Points to Ponder

Korach master

**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.

**And Korach took (16:1) – Rashi** cites the famous Midrash about how Korach challenged the ideas of a Tallis which was covered in Techeiles**. Rav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz ztl. quoted Rav Leib Chasman ztl.** who noted that Moshe never answered this question. That is simply because sometimes questions are not meant to be asked, they are merely stated in order to take down the truth. Rav Michel Yehudah ztl. added that the entirety of this Parsha teaches us how dangerous mockery, honor and Leitzanus can be and that the only way to deal with it is to move on from it.

**And Korach…and Dasan and Aviram took (16:1) – Rav Baruch Gigi Shlita** points out that the Korach rebellion consisted of 2 groups, Korach and the Bnei Levi who were arguing for their right toward MORE spirituality in leadership and Dasan and Aviram who wanted no leadership at all. Dasan and Aviram were ready to return to Egypt, to a situation in which there was no need for any leaders trying to guide the people to any objectives at all. In our times, general society is largely apathetic when it comes to spiritual progress and the setting of goals. People are tired of wars, uninterested in battles, and want to be left alone in peace. This outlook has seeped into our circles, too. We find ourselves confronted with mediocrity, a sense of resting on laurels, and a lack of goals. We must stand firm against this atmosphere, and aspire to greatness. We must set ourselves new challenges and goals and aspire to attain them. Every day is an opportunity to try to progress, to grow, to raise ourselves higher.

**ויקח קרח Korach took (16:1)** – **Rashi** explains that he took himself to one side of the Machlokes. In Pirkei Avos this Machlokes is contrasted with that of Shammai and Hillel but how can one person who rebels be compared to the Machlokes of Shammai and Hillel? **Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel ztl.** explained that Korach also debated a big question in life – how to properly get close to Hashem. The difficulty was not the difference with Moshe in this regard. It was that he pulled himself over to one side and used it to be Michalek and separate from the crowd.

**בֶּן־יִצְהָ֥ר בֶּן־קְהָ֖ת בֶּן־לֵוִ֑יThe Son of Yitzhar son of Kehas Son of Levi (16:1)** - Why the stress on Korach’s lineage? Some commentaries note that Korach recognized that he came from good stock and thought that it would protect him. **Rabbi Yehuda Kupperman ztl**. founder of the Michlalah suggested that having good yichus is more of a responsibility than an automatic advantage. He likened the possessor of Yichus to a pearl on a string. It shines when it is part of the string and acts as part of the necklace. However, when the pearl snaps the string it is on, not only does it lose its own place but it destroys the entire necklace.

**Dasan and Aviram the children of Eliav (16:1) – Rav Simcha Zissel Broide ztl.** notes the impressive Gadlus of Dasan V’Aviram who are referred to as Kriei HaEidah when they are mentioned later (26:9). This is difficult when we consider the fact that the Gemara (Megillah 11a) notes that Dasan V’Aviram were Reshaim from beginning to the end. How could they be both Reshaim and Kriei HaEidah at the same time? Rav Simcha Zissel answers that when it came to political matters – that were indeed Shomayim oriented – the first bloggers were Dasan and Aviram. Whether it was the Slav, the people fighting in Egypt or when Moshe lost the first round with Pharaoh, the first ones in were always Dasan and Aviram (Nitzim V’Netzavim). When you are focused on the fight – the sights of miracles and seeing Hashem himself don’t square up with the person. This was the challenge of Dasan V’Aviram.

**וְא֥וֹן בֶּן־פֶּ֖לֶת And On Ben Peles (16:1)** - 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 Machlokes -- 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.

**וְא֥וֹן בֶּן־פֶּ֖לֶת And On Ben Peles (16:1) - Rashi** notes that On disappears from the story. The Gemara in Sanhedrin notes that On’s wife saved his life while Korach’s egged him on into a bad place. **Mrs. Sivan Rahav Meir ShT’Chy** comments that  the lesson here is crucial. In the end we learn what affects us most in life are the messages we hear at home. Living room conversations, the atmosphere, the values, the jokes we hear at home. What seem like important matters of ideological significance, such as the rebellion of Korach, begin with what we hear at the end of the day when we get home from work and the front door is closed, in the small talk we make inside, between the living room and the kitchen.

**ויקמו לפני משה ואנשים מבנ"י חמישים ומאתים And he stood in front of Moshe with 250 people (16:2) –** **Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** gave a very well known known Derasha that Korach’s rebellion was based on his common-sense logic and how he wanted to use it to Pasken Shaylos. The problem is that sometimes there is logic for the discipline. Halacha is no different. Sometimes Sevara is only ok from the Torah. **Rav Schachter Shlita** would often add from the Sifrei that if the Beis Din paskens that we are not allowed to veer from their Psak even if they tell us to follow the left that it is right. Rav Schachter told us that this doesn’t mean that you can do the wrong thing, it means that if it appears to YOU to be backwards then you might need to learn the system of Torah logic.

**And they congregated on Moshe and Aharon (16:2)** – The Mishna in Avos (5:17) notes that the Machlokes of Korach and his cohorts is an example of one that will not endure**. Rav Ovadiah Yosef ztl.** highlights the fact that Korach and his cohorts was only one side of the

Machlokes. Why does the Mishna not note the fact that it was a disagreement between them and Moshe? He answers that when there is a Machlokes that is for the sake of heaven so each side unites in support of its opinion. Unique to Korach and his cohorts was the fact that at the same time that they were disagreeing with Moshe, they were not even united themselves – for each one believed that he and he alone, was the rightful heir to the Kehuna.

**כי כל העדה כולם קדושים For the entire nation is holy…so why do you rise above the congregation of Hashem (16:3)** – The Mishna in Pirkei Avos contrasts Korach’s arguments with those of Hillel and Shammai. One gets the impression that the Mishna did not accept the questions of Korach. Why? How is one to ask tough questions? **Rav Haim Sabato Shlita** suggests that it was not the tough ideological questions that made Korach’s relationship difficulty. Rather Korach was guilty of personalizing his desires and his problems – precisely the same thing that he accused Moshe Rabbeinu of. When one does not really ask questions but rather makes ideological demands – this is not something easily quieted.

**כִּ֤י כָל־הָֽעֵדָה֙ כֻּלָּ֣ם קְדשִׁ֔ים The entire congregation is holy (16:3)** - When Moshe Rabbeinu recounts the story of Korach at the beginning of the book of Devarim, he refers to this episode as “Chatzeiros”. Why? **Chuddushei HaRim** notes that when we speak of an Eiruv Chatzeiros everything unites into a single Reshus under the banner of the Tzaddik. What Korach attempted to do,was to take a Chatzer and make many Chatzeiros.

**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.

**וַיִּשְׁמַ֣ע משֶׁ֔ה וַיִּפֹּ֖ל עַל־פָּנָֽיו Moshe heard and fell on his face (16:4)** - The Gemara (Sanhedrin 110a) explains that Moshe heard that everyone was performing Kinui with their wives refusing to allow them to be alone with Moshe (the first step of the Sotah process which is initiated due to jealousy). Why would they accuse Moshe of impropriety? **Rav Shimshon Dovid Pinkus ztl.** explained that when husbands looked at Moshe and his look and outlook, they each recognized their own inadequacy and were afraid that their wives would notice the same. As a result, they did what they could to squash the competition instead of rising to the opportunity.

**When Moshe heard, he fell on his face (16:4) – Rashi** writes that this was Bnei Yisrael’s 4th offense – after the Eigel and the Misloninim and the spies an additional offense got Moshe to sink his hands. **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** explains that arguing with Torah leaders is worse than the other Avairos. Only nonbelievers commit the other offenses but rebelling against Torah leaders can be done even by those who believe – yet this leads to a breakdown of even a few that can cause a much bigger breakdown of Torah values. In other cases sins are recognized as being committed by sinners. Here, it is more global and therefore more damaging.

**וידבר אל קרח ואל כל עדתו לאמר בקר He spoke to Korach and his whole group stating Boker -- as with day Hashem will make it clear (16:5) – Rashi** notes that in the same way there are boundaries between day and night, you can try to change those in the way you are trying to change these. What does Day and night have to do with Korach’s challenge**? Rav Asher Weiss Shlita** suggested that the issue is similar to the original debate between day and night when the moon asked Hashem to shrink one (meaning the sun) of the illuminaries (Chullin 60b). The sun stayed silent and Hashem answered the moon and allowed the sun to shine within its strength. In the same way that Hashem took care of the sun when the moon challenged its boundaries he would take care of Moshe in the face of Korach’s challenge as well.

**קְחֽוּ־לָכֶ֣ם מַחְתּ֔וֹת Take pans (16:6)** - Why the test with Ketores? **Rashi** explains that the message here is that when someone is full of Gaava, the Ketores can kill him. **Mishnas Chassidim** notes that the Ketores has Teshuva powers and this was Moshe’s hope here. **Rav Soloveitchik ztl** offered a third possibility. He suggested that Ketores is made up of many different ingredients including the foul smelling Chelbenah. The same can be said about Achdus Yisrael but the achievement of Achdus should not be built on the holder’s definition -- it should be based on Hashem’s. Rav Soloveitchik added that Mitzvos contain 2 levels in their completion -- there is the performance of the Mitzva and there is a “great romance” that one experiences when performing Hashem’s Mitzvos. Korach wanted to skip to the “Great romance” without sticking to the rules as to how the Mitzvos are to be performed. **Rav Schachter Shlita** would often point out to us that this is the intention of the Possuk Kee Yisharim Darchei Hashem -- that the way**S** of Hashem are just. Yes, there are multiple ways but the Tzaddikim need to lead us there or we might falter. **Rav Noach Isaac Oelbaum Shlita** added that while lighting the menorah technically does not need a Kohein, being Meitiv does. The main Avoda of the Kohein  is not the momentary act -- it is the ability to fix the past and improve it into the future.

**Woe to you sons of Levi (16:7)** – The Gemara informs us that as a result of Moshe’s use of the word “Rav” he too, was punished with the use of the words Rav LAch in regard to his prayers about entering Eretz Yisrael. Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz ztl. asks why he needed to be punished if, after all, he was correct? Moreover, if he were being punished, was it not for the Avaira he did later with the rock – What is its connection to the word “Rav” ? **Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz ztl.** answers that Moshe was not sensitive to their request. He should have been sensitive in telling the people that their desires for religious expression were not the will of Hashem. In return, when he needed to receive the same message – for that was the only reason he was going into Eretz Yisrael – he was also told to hold off on the expression – Rav Lach.

**And they said we shall not go up (16:12) – Targum Yonasan** explains that they demurred the opportunity to enter the land of Israel. **Rav Moshe Wolfson Shlita**. asks how this is possible if the people had already been told that as a result of the sin of the Miraglim they would not enter the land? Why is their response so insulting to Moshe? Rav Wolfson answers that the Shevet of Reuben represented by the month of Tammuz – had a chance to engage Teshuva since they are the tribe of Teshuva. Their leaders refused Moshe’s call to Teshuva which could have reversed the general decree. Dasan and Aviram decided to remain stubborn in their dismissing of the land of Israel. Rav Wolfson explains that the same is true today – many have become turned off to living or supporting Israel because of the challenges of living there. However, one has the obligation to live in the opposite manner – to support Israel and to desire to merit to live there at some point --- to see the land as a gift.

**Was it not enough that they took us from a land flowing with milk and honey (16:13) – Rashbam and Ibn Ezra** make it clear that Dasan and Aviram are referring to Mitzrayim here. In fact this is the only time out of 20 references where the land flowing with milk and honey refers to something other than Eretz Yisrael. Why is that such an important praise? **Rav Elchanan Samet Shlita** explains that the praise is an awareness of the continuation of the effortless economic expansion available to the Land of Canaan. Simply put, in addition to being able to effortlessly produce produce (See Devarim 11:9-11) the land of Canaan also can effortlessly produce honey and milk through its animals effortlessly – creating a bounty of their product. It is juxtaposed there with Eretz Mitzrayim which cannot boast those claims. Accordingly, Rav Samet points out that Dasan and Aviram were engaging in hyperbole when they challenged Moshe calling Eretz Mitzrayim the one with milk and honey.

**Is it not enough that you took us up from a land flowing with milk and honey (16:13)** – Was Korach so blind that he really thought that Mitzrayim was a land of milk and honey and all sorts of good? How could someone so intelligent fall for such nonsense? **Rav Dessler ztl.** cites Rav Hai Gaon who compared the situation to a fox who was cornered by a lion. The fox convinced the lion that he would rather devour a certain fat human who was but a distance away. The lion expressed concern since he was worried that he might be getting into a trap. The fox assured him that not he nor his child but only the grandchild would need to worry. The lion pounced—and fell into a trap. As the fox walked around the trap, the lion asked him how he could have been entrapped if the fox had promised that only the grandchild would be ensnared? He was told that his grandfather too, had been provided the same promise. Rav Dessler added that sometimes, when one considers the reward and not the path to it, often it leads one to overlook obvious challenges that lead one to make ridiculous statements. Korach knew better but he was so quick to be correct in order to claim the Kehuna, he failed to see the trap in his words.

**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 Do not look at their Mincha (16:15)** - Why does Moshe turn to Dasan and Aviram with such a strong response when he had just responded with humility and calm when responding to Korach? **Rav Moshe Mearnik ztl.** noted that Korach was guilty of a misunderstanding about authority. Such a mistake is correctable. Dasan V’Aviram were guilty of Kefirah and to that there can be no tolerance.

**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 symbolizes 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.

**Moshe was angry and he said to Hashem Do not accept their Mincha offering (16:15)** – Why does it bother Moshe so much if Hashem “looks to their Mincha”? What kind of Tefillah was Moshe offering? **Rav Eliyahu Bakshi Doron Shlita** explains that Moshe was afraid that Hashem would examine the Mesirus Nefesh that the 253 used in offering Ketores and perhaps offer some degree of Zechus as a result (ala Sotah) which would allow the seed of Machlokes to continue within the Jewish camp.

**ויקהל אליהם קרח Korach gathered the entire assemblage on them (16:19) – Rav Elyashiv ztl.** pointed out that there is a strong contrast between the ease that Korach had at bringing the people together to listen to him and that of a different period. The **Yalkut Shimoni** explains that Yirmiyahu, Tzafaniah and Chulda all offered Nevuah. Yirmiyahu offered it in the marketplaces, Tzafania in the Shuls and Chulda to the women. The Yalkut adds that Yirmiyahu went to the markets because he was not sure that the people would come to him to listen. Tzafaniah went to the Shuls to those who didn’t hear Yirmiyahu. Chulda sought out the women to hear them in a language that others didn’t or couldn’t hear. Rav

Elyashiv notes that when it comes to the word of Hashem it takes a large effort to have His words heard. That is a strong contrast to someone who comes for personal glory against Hashem – to that everyone seemed to come.

**I did not even take one donkey from them (16:15) – Rashi** explains that when Moshe went from Midyan to Mitzrayim he did not use a “company donkey”. What would have been so bad HAD he used one of their donkeys? **Rav Wolbe ztl.** explains that he was able to openly declare that he had no Negios from his position. He wanted to be sure that his earned money was clean and not tainted.

**Remove yourselves from the Mishkan of Korach, Dasan V’aviram (16:24)** – Why is the word Mishkan used to refer to their tents? **Rav Mordechai Gifter ztl.** explains that this is not by accident. Rather the debates between Dasan and Aviram and Moshe dated all the way back to Moshe’s time in Mitzrayim. Those issues so splintered them from the mainstream, it was as if they had established another Mishkan in their midst – a separate camp based on an alternative ideology. It was the entire ideology that Moshe wanted the rest of the people to move away from.

**Remove yourselves from on top of the tents of these evil people and do not touch anything that is theirs (16:26)** – Why can’t the people touch their objects? Rav Shach ztl. once noted that when one is so consumed with this world, you would expect him to live life to the complete fullest. However, we find that these people tend to spend their time in earth chasing valueless trinkets. Why hold onto something that has no value? Thus, Moshe told the people to have nothing to do with the philosophy of these people as it won’t even achieve THEIR goals – only their desires.

**וְאִם־בְּרִיאָ֞ה יִבְרָ֣א  If Hashem creates a new creation (16:30)** - Why did Moshe ask Hashem to create something that went against the rules of nature? Why was that show of force necessary? **Ramban and Sforno** note that the issue was the creation of a Yeish M’Ayin **(Ibn Ezra** disagrees). Why? **Rav Gifter ztl** explains that Korach and company tried to change the rules of nature by subverting the Torah which is the blueprint of nature. Calling nature to defend itself would not prove anything. Thus, Moshe used a “neutral” proof -- the creating of a Yeish M’Ayin -- proving once and for all that this was the order of things from Hashem’s perspective.

**And all of the property (16: 32)** – Why did all of the property need to be taken as well? **Sforno** notes that it was so that Tzaddikim would not benefit from anything associated with these people. **Rav Chaim Kanievski Shlita** adds that it was the Korach wealth that led him to be a Baal Gaava. That same wealth needed to be removed lest it corrupt someone else.

**They all went down Chaim Sheolah (16:33)** – The Gemara (Bava Basra 74a) tells of an arab who showed Rabbah Bar Bar Chana where the ground opened and swallowed Korach’s family. Rabbah Bar Bar Chana heard the cries “Moshe Emes V’Toraso Emes V’Heim Badayim”. However, what purpose does the crying help? No one hears it and it does not help – as it does not get one out of Geheinom so why do it? **Rav Yaakov Galinski Ztl.** explains that the ultimate Geheinom is a final awareness of the fallacy of one’s ways and beliefs when it is finally too late.

**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.

**The Matos (17:1) – Daas Sofrim** explains that the story of the Matos was necessary in order to teach us a valuable lesson – just because the source of a challenge has been eliminated does not mean that the problem has been eliminated. The challenge of the Korach did not end when Korach died – at that point Moshe needed to engage Bnei Yisrael in a healing process to bring them closer to Hashem. The absence of distance is not closeness.

**And you won’t be like Korach (17:5)** – The Gemara quotes Rav who says that when one engages in

Machlokes (“HaMachazik”) , s/he is violating this Issur of not being like Korach (Sanhedrin 110a). The

Chofetz Chaim suggests that this prohibition only applies to one challenging the Kehuna. **Rav Zalman**

**Nechemia Goldberg ztl** suggests that the continuation of the Torah’s story – whereby Moshe went to

Dasan V’Aviram clearly shows that this is not the case. For if it were, Moshe did NOT challenge the Kehunah? Rather, Rav Zalman Nechemia suggests , the issue is one of Machazik, -- to one interpretation a Machazik is only the one who STARTS the Machlokes. That is not a reference to Mosh who went out of his way MiMidas Chassidus not to maintain it.

**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.

**וַיִּלֹּ֜נוּ כָּל־עֲדַ֤ת בְּנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ מִמָּ֣חֳרָ֔ת The nation complained the next day (17:6)** - Did the people not learn ANYTHING from the events of the day before? The ground opened, the people were swallowed, the 250 were burned. How could the people complain the next day? **Rav Chatzkel Levenstein ztl.** notes that this is the power of Leitzanus. One “just joking” comment can undo 100 messages of Mussar. This is what happened the day before. It came at a cost.

**וַיַּֽעֲמֹ֥ד בֵּֽין־הַמֵּתִ֖ים וּבֵ֣ין הַֽחַיִּ֑ים He stood between the dead and the living (17:13)  - Rashi** notes that the Malach HaMaves tried to get Aharon to get out of his way, arguing that Aharon was only listening to Moshe while he was following the command of Hashem. Aharon responded that Moshe spoke the word of Hashem (and he won the argument). How did Aharon win? **Rav Shach ztl**. explained that this story shows that when it comes to the debate between a Malach and a human, the human wins. The reason, explains Rav Shach, is due to the fact that a human is at a higher level than the Malach due to his or her Bechirah.

**והיה האיש אשר אבחר בו מטהו יפרח And the one I select, his flower shall blossom (17:20) – Ramban** notes that this test came about because the Bechoros wanted to serve in the Mishkan instead of the Leviim. But if after the test of the ground opening and the fire consuming the Ketores bringers, the people were not swayed, why would this test prove anything either? **Rav Simcha Zissel Broide ztl.** explains that this test had an added component – the almonds. Lest the people think that Moshe was stringing the situation along, Hashem added to Moshe’s test in a manner not revealed to him – which proved to the people that Hashem and not Moshe was calling the shots here. He alone was setting the structure and it was His decisions that Moshe was charged to implement.

**The one I choose, his staff will flower (17:20)** – If the tests themselves and the ground opening did not impress the people, why should this test prove anything? **Rav Simcha Zissel Broide ztl.** explained that the people thought Moshe was calling the shots and Hashem was going along with his plan. By seeing that Moshe’s request was fulfilled AND that Hashem went even further – it guaranteed that the people knew that this was indeed Hashem’s masterplan.

**And it blossomed into flowers, budded and gave off almonds (17:23) – Rav Shmuel Brazil Shlita** notes that Korach’s challenge flew directly in the face of just who a Kohein is supposed to be. Kohanim are Zrizim to help their people. Hence, like the almonds, they blossom fast. He adds that part of the daily Beracha that they offer – Yisa Hashem Panav Eilecha v’Yasem Lecha Shalom is Gematria of VaYigmol Shekeidim.

**And it blossomed and brought forth almonds (17:23)** – Generally when a fruit tree begins to bear fruit, the flower falls off. Here, the flower remained as part of the sign. Why? Moreover, the test was to see whose stick would flower (17:23) – why the fruit AND the flower? **Rav Gedaliah Schorr ztl.** reminds us of the reason for the test – to see who would be worthy of leading the people. Often leaders suffer from a lack of “freshness” when they get into the later years of their lives. The message in Aharon’s case was not only that his efforts “bore fruit” but that at the same time, he approached the job with a certain freshness – a Hitchadshus – each and every day

**וַיִּקְח֖וּ אִ֥ישׁ מַטֵּֽהוּ The test of the staff (17:24)** - Why did this test prove anything? Why was it offered? **Rav Aharon Soloveitchik ztl**. suggested that it was an outgrowth of the lesson of Tzaddik KaTamar Yifrach -- why a palm tree? Rav Aharon noted that a palm tree can grow even in less than optimal conditions. Shevet Levi as well, despite being in less than optimal conditions spread out nicely (think Cheit HaEigel). The test of the staffs would prove the same -- as the staffs had been detached from the ground, growth should have been impossible, However, the selected staff would not only survive in the less than optimal, it would thrive -- budding and giving off almonds!

**And they saw and they took each one’s staff (17:24)** – Why is it important to know that each took the staff? Moreover, what was the point of taking the staff – it was merely a dried out piece of wood that FAILED the Levi test of Hashem? Why hold onto a failure? **The Lutzker Rav ztl.** explains that the staffs showed that each Shevet was prepared to give up the right to financial security that came with the division of the land – in exchange for being the chosen tribe. Althuogh in the end not chosen, the staff told a story – via the signature of Moshe on each staff – of dedication to serving Hashem. That dedication became an important piece of history for the future of each Shevet.

**Benei Yisrael said to Moshe, Lo, we perish! We are lost, all of us lost! Everyone who so much ventures near God's Mishkan must die. Alas, we are doomed to perish!" (Bemidbar 17:27-28) – Rav Aharon Lichtenstein ztl.** noted that Tumah is not the opposite of Kedusha but rather Tahara. Why then in the

Torah do we find Mishkan Hashem -- the source of Kedusha – to be unable to handle Tumah? Rav

Aharon explained that the uniqueness of Tumah. Citing the Rambam (Hil. Tumas Ochlin 16:9) Rav Aharon notes that there is no prohibition to make things Tumah except Tumas Mes but there is a prohibition to use it to create a vacuum of Kedusha – man cannot create gaps in time, space or place where Kedusha is supposed to be there but due to his Tumah it cannot exist. The Jews were granted the possibility of reaching high levels of sanctity, they have many mitzvot and must adhere to a higher standard of values. But this is not given to us gratis. The elevated status of Am Yisrael carries with it tremendous responsibility, and one must ensure that he not diminish in any way the sanctity afforded to him. Anything in which we infuse kedusha must be guarded against tumah.

**תִּשְׂא֖וּ אֶת־עֲוֹ֣ן הַמִּקְדָּ֑שׁ You shall bear the sin of the Mikdash (18:1) - Rashi** explains that the entire Shevet Levi is to teach all of Am Yisrael not to touch things in the mikdash that are kodesh.  Why is an entire Shevet commanded to watch out for this? **Rav Yerucham Levovitz ztl** explained that we see how much the people desired to serve in the Kodesh, everyone wanted to play a part and as a result certain boundaries needed to be put up for protection and the Shevet needed to protect the others.

**And behold I have given you from the Mishmeres of my Terumah – given to you and your children (18:8)** – There is a separation between you and the other kohanim. Why does the Torah distinguish between Aharon and the other Kohanim? **The Tchibeiner Rav – Rav Dov Ber Weidenfeld ztl.** explains that only Kohanim Gedolim can sit in the Azara and therefore only they can eat Kodshei Kodashim sitting. Thus, only the Kohein Gadol can fulfill Hamshacha L’Gedulah on these Korbanos.

**And behold I have given you the guardianship of my Teruma (18:8)** – The braisa at the end of Pirkei Avos compares Torah to Kehuna and Malchus by noting that Torah is greater than Kehuna since Kehuna has 24 gifts while torah is acquired in 48 ways. Why is the fact that there are 24 gifts of Kehuna compared to the 48 steps needed to acquire Torah – the two seem unrelated? **Rav Baruch Dov Povarsky Shlita**  explains that the 48 ways are also 48 gifts – when one studies Torah correctly, then each one of the gifts is given to him in the same manner that Terumah is given to the one who is a kohein.

**ואני הנה נתתי לך את משמרת תרומותיAnd as for me, I gave you the responsibility to guard my Terumah (18:18)** – We learn that Terumah needs protection from becoming Tamai and being wasted. The **Avnei Miluim Teshuvos 18)** notes that creating a Bittul L’Chatchilah is a rabbinic prohibition except when one is Mivatel Terumah which would be biblically forbidden since one who does so, is causing a loss of Kedushas Terumah. **The Steipler ztl.** disagreed noting that there is a major difference between Being Mivatel and being Mitamai. Being Mitamai is a problem because one is actively removing the Kedusha from Kodesh. When bittul happens, the Kedusha disappears on its own. It is not the same embarrassment to Kodesh that this Issur discusses.

**כֵּ֣ן תָּרִ֤ימוּ גַם־אַתֶּם֙  So too should you also elevate Terumah (18:28) - Rav Elazar M. Teitz Shlita** noted that there is a command to become uplifted through the performance of Mitzvos. For when a person does Mitzvos properly, s/he grows from the Mitzva. That’s why we say “Yiyashar Kochecha” to one who performs a Mitzva -- it is a blessing not for the Mitzva done but rather for further opportunities to grow to the next level because of the effect the Mitzva performance has on the person.

**Haftara:**

**Haftorah – Rav Hershel Schachter Shlita** noted that many assume the connection between the Parsha and the Haftorah is in the rebellion – in the parsha of Korach to the authority of Moshe and Aharon and in the Haftorah of Bnei Yisrael to the authority of Shmuel. However, he added that a more complete connection would be in the actions of Moshe and Shmuel to challenge the rules and structure of nature as proofs to the authority of the leadership and Haskama of Hashem to that authority from the beginning of time.

**אֶת־שׁוֹר֩ | מִ֨י לָקַ֜חְתִּי וַחֲמ֧וֹר מִ֣י לָקַ֗חְתִּי Whose ox did I take and whose donkey did I take? (Shmuel I 12:3**) - Moshe didn’t ask the people -- he declared to Hashem that he did not take a donkey. Why didn’t he use the tactic Shmuel does? **Rav Elyashiv ztl**. answered that while Shmuel had no beefs with the people, Moshe knew that the people were suspicious of him. Had he made a declaration, they would have challenged him openly -- even if they needed to lie to do so (See Moed Katan 18b and Rashi that the people accused him of infidelity with their wives). Hence he chose not to issue the challenge.

**אֶת־שׁוֹר֩ | מִ֨י לָקַ֜חְתִּי וַחֲמ֧וֹר מִ֣י לָקַ֗חְתִּי Whose ox did I take (Shmuel I:12:3) - Rav Binyamin 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.

**If you fear Hashem and serve Him and listen to him and do not rebel against Hashem (Shmuel I: 12:14)** – Why does Shmuel caution the people with three different aspects of the Tzidkus needed to serve Hashem? **Rav Zalman Sorotzkin ztl.** explains that even if one serves Hashem and fears Him, the Yetzer HaRa can still get the person to sin unless he is careful to be on guard not to rebel against Hashem.

**For Hashem will not forsaken his nation because of his great name (Samuel I: 12:22) – Rav Zvi Hirsch Farber ztl.** explains this possuk based on a Midrash that tells of a man destined to receive the death penalty in the court of Alexander the Great. Alexander asked the guilty man to declare his name to which he received the answer “Alexander”. The king freed the man because he felt it inappropriate to have the name of Alexander declared to be killed as a result of crime (which normally happened when the death penalty was handed out). This is the intention of the Possuk as well. We will never be wiped out totally because of the great name (Keil) of Hashem.