

# WITHOUT THE INNER DIMENSION, THE OUTER DIMENSION IS WORTHLESS (BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

## The Path To Follow

KORACH

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**A**t the beginning of this week's parsha we read, "Korach took...with Dathan and Abiram and On the son of Pelet, the offspring of Reuben" (Numbers 16:1). Our Sages have said that by opposing the priesthood, Korach "took a bad deal for himself" (Sanhedrin 109b). However it is also written, "The sons of Korach did not die" (Numbers 26:11), and the Sages have explained: "A place was set apart for them in Gehinnom, where they sat and sang praises [to G-d]" (Sanhedrin 110a). It is also said, "On, the son of Pelet, was saved by his wife. ... She sat down at the entrance [of the tent] and loosened her hair. All who came and saw her went away" (ibid. 109b-110a).

Let us first explain the nature of the dispute involving Korach and his followers. There are three questions that we need to answer:

1. What does "a bad deal" mean? What is a good deal, and what exactly was the "bad deal" that Korach took?
2. How did Korach's sons really end up repenting, contrary to the will of their father, an important figure? How could it be that they suddenly followed Moses and Aaron?
3. We know that when On arose, he immediately tried to go and find Korach's followers. Nevertheless he was saved by his wife. She convinced him to stay by pointing out that he had nothing to gain in this dispute, regardless of the outcome. However since we have no indication that On repented, how did he survive?

When we examine the midrashim on Parsha Korach, we can clearly see that Korach was not an ordinary man. He was an important Levite and a lofty individual, among those who loaded and carried the holy Ark. Yet at the same time, he committed an extremely grave sin by fighting against the tzaddik of the generation. Korach opposed Moses and wanted to take every honor for himself, even though he was great in Torah and aware of its secrets. Despite all this, he took "a bad deal" for himself.

As we know, the Torah is called a good teaching, as it is written: "For I have given you good teaching, do not forsake My Torah" (Proverbs 4:2). What is the essence of Torah? It consists of toiling in its study in order to know its inner dimension. In fact the superficial, or outer dimension, is completely worthless, and when a person wants to study Torah as any non-Jew would (i.e., simply because he finds it interesting), it will not last with him.

From here we learn a lesson on how to live our lives. When a Jew goes to the Beit Midrash in order to study, yet he fails to pay attention to the Torah's inner dimension, disregarding the essential aspect of study and learning Torah like any non-Jewish book of wisdom, he will end up losing on both counts.

This is why Korach experienced what he did, for his only intention was to seize the Torah as a simple piece of wisdom; he did not want to grasp its inner dimension. Although Korach was among those who carried the Ark, he carried it from the outside. That is, only superficially was

he perfect; on the inside he was far from perfection. Now the Torah cannot be acquired by the outer dimension, for it is said: "Your Torah is in my innards" (Psalms 40:9). The Torah must be absorbed within a man's members, completely within him. If a person does not do this, he will end up with nothing, meaning without Torah, mitzvot, good deeds, and good middot, as we have said. If Korach had perceived the inner essence of the Torah, he would have also perceived Moses' inner essence and refrained from opposing him. Hence Korach took a "bad deal" for himself by clinging to superficiality. The same did not apply to Korach's sons, for after seeing their father taking this bad deal for himself, and after realizing that his dispute with Moses was not for the sake of Heaven, they fully understood that the outer dimension without the inner dimension is completely worthless. Hence they immediately said, "Moses is truth and his Torah is truth" (Midrash Tanhuma, Korach 11). In other words, only the Torah of Moses – only the inner dimension of Moses – is truth, and only it can bring us closer to the Creator. In fact a person who is drawn to the outer dimension will end up being swallowed by the earth. The earth will eventually engulf both him and his good deeds, and nothing will remain. Thus the sons of Korach immediately began to repent. They simply could not understand how it was possible for their father, who had carried the Ark, to want to lead the people at the same time as he scorned Moses, the people's leader and the man who had received Hashem's truth. They simply could not understand this. Therefore they realized that their father's path constituted a "bad deal." Because it was not right, they quickly began to study the inner dimension of Torah, having seen that the path of Moses was the right one and that he was the only man the people should follow.

The same occurred with On the son of Pelet. At first he believed that Korach was the true leader of the people and that his path was the right one. However his wife knew that this was not so. She knew very well that Korach's path was one of complete superficiality, totally devoid of the inner dimension and thus forbidden to follow. What did she do? She simply brought Pelet within the tent, meaning that she led him to the inner dimension of Torah – within the tent of Torah study, the Tent of Meeting – to the inner dimension of Torah study. When On still wanted to follow Korach, his wife said that he had nothing to gain in any case, for Korach's path was not the right one, since the inner dimension is the main thing. In fact On listened to his wife and began to seek that very thing. He was thus saved from the followers of Korach and did not die with them.

From this we can learn a lesson on how to live our lives. This lesson applies to each of us, be it a young boy, an avrech, or a Jew who fixes regular times for Torah study. We must all realize that the study of Torah in a simple, superficial way is absolutely worthless, for in the end we will be left with nothing. The essential thing is the inner dimension, meaning to connect ourselves with the inner essence of Torah. This not only means cleaving to Torah study itself, but to mitzvot, good deeds, and good middot. The main thing is the inner dimension, for only when we do everything with true devotion will we merit every good thing from the Creator.

## GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

### Internal Strife

The Mishnah compares a dispute that is for the sake of Heaven with one that is not for the sake of Heaven (Perkei Avoth 5:17). Symbolic of the former is the dispute between Hillel and Shammai, who held different views on matters of Halachah. These views have been studied and expounded upon generation after generation as an integral part of the Oral Law, for such disputes stem from a yearning to know the truth. Symbolic of the second kind of dispute is that of Korach and his assembly, in which personal animosity toward Moses led them to a bitter end, to death and eternal derision. The Mishnah is very precise in stating "Korach and all his assembly," not "Korach and Moses," even though Moses was the other party. This is because in a dispute that is not for the sake of Heaven, there is strife even among the members of the same group. Thus it is stated, "Korach and all his assembly" because there was strife even among the members of his own assembly. The Chafetz Chaim wrote, "One who kindles the fire of strife for forbidden speech transgresses the prohibition, 'Be not like Korach and his assembly'" (Introduction to Chafetz Chaim, Prohibition 12).

# MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

## How Dare You Complain?

The book Sheelot U'Teshuvot by Rav Hai Gaon, which deals generally with questions of Halachah, recounts an interesting parable: There once was a lion who was eyeing a fox with hungry eyes. The fox said to him, "What would you want with a little fox like me? Over there is a portly man who will make a much more satisfying meal for you." The lion replied, "But animals are forbidden to kill and eat humans. I could be severely punished if I ate him." The fox replied, "Don't worry! The punishment won't overtake you, but rather your children. As you know, 'The fathers eat sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge' [Ezekiel 18:2]." Enticed by this argument, the lion ran towards the man in order to eat him. As he was running, however, he was caught by a trap and fell to the bottom of a deep pit. When the fox ran over and looked into the pit, the lion cried out: "You said that only my children would be punished for my sin!" The fox replied, "You're not being punished for what you did, but for what your father did. He once ate a human being himself." The lion screamed, "That's not fair! Why should I have to suffer for my father's sins?" The fox laughed and said, "You were prepared to sin even though you knew that your children would suffer for it! How dare you complain that it's not fair?" Rav Hai Gaon ended this parable by stressing its importance.

When we examine the story of Korach and his followers, we are stunned by a simple fact: Korach, an intelligent man, along with 250 leaders of the Sanhedrin – all of them among the generation that received the Torah –announced their lack of faith in the leadership of Moses and the priesthood of Aaron! How could they have protested in this way, a way worthy of lesser men? They said things such as, "Is it a small thing that you have brought us out of a land that flows with milk and honey" (Numbers 16:13), by which they were referring to Egypt, where they had been mistreated and reduced to slavery! How could they have said such an absurd thing? From the above parable, we learn that when a desire becomes overwhelming, a person is incapable of knowing what he must do and what he must not do, for his mind is clouded at that point. It is only when this desire leaves him that his mind begins to clear and he can say, "What was I thinking?"

In his book Kovetz Ma'amarim, Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman explains the reason for something we see in life, namely that most people do not believe in Hashem, and among them are many intelligent individuals who have made important discoveries for society in every field. Rabbi Elchanan states that with regards to faith and religion, it is impossible to know the truth unless one is free from the desires of this world, and such people are not found among the nations. Now even when we become enticed by something minor, it blinds us to the truth. How much more is this true when it is the entire world that is enticing us! Although most people in this world are far from faith, we should not pay attention to them or let them trouble us. Living in this world is like walking by a tavern and seeing 100 drunks rolling on the floor. No one would listen to them if they said, "You're only one, but we're a hundred. Why don't you do the same as us?" The same applies to this world, for those who live in it are drunk with desire, and their minds are blinded to the point that they can no longer perceive the truth.

## A Pearl From the Rav

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

Concerning Balaam's donkey it is said, "The L-RD opened the mouth of the she-donkey" (ibid. 22:28). In his book Pahad David, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita asks why Scripture attributes the opening of the donkey's mouth to Hashem, while the opening of the earth's mouth to swallow Korach is attributed to itself. The answer is that although Scripture describes Moses as "exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3), Korach still said to him: "Why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of the L-RD?" (ibid. 16:3). Because Korach suspected Moses of being arrogant and feeling superior to others, it was proper that "the earth" (a symbol of humility, for everyone walks

on it) should defend the honor of the greatest among the prophets. Hence it is written that the earth itself opened its mouth to defend the honor of Moses, the humblest of all men. The earth avenged itself on Korach, for he had denied the humility of Moses.

## Among the Bearers of the Ark

Rashi asks, "What did Korach, who was a clever man, see [to commit] this folly?" However the Midrash states, "Korach was a clever man and one of the bearers of the Ark" (Bamidbar Rabba 18:3).

What difference did it make if Korach was among the bearers of the Ark? Did this have some connection to his dispute with Moses?

According to the Da'at Sofer, the answer lies in the fact that "Korach was a clever man and one of the bearers of the Ark." Commenting on Parsha Terumah, the Kli Yakar asks why all the dimensions of the Ark comprise fractions ("one cubit and a half," "two cubits and a half"), whereas the dimensions of the other articles in the Sanctuary comprise whole numbers. It is to teach us that whoever wants to merit the Torah must be humble. As for Korach, who was intelligent and among the bearers of the Ark, what reason did he have to feel superior to Moses?

## Carrying Those Who Carry It

Another explanation, says the Da'at Sofer, is that Korach claimed that the people had only heard two statements from Hashem: "I am the L-RD your G-d" and "You shall have no other gods before Me." As for everything else, Korach said that Moses had invented it! In other words, Korach was claiming that the Tablets of the Law were a lie. Now since the Ark carried those who carried it, did Korach not feel himself being carried as he transported the Ark? Yet how could that be possible, given that Korach claimed that the Ark was carrying tablets of falsehood? After all, would Hashem perform a miracle for the sake of falsehood?

## And as for Aaron...

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

There seems to be no connection between the beginning of this verse and its end. Starting with, "You and your entire assembly that is joining together are against the L-RD," Moses should have continued to discuss them. However he suddenly began to talk about Aaron!

The Beit Yitzchak said that a person who entered the Temple complex would see an immense slaughterhouse. There he would witness animals being slaughtered, meat being suspended and grilled, and blood being drained. Yet what is the difference between a slaughterhouse and the Temple? Offerings in the Temple were made on Hashem's command, and without it the Temple would have been a simple slaughterhouse. Moses told Korach and his followers, "You want to be priests? What will you do as priests – slaughter offerings? Yet you claim that Hashem did not command any of this, since you say that I am lying. You claim that it's a simple slaughterhouse. So what do you want from Aaron?" Hence, "You and your entire assembly that is joining together are against the L-RD" – you have said that none of this was commanded by Hashem, and so you are not seeking to draw closer to Him. Rather, you are conspiring against Him. "And as for Aaron, what is he that you protest against him?" In other words: Why are you jealous of Aaron, whom you claim is nothing more than a mere butcher?

## Not Even a Single Donkey

It is written, "This distressed Moses greatly, and he said to the L-RD, 'Do not accept their offering. I have not taken even a single donkey of theirs, nor have I wronged even one of them'" (Numbers 16:15).

Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin Zatzal said with a smile: "Moses said to Hashem: Look how they speak of me, and this is despite the fact that I have not even taken a single donkey from them! Therefore 'Do not accept their offering,' for if You accept their incense, You will see what they will say about You."

## Educating Toward Mitzvot

It is written, “So they withdrew from around the dwelling of Korach, Dathan, and Abiram. Dathan and Abiram went out standing upright at the entrance of their tents, together with their wives, their children, and their infants” (Numbers 16:27).

We know that when he was a child, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hanania’s mother would bring him to the entrance of the yeshiva in order to hear words of Torah being spoken. Dathan and Abiram also educated their children, but they taught them to disparage Moses. Hence they took their children with them so they too could learn from their parents. This was their own way of “educating toward mitzvot.”

## Opening and Closing

It is written, “They and all that was theirs descended alive to the pit. The earth closed upon them and they were lost from among the congregation” (Numbers 16:33).

There have been cases, following massive earthquakes, in which the earth opened its mouth to form a massive and deep pit. However the Ramban says that the miracle in our parsha is that the earth closed after it had opened, as it is written: “The earth closed upon them.”

## As Rich as Korach

The Sages say that Korach searched Egypt for the treasures that Joseph had hidden there. Joseph brought all the treasures of the world to Egypt, yet people did not know where they were. Not even Korach knew, which is why he began to look for them. In the end he found one of three treasures hidden by Joseph, and he became “as rich as Korach.” In fact Korach was so wealthy that the Gemara states, “The keys of Korach’s treasure house were a load for 300 white mules, even though all the keys and locks were of leather” (Sanhedrin 110a). In other words, Korach possessed unimaginable wealth.

– Aish Dat

## Overview of the Parsha

In Parsha Shelach the journey of the people was disrupted by the incident involving the spies. This continues in Parsha Korach, and to an even greater extent, following Korach’s rebellion over the priesthood. The truth becomes known, however, when the rebels are swallowed by the earth and the incense offering of Korach’s followers is rejected, after which they are consumed by fire. Complaints arise in the camp after their death, followed by an epidemic that Aaron succeeds in stopping with the incense. As a sign to the protesters, the staffs of all the tribal leaders are gathered, but only Aaron’s staff blossoms. After these events the priests and Levites grow fearful of dying in their sanctified duties by coming too close to the sacred. The parsha ends by describing the various tithes that must be given to the priests and Levites.

# EISHET CHAYIL

## Saved By His Wife

It is written, “The wise among women, each builds her house” (Proverbs 14:1). Commenting on this verse, our Sages have said: “On, the son of Pelet, was saved by his wife. She said to him, ‘What does it matter to you whether one [Moses] remains as leader or the other [Korach] becomes leader, since you are but a disciple?’ He replied, ‘What can I do? I have taken part in their counsel, and they have sworn me [to be] with them.’ She said, ‘I know that they are all a holy community, as it is written: “For the entire congregation, every one of them, are holy” [Numbers 16:3]. ... Sit here and I will save you.’ She gave him wine to drink, got him drunk, and laid him down within [the tent]. She then sat down at the entrance and loosened her hair. All who came and saw her went away” (Sanhedrin 109b-110a). The earth swallowed Korach’s followers in the meantime, and all who had challenged the authority of Moses were punished.

# REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

## Moses is Truth

It is written, “But if the L-RD creates a new creation, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them and all that is theirs...” (Numbers 16:30).

Why was a special creation needed to prove that Moses was correct? Would it not have been enough for Korach and his 250 men to have all died at once, in an extraordinary way, in order to prove that “Moses is truth and his Torah is truth”?

Commenting on the verse, “G-d seeks the pursued” (Ecclesiastes 3:15), our Sages state that Hashem conducts the world according to this principle, even when the righteous pursue the wicked (Vayikra Rabba 27:5). Now Korach and his assembly persecuted Moses in all sorts of way. Therefore when they were punished, the Jewish people could see it as a manifestation of this principle (i.e., that pursuers are punished). This does not, however, prove that Moses was correct. Only when “the L-RD creates a new creation” – when punishment comes through supernatural means, with the laws of nature being suspended – does this constitute clear proof that “these men have provoked the L-RD” (Numbers 16:30).

However we still need to understand why Korach and his assembly were swallowed by the earth, not by another supernatural form of punishment. In his book *Zer Zahav*, Rabbi Zev Wolf of Strikov states that Moses viewed himself as the least important person “on the face of the earth.” Nevertheless, Korach and his assembly said, “Why do you exalt yourselves?” (Numbers 16:3). In their eyes, even being so humble as to consider himself on the same level as the face as the earth – even that was considered arrogance! Therefore their only recourse was to descend below the earth. Rabbi Mordechai Chaim of Slonim offers another explanation. He states that Korach’s men sought the truth, and they told Moses that Hashem had certainly not communicated all these orders to him. Now since it is written, “Truth will sprout from the earth” (Psalms 85:12), Korach’s men were sent below the earth to find the truth. There they said, ‘Moses is truth and his Torah is truth, and we are but liars.’ The punishment of Korach’s assembly consisted of being swallowed by the earth with all their possessions. Why were all their possessions included? Rabbi Ovadia Sforno states that it was in order to prevent the righteous from benefiting from their possessions. As our Sages have said, “Scripture has affixed a blessing on someone to whom a meritorious deed came without his knowledge. From this we must conclude that, if one has a coin in his garment, yet it falls out and a poor man finds it and buys provisions, Hashem grants him a blessing” (Rashi on Leviticus 5:17). Thus even the possibility of earning such merit was denied to Korach and his assembly.

## A TRUE STORY

### Questions From Generation to Generations

It is written, “Why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of the L-RD?” (Numbers 16:3).

Rabbi Meir Shapira of Lublin (d. 1933) was among the greatest Torah figures of Poland, as well as the founder of the Chachmei Lublin yeshiva. He also represented Orthodox Judaism in Poland’s parliament, where he defended the honor of the Jewish people. Rabbi Meir once said, “When I was elected to the Polish parliament, people would approach me to protest, ‘Why are you occupying yourself with unimportant matters, with plans to establish a yeshiva and teach Torah? You’re the official representative of Jews in Poland, and you have to devote yourself exclusively to this task!’

“Around the same time,” Rabbi Meir said, “I passed through the city of Reisha, where people approached me to protest about their Rav, the gaon Rabbi Aaron Levi. They complained that he was preoccupied with politics and devoted his time to Agudath Israel. They claimed that a Rav must deal exclusively with matters of Torah, not venture outside the four cubits of Halachah. It was then that I explained a statement made by King David: ‘They were jealous of Moses in the camp, of Aaron, the L-RD’s holy one’ [Psalms 106:16]. This means that protesters always find something to complain about. Concerning Moses, they believed that he was a ruler. Therefore he should not have stayed in the camp; he should have left to pursue political matters. As for Aaron, they said that he was Hashem’s holy one. Therefore as High Priest, he should have remained exclusively consecrated to Hashem, not involve himself in community matters.”

## IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

### For the Sake of His Great Name

It is written, “For the L-RD will not forsake His people for the sake of His great Name” (ibid. 12:22).

The nations of the world want to, as it were, elevate Hashem by saying, “The L-RD is high above all nations” (Psalms 113:4). They claim that it is below the dignity of the Creator to watch over the inhabitants of the earth and to have His Shechinah dwell among them. Hence they say, “Above the Heavens is His glory” (ibid.), for that is the place of His abode. The Jewish people reply, “Who is like the L-RD our G-d, Who is enthroned on high,” yet He still “looks upon the heavens and the earth” (vv.5-6). We must realize that among the principles of faith, as stated in Perek Chelek (the Rambam’s Mishnah commentary in Sanhedrin), is the fact that Hashem abides above the highest of the high. He is the One Who created Heaven and earth, the sea and everything in it, having brought them into existence ex nihilo, out of nothing. Not only did He create them, He directs and watches over them by constantly infusing them with His power at all times. If He were to withdraw this existential force for but an instant, everything would return to a primordial state of chaos.

This is what the verse is saying: “For the L-RD will not forsake His people for the sake of His great Name” – there is no reason to worry that Hashem will forsake His people on account of His great Name, for in fact we believe that it is not below His dignity to deal with the inhabitants of the earth. On the contrary, Hashem in all His glory surveys everyone who lives on earth.

## YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

### Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Epstein The Author of Maor VaShemesh

Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Epstein, the author of the Torah commentary Maor VaShemesh, was among the greatest Rebbes that Chassidut has known. The main disciple of the holy Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk and the Chozeh of Lublin, he frequented many other Rebbes, including the Maggid of Zlotchov and the holy Menachem Mendel of Rimanov.

Rabbi Kalonymus was an exceptional individual, a man educated in Torah and Kabbalah, one whose words pierced the Heavens as he poured out his soul in prayer. He lived in Krakow, which during his time was largely opposed to Chassidut. However a turning point was eventually reached, and he was able to introduce many noteworthy individuals to Chassidut. He prayed in the Beit Midrash of the gaon Rabbi Nathan Neta Shapira (the Av Beit Din of Krakow and author of Megale Amukot), and many people from other synagogues came to hear him pray. Although this created opponents for him, he was eventually able to spread Chassidut throughout the city. Rabbi Kalonymus ended up becoming famous in the Diaspora for his Torah commentary Maor VaShemesh, a work that was accepted as authoritative throughout the Jewish world. In fact after a few years, it was printed at the same time as chumashim. On Tammuz 1, 5587 the soul of Rabbi Kalonymus ascended to Heaven, and his body was laid to rest in Krakow’s newer cemetery (not the older one, in which the Rema and others are buried). In accordance with his wishes, no tombstone was raised over his gravesite, and today it is a gathering place for many, as people come to express their troubles and request aid both for individuals and the community. May his merit protect us all.

## THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

### A Donkey Knocked Over the Lamp

Rabbi Eliezer’s wife, Imma Shalom, was the sister of Rabban Gamliel. In his neighborhood there lived a certain philosopher with a reputation for refusing bribes. Rabban Gamliel and his sister wished to expose him, so she took a gold lamp and together they went to see the philosopher. “I wish to have an inheritance from my deceased father’s estate,” she said to him. When the philosopher ordered, “Divide the inheritance between yourselves,” Rabban Gamliel replied, “It is decreed for us that when the deceased has a son, he inherits everything from his father; a daughter inherits nothing.” The philosopher replied, “Since the day that you were exiled from your land, the Law of Moses has been superseded and another book has been given. In this book it is written, ‘A son and a daughter inherit equally.’” The next day, Rabban Gamliel brought the philosopher a Libyan donkey. The philosopher said to them, “Look at the end of the book, for there it is written: ‘I came not to destroy the Law of Moses, nor to add to the Law of Moses,’ and it is written therein: ‘A daughter does not inherit where there is a son.’” Wanting to remind the philosopher of the gift she had brought him, Imma Shalom said, “Let your light shine forth like a lamp.” Rabban Gamliel said, “A donkey came and knocked over the lamp!” Rabban Gamliel and his sister had done this in order for the people (who had gathered around) to see the unreliability of this philosopher, who clearly accepted bribes.

– Adapted from Shabbat 116a-b