



SHABBAT PARSHAT KORACH · 25 SIVAN 5768 · JUN. 28, 2008 · VOL. 15 NO. 38

PARSHA INSIGHTS

KOSHER STYLE

“And Korach took...” 16:1

“\$750 for a pair of tefillin! You must be joking! \$750 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! 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! This is 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 ADSL modem?”

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

“Tefillin are a spiritual ‘modem’. They connect us to Something beyond this world. If there’s the tiniest break in a

letter, then the modem that we call tefillin won’t receive anything.”

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

Korach was saying that the *mitzvot* of the Torah are symbolic, devoid of absolute performance parameters. Moshe’s answer was that they function within strict operational criteria. One mezuzah on the door is what connects us to G-d, no more and no less, even if a house full of Torah Scrolls may look more Jewish.

• Source: Based on a story heard from

Rabbi Mordechai Perlman about Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz, zatzal

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 its name. This is because the holy language (Biblical Hebrew) 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

destruction (literally - ‘Men of name’). The other place is in this week’s Torah portion referring to Korach’s accomplices who opposed Moshe.

The Zohar explains that when the generation who built the Tower of Babel said, “Let us make ourselves a name”, their motivation was to exaggerate their importance. They meant to distort their name, to assume a name that 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’; men who were trying to usurp the name of Moshe and Aaron — to usurp the name ‘Kohen’. They thought that by stealing the name, maybe they could steal the essence.

We can never be something we’re not. At best we can live up to our own name.

• Source: Based on *Korban HaOni*

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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 DANGER OF DEMAGOGUERY

One of the greatest dangers to civilization in general, and to the Jewish People in particular, is the delusion that populism will solve all the problems of mankind. While history has shown many advantages which democratic government has over tyrannical, autocratic rule, there has always existed the danger of skillful demagogues capable of manipulating the so-called "will of the people" in order to gain power.

This week's Torah portion provides us with a striking example of such demagoguery. Korach succeeded in fomenting a rebellion against the leadership of Moshe by

cleverly accusing him of placing personal interests above those of the nation.

For the Jewish people Torah leadership is the indispensable element of their existence. There is no place in the world for a demagogue who attempts to undermine that authority. This is why the Heavenly punishment for Korach and his cohorts was sinking into the earth and vanishing from human sight.

It is to be hoped that this will be a lesson for all those who refuse to accept the authority of our Torah leaders whose guidance alone can 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

KFAR SABA – TOMB OF BINYAMIN

Like all the sons of the Patriarch Yaakov, the youngest of them, Binyamin, found his final resting place in Eretz Yisrael.

There is a wide range of opinions as to exactly where he was buried. Some claim that he was



buried in Jerusalem, which was in the part of the Land inherited by his tribe. Jewish pilgrims from medieval times believed that he was buried in the Beit Netofa Valley near Tzipori. The most popular tradition, however, is that his tomb is near Kfar Saba on the way to Kalkilya.

לע"נ
מת בי"לא בת ר' דוד ע"ה
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

- The clever tactic of Caleiv against the other spies
- The slander of the spies and the tragic aftermath
- Carrying of the Holy Ark in times of Yehoshua and of David
- The multiple covenants regarding the *mitzvot*
- The order of blessings and curses at Mount Grizim and Mount Eival
- The blessings given by the *kohanim* – when, where and how
- The danger of selfishness
- Some rules regarding the public reading of the Torah
- The humbleness of the Sages
- The *Modim Derabanan* recited during repetition of the service
- The *kohen gadol*'s reading of the Torah on Yom Kippur
- The king's reading during *hakheil* once in seven years
- The danger of flattery
- The selection process of soldiers conducted by *kohen* appointed for this purpose
- David and Goliath and other confrontations
- Exemptions from military service

THANKS FOR THANKS

Modim Derabanan, literally translated as the prayer of thanks compiled by the rabbis, is familiar to every Jew who listens in the synagogue to the *shaliach tzibur*'s repetition of the *Shmoneh Esrai* service. This is what the congregation recites while the *shaliach tzibur* is saying the *Modim* prayer which everyone said in the silent service.

What is the meaning of this title? It cannot mean that only this prayer was compiled by the Sages since the entire text of our prayers was compiled by them!

The answer lies in the response given by various Sages to the question of what the congregation says while the *shaliach tzibur* is saying *Modim*.

Five different texts are presented by various Talmudic rabbis, and the conclusion reached by Rabbi Papa is to combine them all into a single prayer of thanks. Hence the name *Modim Derabanan*.

The closing segment of this prayer demands explanation: "For the fact that we thank You may You be blessed, the L-rd to Whom thanks are due."

Rashi's explanation is that we thus thank G-d "for instilling in our hearts the desire to cling to You and to thank You."

It seems from this that the ability to express gratitude is also a gift from G-d, especially since people generally take almost everything they enjoy for granted. We are therefore reminded daily to say thanks for the ability to say the thanks that needs to be said.

• Sotah 40a

What the SAGES Say

"Said the Holy One, Blessed be He, to Israel: 'Even if you only fulfilled the mitzvah of reciting the *Shma* morning and evening you will not be delivered into the hands of your enemies.'"

• Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai - Sotah 42a

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A LOOK “C”

From: Melissa in Milwaukee

Dear Rabbi,

I am very upset about something. I recently took a final exam that I really studied hard for. During the test, a friend of mine kept looking over my shoulder to see what I wrote. I really didn't know what to do. On the one hand, I didn't want to be involved in cheating, but she is my friend and I didn't want to offend her. Anyway, it was not me who was cheating, she was looking over my shoulder – so any blame would be put on her. But still, the dilemma distracted me from my own answers and I feel that my performance on the test was affected by her since I got a “C” which is less than I'm used to, and not on par with my preparation. What should I have done? If I told her to stop, she'd be hurt and I probably wouldn't have been able to concentrate anyway. If I had asked to change my place, the teacher would certainly have suspected something, my friend might be caught, she'd certainly be offended by me, and I still probably wouldn't have been able to concentrate.

Dear Melissa,

You were undoubtedly put in a very difficult situation and it seems that whatever you could have done at the time simply would not have been ideal.

You are absolutely right about not wanting to contribute to your friend's cheating. Regardless of why she needed help, even for justifiable reasons, you cannot “help” her by letting her cheat. If she was able to properly prepare but chose not to, she has to bear the responsibility and you are not responsible, nor should you be distracted. And even if she wasn't able to prepare because of some extenuating circumstances, that must be worked out between her and the teacher before the test, not by looking over your shoulder during the test.

Regarding not wanting to hurt her, either emotionally or grade-wise, while sweet and sensitive of you, that was not the right approach. The reason is clear. You worked hard because it was important to you. But as result of her cheating, you were no less hurt emotionally or grade-wise than you were concerned she would be. So you see, you responsibly prepared properly, but ended up being harmed yourself by getting upset and by getting a lower grade. If one of you were to be so affected, it

should have been her and not you.

Anyway, if her copying resulted in similar answers to yours, you're lucky you weren't accused of cheating (although you may have been suspected). Because if you had been accused, we both know that saying, “I didn't know” wouldn't have passed since you really did know; it would have been a lie, and the teacher wouldn't accept that as an excuse even if it was true. So it's not like any blame would have been put only on her.

Given the scenario you describe, if there was no way to move places, I think you should have continued the exam in a normal posture, without moving to help or block her and gradually forget about her all together so that you could do your best without being distracted. In such a case, if you were later suspected of cheating, you would have to admit that you thought she might be looking over your shoulder but that there was no way you could “tell on her”, nor could you move, so you just tried to do your best by ignoring her. I don't think you'd be penalized in that scenario.

If you could have moved with some excuse based on light, smell, sound or some other distraction, that would probably have been even better since you wouldn't have been involved in cheating at all. As long as this wouldn't cast suspicion on your friend, even if it hurt her feelings, you would be justified in moving since you should not compromise your ideals for her feelings. Anyway, she put you in an uncomfortable situation in the first place. And even if she would be suspected, you still should have moved if able since the ramifications for her probably wouldn't be so severe. Once having moved, while you might initially be flustered, eventually you would be able to concentrate even more than staying and ignoring her.

Another possibility would have been to tell her straight out, either verbally (that might have caused problems), or by writing on a piece of paper on your desk in order for her to see as she “overlooked” you, “You're really disturbing me and if I won't be able to concentrate I'll have to move.” This way she would have been warned; if she continued she accepted the possibility of your moving, and if the note was seen it could have been explained off somehow. Of course, it's not our point to discuss what could/should have been per se, but rather how to view and deal with these situations in the future. And in that vein, a most important aspect of all this is to speak with your friend about it directly to prevent it from happening again.

LATE-NIGHT CALLERS

Question: It often happens that the telephone in my home rings after I have already retired for the night. I am sorely tempted to answer the call because it may be an emergency and am almost always disappointed to learn that the caller is merely some “late bird” who is calling about some non-urgent matter without considering that most people are already asleep. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: Since people have different schedules for going to sleep there is no way of expecting everyone to have the con-

sideration you believe is appropriate.

Perhaps the best solution is to introduce this note to the message on your answering machine:

“If you are calling after (whichever hour you choose) I am unable to answer because I have already retired for the night. If your call is of an urgent nature please ring again upon completion of this message and I will try to answer. Otherwise please save your call until tomorrow (indicate hours you are available) when I will be happy to speak with you.”

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

OF CARS AND HEARTS

While visiting a friend in the cardiology department of a hospital, the Rosh Hayeshiva of the Ponevez Yeshiva, Hagaon Rav Shach, *zatzal*, paid his respects to the department head. After hearing from him about all the outstanding features of the department the Rosh Hayeshiva asked the doctor how many years ago he bought his automobile.

When the reply was that it had been purchased that very year Rav Shach asked whether the previous one had broken down. The doctor explained that although the old one was still in decent shape he bought the latest model, something

he does every year because some unforeseen problems always arise with cars, which are solved in the new models.

“As the head of a heart department,” said the Rosh Hayeshiva in response, “you should learn an important lesson in faith from what you just told me. The heart of man today is the same heart that the first man had and there has never arisen a need for improvements as in the case of automobiles. This shows that in His infinite wisdom the Creator anticipated the problems that might arise and already solved them.”

PARSHA INSIGHTS _____

continued from page one

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”. (George Orwell - *Animal Farm*)

Talmud (Sanhedrin 109): “Rav said: It was the wife of Ohn Ben Peles (one of Korach’s co-conspirators) that 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.