



# Kindert Torah

## Parashas Korach



### A Joke is No Joke

"E veryone in the class please keep together. We are coming to the exhibition of ancient weapons."

"This is really exciting, Avi. I want to see how they fought battles in the times of the Tanach. Let's listen to the tour guide."

"Here are several types of swords. Some are longer than others are. Notice that these swords are curved and those are straight. Over here, we find spears with very sharp tips. On the other side are bows and arrows."

"May I ask a question Mr. Tour Guide?"

"Go right ahead young man."

"How did the warriors protect themselves from being injured by these weapons?"

"Excellent question, young man. They used armor. Now we are coming to the armory section of the exhibition. Here you see iron helmets, body armor, and shields. The metal protected them from the swords, spears, and arrows. The warriors would grease their shields with oil. If the spears or arrows hit the shield, they would slip off and not reach the body."

"That's like a joke."

"What?!? A joke? Hand to hand combat is life and death!"

"Yes, and a joke is also life and death."

"Young man, can you please explain yourself?"

"Yes, Sir. One of our great Rabbis, Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato wrote a book called Mesillas Yesharim. It is a guide to ascending the ladder of spiritual accomplishments. The very first step is called *zehirus* - taking care not to commit any sins. Rav Luzzato describes in detail the hard work that is required to acquire this *middah* (trait) of *zehirus*. Then he lists dangers that can cause a person to lose out on this trait. One of them is senseless joking and mockery. It is like a disease the creeps upon you unknowingly and slowly destroys everything. You can no longer be serious about the important matters in life."

"That is certainly important information, young man. But how is it related to ancient armor?"

"Rav Luzzato compares mockery to a greased shield. Arrows fired at it will not penetrate to the body of the warrior. So too, mockery will prevent any serious *tochacha* (correction) or regret about a sin from reaching the heart of a person. He will laugh off all attempts to help him correct his ways. In this way, the armor is like a joke."

"You are right. That is no joke, young man."

"Yes Sir. A joke, when it mocks a serious effort to improve, is one of the saddest things in the world. Thank you very much, Mr. Tour Guide. This was a fascinating exhibition."

"My pleasure. Thank you too, boys. You have taught me an important lesson. A joke is no joke, when it is used the wrong way."

### Kinderlach . . .

*The Keli Yakar on Bamidbar 17:5 cites the Medrash Shochar Tov on the first chapter of Tehillim. Korach was in the group of letzim (mockers). The letters of his name reflect this. "Kuf" is for keshet (bow), "reish" is for romach (spear), and "ches" is for cherev (sword). A different verse explains that letzim have teeth like spears and arrows, and their tongues are like sharp swords (Tehillim 57:5). A jokester uses his speech as a weapon to mock people and their serious efforts to improve. Korach went even farther. He mocked Moshe Rabbeinu in an attempt to gain honor and power! What is the antidote to this poison of mockery? Learn Torah! Rebbe Chanania ben Teradion (Pirkei Avos 3:3) teaches us that if two people sit down to eat and do not share between them Divrei Torah, it is a moshav letzim (gathering of disrespectful people.) Kinderlach, don't let this happen to you! Be serious about the important things in life! They are no joke. When you sit with your friends, share a Devar Torah! This will keep you on the right path. Jokes are no joke!*



### A Good Wife

"Chaim, I have great news - a simcha in our family!"

"What is it, Avi?"

"My brother got engaged today!"

"Mazel tov! That is wonderful! I am sure that his *kallah* is a genuine *Aishes Chayil* (Woman of Valor)."

"B'ezras Hashem, Chaim. We were just learning about the subject of good and bad wives in our parashas ha'shavuah class. We have examples of both in the story of Korach."

"Please tell me about it."

"The Gemora (Sanhedrin 109-110) explains how On Ben Peles' wife saved him from the death of Korach's group. She reasoned with him, 'Why join Korach in this *machlokes*? If Moshe wins, you will follow him. If Korach wins, you can fol-

low him.' On Ben Peles, however, could not follow her advice because he had already joined the deliberations, and had sworn to come if they called him."

"Oy vey. What did his wife do to save him?"

"She knew that Korach's men would not approach a woman who was not *tsnuah* (properly clothed). She gave her husband wine until he became drunk. She then sat at the entrance of the tent and let down her hair. Anyone who came to call her husband saw her, would not approach her, and turned back."

"What an *Aishes Chayil*!"

"She was a special woman. Korach's wife, on the other hand, incited him to start the rebellion that caused his destruction. 'Look at what Moshe did!' she exclaimed. 'He became the king. Then he made his brother the high priest, and his nephews the deputy priests. He ruled that *trumah* must be given to the priests, and the *Leviim* must give one tenth of their *maaser* to the priests. He shaved all of the hair off of your body and mocked you as if you were crazy.'"

"What she did was terrible, Avi!"

"Right, Chaim. Korach listened to her, and began his slide down to the pit of infamy."

"A good wife can save her husband's life, and a bad one can ruin it."

"Right. May we all merit marrying good wives."

"Amen."

### Kinderlach . . .

*Bas Yisrael (Daughter of Israel) - what is your goal in life? To be an Aishes Chayil. While you are single, perfect your middos (character traits) and become the warm and caring person that a good young man will want to marry. Choose a wonderful husband and help him grow to become a big tsaddik!*

*Young man, what is your goal in life? To marry an Aishes Chayil and treat her like a queen. While you are single, perfect your middos (character traits) and become the refined person that an Aishes Chayil will want to marry. Choose a wonderful wife and be kind to her in every possible way. You will both grow and reach the highest spiritual heights. May you all merit building a bayis ne'eman (faithful home) b'Yisrael.*

### Parasha Questions:

- Is it important to have good neighbors? (Rashi 16:1)
- Describe Korach's family tree. How did this give him cause to rebel? (Rashi 16:1)
- Which great people descended from Korach? (Rashi 16:7)
- Within what time period must the *chazeh*, *tnufah*, *shok hayemin*, and *bechor* be eaten? (Rashi 18:18)

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