



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

What Truly Motivated Korach's Actions?

Presented by Rabbi Hillel Shaps, Kollel Scholar and Director of Special Projects

At the outset of this week's Parsha, Korach gathers two hundred and fifty men to challenge the leadership of Moshe and Aharon. The Sages offer an array of explanations for Korach's actions. The Midrash explains that when Korach questions, "The entire congregation are all holy... why do you raise yourselves above G-d's people?" (16:3), he reasoned that a nation of only holy people had no need for a leader. Later in Verse 7, Rashi cites the Midrash, which explains that Korach saw with Divine Inspiration that the prophet Shmuel would descend from him. Therefore, when Moshe warned that only one person would survive the standoff between them, Korach assumed it would be him. Additionally, back in Verse 1, Rashi quotes the Midrash that the reason that Korach rebelled against Moshe was because he was envious of the appointment of his cousin, Elitzafan, as leader of the Family of Kehas, a position that Korach thought belonged to him.

All of these explanations leave us with a confusing picture. Which of these reasons motivated Korach to rebel against Moshe? Was it Elitzafan's appointment or because there was no need for a leader? Did he believe with conviction that he was right and Moshe was wrong or did he only believe that he would defeat Moshe because he knew that Shmuel would descend from him?

Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe clarifies these difficulties with a startling revelation. The true impetus of a person's actions are not the reasons and rationales that he or she believes are guiding his or her choices. The root cause of the choices one makes in life are one's *middos* – character traits. Korach was a man whose character was tainted by a great desire for honor and power. Never having successfully rooted out this bad trait, it lay dormant, and was finally awakened by the appointment of Elitzafan as leader of Kehas. Angry with Moshe at this perceived injustice, Korach came to the conclusion that Moshe had to go. To rationalize this, he espoused a concept of leadership that resulted in no leader being necessary. Finally, to convince himself of the veracity of his perspective, he interpreted the prophecy that the great prophet Shmuel would descend from him as proof that he must be in the right. Korach certainly believed himself to be correct about all of these conclusions, but the true motivation for his actions was his envy and desire for honor.

Like Korach, the perspectives we develop and the actions we take throughout our lives are motivated by our *middos*. We undoubtedly believe ourselves right and will validate our positions by interpreting the world around us through our own lenses. Rabbi Wolbe teaches us that in order to be assured that we are on the correct path, we must first perfect our most basic *middos*. These positive traits will then radiate through all of our decisions and actions.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

When he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open. The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them... the earth covered them over and they were lost from among the congregation. (16, 32 – 33)

What is the difference between *ground* and *earth*? Why does the verse switch the term from *ground* to *earth*?

Parsha Riddle

Where in NaCH do Dasan and Aviram show up in a different form?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

How did Yehoshua's future position impact his actions in this Parsha?
Answer: Since Yehoshua was going to be the leader to take Bnei Yisrael into Eretz Yisrael, he did not want to argue with the other spies in favor of Eretz Yisrael.

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

R. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik interprets the ideology of Korach, and explains its erroneousness, as follows:

Korach rebelled against authority. All Jews are equal. Hence, everyone is entitled to interpret the law ... The study of the law, Korach argued, is an exoteric act, a democratic act, in which every intelligent person may engage. Moshe's claim to being the exclusive legal authority, and the exclusive interpreter of the law, Korach argued, was unfounded and unwarranted. ... The Oral Law (Halacha) has its own epistemological approach, which can be understood only by a lamdan (advanced Torah scholar) who has mastered its methodology and its abundant material. (The Rav: Thinking Aloud – Sefer Bamidbar, pp. 127-148)

But even if genuine competence in halachah is restricted to the lamdan, it is still true that halachah has a strong anti-authoritarian aspect as well. Rambam rules that a court is generally free to dissent from the ruling of another court, even one from centuries earlier, and even one that is considered more distinguished. (Hilchos Mamrim 2:1, as explained by Kesef Mishneh and Radvaz) Similarly, Rosh rules (contrary to Raavad) that it is permitted to dissent even from the rulings of the venerable (Babylonian) Gaonim, just as the later scholars of the Talmud sometimes disagree with the earlier ones. (Sanhedrin 4:6)

R. Isaiah de Trani the Elder justifies the legitimacy of disagreement with scholars we concede to be greater than us with the parable of the dwarf on the shoulders of the giant. Although the giant can normally see farther than the dwarf, since his eyes are at a higher elevation, when the dwarf sits on the giant's shoulders, he can see farther, since now his eyes are higher than the giant's. So, too, are we able to master our great predecessors' wisdom and move beyond it. (Shut. Ha'Rid 62)

R. Yisrael Isserlin rules that even a student may disagree with his teacher, if he has clear and compelling grounds for doing so. He notes that this has historically been the way of the Torah, as illustrated by examples from scholars of the Mishna, the Talmud, and the medieval period. (Terumas Ha'Deshen psakim v'ksavim 238, but see Shach YD siman 242 s.k. 3 who cites an apparently dissenting view)

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. We were holy.
2. We were holed.
3. We separated.
4. Watch out below!

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I am all blue.
2. I am full of scrolls.
3. He is the Nasi?
4. From Hashem?

Last Week's Answers

#1 The yud in Yehoshua (I was given by Moshe, came from a woman, I took two dots from the son's segol, I changed a name into a prayer.)

#2 Challah (I name your bread, I could cause death, I am for the Kohen, I am not a bride.)

The raffle has been postponed until after the shuls are reopened. We are still accepting entries to the raffle.

All children 13 and under who answer a "Who Am I?" correctly will be entered into a raffle to

WIN a Claw Machine Arcade Game



Visit gwckollel.org to submit your answers.

Answer as many as you can. Each correct answer will entitle you to another raffle ticket and increase your chances of winning!

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