**What’s in a Name**

“...men of name.” (16:2)

According to the religions of the East ‘when you define a thing you destroy it.’ From the Jewish perspective however, definition, far from being destructive, can put us in contact with the essence of a thing, with its interior reality.

The Torah tells that Adam gave names to all the animals. Adam didn’t just pick arbitrary titles. He was able to express the essence of each life-force in words. This is because the holy tongue is like no other language. In all other languages names are merely conventional — a table is called ‘a table’ purely as a means of communication. The word ‘table’ itself however, has no intrinsic connection to ‘tableness.’ It is only in the Hebrew of the Bible that names express essence.

This expression ‘men of name’ is extremely rare in the Torah. There are only two places where the phrase appears — once in the generation of the Flood, referring to the Nephilim: “They were the mighty, who, from old, were men of devastation” (literally — ‘men of name’). The other place is in this week’s Parsha referring to the cohorts of Korach who assembled themselves in opposition to Moshe.

The holy Zohar explains that when the generation who built the Tower of Babel said “Let us make ourselves a name,” their whole motivation was to glorify and amplify themselves. To distort their name. To assume a name which did not define their essence.

Possibly this is why the Torah uses this expression here as well in connection with the rebellion of Korach. “They were men of name” — only in name. They tried to usurp the name

**InSights**

of Moshe and Aaron, to usurp the name ‘Kohen.’ By stealing the name, maybe they could steal the essence...

But you can never be something you’re not. All you can ever be is the best version of yourself that you can be. And live up to your own name.

- Based on Korban HaOni

**Kosher Style**

“And Korach took...” (16:1)

“$500 for a pair of tefillin! You must be joking! $500 for a pair of leather boxes with some Hebrew writing in them! Why, for a fraction of the price I could get something almost identical! If the whole point of tefillin is to be a reminder, what do I need all this crazy quasi-scientific precision for. What does it matter if there’s a hairline crack in one letter. It’s so small you can hardly see it! It’s a typical example of the sort of nit-picking legalism that I hate in organized religion!”

“Open up your computer. What would happen if I took a very sharp x-acto blade and cut one of the wires here in the modem?”

“Well of course — it wouldn’t work — the modem won’t receive anything.”

“It’s exactly the same with tefillin — if there’s the tiniest break in a letter, then the spiritual modem called tefillin won’t receive anything.”

Korach asked Moshe if a house full of Sifrei Torah still needed a mezuzah on the door frame. Said Moshe “Yes.” Korach started to mock him saying “If a single mezuzah affixed to the door frame of a house is enough to remind us of Hashem, surely a house full of Sifrei Torah will do the job!” (Midrash)

In a way, Korach was the first ‘non-halachic Rabbi’ — the first proponent of ‘Kosher Style Glatt Treif.’ “As long as it looks Jewish from the outside it’s fine.” In other words according to Korach the mitzvos are only symbolic, devoid of absolute performance parameters. Moshe Rabbeinu’s answer was that the mitzvos of the Torah function within strict operational criteria: One mezuzah on the door is what the Torah requires, nor more and no less, even if a house full of Sifrei Torah may look more Jewish...

- Based on a story heard from Rabbi Mordechai Perlman about Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz zt”l

**Down on the Farm**

“...for the entire congregation, all of them, are holy.” (16:3)

“All animals are equal except for some animals who are more equal than others.” (Animal Farm)

The Talmud in Tractate Sanhedrin (109) states:

“Rav said: It was the wife of Olen Ben Peles (one of Korach’s co-conspirators) who saved him. She said to him ‘What’s the difference who’s in charge, whether it’s Moshe or Korach, either way – it won’t be you!’

The way of all autocratic tyranny is to start by preaching grass-roots equality. Only when the new regime has replaced the old, does it emerge that dictatorship has been replaced, not by democracy, but by just another dictatorship.

K orach, Dasan and Aviram, and 250 of the leaders of Israel rebel against the authority of Moshe and Aaron. The rebellion results in their being swallowed up by the earth. Many people of the nation resent the death of Korach and his followers, holding Moshe responsible. Hashem’s ‘anger’ is manifested by a plague which beets the nation, and many thousands perish. Moshe intercedes once again for the people, instructs Aaron to make atonement for them, and the plague is halted. Hashem then commands that a staff inscribed with the name of each Tribe be placed in the Mishkan, the Tabernacle. In the morning, the staff of Levi, bearing Aaron’s name, sprouts, buds, blossoms and yields ripe almonds. This provides Divine confirmation that the Tribe of Levi is selected for the Priesthood, and also verifies Aaron’s position as the Kohen Gadol, the 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 concerning the first fruits, the redemption of the firstborn, and other offerings.
Three levels of celebrating Shabbos are mentioned. “Double loaves” refers to the Jew who cannot even afford wine for kiddush and must recite it over the “double loaves.” The more comfortable Jew can indulge in lavish delicacies to honor Shabbos. The more affluent one can indulge in a spirit of generosity which is the spirit of generosity that Yechezkel talks about. Each type of Jew brings to the honoring of Shabbos his or her own ability.

The Talmud says that someone who lets blood for health reasons should say a special prayer before and after. Before the procedure he should say “May it be Your will, Hashem my G-d, that this procedure have a healing effect, for You are the free healer.” Afterwards he should say, “Blessed are You, Who heals the sick.”

The purpose of this prayer is to remind a person that it is Hashem who heals, not the medicine. So whether ‘letting-blood’, taking medicine or undergoing any medical treatment, one should say this prayer.

Similarly, if you jog for health reasons you can say a prayer such as: “It should be the will of Hashem that my exercise help me have good health.” But one shouldn’t say the version mentioned in the Talmud unless he is actually sick.

I don’t know if the following story is true, but I’ll let you decide. Kenya’s star soccer player used to offer a prayer for victory before every game. When facing Israel in the World Cup elimination matches, however, he didn’t offer his usual prayer. When asked why not, he replied, “Well, I don’t suppose it would help much seeing as He’s on their team.”

Sources:
- Tractate Berachot 60a
- Chayeim Adam, Kli 65:1
- Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 230:4, Mishna Berura 6

It’s improper to enter the bathroom wearing a garment that’s designated for prayer. The large talit is such a garment — it’s made to be worn specifically during prayer (hence the term ‘prayer shawl’). Therefore, it’s improper to go into the bathroom wearing it.

The small talit, on the other hand, is worn all day long; during work, play ... some people even sleep wearing one. Since it isn’t a garment designated specifically for prayer, it may therefore be worn in the bathroom.

Which reminds me: One Shabbat a man spilled grape juice on his talit. The very next day he brought it to the cleaners. When the time came to pick it up, he was stunned to see the bill for $50.

“Fifty dollars!” he shouted. “To clean one talit?”

“Do you have any idea how long it took me to get out all those little knots!” the dry-cleaner replied.

Answers:

1. Answer: In Parshat Bamidbar (3:19) the Torah says “And the children of Kehat were: Amram (i.e. his father), Yizhar, Chevron and Uziel.” Moshe’s uncle was named Chevron! Don’t you think Moshe saw his uncle?

2. Answer: In Parshat Bamidbar (3:19) the Torah says “And the children of Kehat were: Amram (Chevron’s father) and Yitzhar, Chevron and Uziel.” Moshe’s uncle was named Chevron! Don’t you think Moshe saw his uncle?

Yiddle Riddle

Last week we asked: At the end of Moshe’s life, Hashem shows Moshe the entire land of Israel. But where does the Torah indicate that Moshe saw his uncle?

Answer: In Parshat Bamidbar (3:19) the Torah says “And the children of Kehat were: Amram (he was Moshe’s father) and Yitzhar, Chevron and Uziel.” Moshe’s uncle was named Chevron! Don’t you think Moshe saw his uncle?

Thanks to Efrain Yavitz.
**Are Two Heads Better Than One?**

“If a person has two heads — on which does he put tefillin?”

When this question was put to Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi (Rebbie) by the Sage Phlimo, it drew an angry rebuke for suggesting an impossible situation.

Suddenly a man came along and asked: “My wife gave birth to our first-born boy with two heads! How much must I give to the kohen for redemption of the first-born?”

(This case, from this week’s section of Daf Hayomi, was mentioned in the “Ask the Rabbi” column of Parshas Behar-Bechukosai and dealt with at length along with the issue of conjoined twins. We will merely concentrate on the halachic conclusions of the Talmud regarding the two-headed baby.)

The ruling given to the father of the two-headed first-born was that he must give double the normal amount since the Torah commanded that the kohen be given “five selaim per head” and here there were two heads. Rashi explains that in the case of normal twins the father must give only five selaim because it is impossible for both babies to come forth from the womb simultaneously so that only one of them is considered “petter rechem” — the first fruit of the womb. In this case, however, it was possible for both heads of the baby to come out together and both therefore qualify for redemption.

This is not a contradiction to Rebbie’s outraged reaction to Phlimo’s question. The Talmudic guideline of “any organ which appears in excess is considered as non-existent” compels us to consider a two-headed baby as one without a head at all and therefore a “treifah” not capable of living out the year. Since the two-headed baby was still alive when the thirty-day period set for redemption was concluded he must be redeemed with a double amount. But no child of such a nature would survive till the age where tefillin become relevant and Rebbie rebuked his disciple for suggesting such a possibility.

**The Constant Companion**

Beloved is Israel for Hashem has surrounded them with mitzvos: 1) tefillin on their heads; 2) tefillin on their arms; 3-6) tzizis on the four corners of their garments; and 7) mezuzos on their doorposts. In reference to this David declared (Tehillim 119:164) “Seven in a day do I sing praise to You about Your righteous commandments.”

When David entered the bathhouse where there is no mezuzah and one is without tefillin and tzizis, he sighed to himself: “Woe to me for I am naked without any mitzvah!” But as soon as he reflected on the sign of bris milah on his body he was reconciled and when he came out of the bathhouse he sang a song of praise about the mitzvah of milah which he titled a “Song to the Eighth” (Tehillim 12).

Three explanations of this title are offered by Maharsha:

This eighth mitzvah which constantly surrounds the Jew proved a more reliable companion than the aforementioned seven.

The mitzvah of milah is on the eighth day of the child’s life.

Milah was the eighth mitzvah commanded to Avraham who was already bound by the seven mitzvos commanded to all the sons of Noach.

1. What did Korach “take”?
2. Why is Yaakov’s name not mentioned in Korach’s genealogy?
3. What motivated Korach to rebel?
4. Why did Moshe delay the confrontation with Korach’s congregation until the next day?
5. What warning did Moshe give the rebels regarding the offering of the incense?
6. Korach knew prophetically that great men would descend from him. Who were the descendants of Korach?
7. What event did Korach not foresee?
8. What did Korach do the night before the final confrontation?
9. In verse 16:25, why did Moshe approach Dasan and Aviram?
10. Before what age is a person not punished by the Heavenly Tribunal for his sins?
11. The censers used by Korach’s assembly were made into an overlay for the Mizbe’ach. This was to serve as a warning. What was the purpose of the sign?
12. What happens to one who rebels against the institution of Kehuna? Who suffered such a fate?
13. How did Moshe know that burning incense would stop the plague?
14. Which tribe was divided into two families?
15. Why was Aaron’s staff placed in the middle of the other eleven staffs?
16. Aaron’s staff was kept as a sign. What did it signify?
17. After Aaron’s Kehuna was firmly established, what fear did the Jewish People express to Moshe?
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. If a Levi comes to the pile of grain on the threshing floor before terumah gedolah has been separated, what must he do before receiving his own tithe?

**I Didn’t Know That!**

Among the members of Korach’s congregation were the 12 Nesi’im (Princes of the Tribes) who offered their gifts at the dedication of the Mishkan.

• Rabbeinu Bachaye

**Parsha Q&A**

**Bonus Question?**

In verse 16:1 the Torah mentions that Ohn ben Peles as one of the leaders of Korach’s rebellion. But, Ohn ben Peles is not mentioned even one more time in the Parsha after this incident. What happened to Ohn ben Peles?
Then Samuel said to the people, ‘Come, let us go to Gilgal, and let us renew the kingdom there.’

Rashi: “Because they were making claims against it.”

Rosh Hashana is a coronation. We crown Hashem as our King. But really, isn’t our duty to acknowledge Hashem’s kingship every single day of the year? What is special when we ‘crown’ Hashem on Rosh Hashana?

In this week’s Haftarah, as Rashi tells us, Shaul had to ‘renew’ the kingdom — revitalize and re-secure it — because people were making claims against it.

Similarly, on Rosh Hashana arraigned against us are the accusing angels which have been created by our own transgressions. They accuse us, as it were, of being disloyal to the king by failing to observe his commands. And as it says ‘there is no king without a people.’ So Hashem’s Kingship is, as it were, ‘threatened.’

This accusation of our disloyalty forces us to re-new our commitment to Hashem as our King, and thus we ‘renew the Kingdom.’

• Based on Admor M’Gur zt”l in Mayana shel Torah

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

1. 16:1 - He ‘took himself’ out of the community in order to incite dissension.
2. 16:1 - Yaakov prayed that his name would not be mentioned in connection with Korach’s rebellion (Bereshis 49:6).
3. 16:1 - He was jealous that Elzaphan ben Uziel was appointed as leader of the family of Kehas instead of himself.
4. 16:5 - In order that they might repent.
5. 16:6 - Only one person would survive.
6. 16:7 - Shmuel HaNavi, and 24 groups of Levi’im who served in the Beis Hamikdash, all of whom were Nevi’im.
7. 16:7 - That his sons would repent. (Shmuel and the 24 groups of Levi’im descended from them).
8. 16:19 - He went from tribe to tribe in order to rally support for himself.
9. 16:25 - He felt that if he himself approached them, they might back down.
10. 16:27 - 20 years old.
11. 17:3 - To serve as remembrance of the challenge to the Kehuna and that the rebels were burned.
12. 17:5 - He is stricken with tzara’as, as was King Uziyahu (Divrei HaYamim II 26:16-19).
13. 17:11 - He was told on Har Sinai by the Angel of Death that the ketores (incense) has the power to stop plagues.
14. 17:18 - Levi. It was divided into the family of Kohanim, and the family of Levi’im.
15. 17:21 - So that people would not say that Aaron’s staff bloomed because Moshe placed it closer to the Shechina.
16. 17:25 - That only Aaron and his children were selected for the Kehuna.
17. 17:28 - Since they were permitted in the courtyard of the Ohel Mo’ed, they feared that they might accidentally enter the Ohel Mo’ed itself and be punished.
18. 18:8 - Since Korach claimed the Kehuna, the Torah emphasizes Aaron’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 (fore-courts of the Beis Hamikdash).
20. 18:29 - He must first set aside 1/50 of the pile the average amount given as teruma gedolah before taking his tenth from the pile.

Recommended Reading List

Ramban
16:21 The Sin of the Congregation
16:29 The Sin of Dasan and Aviram
16:30 A New Creation
18:7 The Gifts of the Kehuna
18:20 Inheritance of the Kehuna

Sefer Hachinuch
389 Defined Roles
394 Service of the Levi’im
395 Ma’aser Rishon (The First Tithe)

Storno
16:15 Nullifying Atonement
16:32 Why Also Their Possessions

HAFTORAH: Shmuel 11:14-12:22

When Ohn ben Peles told his wife of his role in the rebellion, she realized that he was behaving foolishly. That night she gave him strong wine to drink and he fell asleep. She and her daughter sat in front of the family tent. When Korach’s messengers came to summon Ohn they were forced to turn back by his wife and his daughter. When the earth swallowed Korach’s assembly, Ohn ben Peles was sleeping peacefully in his bed, saved by his wife’s great wisdom.

• Bamidbar Rabba 18:15

Bonus Answer!

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