

Points to Ponder
Korach 5775

Dasan and Aviram the children of Eliav (16:2) – 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.

In the morning Hashem will make it known who was chosen to lead (16:5) – Rashi cites a famous midrash which notes that the distinction between Kohein, Levi and Yisrael will be as clear as the difference between night and day. **Rav Hershel Schachter Shlita** is fond of noting that all of the Torah represents the boundaries distinguishing between the muttar and the assur. There is a broad two dimensional **area** of muttar, and not just a straight **line**. In the Torah way, we don't have to be careful not to get "out of line", rather we have to be careful not to cross over the border (gevulos). So on the one hand, not everyone must be raised in the same way of serving the Ribbono Shel Olam but at the same time, everyone must conform to the same standards of Halacha.

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.

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 Shlita** 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.

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.

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. Although 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.

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.

Haftorah: 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.