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maskil Le'David

Learning from Wise Elders

"They gathered together against Moshe and against Aharon and said to them, 'It is too much for you! For the entire assembly - all of them - are holy and Hashem is among them; why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of Hashem?'" (*Bamidbar* 16:3).

David Hamelech shows us that despite being king and possessing all the good in the world, the true good he aspires and longs for is "But as for me, G-d's nearness is my good" (*Tehillim* 73:28). Closeness to G-d was the absolute good that David Hamelech aspired to achieve. We too must strive and toil for this throughout our lives, as the *Mesilat Yesharim* writes (in the introduction), "And anything besides this, that people consider good, is only emptiness and takes us in the wrong direction."

We may ask why David Hamelech chose the expression "is my good". Seemingly, it would seem sufficient to say, "G-d's nearness is good." The reason could be, many people desire closeness to Hashem but do not take measures to gain this longed-for closeness. Rather, they hope this closeness will appear by itself. This is why the sweet singer of Israel wrote, "... is my good" — signifying that cleaving to Hashem is important to him, and he takes care to implement it and engrave it in his heart, not waiting for it to appear on its own.

Every person desires a good life, yet if we ask them what kind of good they aspire for, each will answer according to his spiritual level. One may answer that he desires much money and possessions, despite knowing that "the more possessions, the more worries." Another person wishes for honor and greatness, even though he is aware that pursuing this removes a person from this world. In any case, each person spends his life searching for his longed-for perception of good.

But David Hamelech teaches every Jew, whatever his level, that the only true and perfect good, without a trace of disappointment or heartache, is the desire to draw close to Hashem with all one's might. And if one merits this, all other things will automatically follow and he will not lack anything.

This week's *parshah* tells us about Korach, a great and

distinguished personality. In addition to his great wisdom, Korach was exceptionally wealthy, as *Chazal* tell us (*Pesachim* 119a), he owned three hundred donkeys just to carry the keys of his treasures. This is why we often describe a rich person as being "as rich as Korach." Korach was also among those who carried the Aron of Testimony, inside which lay the *Luchot Habrit*. This shows us Korach was on a very high level and possessed exceptional qualities, but still searched for further closeness to Hashem by wanting to be a Kohen. However, since this closeness did not stem from a legitimate and pure source, he and all his possessions were swallowed up by the ground.

Let us try and understand what brought Korach to act in such a foolish way. Why was everything he merited until now, both materially and spiritually, not enough for him? What made him argue with Moshe Rabbeinu?

Korach behaved as he did because he lacked the attribute of humility and submission in the face of the Torah and its scholars. *Chazal* say (*Berachot* 7b), "Serving [*talmidei chachamim*] is greater than studying [Torah], as it says (*Melachim* II, 3:11), 'Elisha son of Shaphat is here, who poured water over the hands of Elyahu!' It does not say 'who studied under him,' but 'who washed his hands,' to teach that serving is greater than studying." One who serves *talmidei chachamim*, thereby having the chance to observe their conduct — the practical application of the knowledge they impart — is aware of how they behave in all circumstances; he personally observes them in action. This is why serving *talmidei chachamim* is considered greater than studying Torah. However, the merit of both studying and serving is certainly the most advantageous.

One can learn something beneficial for one's *avodat Hashem* from every person on every level. David Hamelech says (*Tehillim* 119:99), "From all my teachers I grew wise." *Chazal* also tell us (*Eiruvim* 100b), "Had the Torah not been given, we would learn modesty from a cat, theft from an ant, and immorality from the dove." Although we human beings are vastly superior to animals, nevertheless we can still glean morals from their characteristics, and similarly benefit from everything in the universe — it's all for the sake of our spiritual elevation. All the more so one can learn from the ways of a human being. And the conduct of *talmidei chachamim*, who are considered living *sifrei Torah*, can impart even greater lessons.

Korach did not want to learn from Moshe Rabbeinu. He claimed, "The entire assembly is holy and Hashem is among them. If we ourselves have already achieved such a great level in *avodat Hashem*, what do we have left to learn from Moshe Rabbeinu?" This was Korach's mistake — which brought him to the edge of the abyss.

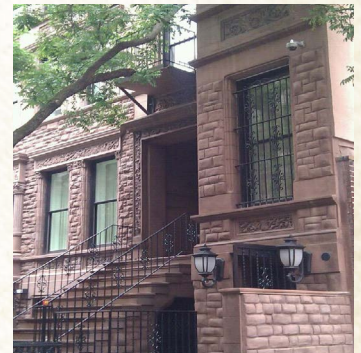
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5 Tamuz 5786

20 June 2026

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Korach



Hilula

5 Tamuz

Rabbi Tzalach Cohen Zangi

6 Tamuz

Rabbi Chaim De la Rosa,
author of *Torat Chacham*

7 Tamuz

Rabbi Simcha Bunim Alter,
the Gerer Rebbe

8 Tamuz

Rabbi Chaim of Shash,
author of *Nishmat Chaim*

9 Tamuz

Rabbi Yekutiel Yehuda
Halberstam, the Sanzer Rebbe

10 Tamuz

Rabbi David Chassin

11 Tamuz

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of
Ziditchov, author of *Ateret Tzvi*





PARSHAH PEARLS

Inspiring Reflections

There is No Law of Chazakah in a Dispute

“Moshe sent forth to summon Datan and Aviram” (*Bamidbar* 16:12).

Rashi quotes *Chazal* who derive from this that one should always seek to end a controversy; Moshe appealed to the other leaders of the revolt to try to make peace. Harav Yitzchak of Verka *zt”l* explains that the intention of *Chazal* is to teach us that there is no law of *chazakah* (established status) with a dispute. Even after several unsuccessful attempts at trying to make peace with one’s opponent, one may not presume one will never succeed. On the contrary, a person is obligated to try repeatedly to settle the argument, just as *Chazal* tell us that Moshe sought them out to try to make peace.

Don’t Corrupt

“The earth covered them over and they were lost from among the congregation” (*Bamidbar* 16:33).

The existence of men, points out Rabbi Yitzchak Abuhav *zy”a* in his *sefer Menorat Hame’or*, obligates them to dwell together and serve and assist each other with all their work and needs. The world’s existence is dependent on friendship, brotherhood, and agreement, with the same outlook and laws. Dispute serves to corrupt the world’s existence.

The study of Torah requires a group of *talmidim*. If they debate and offer varying opinions for the sake of Heaven to bring the truth to light, this is considered *avodat Hashem*; their goal is to seek the truth and prevent mistaken rulings. However, when the *talmidim* are faced with differences of opinion, their intention must be for the sake of Heaven, to bring the true ruling to light, and not to provoke or torment.

One must be exceedingly careful even when showing support for Torah arguments, so as not to cause everlasting destruction. Peace and tolerance are always appropriate — and may Hashem Yitbarach bless His people with peace!



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v’Rabbeinu Hagaon Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

Self-improvement – The Last Leg of Illness

A man once told me that he was suffering from a wound in his foot for the past half year. His doctors had told him it was nothing serious and just gave him various creams and ointments. But these had not helped at all and he continued suffering.

When I heard his story, I remembered that my father, too, *zy”a*, had suffered in a similar way. After undergoing testing, he was diagnosed with diabetes. He was told he had to have his leg amputated so the infection would not spread throughout his body. (*Baruch Hashem*, in a most miraculous way, he was spared this procedure.)

I asked the man standing before me if he, too, suffered from diabetes. He repeated that the doctors told him he was not suffering from anything serious.

“Did you undergo any testing whatsoever?” I continued.

“No,” he replied. “The doctors made their assessment based only on the wound on my leg. I was not sent to do any sort of tests. I also wondered about this.” I instructed him to do a battery of tests, in spite of the doctors’ attitude.

The results revealed that this man suffered from the same illness as my father and now he was informed his leg had to be amputated! He ran to me begging for advice how to proceed. He didn’t want to lose his leg!

I responded, “It is well-known that when a Jew resolves to improve his *avodat Hashem*, this resolution has the power to annul harsh decrees. It would therefore be beneficial to undertake improvement in some minor matters. *B’ezrat Hashem*, you will then merit salvation.”

He did as I instructed. Only a few months later, his baffled doctors informed him there was no trace of his former illness and his leg was completely healed.

This incident is proof of Divine Intervention. For a full six months, the man had not done any sort of testing. Then Hashem brought him to me, I remembered my father’s illness, and thus the source of his suffering was revealed. The man was eventually completely healed in the merit of his self-improvement.

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When a rav is addressing a crowd, delivering words of reproach, and instead of listening to his words, one’s thoughts drift or one studies a *sefer* and doesn’t pay attention to the lecture — this contains an element of degradation for the honor of Torah! If one does not possess awe of *talmidei chachamim*, one cannot attain awe of Hashem.

The meaning of the name “Korach” is associated with “ice” and “coolness.” This alludes to the fact that Korach wanted to cool the hearts of the people and prevent them from connecting to the leaders of the congregation. Korach mistakenly presumed he was worthy enough in his own right and has no need to learn further from Moshe and Aharon. Korach misguidedly thought: if the entire congregation is holy and Hashem is among them, there is no place for Moshe and Aharon to be greater than the rest of the people; their time has come to vacate their position in favor of others.

Korach and his congregation were punished with an extremely severe punishment, never before experienced! Bnei Yisrael would learn well that one must not take lightly the verse “Hashem, your G-d, shall you fear,” for it includes the obligation to fear *talmidei chachamim*. Even if one is an exceptional *talmid chacham*, such a person is still obligated to learn from the *gedolei hador*, as it says (*Tehillim* 119:100), “From wise elders I gain understanding.”

WORDS OF THE SAGES



An End to the Rich Man's Pranks

On the verse in *Kohelet* (5:12), "Riches are hoarded by their owner to his misfortune," Chazal expound (*Pesachim* 119a), "Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said, 'This refers to the wealth of Korach.'" His wealth was only to his detriment; it did not benefit him in any way.

Rabbi Reuven Karlenstein, in his sefer *Yechi Reuven*, writes a story about Baron Rothschild, who arrived at a certain village early one morning and inquired about the time of the *Shacharit* prayers. He was told they would be held at seven o' clock. He entered the *beit kneset* and found that all the congregants had already arrived – the rav, the chazan, the Dayan, the worshippers – but had not yet begun to pray.

He asked what the reason for the delay was, and they explained that the town's wealthy resident had not yet arrived and it was he they were waiting for. Five minutes passed, ten minutes, and still they waited... At seven fifteen the rich man finally arrived, eyes still puffy from sleep. He made his way to his seat in the front bench, sat down next to the rav, and signaled that they should begin praying. Baron Rothschild was shocked at his audacity! The rav of the *beit kneset* has to wait for him? The entire world has to wait for him? What insolence!

The time came for the Torah reading. The Baron asked for an *aliya* and afterwards they recited a *mi sheberach* for him.

When the *gabbai* came to the words "because he will contribute... to charity" Baron Rothschild said, "Because I will contribute the sum of all the assets of this local wealthy man." The *gabbai* did not know it was Baron Rothschild standing before him, and he declared, "Are you crazy?! This rich man possesses a fortune!" But the Baron remained firm and promised to donate this exact sum.

The *gabbai* answered, "R' Yid! Don't make fun! If you want to donate to the *beit kneset*, specify an amount! If you don't want to donate, no one is forcing you." The Baron replied, "I already said I want to donate! I even stated the amount!"

"And you have this amount to donate?" asked the *gabbai*. "Yes," he replied. "I have a thousand times more than this amount..."

Only then did the *gabbai* realize who this man was.

The *gabbai* hurried over to the town's wealthy resident and asked him to detail the sum of his fortune so Baron Rothschild should know how much to donate. The wealthy man, however, refused, claiming he did not want his personal affairs to be public knowledge.

They tried to persuade him: "We are talking about a huge loss for the entire community. The money the Baron donates will benefit all the town's poor! If you don't reveal how much your assets are worth, the Baron will leave town and we will lose everything."

The rich man would not budge. "You cannot demand that I publicly expose my personal affairs." The entire community was up in arms! They demonstrated outside the wealthy man's home. Finally Baron Rothschild told them, "It is not necessary for him to divulge! I can find out on my own. I will pay a lawyer and accountant to inspect the relevant records and figure out the value of his assets." The hired experts investigated, re-checked, scrutinized, re-inspected, and discovered that this rich man had almost... nothing! Yet *he* was the town's wealthy resident, the one they all waited for to begin their prayers...

This is the meaning of "riches hoarded by their owner to his misfortune," as Rashi explains, "Like the wealth of Korach, for through it he became proud and fell to the depths."



FROM THE TREASURY

Based on the teachings of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik
- Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

One May Ask; But Not Ridicule

"Korach, son of Yitzhar, son of Kehat, son of Levi separated himself, with Datan and Aviram, sons of Eliav, and On, son of Pelet, the offspring of Reuven" (*Bamidbar* 16:1).

The Torah tells the story of the rebellion led by Korach and his followers concerning the priesthood. *Chazal* point out that a dispute that is for the sake of Heaven will have a constructive outcome, while one that is not for the sake of Heaven will not have a constructive outcome. What sort of dispute is considered for the sake of Heaven? One that transpires only out of a desire to fulfil Hashem's command. If two people are debating words of Torah and a stranger notices them arguing, he may at first think they are fighting, and even hate each other. As soon as they conclude their study session, however, it will be evident to all that they are in fact good friends who enjoy each other's company. The only reason they were arguing was for the sake of Heaven, in an attempt to understand the depths of the matter and discover the true Will of Hashem.

This was the nature of all the famous arguments between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai; their entire goal was for the sake of Heaven. The proof is that although the final ruling follows Beit Hillel, they would nevertheless study and review Beit Shammai's opinion to try to understand their view of the matter. Most people who disagree do not invest effort and thought in understanding the reasoning of the opposing side. Since Beit Hillel studied Beit Shammai's opinions, it proves theirs was an argument for the sake of Heaven, which has a constructive outcome. Concerning the opinions of Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai it says, "These and these are the words of the Living G-d," since both sides wished to understand Hashem's Word for the sake of increasing the glory of Heaven in the world.

The symbol of a dispute not for the sake of Heaven is the dispute of Korach and his followers, which was actually a one-sided dispute; Korach rebelled against Moshe Rabbeinu while Moshe Rabbeinu only sought peace. Upon hearing Korach's words, he fell on his face out of distress. Throughout the rebellion, Moshe sent messengers to Korach's followers to try and appease him and avert the dispute. Since it was a dispute for the sake of a dispute, Moshe Rabbeinu did not wish to have any part in it.

Korach's entire argument was of a very problematic nature since he used the words of the holy Torah to spread dissension. At first he questioned the decree of the red heifer, and also confronted Moshe with derisive questions about *mezuzah* and *tzitzit*. These challenges led to Korach protesting the appointment of the priesthood. So Korach used words of Torah for his personal gain and as a means for dispute.

Korach was not indicted for the questions he asked, since we are told, "A bashful person cannot learn." Asking questions is a most necessary feature and occupies an important place in Judaism. Rather, Korach was indicted for the *way* in which he asked – his questions contained contempt and derision. The entire goal of his questions was to ridicule and show disdain for the holy leaders of the nation. Korach was also charged for exploiting the words of the holy Torah to promote his personal wishes, thereby making a mockery and scorn of the Torah and publicly profaning the Name of Heaven.

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



Peace is More Important Than Being Called Up for Maftir!

This week's *parshah* details the terrible dispute of Korach and his followers and the horrendous tragedy it caused. Men, women, children and young babes suffered; they all paid the price. Immediately following this dispute, the Torah warns us not to become involved in such evil, and to stay away from such dangerous and frightening developments. True, there can be differences of opinion and arguments. But still, let us manage them matter-of-factly, with the desire to forgo and find solutions. Most importantly, we must ensure that the issue not become an intense argument!

Rabbi Asher Kovleski *shlit"a* publicized an extraordinary incident that took place in the Nadvorna-Chadera *beit kneset* in Bnei Brak. One day, one of the long-time members approached the *gabbai* with the request to receive the *maftir aliya* on a certain Shabbat and serve as the *chazzan* for *mussaf*, since this Shabbat preceded the *yahrzeit* of his mother *a"h*.

The *gabbai* checked his calendar and confirmed that this Shabbat was free of any other obligations. The *gabbai* was happy to accommodate his request. The congregant was pleased; he was an organized person and wished to have the matter taken care of; and now it seemed everything would proceed smoothly.

That Shabbat he made sure to arrive early at the *beit kneset*, certain that the *maftir* and *mussaf* prayer were patiently waiting for him. But minutes after he entered, out of the corner of his eye he noticed a stranger, not one of the regulars, arguing with the *gabbai*. Curious to hear what the argument was about, he discovered to his consternation that this stranger was asking for the *maftir aliya* and to serve as *chazzan* for *mussaf*. This was *his maftir* and *his mussaf* – how could this be?!

For a moment he fought an internal battle: "Master of the world, if there is justice in the world, it is being desecrated before my eyes. I am a regular member, I reserved these honors in advance, and I have been a regular contributor to this *beit kneset* for many years. And look what is happening here! A stranger wishes to take control of the honors! This is a real scandal!"

On the other hand, a quiet voice whispered to him: bow to the circumstances: "Regardless, we do not understand how an *aliya* and

servicing as *chazzan* benefits the souls in the Upper World; we do not really know how they affect the elevation of the souls in Gan Eden. We try to do our best according to the tradition handed down to us, but does forgoing one's wish, such intense effort, not have an effect on the soul? It also has a certain power! Maybe it is better to forgo, to run away from strife, and dedicate the surrender to my mother's memory?!"

And with that he made his decision. With courage and determination, he announced to the *gabbai* that he is prepared to forgo his rights! At first the *gabbai* tried to protest. "G-d forbid, do you think I will allow him to have his way? No way. There is order in the *beit kneset*, there are regulations; the members have rights, and receiving an *aliya* and serving as *chazzan* on the Shabbat preceding the *yahrzeit* is one of them. It is not even a question; I am not prepared to yield!"

However, the member had already decided that however important the *aliya* is, it is not worth getting into an argument over it. Strife is doubly dangerous and brings tragedy seven times more than forgoing an *aliya*. He remained firm, "No way, my friend the *gabbai*. I am willing to forgo. I do not want argument and strife. Give him the *aliya*, give him the *mussaf* prayer as well; I will make do with a different *aliya*. I will serve as *chazzan* on the day of the *yahrzeit* itself. I prefer to forgo; I do not want to be the cause of strife!"

In the face of his determination, the *gabbai* accepted his words and gave the *aliya* and *mussaf* prayer to the stranger. The prayers ended in a pleasant and lofty Shabbat atmosphere. Each received what they wanted; the stranger who insisted on having his way, the regular worshipper who was willing to yield was delighted that he had avoided strife, and the *gabbai* succeeded in making all sides happy.

The next day, the regular worshipper arrived at the *beit kneset*, shaken and full of emotion. One look at his face showed that he had been through an emotional, dramatic experience. He readily explained what happened that night:

"Last night while sleeping, my mother *a"h* appeared to me in a dream. It was in her honor that I wished to receive the *maftir aliya* and serve as *chazzan* for *mussaf*.

And in her honor I sacrificed my desire to prevent strife. She appeared to me, her face shining, and told me a secret:

"My dear son, I received special permission from the Heavenly Court to come down to This World to thank you. An *aliyat neshama* (elevation of soul) such as I experienced today, when you relinquished the *aliya* and *mussaf* prayer, I have never experienced before. I will remember the *aliyat neshama* of previous years, when on the *yahrzeit* Shabbat you received the *maftir aliya* and *mussaf* prayer in my honor. But this does not come close and cannot be compared to what I merited this year, when you courageously forwent the honors you deserved, fleeing from strife!"

"I awoke trembling with emotion. Not every day does a Jew merit a visit from his mother from the World of Truth! And the message she related is worth remembering and repeating.

"*Aliyot*, honors, and many other matters, are very important, elevated principles. They involve Heavenly matters we cannot grasp, and serve as elevation for the soul. They are ancient customs which are deeply significant. But this story echoes with a Heavenly revelation:

"These are all extremely precious and important matters, until they become fused with the stub of dissension, a touch of battle, and a spark of burning fire. The moment strife looms, as tones begin to escalate, and differences of opinion raise their heads, a clever person will flee. He will simply exit the scene, knowing it is so much more important to run away from strife, to forgo, and refrain from participating in this bloody battle ground.

"Strife is never a harbinger of good. It brings only evil. On the contrary, fleeing from dissension, refraining from battle, forgoing – which often involves superhuman strength – is the correct way to act and also serves as an elevation for the soul. It awakens Heavenly mercy and brings in its wake a life of happiness and joy."

Let us flee from strife and refrain from disputes, even if we are right and even if it seems that the matter involves deep, Heavenly significance. This is the correct way to act and this is what brings an abundance of blessing!