



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

# Torah Minute

In memory of *Rabbi Kalman Winter zt"l*

Parasha Korach 5773

We live in a world of unprecedented comfort and luxury. Every imaginable delight and delicacy abound. Armies of scientists and researchers work around the clock to discover and unlock new flavors and tastes, or search for solutions to our every discomfort.

We also live in an age where all this goodness and bounty is available to us instantaneously.

With a mere click, like the mightiest and wealthiest kings of yore, we can summon anything we fancy from the farthest corners of the earth.

In contrast, our spiritual endeavors and goals, be they our desire to draw closer to G-d, to improve our character, to pray with greater intensity, or to be softer and gentler to our nearest and dearest, seem to come with only the greatest efforts. We find ourselves beset with obstacles and confronted with challenges. Often, this leads us to becoming disheartened and frustrated, and on occasion we may even abandon our noble undertakings.

***How do we galvanize ourselves and continue on in our mission? How do we strengthen and steel ourselves to carry forth undaunted?***

In Parshas Korach, we learn about the tragic rebellion to overthrow the G-dly appointed leadership of Moshe and Aharon. Korach and his minions spearheaded a coup d'etat to delegitimize them as leaders and Aharon as the High Priest. In an unprecedented and incontrovertible miracle, the very earth opened up to swallow Korach and his acolytes, then closed up, erasing any vestige of them.

Apparently, this extraordinary event did not fully assuage the doubts of the nation, for G-d subsequently commanded the leader of each tribe to inscribe his own name on a staff and place it in the Tabernacle. For the divinely-chosen one of these twelve tribal leaders, including Aharon, his staff would blossom and prove his greatness indisputably. Indeed it is Aharon's staff that blossoms, as the verse states that it "brought forth a blossom, sprouted a bud and ripened almonds." Rabbi Moshe Feinstein infers from the verse and corroborates from the Talmud in Yoma that, in contrast to the natural process where the blossom would fall away as the fruit emerged, the blossom and almond coexisted. This was obviously an additional facet of the miracle. But what was the lesson that G-d was conveying to us with this added dimension?

Rabbi Feinstein explains that the staff symbolized our spiritual endeavors: the blossom, our efforts, and the almond (the fruit), the mitzvah itself. **G-d was demonstrating to us that, unlike our physical and material pursuits where just the result is of value and our efforts a requisite vexation, in the spiritual realm, not only is the result treasured, but our very efforts are cherished and precious.** This was symbolized by the blossom remaining fresh and vibrant on the staff even as the almond emerged.

When we learn the lesson of Aharon's staff and contemplate its message of how beloved all our spiritual efforts are to G-d, we will be strengthened and fortified to resolutely pursue our goals.

***Have a great Shabbos,  
Rabbi Menachem Winter***