

A String of Mitzvos

Korach wanted honor. Korach wanted leadership. He felt it was coming to him, for good reason. Korach knew who was destined to descend from him. None other than Shmuel HaNovi, who was equated to Moshe and Aharon. "For his sake I rescue (our honor, and not for my own)." Additionally, twenty-four legions of prophets would be born to Korach's grandchildren.

Korach's father Yitzhar was the second son of Kehas. Moshe passed over him and made Elitzofon ben Uzziel, (the son of Korach's youngest uncle,) the Prince. "How can I be silent (while my family's honor is slighted)?" Korach felt that he must speak up. "You have taken much more than you deserve, Moshe and Aharon!"

And so, he began the first uprising against a leader of Klal Yisrael. He donned a tallis made entirely of *t'cheles* (turquoise wool). "Does such a garment need *tzitzis*?" he asked Moshe Rabbeinu. "Yes," was the answer. "Ha! Can it be that one thread of *t'cheles* (in the *tzitzis*) frees a *tallis* (from its obligation), yet a whole garment of *t'cheles* is not exempt from *tzitzis*?"

The Steipler zt"l has a fascinating insight into Korach's statement. One can see Korach's mistake by examining the question he asked Moshe Rabbeinu. What are the purpose of the *tzitzis* threads (among them the *t'cheles*) on the edges of the tallis? To remind us of Hashem's mitzvos, as the verse states, "And you shall see them, and you will remember all the mitzvos of Hashem, and you will perform them" (Bamidbar 15:39). A thread cannot have two functions. If the thread is part of the garment, its' job is to clothe and warm the person. The same thread cannot remind him of the mitzvos. Why? When the wearer sees that thread, he will only be reminded of the pleasure that he receives from it. It cannot also remind him of the mitzvos because the two concepts: worldly pleasures and mitzvos are diametrically opposed.

A leader of Klal Yisrael is compared to the *t'cheles*. His true function is like the *tzitzis*: to inspire and lead the people to serve Hashem. This is a tremendous mitzvah. If this is his only goal, he will be a good leader. However, if he wants lead-

ership in order to pursue the pleasures of this world, honor being among them, he is totally unworthy. He is no better than an ordinary thread of the garment. This was Korach's mistake. He was *rodef kovod* (running after honor). The running itself proved that he was unworthy. He only wanted *kovod*. He did not want to help people. Such a person cannot possibly lead Klal Yisrael.

Kinderlach . . .

"Imma, do you know who they picked to be the leader of our Shmiras HaLashon group?" "No, who?" "Leah. Many girls wanted to be the leader. Leah was not so interested. She only wanted to seriously learn and practice Shmiras HaLashon." "That is precisely why they picked her! She was not interested in the honor of leadership. She was only interested in doing mitzvos. Therefore, her dedication and sincerity will inspire everyone. That is a true leader. May she have much success." "Amen."



Stop the Fight

"Hello, Abba."

"What's the matter Avi? You look sad."

"I am sad, Abba. I am involved in a *machlokes* (dispute). I don't remember how I got into it, and I don't know how to get out of it. Can you help me, Abba?" "I can try, Avi. First, I must compliment you for wanting to stop the *machlokes*. You are saving yourself from many big *aveyros* (sins). Anyone who intentionally prolongs or escalates a *machlokes* violates the commandment, "Do not be like Korach and his congregation" (Bamidbar 17:5). They started a terrible *machlokes*, which caused untold destruction in Klal Yisrael."

"Oy vey."

"The sefer Eved HaMelech explains that *machlokes* is a very very big iniquity. Fighting brings a person to transgress many many positive and negative commandments. Therefore, he should be very careful to distance himself from a foolish argument. If he finds himself involved in

an argument, as you are, he should try to stop it by humbling himself and seeking peace with his opponents. He should not hate them, curse them, speak *loshon hora* against them, or do anything bad to them. Rather he should realize that the *machlokes* is all a punishment for his *aveyros*."

"Really, Abba?"

"Yes, Avi. He should look deep into his deeds, identify his sins, and correct them. He should try to be good to his opponents, in any way that he can. Lastly, he should pray to Hashem for *rachmonus* (Heavenly mercy). If he does this, an amazing thing will happen; his opponents will disappear."

"Wow. That's it? It sounds so easy, Abba."

"It is, if you are sincere, Avi. As the verse states, 'It is not in heaven . . . nor is it across the sea . . . Rather the matter is very near to you - in your mouth and your heart - to perform it' (Devarim 30:12-14). One explanation is that this verse is referring to *teshuva*. It is very close and easy to accomplish. You make your effort, and Hashem will give you *Siyata Di'shmaya* (Heavenly assistance), and you will succeed. Avi, may your *machlokes* vanish into thin air."

"Amen!"

Kinderlach . . .

Never, never, never get involved in a senseless machlokes. Never. Be easy going, patient, and understanding. Smile and speak nicely to people. You will save yourself from many, many aveyros. If you are fighting, stop. Humble yourself, seek peace, be kind to your enemies, do teshuva, and pray to Hashem. Remember, anyone can start a machlokes; however, it takes a big person to stop one. Be a big person. Stop the fight.

Parasha Questions:

- How do we know that a person should not strengthen a senseless argument? (Rashi 16:12)
- What did Elozar do with Korach's censures (look up artscroll translation)? (17:2-5)
- What happened to the staff of the chosen one? Who was he? (17:16-24)
- Whose job was it to warn people not to approach the Mikdash? (18:1 and Rashi)
- Which bechoros must be redeemed? (18:15)
- What is the inheritance of the Kohanim? (18:20)