviram have in common specifically with Goliath?
13. Before what age is a person not punished by the Heavenly Court for his sins?
14. What happens to one who rebels against the institution of *kehuna*? Who suffered such a fate?
15. Why *specifically* was incense used to stop the plague?
16. Why was Aharon's staff placed in the middle of the other 11 staffs?
17. Aharon's staff was kept as a sign. What did it signify?
18. Why are the 24 gifts for the *kohanim* taught in this week's Parsha?
19. Who may eat the *kodshei kodashim* (most holy sacrifices) and where must they be eaten?
20. Why is G-d's covenant with the *kohanim* called "a covenant of salt"?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 16:1 - Because they were his neighbors.
2. 16:1 - Yaakov prayed that his name not be mentioned in connection with Korach's rebellion (*Bereishet* 49:6).
3. 16:1 - Korach was jealous that Elizafan ben Uziel was appointed as leader of the family of Kehat instead of himself.
4. 16:1 - They laughed.
5. 16:6 - Only one person would survive.
6. 16:6 - Yes.
7. 16:7 - That his sons would repent.
8. 16:7,3 - *Rav lachem* appears twice in this week's Parsha. It means "much more than enough greatness have you taken for yourself (16:3)" and "It is a great thing I have said to you (16:17)."
9. 16:12 - Egypt and Canaan.
10. 16:15 - When he traveled from Midian to Egypt.
11. 16:19 - Korach went from tribe to tribe in order to rally support for himself.
12. 16:27 - They all blasphemed.
13. 16:27 - Twenty years old.
14. 17:5 - He is stricken with *tzara'at*, as was King Uziyahu (*Divrei HaYamim* II 26:16-19).
15. 17:13 - Because the people were deprecating the incense offering, saying that it caused the death of two of Aharon's sons and also the death of 250 of Korach's followers. Therefore G-d demonstrated that the incense offering was able to avert death, and it is sin, not incense, which causes death.
16. 17:21 - So people would not say that Aharon's staff bloomed because Moshe placed it closer to the *Shechina*.
17. 17:25 - That only Aharon and his children were selected for the *kehuna*.
18. 18:8 - Since Korach claimed the *kehuna*, the Torah emphasizes Aharon's and his descendants' rights to *kehuna* by recording the gifts given to them.
19. 18:10 - Male *kohanim* may eat them and only in the *azara* (forecourt of the *Beit Hamikdash*).
20. 18:19 - Just as salt never spoils, so this covenant will never be rescinded.

A digest of the topics covered in the seven weekly pages of the Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle along with an insight from them

TALMUDigest

BAVA METZIA 58 - 64

- When a guardian receives compensation for Shabbat
- Priceless items
- Hurting with words
- The seriousness of public embarrassment
- The great debate and the voice of Heaven
- Deceiving consumers by mixing inferior with better produce
- Unfair competition for customers
- The slave who dyed his hair and beard
- Usury with money or produce
- Various forms of dishonesty
- Which profits of usury can be confiscated by court
- Your own life comes first!
- Returning profits from usury or stolen items
- When buying “futures” constitutes forbidden usury
- Subtle forms of usury which are forbidden

ANATOMY OF A BLUSH

“One who embarrasses another in public and causes him to blush in shame is considered as having murdered him.”

This powerful warning that was stated before Rabbi Nachman bar Yitzchak received corroboration from him. He pointed out that we see the victim of such embarrassment turn red and then white, which indicates a form of blood-

shed.

But why does he first turn red if the reaction is one of losing blood?

Tosefot explains that the initial blush is caused by the excitement that forces the blood to seek an escape. The resulting paleness is the result of the blood receding.

Public embarrassment is therefore equated with bloodshed even though it is only a momentary experience.

• *Bava Metzia 58b*

What the SAGES Say

“A man must always be extremely careful in showing consideration for the honor of his wife, for the prosperity which is bestowed upon his household is only in the merit of his wife.”

• *Rabbi Chelbo - Bava Metzia 59a*

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SABRA SPIRITUALITY

From: Marc

Dear Rabbi,

My family and I have just returned from a visit to Israel in honor of my son's bar mitzvah and I wanted to share with you an interesting aspect of our trip, and to hear your take on it. It seems that wherever we went, average, non-religious Israelis knew a lot about Judaism, and sometimes even more than us as religious Jews. We found that very interesting and encouraging on one level, but on another, it was frustrating because whenever the discussion turned toward observance, they were adamantly opposed to it. How can they be so knowledgeable on the one hand, but so unwilling to observe on the other?

Dear Marc,

Mazal tov on the bar mitzvah of your son! It sounds like you made the best of it, not only by exploring Israel, but also by exploring Judaism with Israelis. No doubt this enriched your son's appreciation of the variety and diversity of the Jewish people. Still, your question shows you are a bit unsettled about the tension between Judaism and secularism in Israel.

It's important to remember that the early leaders of the secular Zionist movement were themselves raised in religious families. As young adults, they rejected observant Judaism, which in their minds was the source of continued Jewish suffering, in favor of a worldview and lifestyle that would redeem the Jewish people and gain the admiration of the nations.

Since many were rooted in Jewish education, and proud of their Jewish identity, and their agenda was to protect and preserve the national identity of the Jewish people, they naturally drew upon and adapted the teachings and practices of Judaism to their program, but with a secular, nationalistic bent.

This approach was manifested in all spheres: social, economic, the military and education. The result is that the average secular Israeli is raised with a much stronger sense of Jewish identity and Jewish knowledge than Jews of western countries. On the other hand, this Jewish identity and knowledge is often purely secular and nationalistic in nature, imbued with a religious-like fervor of its own.

Since much of Israeli education in these matters aims at undermining millennia old Judaism and replacing it with the new (now outdated) Zionist zeal, Israelis who come through the system are taught, at best, a purely secular/academic view of Judaism, and more often a slanted, propagandist and cynical view of traditional Judaism and Jews.

The result of all this is the source of the frustration you felt about Israelis being Jewishly so close yet so far. Nevertheless, it is the average Israeli's familiarity, which, although it may make them "hard to handle", also enables them to quickly accept Judaism once you pare away the peel. This is the dynamic behind the significant teshuva movement taking place in Israel

today, of which the following story is just one example.

There was once a Torah scholar who rarely left the insular confines of the ultra-religious neighborhoods of Jerusalem until one day he needed access to an old religious text in the Hebrew University Library. Once there, he learned through the morning in yeshiva-like fashion by reading out loud. By noon, he took out his lunch, ceremoniously washed his hands for bread, and then recited the after-blessing in the customary audible way. The librarian eyed this peculiar behavior with disdain, but refrained from chastising him for his "unorthodox decorum" until after he finished his blessings.

The visibly secular Israeli young woman reprimanded the rabbi: "I don't expect you to be aware of the decorum appropriate to a university library so I overlooked your noisy learning, clumsy washing, eating in the library and blessing out loud. But as a rabbi, I expect you to at least say the prayers right. You said '*she lo nikashel*' (may we not falter) at the end of the third blessing and those words aren't part of the prayer!"

Amazed at her awareness of the subtlety of the text, he nevertheless insisted on the correctness of his version. She produced siddur after siddur from the library shelves, and none had the rabbi's version. Apparently, she was right.

The scholar returned to his neighborhood and after a long search, he finally found an official source for his family's custom. He copied the page, encircled the relevant words in red ink, adding arrows for emphasis, and mailed the page in an envelope addressed: "To the young librarian who worked on such-and-such a day who argued with me about the version of birkat hamazon", Hebrew University Library, Jerusalem.

Needless to say, he never heard back from her.

A year or two went by. He received an invitation to what looked like a religious wedding but he didn't recognize the names of the bride or groom. Realizing he didn't receive an invitation by chance, and not wanting to offend, he attended. There, he didn't recognize anyone. Eventually, he was told that the bride would like to speak to him. Once near the women's side, he just barely recognized the now obviously Orthodox secular librarian. "Is that you?"

She explained that at the time he came to the library, she had been going out with a non-Jewish man. He was pressing for marriage, but she was uncertain for that reason. A few months went by, and he finally gave her an ultimatum, either she agree to marry or it's over. In a whirl of confusion and mixed emotions, she got to work only to find the rabbi's peculiarly addressed letter, which had only then arrived. When she opened it up and saw the words "may we not falter" so emphatically highlighted, and considered the strange course of events through which this message was communicated to her, she understood what she had to do.

She broke up with the boyfriend, investigated Judaism, became religious, and was now about to marry a young Israeli man of similar background with the intention of building a religious home and family. The most important guest at her Orthodox wedding, she explained, was the "unorthodox" rabbi and addressee who saved her from faltering.

TAKING ON A CHALLENGE

Question: I am sometimes approached to take on a charity project that I feel is far beyond my capacity. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: The story is told about the trustee of a synagogue somewhere in Israel who was handed a note by one of the congregants. Its message was that he was destitute and urgently needed help to feed his family.

Since this trustee was not one of the activists for the community charity fund, he was surprised that such an appeal should be directed to him. Nevertheless he decided to try to help. His first opportunity came shortly afterwards when a new arrival from the US passed by. He handed him the

signed note and asked him if he could help. After seeing who signed the note, the newcomer promised to get back in a few days.

Sure enough, a few days later he handed the trustee an envelope with a large sum of money and offered the following explanation.

“As a newcomer to this country I experienced the usual difficulties faced by immigrants. The fellow who handed you that note was the one person who went out of his way to help me and my family in so many ways to get settled. I felt a great debt of gratitude to him and saw this as a Heavensent opportunity to pay that debt.”

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

A QUARTER-BACK SIGNAL

Several years ago a rabbi from out-of-state accepted a call to a community in Houston, Texas. Some weeks after he arrived he had an occasion to ride the bus from his home to the downtown area. When he sat down he discovered that the driver had accidentally given him a quarter too much change. As he considered what to do he thought to himself, “You’d better give the quarter back. It would be wrong to keep it.”

Then he thought, “Oh, forget it, it’s only a quarter. Who would worry about this little amount? Anyway, the bus company charges too much fare; they will never miss it. Accept it as ‘a gift from G-d’ and keep quiet.”

When his stop came, he paused momentarily at the door,

and then he handed the quarter to the driver and said, “Here, you gave me too much change.”

The driver, with a smile, replied, “Aren’t you the new rabbi in town?”

“Yes,” he replied.

“Well, I have been thinking a lot lately about going somewhere to worship. I just wanted to see what you would do if I gave you too much change. I’ll see you in Shul on Shabbos.”

When the rabbi stepped off the bus, he literally grabbed the nearest light pole, held on, and said, “Oh, *Ribono shel Olam* (Creator of the world), I almost sold a Jew for a quarter!”

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