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PARSHA INSIGHTS

MEN AT WORK

“...why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of G-d?” (16:3)

You're driving home after a long week's absence. On your way out of town there was a large hold-up where they were fixing the road. You wonder how long it will take to get through it. You turn the bend, and to your delight the traffic is flowing like money at a casino. The road repair crew has already finished their work. Sailing over the new tarmac you notice that it has already lost its pristine blackness. In a few short days it will be indistinguishable from the thousands of other dusty gray miles of tarmac.

In 1873, a holy Jew in Russia authored a work which changed the course of Judaism. The book was called *The Chafetz Chaim* - 'Who Desires Life'.

The subject matter of the book was the set of laws governing proper speech. In clear language the *Chafetz Chaim* led his readers through the sometimes tortuous laws of permitted and forbidden speech. The author of the *Chafetz Chaim* was famous for guarding his tongue with such care that his name became synonymous with that of his creation. He became known as the *Chafetz Chaim*.

One might have expected the *Chafetz Chaim* to be extremely taciturn, visibly standing guard over every syllable that left his lips. The opposite was, in fact, true.

A visitor came to the *Chafetz Chaim* and his son-in-law, Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Levinson (the *rosh yeshiva* of Radin), and was struck by the difference between the two men. Rabbi

Levinson was a man of few and measured words, obviously checked for *kashrut* prior to utterance. By comparison, the *Chafetz Chaim* was almost verbose, his conversation flowing with the ease.

In this week's Torah portion it's difficult to understand how Korach could have hoodwinked the whole of the Jewish People into suspecting Moshe of 'lording it up' over the congregation. Just a few chapters previously, the Torah testifies that Moshe was the 'humblest of all men.' How could there have existed even a suspicion that Moshe was pumped up with his own self-image?

When we master a certain character trait it becomes an indivisible part of who we are. However, when we are still doing 'road work' to perfect a part of our character, the signs of digging and construction are everywhere in evidence. It's clear to all that there are still 'men at work'.

To the untrained eye, Moshe might have seemed lofty and removed. He was, after all, the king of the Jewish People. And he behaved in the manner of a king. But in his heart, Moshe understood, as no man before or since, exactly how small he was compared to G-d. Moshe didn't need to trumpet his humility. It was already integrated into his personality as seamlessly as the tarmac of last year's road repair.

• **Source:** Rabbi Mordechai Perlmán

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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.

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

POMEGRANATE – SYMBOL OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Anyone who has ever eaten this exotic fruit is well aware of the extraordinarily large number of seeds it contains. King Shlomo's comparison (*Shir Hashirim* 4:3) of this fruit to the Jewish people leads our Sages to finding merit even in those Jews whose standard of observing the *mitzvot* leaves something to be desired.

In one place (*Berachot* 6a) it is explained that the city of Tiberias is also called Rakat because the word *raik* means empty or unworthy. Just as in the above-mentioned passage we read the word *rakota'ich* as a hint to



"the unworthy ones being as filled with mitzvah credits as a pomegranate is filled with seeds", so too were even the unworthy people of Tiberias filled with *mitzvot*.

In another place (*Berachot* 6a) this appreciation of Jews is extended to the entire nation. Even the unworthy ones, our Sages tell us, are so filled with *mitzvot* like the pomegranate is filled with seeds that these merits will protect them against the fires of retribution in the World to Come.

Remembering Rav Weinbach

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לע"נ

מרת פייגא בת ר' דוד ע"ה

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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.

ERUVIN 93 - 99

“Rav turned his face away from Shmuel.”

Why did Rav act in this manner which appears to display a lack of honor for the Sage Shmuel? The *gemara* on our *daf* relates dissenting opinions of Rav and Shmuel regarding carrying in courtyards when a wall that divided them fell down on Shabbat, thereby forming one joint courtyard. Shmuel is lenient and Rav is strict. The *gemara* relates an actual case that occurred while Rav and Shmuel were present in this exact scenario where the wall fell on Shabbat between two courtyards. Shmuel ruled leniently in accordance with his view, whereas Rav turned away and faced away from Shmuel.

The *gemara* asks why Rav didn't just say that he disagreed with Shmuel's ruling? The answer given by the *gemara* is that “it was the place of Shmuel” — Shmuel was the *rav* of that city and it would be inappropriate for Rav to issue his dissenting ruling. If so, why did Rav turn away? To hint that he did not agree with Shmuel's ruling. By turning away he politely communicated his disagreement, to insure that people would not mistakenly say that Rav agreed with Shmuel's *psak*.

• *Eruvin 94a*

“Rabbi Akiva said that one might say that tefillin is a mitzvah on Shabbat and Yom Tov; however the Torah states, ‘it (tefillin) is an sign for you on your arm (Shemot 13:9)’ — meaning that the mitzvah of tefillin is for days which require a ‘sign’, which excludes Shabbat and Yom Tov which are already ‘signs’ themselves.”

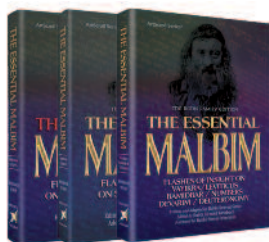
Rashi explains that the idea of having a “sign” is that we should show recognition of our dedication to uphold and fulfill the Torah. During weekdays *tefillin* serves as this sign. However, Shabbat and Yom Tov days are themselves a sign of this commitment — “because it is a sign between Me and between you” (*Shemot 31:13*) — and no additional sign is needed.

• *Eruvin 96a*

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NAME-CALLING

From: Stephanie

*Dear Rabbi,
My husband and I are expecting a birth soon, and we were wondering, if it will be a girl whether there are any special considerations or customs regarding giving a name. We are familiar with the name giving for a boy at the brit, but is there anything like this for a girl?*

Dear Stephanie,

May you have a normal and healthy birth, and may you and your husband have much Jewish pride from this baby, as well as from all other children of yours.

According to traditional Jewish teachings, parents are given special Divine inspiration in naming their children. It is described as one of the remnants of prophecy. This is because a name is bound with, and has an effect on, the spiritual character of a person. It is therefore of utmost importance to choose a name which fits this lofty purpose.

That being said, there are general guidelines for choosing a name which are traditionally adhered to, and which create proper context within which the prophetic nature of the name giving can be realized and expressed.

One common practice is to name children after relatives or rabbis of outstanding spiritual and moral standing. Sefardim often do so for people who are still living; Ashkenazim do so only after the departed. In any case, this is viewed as establishing a spiritual connection between the child and the namesake. It is also considered a way of honoring the one being named after.

Another practice is to name children after righteous people mentioned in the weekly Torah or Haftarah portion of the week in which they were born. So children born when the Book of Genesis is read publicly might be given the names of the patriarchs, matriarchs, or Tribes. While those born during "Exodus" might be named Moshe or Aharon; or Yocheved, Miriam and Tziporah.

A third practice, which is related to the former, is relevant when a child is born during a specific time period or holiday throughout the Jewish year, where parents might name a child after righteous people associated with that time. So a child born around Chanuka might be named Yehuda or Yehudit; while names associated with Purim would be Mordechai or Esther; and Shavuot would be Boaz or Ruth, for example.

Regarding the ceremony associated with naming daughters, it is usually done by calling the father for an aliya to the Torah, after which time a special blessing is recited for the health and well-being of the mother and baby, who are referred to by name. It is here that the first official pronouncement of the baby's name is made, as the daughter of so-and-so (either mother's name or father's or both). Some do this at the first possible opportunity after birth – even on a weekday. Others wait specifically until Shabbat. The name is usually not revealed until that time, except in order to consult with a rabbi.

Parents customarily give out cakes, sweets and make a "l'chaim" at this time in order to share the joy of the occasion with others, as a way of giving thanks to G-d and in honor of the mitzvah of giving a proper Jewish name. Those who do the name-giving particularly on Shabbat will generally host a festive *kiddush* after prayers for the community, and this is a type of "mitzvah meal" akin to the meal made in honor of the *brit* for a boy.

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THE IMMUNITY OF COMMUNITY

Question: By nature I am a very solitary person who avoids being involved in communal affairs. I've often been lectured that this is a wrong approach to life. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: The Sage Hillel offered the following advice (*Pirkei Avot* 2:4):

“Do not isolate yourself from the community and don't have confidence in yourself until the day of your death.”

The simple meaning of the first of these two seemingly separate bits of advice is that one who shares the community's woes will merit sharing its joys. The second one is a warning that someone can be a pious Jew for most of his life-

time and yet abandon his faith.

There is, however, another approach offered by the commentary *Tiferet Yisrael*, which views these two bits of advice as being linked to each other.

A man must never be overly confident in regard to his material or spiritual well-being. Life has its ups and downs so that no one can be certain that his present situation will not deteriorate. The best guarantee that one has for retaining his level of material security and spiritual solidity is the support – both material and spiritual – that the community provides.

Follow this valuable advice and do your best to be part of your community – for its sake and your sake.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THE ECHO OF LIFESAVING CHARITY

Charity to the poor as a lifesaver is a theme that spans the centuries. Back in Talmudic times it saved the life of Rabbi Akiva's daughter. When she was born the astrologers informed her father that the stars indicated that she would die on the day of her wedding. The morning after her wedding she discovered in her room a poisonous snake that she had unknowingly killed with a jewelry pin she had placed near the wall. Her delighted father asked what merit she had to deserve such a lifesaving miracle. She replied that a poor man had come to the door of the wedding hall begging for food but had not been noticed by any of the guests because of the noise of the celebration. She alone heard him and gave him her portion.

In our own times there is a story told about a poor Jew

with a large family who somehow managed to acquire two chickens for the holiday meals. A poor woman knocked on the door and cried that her family had nothing to eat. When he complained that all he had was two chickens that would barely supply his family members with tiny portions, she insisted that he give her one of the chickens. As he opened the refrigerator door he found inside his unconscious infant child who had turned blue from cold after entering the fridge that closed on him. The rescue team that quickly arrived and brought the child around told the father that had he opened the fridge a minute later it would have been too late.

Both cases vindicated the Divine promise that “charity saves from death”.

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