

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT KORACH · 3 TAMMUZ 5775 · JUNE 20, 2015 · VOL. 22 NO. 36

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE JEWISH SIN

“And Korach took... and they gathered together against Moshe and Aharon...” (15:1-2)

If you were to pick one chronic failing in the Jewish People, what would it be? Some would say white-collar crime. There’s an old anti-Semitic joke that runs, “Shloime, I heard you had a fire at your factory last week.” “Be quiet Moishe! Next week!” However, the fact that Jews are less likely to indulge in violent crime and more in insurance rackets is probably due to the fact that in Czarist Russia the State was regarded, and rightly so, as an implacable enemy from whom one should “liberate” as much as one could. These traditions die hard and were not always left behind at Ellis Island.

A religious Jew once asked Rabbi Pam, *zatzal*, for a *beracha* for his business. Rabbi Pam asked him how he ran his business, and he replied that it was a “cash business,” meaning he didn’t report it to the IRS. Rabbi Pam said that he wasn’t running a business; he was a thief.

In the introduction to his classic eponymous work, “The Chafetz Chaim,” Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaKohen Kagan (1839–1933) lists after the Torah prohibitions related to speech, the prohibition of *machloket* – acrimonious divisiveness.

The fact that, to the best of my knowledge, there is no one-word English translation for *machloket* may show that it may possibly be native to the Jewish People. I’ve often thought that a trait of a People may be seen in a word they use that cannot be rendered into another tongue with just a single word. Take the quintessentially French word *chic*. Is there one single English word that sums that unique French quality meaning fashionable, pretty, understated, etc.?

The Yiddish word to *farigin* — the altruistic pleasure that

one has from another’s success — required me to come up with a whole sentence to define that classic Jewish quality. (Interestingly, there is a single word in German that means the reverse — *Schadenfreude* — the exquisite pleasure of seeing your enemy falling. How typically Teutonic!)

Machloket is the Jewish failing.

Has there ever been an epoch in Jewish history devoid of divisiveness and disunity, in towns and communities, and the only thing that unites all these divisions is the singular awesome destruction that it has wrought?

In fact, whether *machloket* is a Torah prohibition or not is itself a *machloket* (albeit one for the sake of Heaven). The Rambam does not include *machloket* in his list of Torah prohibitions, whereas Rabbeinu Yonah and the Sma”g do. The Chafetz Chaim adjudicates according to this latter opinion.

The Mishna in Avot (5:17) comments, “What is a *machloket* for the sake of Heaven? The dispute of Hillel and Shammai.” Only the “Hillel and Shammai” in each generation may allow themselves to have a dispute for the sake of Heaven.

In Mincha, the afternoon prayer of Shabbat, we say, “You (G-d) are One, and Your Name is One, and who is like Your people Israel, one nation in the world?” You can understand this prayer in the reverse order too. If the Jewish People are one, if we are devoid of acrimonious division, then G-d’s Name becomes One; meaning that all the nations on earth will recognize that the G-d of Israel is the King and there is no other Power in creation.

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NEDARIM 30 - 36

“The mitzvah of mila (circumcision) is so important that without it the heavens and earth would not be sustained.”

Rebbi teaches the essential connection between this mitzvah and the world from a verse in Yirmiyahu (33:25), “If not for My covenant day and night, I would not sustain the heavens and the earth”. Rebbi maintains that the “covenant” refers to the covenant of *brit mila*. The *gemara* also cites Rabbi Elazar who disagrees with Rebbi on the meaning of “covenant” in the verse, and maintains that it refers to the covenant of Torah. He states that the world would not exist without Torah.

The Maharsha asks why the two “sustainers of the world” mentioned on our *daf* are not part of the list of the “three sustainers of the world” taught by Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel in Pirkei Avot (1:18) — judgment, truth and peace. He explains, based on the Tur, that there are two types of “sustainers of the world”. Those which are vital for society to function in a positive manner, and those which are indispensable for the existence of the universe and all of Creation. Pirkei Avot refers to the former, whereas the Sages in our *sugya* refer to the latter.

• *Nedarim 32a*

Rabbi Elazar said, “The mitzvah of Torah is so important that without it the heavens and earth would not be sustained.”

His source, as mentioned above, is a verse in Yirmiyahu (33:25), “If not for My covenant day and night, I would not sustain the heavens and the earth”. Rabbi Elazar explains the verse to teach that without learning of Torah day and night, G-d would see no justification for the Creation to continue to exist.

I’d like to share an anecdote with you. The “front page” of every volume of the Talmud is accustomed to be decorated with beautiful graphics that surround the name of the tractate, as a way to “beautify the mitzvah”. However, in all volumes published by a certain publisher, my friends and I noticed drawings of the sun, moon and stars as part of these graphics, accompanied by the above verse from Yirmiyahu regarding the essential connection between Torah and Creation.

We asked a local halachic authority about these drawings of the celestial bodies, and were told it was problematic. After we contacted the publisher, these objects were deleted from future editions.

• *Nedarim 32a*

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.

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.

Aharbanel

ON THE PARSHA

Korach

After Korach and his assembly are swallowed up by the earth for having challenged the leadership of Moshe and Aharon, the people complained again to Moshe and Aharon, saying “You have killed the people of G-d.” (Bamidbar 17:7) Even though the deaths of Korach and his assembly were obviously the result of a miraculous Divine intervention, the people blamed Moshe and Aharon, for they had instructed Korach and his followers to place fire and incense on their firepans and gather together. Immediately afterwards, they were swallowed up by the earth.

G-d reacts to their complaint by punishing them with a deadly plague. In order to halt the plague, Moshe instructs Aharon to take fire from the altar, combine it with incense in a firepan and bring it to the people who were being struck down. Since their transgression was challenging the right of Aharon and his sons to the Priesthood, it was only fitting that Aharon be the one to provide atonement for this challenge. Even though Moshe himself could have easily halted the plague, he wanted to make it known to the people that just as it was through the test of the firepans that Korach and his followers were punished, so too the remainder of the assembly would be rescued through the merit of Aharon and his firepan.

Aharon hastened and “stood between the living and the dead” as if he were telling the Angel of Death to skip over him. The plague ceased immediately, but not before more than 14,000 died almost instantaneously.

G-d saw, however, that the people still believed that Korach and his followers perished because they had brought an “unauthorized” fire, not because they had challenged Moshe and Aharon. He then ordered Moshe to perform another test to prove the pre-eminence of Aharon and his progeny. The leaders of each of the twelve tribes were instructed to bring identical staffs and to

write their names on them, with Aharon writing his name on the staff of the tribe of Levi. The test would have two purposes: 1) To determine that the service in the Tabernacle was to be performed by the Levites, and not by the firstborns. 2) To determine that Aharon, and not another Levite, would serve as the High Priest.

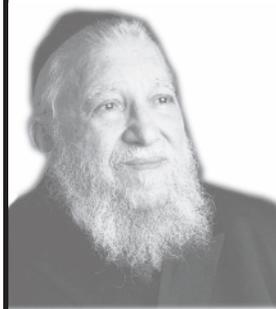
Aharon’s staff was the only one that blossomed: “It brought forth a blossom, sprouted a bud and almonds ripened.” (Bamidbar 17:23) The word for “bud” in Hebrew is the word “tzitz”, which is also the word for the most important of the garments worn by the High Priest. This was a clear indication that Aharon deserved that office. The word for “almonds” is “shekadim”, which is closely related to the word “shekaid”, which can mean “diligence” or “perseverance”. This is an indication that his offspring would persevere forever in that service.

There were also four miracles associated with Aharon’s staff: 1) A dry, lifeless staff blossomed. 2) The blossom preceded the bud. 3) The bud was the first indication of the fruit. 4) The staff produced fully-ripened almonds overnight.

The whole process was contrary to nature, since normally when the fruit appears the blossom falls off. In this case, miraculously, the blossom, fruit bud and ripened fruit all appeared together.

With this test the people realized that Korach and his assembly died because they had infringed on the “territory” which belonged rightfully to Aharon and his sons. Consequently, they cried out “Behold! We perish, we are lost; we are all lost! Everyone who approached closer to the Tabernacle of G-d will die! Will we ever stop perishing?” (Bamidbar 17:27-28) That is to say, they were afraid that it was inevitable that they would end up coming into contact with one of the holy vessels of the Tabernacle and would perish as a result. Therefore, Aharon is told that he is responsible to guard the Tabernacle with vigilance to prevent this from occurring.

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Rav Bulman *zt"l*
on the
Torah Portion of the Week

SHABBAT MONEY

From: Tal

*Dear Rabbi,
A friend told me that there is no blessing in money that is earned on Shabbat. I understand that according to the Torah certain acts are prohibited, but how does that affect the money that's earned through doing the acts? And more, one sees that work brings income, so more work, including on Shabbat, should bring more income, not less.*

Dear Tal,

When the Jews wandered the wilderness of Sinai, G-d sustained them by providing them with a daily portion of manna. In this way, the Jews literally received their living from Heaven. The manna is therefore a prototype for our belief that a person's sustenance comes from G-d, even when not in the direct way of manna.

Regarding the manna, the Torah states, "Six days you shall gather it, but on the Sabbath there will be none....See that the Lord has given you the Sabbath. Therefore, on the sixth day, He gives you bread for two days. Let each man remain in his place; let no man leave his place on the seventh day" (Ex. 16:26-29).

From here we see that on Shabbat it is forbidden to pursue one's livelihood, i.e. earn money; and there is a special blessing for those who refrain from doing so. Conversely, the Torah relates an incident where the manna of those who tried to garner it in a forbidden fashion actually "bred worms and became putrid" (ibid v. 20).

Accordingly, the Torah teachings on the manna indicate that one who refrains from working on Shabbat will have blessing in what he earns during the week, while "manna" gleaned on Shabbat will have no such blessing and will go to waste. So you see, livelihood is not a function of how much one earns each day such that another day of work on Shabbat equals more income, since that income is infested and rotten.

Many years ago, someone in my family knew a young Israeli woman who dreamed to travel to Thailand. After completing the Army she got a job in order to earn the money for her trip, and she particularly preferred working on Shabbat when she earned "double-pay". My relative told her that there's no blessing from such "Shabbat-money", but the woman just ridiculed her and kept working on Shabbat until she finally realized her dream of getting to Thailand.

Once she was thoroughly sated with the Far East and wanted to come home to Israel, she took her remaining money to buy a return ticket, and on the way to the travel agent her bag was stolen. She was now stranded in Thailand, not wanting to be there, and with no money to get out. She spent about as much time doing menial work to pay for her return as she had spent traveling, which was enough time for her to recall her friend's warning and to calculate that the money she lost was about what she had "earned" on Shabbat.

She came to the conclusion that the time she enjoyed in Thailand at the expense of working on Shabbat had to be rectified by working in Thailand without enjoying it – but not on Shabbat!

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

THE SOURCE OF THE STONES

If you have gazed with wonder at those massive stones that form the Western Wall and wondered where they came from, you are not alone in your curiosity.

For years archaeologists have assumed that the giant limestones used by King Herod for the reconstruction of the Second Beit Hamikdash and the Western Wall came from a quarry located in the Old



City of Jerusalem. It is now believed that they came from an ancient quarry four kilometers north-west of the Old City, in the city's Ramat Shlomo neighborhood. It was discovered during a "salvage excavation" conducted by the Israel Antiquities Authority in conjunction with municipal plans to build an elementary school in the area.

SHEMONEH ESREI: THE FOURTEENTH BLESSING - PART 2

PARTNERS IN CREATION

“Blessed are You (Who is) building Jerusalem.”

Seeing as the third Beit Hamikdash has not been built yet, why is the Hebrew word for “building” — *boneh* — written in the present tense instead of the future tense?

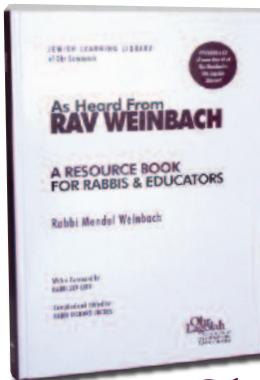
It is important to mention that unlike the First and Second Temples, which were built by the Jewish People, the Third and final Temple will be built by G-d according to many authorities. Thus the Third Temple will have an “advantage” over the first two, as it will be the work of G-d, and it will therefore never be destroyed.

The above idea presents us with a difficulty. Certainly the Jewish People took great pride in the first two Temples that they built in order to provide a dwelling place for the Divine Presence. Now if the final Beit Hamikdash will be built by G-d, something will be “missing”. Let us compare this to a guest staying at a friend’s house. As comfortable as his friend will try to make him feel, he will not be as comfortable as in his own home. This idea can also be compared to a child living in the house of his parents. Even if he has everything he needs, it is all given to him for free, and also nothing in the house actually belongs to him.

The Jewish People are called the “children of G-d”, and just as a child is supported by his parents, we will be taken care of by G-d. This, however, may leave us feeling a lack of self-worth, since we will be benefiting from G-d’s bounty and not from our own. Our Sages therefore teach that Torah scholars (and all who learn Torah) are not to be called “children”, but rather “builders”. But how can that be so since the Torah clearly refers to the Jewish People as G-d’s “children”. The intent of our Sages is not to negate the fact that we are G-d’s children, but rather to teach that we are not “only” children, but “builders” as well.

The deeper meaning of the above idea is that although we are G-d’s children, through our learning of Torah and fulfillment of *mitzvot* we become builders. As builders we become partners with G-d in Creation by helping to bring this world to its completed and perfected state.

We can now understand why the word for “building” is written in the present tense. With each good action that we do, we are actually building a part of the world, bringing it closer to perfection. When this job will be finished, G-d will deliver us from exile and cause the Third Temple to descend from Heaven. Although this Temple will be the work of G-d, through our Torah and *mitzvot* we will be partners in its building.



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