



# Parshas Korach

For the week ending 28 Sivan 5756 (5 Tamuz 5756)\*  
14 & 15 June 1996 (21 & 22 June 1996)\*  
\*Week ending dates for locations outside of Israel

## Summary

**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 besets 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.

## Commentaries

### 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 Bavel 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 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 couple 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 *xacto* blade and cut one of the wires here in the modem?"

Continued on the other side

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Parshas **Korach** — 28 Sivan 5756, 14 & 15 June 1996

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Continued from reverse

"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 doorframe. Said Moshe "Yes." Korach started to mock him saying "If a single mezuzah affixed to the doorframe 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)*

## Haftorah: Shmuel 11:14-12:22

**"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."

**R**osh 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 Haftorah, 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

## 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 *Ohn 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.

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)*



Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations.

**Menucha V'Simcha - מנוחה ושמחה**

**"Contentment & Gladness..."**

With double loaves and a great kiddush **במשנה לחם וקדוש רבה**  
With lavish delicacies and a spirit of generosity **ברוב מטעמים ורוח נדיבה**

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 of challah." The more comfortable Jew has the means for a "great kiddush" while the more affluent one can indulge in "lavish delicacies" to honor Shabbos.

The common denominator, points out the *Divrei Yechezkel*, is the spirit of generosity which each type of Jew brings to the honoring of this holy day according to the best of his ability.

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