Points to Ponder

Korach 5782

**וַיִּקַּ֣ח קֹ֔רַח And Korach took (16:1)** - Why did Korach decide now, all of the sudden to cause a machlokes? If he felt things were not fair, why didn’t he voice his opinion immediately after yetzias Mitzrayim or Matan Torah? **Rav Bentzion Firer ztl.** suggests that until now, the Jewish people had a joint purpose that united them — entering Eretz Yisrael. If he would have attempted a rebellion, he would have been a lone voice and everyone would have ignored him. After the cheit hamergalim, and the decision that this generation would not enter Eretz Yisrael, a lot of people lost their sense of purpose. When that sense of purpose is lost, other frustrations and grievances started to emerge and Korach’s complaints resonated with others.

**נְשִׂיאֵ֥י עֵדָ֛ה  Princes of the congregation (16:2)** - The midrash tells us that Korach was a person of great stature — חכם גדול היה קרח ומטועני הארון. If he was such a great person, how could he have fallen to such a low level? **Rav Dovid Hofstedter Shlita** suggests that when we see the success of others and we are jealous of them, then we act irrationally. People need to be comfortable where they are and not compare themselves to others.

**רַב־לָכֶ֖ם בְּנֵ֥י לֵוִֽי You have taken too much upon yourselves children of Levi (16:7) - Rashi** tells us that Korach’s eyes fooled him. He saw in his future that his descendants will be great people and said ואני אדום? Why did he have this reaction? What does seeing good in one’s descendants lead to protest instead of simcha? **Rav Nahum Rabinovich ztl.** suggests that Korach was part of the “old guard.” The Levi’im were charged with maintaining spirituality in Mitzrayim and they had a strong mesorah from the Avos. Moshe Rabbeinu was an outsider who grew up in non-Jewish house and married a non-Jewish woman and now he was going to lead the Jewish people? Korach came from a perspective of yiras shamayim, but it was focused on himself. Korach’s protest was to uphold the old system. Moshe Rabbeinu’s yiras shamayim was rooted in mesirus nefesh for klal Yisrael. Korach’s mistake is something that even great tzadikim need to look out for. When yiras shamayim is directed inwards, we tend to alienate those who may also be coming from a place of yiras shamayim whose views are different than ours.

**וְדָתָ֨ן וַֽאֲבִירָ֜ם יָֽצְא֣וּ נִצָּבִ֗ים And Dasan and Aviram stood standing (16:27)** - Korach is swallowed up by the earth, and most of his followers are burned in a supernatural fire. Dasan and Aviram, though, are swallowed up by the earth, which is odd; these two men were not trying to arrogate status for themselves, so why should they meet Korach’s unusually harsh fate? **Rav Mordechai Miller ztl.** suggests that as hangers-on with nothing to gain for themselves, Dasan and Aviram were actually worse than Korach. Hangers-on aren’t using strife as a means to achieve something; rather, it is the strife itself that they embrace, and for which they lust. Long after others have either accomplished their goals or surrendered their hopes, the hangers-on are spoiling for a fight. This is seen in the **Gra** to Mishlei 26:17, “One who grabs the ears of a passing dog is like someone who involves himself in a fight that is not his own.” There’s no reason to grab a passing dog’s ears, and you’re going to get bitten – and the same will happen to you for spreading someone else’s fight without reason.

**אַתֶּ֥ם הֲמִתֶּ֖ם אֶת־עַ֥ם ה You killed the nation of Hashem (17:6)** – What was Moshe thinking? He knew that the 250 would die if they were not supposed to bring Ketores. After all, it DID kill Nadav and Avihu. But at the same time, the 250 knew that if they brought Ketores they would die as they had also witnessed the Nadav V’Avihu episode so what were they thinking? And why were the people angry at Moshe and Aharon? **Rav Schwab ztl.** explained that while the people knew the consequences, they all had a burning desire wanted to be vehicles for Hashem’s glory even if it meant being Moser Nefesh (giving up their lives). Hence, Korach’s tent is still called a Mikdash and the Machtos (pans) are holy. There was a holy intent even if the direction was improper and the people guilty. Bnei Yisrael chided Moshe and Aharon since they thought that Moshe and Aharon had exploited a misguided positive intention.

**וַיִּקַּ֨ח אַֽהֲרֹ֜ן כַּֽאֲשֶׁ֣ר | דִּבֶּ֣ר משֶׁ֗ה וַיָּ֨רָץ֙ אֶל־תּ֣וֹךְ הַקָּהָ֔ל  Aharon did as Moshe commanded and he took the Ketores pan and went into the Eidah (17:12) - Rashi** presents us with a dramatic showdown between Aharon and the Malach HaMaves. What motivated them to put Aharon’s life on the line? Why not just accept HaShem’s decree? **Rav Aharon Levine Ztl.** (HaDerash VeHaIyun) notes that Aharon didn’t exactly follow Moshe’s orders. Moshe told him to first go to the Mizbeach and then place the ketores. Aharon however ran straight to the people and only then did he deal with the ketores. Rav Levine suggests that Aharon saw a greater sense of urgency than Moshe and therefore, he went first to the people. Moshe and Aharon were both people who could not live with indifference. The idea that their people were about to suffer elicited protest from Moshe and Aharon against the decree of HaShem, as we have seen from them in the past. Moshe may have been confident that Aharon could ward off the plague with the ketores and therefore, sending Aharon in with the ketores was a calculated risk that Moshe took. However, Aharon was the rodef shalom who was drawn to action. He needed to be with the people immediately during their time of suffering. His presence was important than the ketores. Only when he was with his people did he prepare the ketores.

**וַיִּרְא֥וּ וַיִּקְח֖וּ אִ֥ישׁ מַטֵּֽהוּ And each man took his staff (17:24)** - After Aharon’s staff produces flowers, the heads of the other shevatim take their staffs and bring them back home. Why did they want to keep these staffs? What was so special about them? **Rav Zalman Sorotzkin ztl.** suggests that the avodah of Shevet Levi was one of total dedication and sacrifice. They would receive no land in Eretz Yisrael and would only eat by the graciousness of the other shevatim. The other shevatim felt that they too were worthy of such avodah and they each brought a staff hoping that they were the worthy ones. When Aharon’s staff bloomed, they found out that they were wrong. The staff symbolized that they were in fact willing and ready to sacrifice for avodas HaShem. That is something that they never wanted to give up and that is why they the staffs were a keepsake.

Haftara

**הֲל֚וֹא קְצִיר־חִטִּים֙ הַיּ֔וֹם  Isn’t it the wheat harvest today (Shmuel Alef 12:17)** – In addition to the obvious connection of 2 rebellions against authority, **Rav Schachter Shlita** noted that there is a deeper connection between the Parsha and the Haftara. He noted that both in the Parsha, where Moshe stops a rebellion with a supernatural miracle ending the challenge to his authority and in the Haftara where Shmuel ends any question to his authority with a supernatural miracle about the rain in the summertime, we find examples where Hashem’s support for the leader is proven to the people beyond a shadow of a doubt.