

Korach

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Hilula

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- Lubavitcher Rebbe

3 – Rabbi Yehoshua Neuwirth, author of
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4 – Rabbi Pinchas HaLevi Horowitz
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5 – Rabbi Tzalach Cohen Zangi

6 – Rabbi Chaim De la Rosa, author of
'Torat Chacham'

7 – Rabbi Simcha Bunim Alter, the
Admor of Gur

8 – Rabbi Chaim of Shash, author of
'Nishmat Chaim'

Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

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Under the auspices of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Son of the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Ahron Pinto, zt"l, and grandson of the holy tzaddik and miracle-worker Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy"a



MASKIL LEDAVID

Weekly talk on the Parshah given by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

From Wise Elders I Gain Understanding

"They gathered together against Moshe and against Aharon and said to them, 'It is too much for you! For the entire assembly – all of them – are holy and Hashem is among them; why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of Hashem?'" (Bamidbar 16:3)

David Hamelech, in his sefer Tehillim, reveals to us that despite being a king and possessing all the good in the world, the true good he aspires and longs for is "But as for me, G-d's nearness is my good" (Tehillim 73:28). Closeness to G-d was the absolute good that David Hamelech aspired to achieve. We too must strive and toil for this throughout our lives, as the Mesilat Yescharim writes (in the introduction), "And anything besides this, that people consider as good, is only emptiness and takes us in the wrong direction."

We can ask why David Hamelech chose the expression, "is my good". Seemingly, it would seem sufficient to say, 'G-d's nearness is good'. The reason could be, many people wish for some form of closeness to Hashem but do not take measures to internalize and connect with this longed-for closeness. Rather, they hope this closeness will appear by itself. This is why the sweet singer of Israel wrote, "... is my good", signifying that cleaving to Hashem is important to him and he takes care to implement it and engrave it in his heart, not waiting for it to appear on its own.

Every person desires a good life, yet if we ask others what kind of good they aspire for, each will answer according to his spiritual level. One will answer that he desires much money and possessions, despite knowing "the more possessions, the more worries." Another person wishes for honor and greatness, even though he is aware that pursuing this removes a person from this world. In any case, each person spends his life searching for his longed-for perception of good.

But David Hamelech teaches every Jew, whatever his level, that the only true and perfect good, without a trace of disappointment or heartache, is the desire to draw close to Hashem with all one's might. And if one merits this, all other things will automatically follow and he will not lack anything.

This week's Parshah tells us about Korach, a great and distinguished person. In addition to his great wisdom, Korach was exceptionally wealthy, as Chazal tell us (Pesachim 119a), he owned three hundred donkeys just to carry the keys of his treasures. This is why we often describe a rich person as being "as rich as Korach." Korach was also among those who carried the Aron of Testimony, inside which lay the Luchot Habrit. This shows us Korach was on a very high level and possessed exceptional qualities, but still searched for further closeness to Hashem by wanting to be a Kohen. However, since this closeness did not stem from a legitimate and pure source, he and all his possessions were swallowed up by the ground.

Let us try and understand what brought Korach to act in such a foolish way. Why was all he merited until now, both materially and spiritually, not enough for him? What made him argue with Moshe Rabbeinu?

Korach behaved as he did because he lacked the attribute of humility and submission in the face of the Torah and its scholars. Chazal say (Berachot 7b), "Serving [Talmidei

Chachamim] is greater than studying [Torah], as it says (Melachim II, 3:11), 'Elisha son of Shaphat is here, who poured water over the hands of Eliyahu!' It does not say 'who studied under him', but 'who washed his hands', to teach that serving is greater than studying." One who serves Talmidei Chachamim, thereby having the chance to observe their conduct – the practical application of the knowledge they impart – is aware of how they behave even in matters not discussed, for he personally observes them in action. This is why serving Talmidei Chachamim is considered greater than studying Torah. However, the merit of both studying and serving is certainly the most advantageous.

One can learn something beneficial for one's service of Hashem from every person, even from a friend who is on your level or below you. Concerning this David Hamelech says (Tehillim 119:99), "From all my teachers I grew wise". Chazal also tell us (Eiruvim 100b), "Had the Torah not been given, we would learn modesty from a cat, theft from an ant, and immorality from the dove." Even though we human beings are vastly superior to animals, nevertheless we can still glean morals from the good characteristics they have and thereby benefit from everything in the universe; all is for the sake of our spiritual elevation. All the more so can one learn from the ways of a human being. And the conduct of Talmidei Chachamim, who are considered as living Sifrei Torah, can impart even greater lessons.

Korach did not want to learn from Moshe Rabbeinu, saying the entire assembly is holy and Hashem is among them. This being the case, if we ourselves have achieved such a great level in Avodat Hashem, what do we have left to learn from Moshe Rabbeinu? This was Korach's mistake which brought him to the edge of the abyss.

A scholarly Rav may be addressing a crowd, delivering words of reproach, but instead of heeding his words, one's thoughts drift to different matters or one studies a sefer and doesn't pay attention to the lecture. This contains an element of degradation for the honor of Torah, and if one does not possess awe of Talmidei Chachamim, one cannot attain awe of Heaven.

The meaning of the name 'Korach' is cognate with 'ice' and 'coolness'. This alludes to the fact that Korach wanted to cool the hearts of the people and prevent them from connecting to the leaders of the congregation. Korach's eyes misled him to presume he is worthy enough in his own right and has no need to add to his worthiness and learn further from Moshe and Aharon. Korach mistakenly thought: since the entire assembly congregation is holy and Hashem is among them, there is no place for Moshe and Aharon to be considered greater than the rest of the people. Their time has come to vacate their position in favor of others. Korach and his congregation were punished with such a severe punishment, never before experienced, so Bnei Yisrael would learn well that one must not take the verse "Hashem, your G-d, shall you fear", lightly, for it includes the obligation to fear Talmidei Chachamim. Even if one is an exceptional Talmid Chacham, one is still obligated to learn from the Gedolei Hador, as it says (Tehillim 119:100), "From wise elders I gain understanding."



Walking in their Ways

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu
Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Self-improvement – The Last Leg of Illness

A man once told me that he had been suffering from a wound in his foot for the past half year. His doctors had told him it was nothing serious and just gave him various creams and ointments. But they did not help at all and he continued suffering.

When I heard his story, I remembered that my father, too, zy"a, suffered similarly. After undergoing testing, he was diagnosed with diabetes. He was told he had to have his leg amputated so the infection would not spread throughout his body. (Baruch Hashem, in a most miraculous way, he was spared this procedure.)

I asked the man standing before me if he, too, suffered from diabetes. He repeated that the doctors stated he was not suffering from anything serious.

"Did you undergo any testing whatsoever?" I continued.

"No," he replied. "The doctors made their assessment based only on the wound on my leg. I was not sent to do any sort of tests. I also wondered about this." I instructed him to do a battery of tests, in spite of the doctors' cavalier attitude.

The results revealed this man suffered from the same illness as my father and he was informed his leg had to be amputated. He ran to me begging for advice how to proceed. He didn't want to lose his leg.

I responded, "It is well-known when a person resolves to improve his Avodat Hashem, this resolution has the power to annul harsh decrees. It would therefore be beneficial to undertake improvement in some minor matters. B'eizat Hashem, you will then merit salvation."

He did as I instructed. Only a few months later, his baffled doctors informed him there was no trace of his former illness and his leg was completely healed.

This incident was a proof of Divine Intervention. For a full six months, the man had not done any sort of testing. Then Hashem brought him to me, I remembered father's illness, and this revealed the source of his suffering. The man was eventually completely healed in the merit of his self-improvement.

The Haftarah

"And Shmuel said" (Shmuel I, 11-12)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah tells about the Jewish people who requested that Shmuel appoint a king over them, whereas the Parshah relates how Korach rebelled against Moshe Rabbeinu and requested greatness for himself.

The Haftarah also mentions Shmuel who asked: "Whose ox have I taken?" The Parshah mentions a similar statement said by Moshe Rabbeinu: "I have not taken even a single donkey of theirs."

Guard Your Tongue

Pointing Out Negative Traits

If it is clear that we are required to relate negative information about someone, we are obligated to search for the most minimal way to tell it over. It is preferable to guide the listener to discover the matter himself, rather than express it directly.

When comparing two applicants for a position, it is generally sufficient to mention the qualities of one without pointing out the shortcomings of the other.

In any case, it is always preferable to try as much as possible to limit relating another's flaws.



In Our Father's Path

The Baron Put an End to the Rich Man's Pranks

On the verse in Kohelet (5:12), "Riches are hoarded by their owner to his misfortune" Chazal expound (Pesachim 119a), "Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: this refers to the wealth of Korach." His wealth was only to his detriment, without benefitting him in any way.

Rabbi Reuven Karlenstein, in his sefer Yechi Reuven, brings a story about the Baron Rothschild who arrived at a certain village early one morning and inquired what time they pray Shacharit. He was told at seven o'clock. He entered the Beit Knesset and saw that all the congregants had already arrived; the Rav, the chazan, the Dayan, the worshippers, but still they did not begin praying...

He asked for the reason for the delay and they explained that the town's wealthy resident had not yet arrived, and it was he they were waiting for... Five minutes passed, ten minutes, and still they waited... At seven fifteen the rich man arrived, eyes still puffy from sleep, walked to his seat in the front bench, sat down next to the Rav and signaled they could begin praying... The Baron Rothschild was shocked at his audacity... The Rav of the Beit Knesset has to wait for him... The entire world has to wait for him... What insolence!!

The time came for the Torah reading. The Baron asked for an Aliya and afterwards they recited a mi sheberach for him.

When the gabbai came to the words "because he will contribute... to charity", the Baron Rothschild said, "because I will contribute the sum of all the assets of this local wealthy man." Since the gabbai did not know it was the Baron Rothschild standing in front of him, he declared, "Are you crazy?! This rich man possesses a fortune!" But the Baron remained firm and promised to donate this exact sum...

The gabbai answered, "R' Yid! Don't make fun! If you want to donate to the Beit Knesset, specify an amount! If you don't want to donate, no one is forcing you." The Baron replied, "I already said I want to donate! I even cited the amount!"

"And you have this amount to donate?" asked the Gabbai. "Yes" he replied. "I have a thousand times more than this amount..."

Only then did the gabbai grasp who it was...

The gabbai hurried over to the town's wealthy resident and asked him to detail the sum of his fortune so the Baron Rothschild should know how much to donate. However, the wealthy man refused, claiming he is not interested in making his personal affairs public knowledge.

They tried to persuade him: "We are talking about a huge loss for the entire community. The money the Baron donates will benefit all the town's poor! If you don't reveal how much your assets are worth, the Baron will leave town and we will lose everything."

The rich man would not budge. "You cannot demand that I publicly expose my personal affairs." What could they do? The entire community went to the wealthy man's home and began a demonstration... The Baron Rothschild said to them, "It is not necessary for him to divulge! I can find out on my own."

"I will pay a lawyer and accountant to inspect the relevant records and figure out the value of his assets..." They investigated, re-checked, scrutinized, re-inspected, and discovered that he had, almost... nothing! But he was the town's wealthy resident, the one all waited for to begin their prayers...

This is the meaning of "Riches hoarded by their owner to his misfortune" as Rashi explains, "Like the wealth of Korach, for through it he became proud and fell to the depths."



Pearls of the Parsha

Proof that the Priesthood is not Korach's Inheritance

"Hear now, O offspring of Levi" (Bamidbar 16:8)

The Hebrew word nah – now – is an abbreviation for Nadav and Avihu.

The Yismach Moshe writes that this alludes to the fact that the death of Nadav and Avihu, sons of Aharon who offered an alien fire, is proof that the priesthood does not belong to Korach.

There is No Law of Chazakah in a Dispute

"Moshe sent forth to summon Datan and Aviram" (Bamidbar 16:12)

Rashi quotes Chazal who derive from this that one should always seek to end a controversy, for Moshe appealed to the other leaders of the revolt to try and make peace. HaRav Yitzchak of Verka zt"l explains that the intention of Chazal is to teach us that there is no law of chazakah – presumption – with a dispute. Even after several unsuccessful attempts at trying to make peace with one's opponent, one may not presume one will never succeed. On the contrary, a person is obligated to try repeatedly to settle the argument, just as Chazal tell us that Moshe sought them out to try and make peace.

Don't Corrupt

"The earth covered them over and they were lost from among the congregation" (Bamidbar 16:33)

The existence of man, points out Rabbi Yitzchak Abuhav zy"a in his sefer Menorat Hame'or, obligates that they dwell together and serve and assist each other with all their work and needs. That is why the occupation of the world is dependent on friendship, brotherhood and agreement, with one outlook and law. Therefore, the presence of dispute serves to corrupt occupation.

The study of Torah requires a group of talmidim. If they debate and offer varying opinions for the sake of Heaven to bring the truth to light, this is considered Avodat Hashem, for their goal is to seek the truth and prevent the dissemination of mistaken rulings. However, when the talmidim are faced with differences of opinion, their intention must be for the sake of Heaven, to bring the true ruling to light, and not to provoke or torment.

One must be exceedingly careful even when showing support for Torah arguments, so as not to cause everlasting destruction. Peace and tolerance are always appropriate and may Hashem Yitbarach bless His people with peace!

The Package Gives Evidence to its Contents

"And I – behold! I have given you the safeguard of My leave-offering, of all the sanctities of the Children of Israel" (Bamidbar 18:8)

The Mashgiach Rabbi Yerucham Lebovitz zt"l used to say: The great power that serves to elevate man and raise him to an exalted level is when he has the correct perception of the value of his occupation.

The root of man's success in spirituality is the qualities he seeks to achieve. The more he appreciates them, the more chance there is he will expend effort to attain them.

He brought a mashal of someone who enters a jewelry store. There he sees how each piece of jewelry has its own box, and the more expensive and rare the piece of jewelry, the more exclusive its case. What is the goal of the box? To protect the jewelry, and prevent its getting damaged, knocked or dirty. But why such a lush casing? Because what is precious and important to man, he values, singles out and protects.

Hashem saw that the Kohanim fulfilled their mitzvot with joy, therefore He gave them another twenty-four gifts of priesthood, since it was clear they would guard them appropriately.

Treasures

Based on the teachings of
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon
Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya
Pinto, shlita



One May Ask; Not Ridicule

"Korach, son of Yitzhar, son of Kehat, son of Levi separated himself, with Datan and Aviram, sons of Eliav, and On, son of Pelet, the offspring of Reuven" (Bamidbar 16:1)

The Torah brings the story of the rebellion led by Korach and his followers concerning the priesthood. In this context Chazal point out that a dispute that is for the sake of Heaven will have a constructive outcome, while one that is not for the sake of Heaven will not have a constructive outcome. What sort of dispute is considered for the sake of Heaven? One that transpires only as a result of the desire to fulfil Hashem's command. If two people are debating words of Torah and a stranger notices them arguing, he may at first think they hate each other. As soon as they conclude their study session, however, it will be evident to all that they are in fact good friends who enjoy each other's company. The only reason they were arguing was for the sake of Heaven, in an attempt to understand the depths of the matter and discover the true will of Hashem.

This was the character of all the famous arguments between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai; their entire goal was for the sake of Heaven. The proof is that although the final ruling follows the opinion of Beit Hillel, they would nevertheless study and review Beit Shammai's opinion to try and grasp their perception of the matter. Most people who disagree do not invest effort and thought in understanding the reasoning of the opposing side. Since Beit Hillel studied Beit Shammai's opinions, it proves theirs was an argument for the sake of Heaven, which has a constructive outcome. Concerning the opinions of Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai it says, "These and these are the words of the Living G-d", since both sides wished to understand Hashem's word for the sake of increasing the glory of Heaven in the world.

The symbol of a dispute not for the sake of Heaven is the dispute of Korach and his followers, which was actually a one-sided dispute; Korach rebelled against Moshe Rabbeinu while Moshe Rabbeinu only sought peace. Upon hearing Korach's words, he fell on his face out of distress. Throughout the rebellion, Moshe sent messengers to Korach's followers to try and appease him and avert the dispute. Since it was a dispute for the sake of a dispute, Moshe Rabbeinu did not wish to have any part in it.

Korach's entire argument was of a very problematic nature since he used the words of the Holy Torah to spread dissension. At first he questioned the decree of the Red Cow, and also confronted Moshe with derisive questions about mezuzah and tzitzit. These challenges led to Korach protesting the appointment of the priesthood. It follows then that Korach used the words of Torah for his personal gain and as a means for dispute. Korach was not indicted for the questions he asked, since we are told, "a bashful person cannot learn." Asking questions is a most necessary feature and occupies an important place in Judaism. Rather, Korach was indicted for the way in which he asked – his questions contained a vein of contempt and derision. The entire goal of his questions was to ridicule and show disdain for the holy leaders of the nation. Korach was also charged for exploiting the words of the Holy Torah to promote his personal wishes, thereby making a mockery and scorn of the Torah and publicly profaning the Name of Heaven.



A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Peace is More Important Than Being Called Up for Maftir!

This week's Parshah details the terrible dispute of Korach and his followers and the horrendous tragedy it caused, in which men, women, children and young babes suffered; they all paid the price. Immediately following this dispute, the Torah warns us not to become involved in this evil and stay away from such dangerous and frightening developments. True, there can be differences of opinion and argument. But still, let us manage them matter-of-factly, with the desire to forgo and find solutions. Most importantly, we must take care that the issue not become an intense argument!

Rabbi Asher Kovleski shlita publicized an extraordinary incident that took place in the Nadvorna-Chadera Beit Knesset in Bnei Brak. One day, one of the long-time members approached the gabbai to ascertain whether he could receive the maftir aliya on a certain Shabbat and serve as the chazzan for mussaf, since this Shabbat precedes the yahrzeit of his mother a"h.

The gabbai checked his calendar and confirmed this Shabbat was free of any other obligations. As this regular worshipper was entitled to receive aliyot during the year and also serve as the chazzan, the gabbai was happy to actualize his wish. The congregant was pleased, for as an organized person he wished to verify that all the yahrzeit matters would be taken care of in the best possible way, and now it seemed everything would proceed smoothly.

That Shabbat he made sure to arrive early at the Beit Knesset, certain that the maftir and mussaf prayer were patiently waiting for him. But minutes after he entered, out of the corner of his eye he noticed a stranger, not one of the regulars, arguing with the gabbai. Curious to hear what the argument was about, he discovered to his consternation that this stranger was asking for the maftir aliyah and to serve as chazzan for mussaf! This was his maftir and his mussaf, how could it be?!

For a moment he waged a battle inside of himself. "Master of the world, if there is justice in the world, it is being desecrated

in front of my eyes. I am a regular member, I reserved these honors in advance, and I have been a regular contributor to this Beit Knesset for many years. And look what is happening here! A stranger wishes to take control of the honors! This is a real scandal!"

On the other hand, a quiet voice whispered to him: bow to the circumstances. "Regardless, we do not understand how an aliya and serving as chazzan benefits the souls in the Upper World; we do not really know how they affect the elevation of the souls in Gan Eden. We try to do our best according to the tradition handed down to us, but does forgoing one's wish, such intense effort, not have an effect on the soul? It also has a certain power! Maybe it is better to forgo, to run away from strife, and dedicate the surrender to my mother's memory?!"

And with that he made his decision. With courage and determination, he announced to the gabbai that he is prepared to forgo his rights. At first the gabbai tried to protest. "G-d forbid, do you think I will allow him to have his way? No way. There is order in the Beit Knesset, there are regulations; the members have rights, and receiving an aliya and serving as chazzan on the Shabbat preceding the yahrzeit is one of them. It does not come into question; I am not prepared to yield!"

However, the member had already decided that however important the aliya is, it is not worth getting into an argument over it, for strife is doubly dangerous and brings tragedy seven times more than forgoing an aliya. He remained firm: "No way, my friend the gabbai. I am willing to forgo. I do not want argument and strife. Give him the aliya, give him also the mussaf prayer, I will make do with a different aliya. I will serve as chazan on the day of the yahrzeit itself. I prefer to forgo; I do not want to be the cause of strife!"

In face of his determination, the gabbai accepted his words and gave the aliya and mussaf prayer to the stranger. The prayers ended in a pleasant and lofty Shabbat atmosphere. Each received what they wanted; the stranger who insisted on having his way, the regular worshipper who was willing to yield was delighted that he had avoided strife, and the gabbai succeeded in making all sides happy.

The next day, the regular worshipper arrived at the Beit Knesset, shaken and full of emotion. One look at his face showed that he had been through an emotionally drain-

ing experience. He readily explained what happened that night:

"Last night, in the middle of my sleep, my mother a"h appeared to me in a dream. It was in her honor that I wished to receive the maftir aliya and serve as chazzan for mussaf. And in her honor I sacrificed my desire to prevent strife. She appeared to me, her face shining, and told me a secret:

"My dear son, I received special permission from the Heavenly Court to come down to This World to thank you. An elevation of soul such as I experienced today, when you relinquished the aliya and mussaf prayer, I have never experienced before. I well remember the elevation of soul of previous years, when on the yahrzeit Shabbat you received the maftir aliya and mussaf prayer in my honor. But this does not come close and cannot be compared to what I merited this year, when you courageously forwent the honors you deserved, fleeing from strife!"

"I awoke, trembling with emotion. Not every day does a Jew merit a visit from his mother from the World of Truth! And the message she related is worth remembering and repeating:

Aliyot, honors, and many other matters, are very important, elevated principles. They involve Heavenly matters we cannot grasp, and serve as elevation for the soul. They are ancient customs which are deeply significant. But this story echoes with a Heavenly revelation:

These are all extremely precious and important matters, until they become fused with the stub of dissension, a touch of battle, and a spark of burning fire. The moment strife looms, as tones begin to escalate, and differences of opinion raise their heads, a clever person will flee. He will simply exit the scene, knowing it is so much more important to run away from strife, to forgo and refrain from participating in this bloody battle ground.

Strife is never a harbinger of good. It brings only evil. On the contrary, fleeing from dissension, refraining from battle, forgoing – which sometimes involves superhuman strength – is the correct way to act and also serves as an elevation for the soul. It awakens Heavenly mercy and brings in its wake a life of happiness and joy.

Let us flee from strife and refrain from disputes, even if we are right and even if it seems that the matter involves deep, Heavenly significance. This is the correct way to act and this is what brings an abundance of blessing!