Points to Ponder

Korach 5781

**וַיִּקַּ֣ח קֹ֔רַח Korach took (16:1) - Rashi** notes that Korach took himself to one side in order to distinguish himself from the group in order to argue on the Kehuna. **Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel ztl.** explains that Klal Yisrael were in a situation of Sheleimus as one nation with one heart and when that happens there is no possibility of coming with Leitzanus. The intention of Korach and his henchmen was to destroy the Sheleimus and the means? The leitzanus -- which comes from being outside the situation and denigrating it.

**וְא֥וֹן בֶּן־פֶּ֖לֶת And On Ben Peles (6:1)** - The Gemara notes the contrast between Mrs. Korach and Mrs. On Ben Peles. What is the basis of their difference? **Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz ztl.** suggested that while Mrs. On Ben Peles held her husband away from Machlokes, Mrs. Korach did not -- she encouraged it. Rav Chaim notes that this is typical of a Baal Mahlokes -- s/he loses common sense. **Netziv** notes that we see the classic Ezer K’Neggdo here. But what was the basis in each of the women that made them make such different decisions? We suggested that while Mrs. Korach sees something problematic, she merely knows how to complain about it. Mrs. On sees a problem and does something about it.

**כִּ֤י כָל־הָֽעֵדָה֙ כֻּלָּ֣ם קְדשִׁ֔ים The entire congregation is holy (16:3)** - Is that a fair claim? Are we to learn the concept of conformity within this Parasha? **Rav Schachter Shlita** would regularly remind us that when we discuss Halacha, we discuss the 4 Amos of Halacha -- that there are Halachic boundaries to a space (Reshus) of Halacha bound by the boundaries of Assur and Mutar. Within the boundaries there is plenty of space for different expressions of Torah life. This is the intention of the Gemara (Berachos 17a) that notes that both my friend and I are Briyos. His work is in the field and mine is in the city but there are commonalities.

**אַ֡ף לֹ֣א אֶל־אֶ֩רֶץ֩ זָבַ֨ת חָלָ֤ב וּדְבַשׁ֙ הֲבִ֣יאֹתָ֔נוּ וַתִּ֨תֶּן־לָ֔נוּ נַֽחֲלַ֖ת שָׂדֶ֣ה וָכָ֑רֶם הַֽעֵינֵ֞י הָֽאֲנָשִׁ֥ים הָהֵ֛ם תְּנַקֵּ֖ר לֹ֥א נַֽעֲלֶֽה: Moreover, you did not bring us to a land flowing with milk and honey nor give us a heritage of field and vineyard! Even if you would gouge out the eyes of those men, we shall not go up (16:14)** - Dasan and Aviram seem to have a different claim than Korach. What was their problem?  **Rashbam** notes that this dispute arose following the failed mission of the spies and punishment that ensued from their sin. **Targum Yonatan ben Uziel** also explains Dasan and Aviram's words as relating directly to the fear of the mighty Canaanite warriors. **Rav Aharon Friedman Shlita** explained that as in the land of Mitzrayim, here too, Dasan and Aviram showed that they could not deal with the difficulties that are inherent in the process of redemption and going out to freedom – they are the same people who flinch at the need to fight against the nations of Canaan and are not able to bear the need of the long wait in the desert until entering the Land. Only one thing can satisfy them with a complete redemption – now and without effort.

**אַל־תֵּ֖פֶן אֶל־מִנְחָתָ֑ם Don’t look at their Mincha (16:15)** - Why does Moshe refer to their offering as a Mincha? And why does Moshe need to daven not to have their Mincha accepted? And why does Moshe make it look like he needs to defend himself to Hashem**? Rav Betzalel Rudinsky Shlita** compared this situation to that of the person in the Ir Miklat whom the Gemara notes (Makos 11a) has a power of tefillah that can even cause the Kohein Gadol to expire. Moshe was afraid that the people, albeit undeserving, would offer their souls to Hashem (the mincha sybolizes the soul) and have it be accepted. It might overcome any small claim against Moshe. Therefore Moshe asked Hashem not to accept their Mincha and that he never did anything to them so their Tefillah should not be accepted.

**וְאֵ֥שׁ יָֽצְאָ֖ה מֵאֵ֣ת ה' וַתֹּ֗אכַל אֵ֣ת הַֽחֲמִשִּׁ֤ים וּמָאתַ֨יִם֙ אִ֔ישׁ And a fire went out from Hashem (16:35)** - Why was there a need for 2 separate punishments? **Rav Gedaliah Schorr ztl.** suggested that there were different motivations between the 250 and Korach. The 250 Makrivai Haketores wanted more Ruchnios. Just like Nadav and Avihu wanted more Ruchnios and they did things that they shouldn't have done, they brought their own Aish, their own Ketores. They wanted more Ruchnios. But Korach was motivated purely by Gai'va. **Rav Yisrael Reisman Shlita** added that there is an important lesson to be learned here. Namely, if one wants to achieve a goal -- especially a spiritually advancing one -- and the person who can help you is a Rasha, you need to consider the fact that he is helping you but for his own reasons. Two punishments for 2 motivations but ultimately all paid with their lives.

**זִכָּר֞וֹן לִבְנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל A memory for the Children of Israel (17:5) - Rav Abraham J. Twerski ztl** noted that one of the unique features of man that distinguishes him from other animals is his ability to learn from history. Unfortunately, man often fails to exercise this capacity. Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Rabbi Dr. Twerski would often marvel at man’s ability to recognize the fallacies in the decisions of others all the while failing to see the same in themselves. The lesson here is that we need to take the lessons of history to heart and stand strong by them.

**Haftara:**

**אֶת־שׁוֹר֩ | מִ֨י לָקַ֜חְתִּי וַחֲמ֧וֹר מִ֣י לָקַ֗חְתִּי Whose ox did I take (Shmuel I:12:3) - Rav Binymin Eisenberger Shlita** noted the strong contrast between Korach and his great grandson Shmuel. While Korach was jealous of Moshe and Aharon because of the honor they received, Shmuel introduces his opposition to the people’s request to a king as not being jealous about the honor that a king would receive.