



# The Path To Follow

KORACH

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## GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

### Good for the Tzaddik and Good for His Neighbor

Everyone has a special duty to put every effort into performing a mitzvah that not many people are interested in, and which is often neglected.

Rabbi Yehudah HaChassid wrote about this subject in his Sefer Chassidim: "A mitzvah that no one seeks out, pursue it to perform it." He compares the importance of a mitzvah that nobody pursues to taking care of a corpse that has been left unburied. Avoiding Lashon Harah is also considered a mitzvah that we must pursue in order to perform. The Sages have said, "It is good for the tzaddik and good for his neighbor" (Sukkah 56b). According to this, a person who pays attention to not speaking forbidden words brings good upon others as well. Many of his friends will learn from his attitude and emulate his conduct, and he will also be rewarded for the good that they do.

## STRIFE IS THE MOTHER OF ALL SINS

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

**T**his week's parsha begins with the grave dispute of Korach and his followers against Moses and Aaron. In his great wisdom, Korach had seen that a dynasty would emerge from him, one that would culminate with the prophet Samuel. What Korach didn't know, however, was that he himself would be the impure baggage that Samuel carried behind him. What was Korach's fate? He was swallowed by the earth along with 250 men. Not only that, but the Sages have said that even babies were swallowed by the earth and died, so grave is the sin of strife, which has many faces. When involved in a dispute, some people claim to be fighting for Da'at Torah ("the Torah view"), as each party tries to prove that they are right. This is the sense of the verse, "You shall not ascend My altar vema'alot [with steps]" (Exodus 20:23), meaning that one must be careful not to bring offerings that are suspected of ma'alot (i.e., virtues that a person thinks he possesses) or personal bias. Thus people will sometimes quarrel among themselves, and to strengthen their position they will say that they are, as it were, fighting for the Torah view, as each side claims that all they care about is the Torah. In reality, however, personal interest is the only cause of their dispute, and they are using the Torah to strengthen their position.

It is not difficult to understand when a dispute over the Torah view is real, or when it stems from personal interest. In fact someone whose intentions are good will act calmly and win people over through his righteousness. He will not offend or harm anyone, for that would be contrary to the Torah view, as it is written: "The words of wise men are heard in quiet" (Ecclesiastes 9:17). However when a dispute is waged at the expense of others, and when the parties involved have a financial or other interest at stake, this indicates that their dispute is not for the sake of Heaven. On several occasions I have become personally involved in disputes in order to calm people down, situations in which each side was using the Torah to make money in his own little way. This certainly does not correspond to "the Torah view," and Hashem does not forgive Lashon Harah. Thus the Sages have said, "Any dispute that is for the sake of Heaven will have an enduring result, and that which is not for the sake of Heaven will not have an enduring result. Which is a dispute for the sake of Heaven? The dispute between Hillel and Shammai. Which is not for the sake of Heaven? The dispute of Korach and all his followers" (Perkei Avoth 5:17). Our Sages have given us this sign so we can determine whether a dispute is for the sake of Heaven or not. In fact if the parties involved in a dispute remain good friends, then it is like "the dispute between Hillel and Shammai," who loved and respected one another, an indication that their dispute is for the sake of Heaven.

However if the parties involved are not friendly with one another, and the dispute stirs up hatred between them, then it is like "the dispute of Korach and all his followers." Such a dispute was filled with hatred and hostility, as Moses said: "A little more and they will stone me" (Exodus 17:4). This dispute was definitely not for the sake of Heaven, for the Satan was motivating them. This is what we must look for in any dispute to see if it is for the sake of Heaven or

not. In the dispute of Korach and his followers against Moses and Aaron, Korach was not fighting for the sake of Heaven, for he knew that the priesthood was not his because Hashem had not appointed him to it.

A person who avoids honor, conquers his faults and the evil inclination (which is made of fire), and overcomes every obstacle in the service of Hashem – doing everything with humility through the selfless study of Torah, especially by yielding before the tzaddik of the generation – will not try to oppose the tzaddik, but instead will obey him. These things are not easy, nor are they achieved without great effort. Hence a person who has managed to achieve all this is worthy of having miracles performed for him. As for Korach, who did not act in this way, he experienced a miracle in reverse, for he did not die in a normal way.

When we consider these things, we will understand just how important unity is and how much we must strive to achieve it. It is on account of unity that the Shechinah dwells among us, enabling us to avoid all kinds of disasters, as well as hastening our deliverance. True, this is not easy, for the evil inclination (which is the kelipah of strife and disagreement) cannot tolerate seeing Jews studying Torah together in unity and harmony while the Holy One, blessed be He, joins with them and makes His Shechinah dwell among them. Hence by introducing strife into the situation, the evil inclination is doing all that it can to upset this. As such the Shechinah will depart, for it only remains under conditions of unity. This is why we must be extremely vigilant with regards to the evil inclination, which is the Satan, and to run from a dispute as if from a burning building. Simply put, we must put an effort into achieving unity.

We learn the great value of unity from what Rabbi Akiva said on the verse, "You shall love your fellow as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18), namely that it is a great principle of the Torah (Yerushalmi, Nedarim 9:4). The Torah does not state, "You shall love chaverecha [your friend]," but "You shall love re'acha [your fellow]." The word re'acha can be interpreted by its root rah ("evil"), meaning that even if your friend acts wickedly with you, you must still love him. However the evil inclination will not allow this, and it sows seeds of strife, as was the case with the dispute involving Korach and his followers against Moses.

Yet as we know, everyone can improve his conduct and way of life, and even Korach could have ventured back onto the right path. In fact the Arizal is cited as saying that in the future, Korach will return and become a High Priest, for the name Korach is formed from the last letters in the words tzaddik katamar yifrach ("the righteous will flourish like a palm tree"). In fact all of Korach's sins will be forgiven in the future, for someone who constantly renews himself and flourishes in the service of Hashem automatically rectifies the 288 rapach (fragments) of holiness, doing so until the arrival of Mashiach. Amen, may it be so.

# MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

## A Series of Suspicions

*It is written, "Speak to the Children of Israel and take from them one staff for each father's house, from all the leaders according to their fathers' house, twelve staffs" (Numbers 17:17).*

Korach contested the priesthood of Aaron, and the 250 men who followed Korach also wanted to serve as High Priest and offer incense, something that they paid for with their lives. However emotions still ran high, and the people were not yet convinced. They needed another sign, and therefore each tribal leader was instructed to take his staff and write his name upon it. All their staffs were then placed before the Ark of the Testimony that was in the Holy of Holies, and the leader whose staff budded would be the chosen one. However they were still likely to say that Moses knew on which side to place Aaron's staff so it would bud (on the side of the Shechinah – Rashi). In order to remove this suspicion from their hearts, Moses placed Aaron's staff in the middle, and on the following day people saw that it had budded. Nevertheless, they were still not convinced that it was a miracle. They were liable to say that no staff had budded, and that Moses had brought a staff from an almond tree that had already budded and engraved Aaron's name upon it. Hence in the book Pnei David, the Chida cites Rabbeinu Ephraim as saying that an additional miracle occurred: Moses brought out Aaron's staff for them to see, and in addition to having already budded, new flowers began to bud before their very eyes! It would seem that all their suspicions would have disappeared at that point, but it was not to be. Scripture notes that each man reclaimed his staff (Numbers 17:24). Why did they do this? Rabbi Ovadia Sforno explains that they were still suspicious that these were not their staffs, for they suspected that when Moses entered the Holy of Holies and saw that all 13 staffs had budded, he took 12 dry pieces of wood, engraved their names upon them, and replaced their staffs. Yet the leaders had taken precautions against this possibility as well, for they had engraved secret markings in their staffs. That is why they reclaimed their staffs and examined them to see that these marks were still there. Here we see a series of suspicious thoughts and mistrust. What was the source of this suspicion and these difficulties? The answer is that they knew just how spiritually elevated each Jew was, regardless of his identity. They realized how each mitzvah is cherished by Hashem, how each prayer is precious to Him, and how greatly He desires our service, to the point that they simply could not believe that a Jew was not permitted within the Sanctuary. In fact they were right to recognize the importance of every mitzvah we perform and the love that Hashem holds for every Jew. However they failed to realize that only the tribe of Levi had been chosen to serve within the Sanctuary, and that the priests were Hashem's agents. Yet through prayer, which is like an offering, all Jews are equal, and in the study of the Torah – which is equal to all the mitzvot – all Jews are equal. In fact the Torah is more precious than pearls, even more precious than the High Priest who enters the Holy of Holies.

## A Pearl From the Rav

*It is written, "The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them" (Numbers 16:32).*

In his book Pahad David, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita asks why this verse states that the earth opened its mouth, rather than saying that Hashem was responsible for doing so, as we read elsewhere: "The L-RD opened the mouth of the donkey" (Numbers 22:28). We must say that despite the fact that Scripture described Moses as "exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth" (ibid. 12:3), when Korach rebelled he said to him: "Why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of the L-RD?" (ibid. 16:3). He therefore suspected Moses of being arrogant and exalting himself at the expense of others. It was thus fitting that "the

earth" – which is the true symbol of humility (since everyone walks upon it) and which demonstrates the futility of man, whose life begins and ends in dust – should defend the honor of the greatest among the prophets. Hence the earth itself opened its mouth.

## The Desire for Honor

*It is written, "Is it not enough for you that the G-d of Israel has separated you from the assembly of Israel to draw you near to Himself...yet you seek the priesthood as well?" (Numbers 16:9-10).*

The desire for honor is stronger than any other desire in man. In fact a person can control his instincts with regards to seeking money and other pleasures, but it is honor-seeking that motivates him, for he cannot stand the thought of being inferior to his fellowman. Many have failed in this regard and have been lost as a result. The Sages have said, "The Holy One, blessed be He, seized Jeroboam by his garment and urged him, 'Repent, then I, you, and the son of Jesse [King David] will walk in the Garden of Eden.' 'And who shall be at the head?' he asked. 'The son of Jesse shall be at the head.' 'If so,' [Jeroboam replied] 'I do not want it'" (Sanhedrin 102a). What caused Korach to lose his way, him and all his followers along with him? It was solely because he sought honor, as the Torah explicitly tells us: "You seek the priesthood as well?" The Sages have also said that Korach was motivated when he saw Elizaphan, the son of Uzziel, being appointed as a tribal leader, a position that Korach desired for himself (Bamidbar Rabba 18:2).

– Messilat Yescharim, ch. 11

## Appointed by the King

*It is written, "Therefore you and your entire assembly are gathered together against the L-RD. And Aaron, what is he that you should murmur against him?" (Numbers 16:11).*

The dissension that you are creating is not against me, but against the Holy One, blessed be He. It is like a king who had many slaves, one of whom he wanted to free and appoint to an important position. In fact he made him a minister and counselor. When the friends of the former slave protested against him, some people said: "If he had freed himself and assumed a glorious position on his own, his friends would have had a reason to protest. Yet since it was his master who gave him all he has, it is against the king that they are rebelling." The same applies here, for Moses said: If my brother Aaron had taken the priesthood for himself, you would have had a reason to protest against him. However since it was Hashem Who gave it to him – and since majesty, grandeur, and strength belong to Him – whoever rises up against Aaron is really rising up against Hashem.

– Midrash Tanhuma 6

## We Must Not Be Obstinate in a Dispute

*It is written, "Moses arose and went to Dathan and Abiram" (Numbers 16:25).*

The Gemara cites Resh Lakish as saying, "This teaches that one must not be obstinate in a dispute, for Rav said: 'He who is unyielding in a dispute violates a negative command, as it is written, "Let him not be as Korach and his assembly" [Numbers 17:5]' " (Sanhedrin 110a). The Gemara also recounts the following story: "When Rabbi Zeira had any complaint against a man, he would repeatedly pass by him, showing himself to him so that he may come forth to pacify him. Rav once had a complaint against a certain butcher, and on the eve of Yom Kippur, when the butcher did not come to him, he said: 'I shall go to him to pacify him.' Rabbi Huna met him and asked, 'Where are you going?' He said, 'To pacify so-and-so.' He thought, 'Rav is about to cause someone's death.' He went there and remained standing before the butcher, who was sitting and chopping an animal's head. When he raised his eyes and saw Rav, he said: 'You are Abba, go away. I will have nothing to do with you.'

While he was chopping the head, a bone flew off and struck him in the throat, killing him” (Yoma 87a).

## Everyone Belongs to Me!

*It is written, “The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them” (Numbers 16:22).*

We need to understand why Korach and his followers were punished by being swallowed by the earth, as opposed to some other punishment. We may explain this by what happened to the Ohr Somayach: Two people once came to him so he could settle a dispute they were having over a piece of land, one they both claimed as their own. Since none of them had any witnesses, the Rav couldn’t verify their claims. He offered them a compromise, but they refused. What did he do? He said to them, “I want to see this piece of land that you are arguing about for myself.” When he arrived, he bent down and seemed to be whispering something to the earth. When they asked him what he said, he replied: “I told the earth, ‘These two men each claim you as their own. What do you say?’ The earth told me that everyone belonged to it, meaning that eventually you will both be buried in the ground and belong to it.” The two men got the point, and they agreed on a compromise. In light of this story, we can understand why Korach was punished by being swallowed by the earth. If he had pondered his eventual fate, he would not have rebelled against Moses. He was therefore punished by being swallowed by the earth while still alive.

– Kol Yehudah

## As Rich as Korach

*It is written, “They and all that was theirs descended alive to the pit” (Numbers 16:33).*

A popular expression states: “As rich as Korach” and “Treasures like Korach.” We need to ask why Korach’s name is associated with great wealth. Have there been no other wealthy individuals among the Jewish people? The answer, says Rabbi Baruch Mordechai of Shedlitz, is that many rumors have circulated about the wealth of rich Jews during their lifetime. Yet when they left this world, people suddenly realized that these rumors were exaggerated. In this regard, Korach’s fate differs from that of the other wealthy individuals among the Jewish people. Korach descended into Sheol with all the riches and possessions that he had amassed in his lifetime. Hence the memory of Korach as an immensely wealthy individual has remained in the collective consciousness, and from it spread expressions such as: “As rich as Korach” and “Treasures like Korach.”

– Parperaot LaTorah

## Overview of the Parsha

After having set out, the people continue their journey in the desert around their Sanctuary. After the incident involving the spies in Parsha Shelach, the stability of the people is again shaken by Korach’s rebellion over the priesthood. It is settled when the rebels are swallowed by the earth and Korach’s followers, after their offering of incense is rejected, are burnt to cinders. People begin complaining after their deaths, and the epidemic that ensues is stopped when Aaron offers incense. As a sign to the rebels, the staffs of all the tribal leaders are put on display, yet only Aaron’s staff blossoms. Following these events, the priests and Levites are warned with regards to their sacred duties. The parsha then allots the heave-offerings to the priests, as well as portions from the other offerings. The Levites are allotted the tithes of the Children of Israel, a tenth of which they must give to the priests.

## REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

### Elazar – Not Moses or Aaron

*It is written, “Say to Elazar, the son of Aaron the priest, that he should pick up the firepans out of the burning.... Let them make them into hammered plates for a covering of the altar” (Numbers 17:2-3).*

Hashem ordered Moses to tell Elazar the son of Aaron to collect the firepans of those who had offered incense, and to work them into a covering for the altar. The holy Alsheich asks why the Holy One, blessed be He, underlined that Elazar should be the one to collect the firepans, rather than Moses or Aaron. He replies that we should apparently have had a reason to remember that Korach’s rebellion was crushed by brutal force, for they had spoken against Moses, the man of G-d, as well as against Aaron, G-d’s holy one. Yet for having contested the choice of the priests, the sons of Aaron, perhaps they weren’t rebuked so severely. Perhaps that is why Hashem ordered Aaron’s son Elazar (who represents Aaron’s descendants) to collect the firepans and rework them. He would thereby demonstrate that the choice of Aaron for the priesthood was for all the generations – for all his descendants after him – and therefore there was no reason to contest it.

The Gemara (Berachot 27b) recounts that a certain nassi was dismissed from his position and replaced by Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, who was only 28 years old at the time (things eventually returned to normal, however, and the nassi resumed his position). When they were discussing whom to appoint as his replacement, one suggestion was Rabbi Yehoshua, who was the greatest among them. However this was rejected because Rabbi Yehoshua was the reason for the nassi’s dismissal, and if he had been named to succeed him, the nassi would have greatly suffered. We see somewhat of the same thing in this week’s parsha. When 250 of Korach’s followers contested Aaron’s priesthood and wanted to offer incense for themselves, a fire descended from Heaven and consumed them. Yet Hashem did not tell Aaron to collect the firepans because he was, as it were, their adversary. Furthermore, Aaron was not chosen for this task so that people would not say that he delighted in their death and rejoiced to see revenge being taken out on those who had opposed him. The Torah is therefore teaching us a lesson here: We must not pour salt into a person’s wounds or empower an individual over whom a revolt took place. Rashi explains that the word *machtot* (“firepans”) means “vessels used for stoking coals, which have a handle” (Rashi, Numbers 16:6). Rabbeinu Ovadia Bartenura objects here, asking why Rashi explains what a firepan is at this point, since he already explained the term in Parsha Terumah. Furthermore, since it is obvious that the firepans were held, why does Rashi mention that they had handles? He explains that Korach was aware of the danger in offering the incense, and he knew that a fire could come down from Heaven to burn and destroy. Yet the handles blinded him, for he thought that with a long enough handle, the fire would not reach him.

## ESHET HAYIL

### Joy as a Segula for Having Children

The daughter of the saintly Rabbi Shemuel of Kaminka was childless. When she was in the city of the tzaddik Rabbi Raphael of Barshad, she visited him and asked for a blessing to have a child. Rabbi Raphael said to her, “Joy is a segula for having children.” When she later recounted to her father what the tzaddik had said, he replied: “Rabbi Raphael learned this from the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. In the Torah it is written, ‘And Sarah laughed’ [Genesis 18:12], after which Isaac was born. In the Prophets it is written, ‘Sing out, O barren one’ [Isaiah 54:1], and in the Writings it is stated: ‘A joyful mother of children’ [Psalms 113:9].” His daughter replied, “But if Sarah laughed because it was a segula, then why was Hashem angry with her?” Rabbi Shemuel answered, “We only need a segula when a tzaddik promises us something. However when the Holy One, blessed be He, is the One making the promise, just as He promised Sarah, then we don’t need a segula. That’s why He was angry with her.”

## THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

### The Prayer of the Pious Man

As a pious man was praying by the roadside, a government minister came by and greeted him, but he did not return his greeting. He therefore waited for him to finish his prayer. When he had finished praying, the minister said to him: "Fool! Is it not written in your law, 'Only beware for yourself and greatly beware for your soul'? It is also written, 'You shall greatly beware for your souls.' When I greeted you, why did you not return my greeting? If I had cut off your head with my sword, who would have demanded satisfaction for your blood from me?" He replied to him, "Be patient and I will explain. If you had been standing before an earthly king and your friend had come and given you a greeting, would you have returned it?" "No," he replied. "And if you had returned his greeting, what would they have done to you?" "They would have cut off my head with the sword," he replied. He then said to him, "Can we not make a logical inference here? If [you would have acted] in this way when standing before an earthly king, who is here today and tomorrow in the grave, how much more when standing before the supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, Who endures for all eternity?" The minister accepted his explanation, and the pious man returned home in peace (Berachot 32b-33a).

We need to understand why the pious man in the above story could have risked his life in this way, since the Gemara states that if a Gentile king asks you where you are going, you must stop in the middle of your prayer and answer him, lest he kill you. The Etz Yosef (cited in Ein Yaakov) explains that when the pious man saw that the minister was the first to greet him, he realized that he was humble to some degree. Hence he thought that he wouldn't hasten to kill him before having heard his reasons for not replying, which is precisely what happened.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

### The Prophet Samuel

*It is written, "Samuel said to all Israel: 'Behold, I have hearkened to your voice, to everything that you have said to me, and I have crowned a king over you' " (I Samuel 12:1).*

From here we see the shortcomings of the prophet Samuel, who agreed to listen to the Children of Israel's request to give them a king in his place, whereas the din states that a judge cannot be removed from office as long as no fault has been found in him. Samuel should not have listened to them, for he had been appointed by Hashem and consecrated by Him. By saying what he did, Samuel seemed to be recognizing that he was incapable of leading the people. There is no greater insult than when disciples approach their teacher and demand that he leave his position and be replaced by someone else. How much more is this true when the leader in question has been crowned by Hashem as a prophet to transmit His word to Israel! Yet in his humility, Samuel was ready to accept this insult, though he did not hide his grievances from them. He said: "I have walked before you from my youth until this day. Here I am – testify about me in the presence of the L-RD and in the presence of His anointed: Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I robbed?" (I Samuel 12:3). His entire statement stemmed from deep humility and more, for "it is shameful for the lion to cry before the fox." It was as if he had asked them whether they agreed with his leadership.

– Kol Tzofayich

## A TRUE STORY

### The Staff that Blossomed

*It is written, "Behold, Aaron's staff blossomed" (Numbers 17:23).*

During the time of the tzaddik Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua of Apt (the author of Ohev Israel), a Jew who had converted to Christianity began to rise in social rank, and he eventually became a government minister. One year as Passover was approaching, the ministers gathered to discuss how Jews supposedly spilled Christian blood in order to make matzot. The minister said to them, "Although you all know how much I hate Jews, I can't support this injustice because I know that the entire story is nothing but a massive lie." His statement was accepted, and the ministers abandoned all plans for taking revenge on the Jewish community. Since this minister had been the instrument of a good deed, his heart was changed and he began to think about repentance. He went to see the tzaddik of Apt, but he drove him from his sight. Not giving up hope, the minister continued to bother him, until one day the tzaddik became extremely upset and said, "Just as this staff will never produce fruit, so too will your repentance never be accepted." Upon hearing this, the minister went and lay down by the entrance to the tzaddik's room, weeping and lamenting through the night. In the morning the tzaddik looked at his staff, and wonder of wonders a flower had blossomed on it! He immediately called for the minister, welcoming him with great warmth and agreeing to show him the paths of repentance.

– Torat HaParasha

## YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

### Rabbi Shlomo Kluger – The Av Beit Din and Rav of Brody

The gaon Rabbi Shlomo Kluger Zatzal was born to Rabbi Yehudah, the Av Beit Din of Komarov, in the year 5546. From early on, his sharp mind began to demonstrate its abilities. He studied with his father and with his teacher, the gaon Rabbi Mordechai Rabin (the Av Beit Din of Zamosc), who never ran short of his praises.

Rabbi Shlomo's diligence was extraordinary. He studied Torah without interruption for 18 hours a day, completely indifferent to the world around him. He didn't spend much time speaking with his friends at the yeshiva, but instead developed his own Torah insights. Even when he could not find paper to write on, he would write in the margins of every book that fell into his hands.

His teacher Rabbi Mordechai predicted that he would enlighten the eyes of the Jewish people through his Torah, which is what precisely what happened. When he grew older, Rabbi Shlomo became famous throughout the Diaspora for his extremely sharp mind, a man who was an expert in every Torah field. Indeed, he was a pillar of Torah and Halachah, and people from every corner of the globe came to him with Halachic questions. Rabbi Shlomo was held in high esteem by everyone, venerated for his great holiness and austere way of life, which itself was famous. In fact the great figures of Chassidim greatly respected him. Rabbi Meir of Premishlan said that the heart of Rabbi Shlomo was so hot that if a match touched his body, it would immediately burst into flames. Rabbi Shlomo Kluger served as the Rav of numerous towns, although he is best known for serving as the Rav of Brody, a position that he held until his dying day. He rejoined the celestial academy on Tammuz 1, 5629, and his body was laid to rest in Brody. May the memory of the tzaddik be blessed.