

O H R N E T

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

WAR ON PEACE

“And Korach took...”

Everyone wants peace. Everyone wants to sit under his fig tree, secure that no one will come and take away his family and his money. Yet almost since the beginning of time, peace has been elusive and often illusory.

If there's one Hebrew word that everyone knows, it's "Shalom", "Peace."

The Zohar tells us in this week's Torah Portion that Korach's rebellion was a rebellion against Shalom — a war on peace.

What does this mean?

If you meet someone in a bathhouse, you may not greet him with "Shalom!" because Shalom is the name of G-d, and it's not fitting to utter G-d's name in a bathhouse.

Shalom means perfection, completion. G-d is the only true perfection.

This world is a creation which lacks perfection. That's the way it is meant to be. The world is a place which strives to arrive somewhere beyond this world. The word for "earth" in Hebrew is "aretz", which comes from the same root as *ratzon*, which means "want" or "will". What someone wants, by definition, is something he doesn't have now. It's not here — it's there. You can also read the word *aretz* as *aratz*, "I will run". This is a world that is running, moving towards its completion.

But its completion can only come from Above.

The word for "Heaven" in Hebrew is *Shamayim*, from the root "sham" which means "there." This world is always "running" to "there" — outside and beyond itself. In fact *Shamayim* can also be read as *sham-im*, the plural of "there" — the Heavens are the sum total of all the "theres" that can be.

This is why G-d's name is Shalom. G-d is the perfection of all the lacking of this world. Every single thing in this world finds its fulfillment, its completion, in Him. It's not here. It's above. It's "there."

“And Korach took...”

This sentence doesn't say what he took. It just says that Korach took. Onkelos translates the sentence as "And Korach separated..."

Korach wanted to separate this world from the world above.

He wanted a world in which everyone is holy, meaning we don't need anything from the outside. We don't need a *Shalom* that comes from above, from beyond ourselves. We have the technology! We have everything we need. This world runs to nowhere but to itself.

Korach challenged Moshe using two *mitzvot*: *tzitzit* and *mezuzah*. Why these two?

Tzitzit are connected — literally — to clothing. The word *begeh*, garment, comes from a root that means rebellion — *boged*. Similarly, the word *me'il*, an over-garment, is connected to the word for misappropriation of Temple property — *me'ila* — another kind of rebellion.

Clothing hides, clothing disguises. All rebellion is born of disguising the true self, covering the disconnection between how we really are and how we appear to others. Clothing makes rebellion possible; it enables us to appear one way and be another. A garment has the potential to hide who we are; it encourages our natural tendency to feel free of obligations, to rebel. *Tzitzit*, fringes have no function in covering. Rather they are threads that connect us outwards to the world, reminding us that even when we are hidden under a garment we are still connected to a system that obligates us.

The home is another means through which we can hide and act duplicitously. At home, we feel we can do as we please. In public we have to behave ourselves.

When we enter and leave our homes, the *mezuzah* on our door reminds us that our behavior in our homes must mirror the way we act outside to the world.

Clothing and the home, therefore, need the special commandments of *tzitzit* and *mezuzah*.

Korach challenged Moshe with *tzitzit*. He claimed that the garment of *techelet* blue sufficiently reminds us of our obligations. Korach was saying that a person requires no completion from Above to be whole. Nothing external is required. There is no need to connect.

Similarly, he claimed, a house full of Torah Scrolls needs no *mezuzah*. The house is all we need to remind us of obligations. We can create our own perfection from ourselves. We need nothing from the outside.

This glorification of self-sufficiency is what lay behind Korach's challenge.

Korach separated himself from external reminders and external leadership. Korach fought against a creation where the *aretz* — this world — is inextricably linked to its fulfillment in *Shamayim* — in that which is outside and beyond.

He fought against the Shalom that makes everything whole. Korach was the true enemy of the Peace Process.

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

THE POWER OF GRAFT

"As rich as Korach!" This is a common Jewish way of describing an exceptionally wealthy man. It is based on the Talmudic description of the vast fortune of the man whose rebellion against Moshe is recorded in the Torah portion we will hear read in synagogue this Shabbat.

What seems to surprise us in this account is the success of this rebel, consumed by envy of family members in authority, in recruiting 250 "leaders of the assembly... men of renown" to join his rebellion. The answer provided by our Sages (*Mesechta Sanhedrin* 52a) is that Korach bought their

allegiance by lavishly providing them with food and drink.

Despite the stature of these 250 outstanding people, they were so susceptible to bribery that they ended up destroying themselves. What a powerful lesson for today's politicians of much lesser stature!

May the terrible fate which befell those 250 when a fire came forth from G-d to consume them serve as a warning to people in power to avoid the temptation of graft and thus help secure 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

RAMAT SHLOMO – THE EYE OF THE STORM

One of the causes of the current tension between the Obama administration and the Israel government was the announcement made during the visit in Israel of US Vice-President Joe Biden that 1,600 housing units had been approved by the authorities for construction in the Ramat Shlomo neighborhood of Jerusalem.



Ramat Shlomo is a religious community which was formerly called Reches Shuafat because of its proximity to the Arab enclave of Shuafat. When it was settled by religious Jews close to two decades ago it was officially renamed Ramat Shlomo in honor of the Jerusalem Torah giant Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, *zatzal*.

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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.

- The *ger toshav* in regard to accidental murder
- What is the status of one who mistakenly thought his action was not prohibited
- If the blind man or the hater must go into exile
- Where were the cities of refuge, what must they contain and what must they keep out
- Some advice re learning and teaching Torah
- Heavenly justice and humanly inspired Heavenly guidance
- The fleeing murderer and the blood avenger
- The death of the *kohen gadol* granting freedom from exile
- The impact of a *tzaddik's* curse
- Does disqualification of a *kohen* have a retroactive effect
- Is the blood avenger merely permitted to kill the exiled murderer or commanded to do so
- Refuge under a borderline tree and exile from one neighborhood to another
- Honoring the exiled person and restoring him to his position afterwards
- Which forbidden sexual relations are punished with lashes
- The impure person who enters Sanctuary or eats sacrificial flesh
- When a positive command precedes or follows a prohibition

UNDESERVED HONOR

The moral demand for a person to refuse honor he does not deserve is pointed out in the final *mishneh* of the second *perek* of this *mesechta*.

One who committed an accidental murder and flees to one of the cities of refuge may not be known to the residents of that city. If they wish to honor him in any way he has the duty of informing them that he committed an act of murder.

This is based on the word “*devar*” that appears in the Torah’s discussion of the exile of the accidental murderer (*Devarim* 19:4). Although in its context the term means “the matter”, our Sages saw in its similarity to the word for speech (*daber*) a hint to the above-mentioned declaration

the exiled one must make when he is being honored.

This *mishneh* is actually a partial quote of a *mishneh* in the Talmud Yerushalmi (*Mesechta Shevi'it* 10:3). There it teaches the need for one who is repaid a loan that has been canceled by the *Shemita* year to declare to the payer that he considers the loan canceled. The case of the exiled person being honored is mentioned there as a parallel.

In the Yerushalmi we find an interesting extension of this principle by Rabbi Yossi who says that if one has mastered one tractate of the Talmud and comes to a place where they honor him as one who has mastered two, he must declare that he does not deserve that greater honor.

• *Makkot* 12b

What the SAGES Say

“I have learned much Torah from my teachers, more from my colleagues and even more from my students.”

• *Rebbie* (Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi) - *Makkot* 10a

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JEW TUNES

From: David

One of my friends recently asked me if I liked a certain singer. When I told him that I do not listen to non-Jewish music, he asked me why. What do I tell him? What makes music Jewish? Especially now, when many introductions for songs and sometimes the songs themselves are copied from non-Jewish music. Thank you for your time. And by the way, you people "rock".

Dear David,

In Judaism, music plays a very elevated and potentially spiritually uplifting role. In fact, musical inspiration is viewed as flowing from the Kabbalistic *sefirot* of Netzach and Hod which are the source of prophetic influence. Thus, music and prophecy are intertwined, and music is used to induce the prophetic state. Thus we find regarding the great prophet Elisha, "And Elisha said, fetch me a musician. And it was that when the musician played, the hand of the Lord came upon him" (II Kings 3:14,15).

Music was also an integral part of the service in the Holy Temple where hundreds of Levites played a multitude of instruments (many of which are not known today) more various than in a modern symphony. This was done with great precision and harmony, as befitting the Palace of the King of Kings. So instrumental was this uplifting, authentic Jewish music to seers and priests seeking spiritual elevation in prophecy and service that it was played even on the Sabbath.

And if, in Judaism, the number seven represents harmony and balance in the physical world, [for example - the seven days of Creation (time), seven conjoined equal circles (space), the seven colors of the spectrum (light) and the seven tones (sound)], music has the ability to transcend the physical realm in that the eighth tone increasingly ascends

higher and higher scales.

These are some of the ideas that create the tenor of true, authentic Jewish music. However, Jewish mystical sources also note that just as there is a pure realm from which flow inspiration and prophecy, there is also a corresponding impure realm which is the source of magic, witchcraft and idolatry. And similarly, the power of music is instrumental in inspiring the influence of this dark side as well.

Nowadays, even though we don't have truly pure Jewish music, music from a truly impure source is also not that common. Rather, what makes much of non-Jewish music out of tune with Judaism is its mood and content. Basically, lewd and violent tunes and lyrics are unacceptable and spiritually damaging. Therefore, non-Jewish music which is refined and uplifting and which is inspired by ideas consistent with Judaism (as discussed in our piece on Classical Music) is acceptable. On the other hand, music dubbed Jewish, but modeled after genres whose tunes or lyrics are generally lewd or violent is very questionable.

However, as mentioned, even mainstream modern Jewish music is not authentic Jewish music in the spiritual sense described above. And even what's called "Chassidic" music today, aside from just a few tunes which are based on authentic, inspirational melodies composed by Chassidic masters of old, is more commercial than spiritual. Still, to the extent to which the tunes and lyrics are positive, contemplative and Jewishly meaningful, they can be considered a form of Jewish music. But one must still be careful to listen to and use this music in the context of a mitzvah in purity and holiness and not as background music for unacceptable behavior.

We await redemption from our spiritual exile when our souls will reverberate in harmony with G-d's will, producing the music of prophecy whose message, together with that of the Torah, will proclaim to the world, "He is our Rock and our Redeemer".

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THE LATE GUESTS

Question: As a hostess who frequently invites young ladies studying at seminaries here in Jerusalem for a Shabbat meal, I am sometimes upset when my guests turn up much after my family is ready to sit down for the meal and sometimes fail to show up altogether. This makes me reconsider extending such invitations. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: Offering a Shabbat meal in your home for young ladies away from home is a great mitzvah of *hachnasat orchim* and you must continue with your hospitality. You

must take into account that the seminary students may not be aware of your meal schedule and that sometimes the invitation which was arranged by them by the seminary's representative was not considered as a positive commitment on their part.

Our suggestion is that you make known to whoever calls you what your meal schedule is. If it is not the students themselves who call you but a seminary official, make your invitation conditional upon the students calling to confirm that they are coming.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

DROP THE SUGGESTION!

In his new book about his grandfather, Rabbi Eliezer Shach, *zatza*, Rabbi Asher Bergman tells the story of a question which was put before this great Torah leader by one of his devoted followers:

"I have received a suggestion of a *shidduch* for my daughter," he said. "My investigations have convinced me that he is a serious, G-d fearing young man of good character. My only concern is that he has made three conditions for considering the match, all of them demanding a rather extreme level of religious observance which may be too much for my daughter."

"Drop the suggestion!" was the categorical response of the sage who went on to thus explain his objection:

"The conditions the young man made for a higher standard of religious life are quite praiseworthy. But if you are looking for an intelligent yeshiva student for your daughter, this one is not very smart at all. The things he would like to see in his marriage can only be achieved through considerate discussion with his soul-mate. Marriage is not a business transaction which requires making such conditions!"

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