

In this week's *Parashah*, we read of Korach's rebellion. At first glance, it appears that Korach's primary complaint was against the High Priesthood of Aharon and, by extension, the legitimacy of Moshe's prophecy. Thus, say our Sages, Korach's repentant sons stand at the entrance to *Gehinom* proclaiming: "Moshe is true and his Torah is true."

However, notes R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson z"l (1902-1994; *Lubavitcher Rebbe*), our Sages elsewhere seem to take a broader view of Korach's wrongdoing. For example, the *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 110a) states: "One who engages in *Machloket* / disputes [that are not for the sake of Heaven] transgresses (*Bemidbar* 17:5), 'That he not be like Korach and his assembly.'" If Korach's sin was challenging Moshe and Aharon--obviously, a very serious dispute--how can we derive from this verse a prohibition to engage in *Machloket* in general--even over petty things? (The *Lubavitcher Rebbe* cites additional sources from our Sages suggesting that Korach's sin was engaging in *Machloket* in general, rather than engaging in *Machloket* about a specific subject.)

The *Lubavitcher Rebbe* explains: The first division in history occurred on the second day of Creation, when *Hashem* separated the upper waters from the lower waters. Because the possibility of *Machloket* was thus created, the Torah does not say "Ki Tov!" / "For it was good!" about the second day. Nevertheless, the Torah says "Ki Tov!" twice about the third day, when the work of the second day was completed, alluding to the possibility of divisions being repaired.

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Elsewhere in the Torah . . .

Rabban Gamliel the son of Rabbi Yehuda *Ha'nasi* says: "The verse (*Devarim* 13:18) says, 'He will give you mercy and be merciful to you and multiply you.' If one is merciful to *Hashem's* creations, Heaven will be merciful to him." (*Shabbat* 152a)

R' Yekutiel Yehuda Halberstam z"l (1905-1994; *Klausenberger Rebbe*) explains: True unity among, and love for, the Jewish People means feeling someone else's pain as if one is himself sick. When one reaches that level, he no longer needs to be punished for his sins, because he suffers through others' punishments. Therefore, Heaven has mercy on him.

(*Otzrot Divrei Yatziv: Shabbat*)

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When was the separation between the upper and lower worlds repaired? During the third millennium of the world's history, paralleling the third day of Creation, the barrier between the "upper worlds" and the "lower world" was dismantled. This occurred when *Hashem* gave the Torah from the upper worlds to the lower world, which, in turn, gave man, in the lower world, the ability to impact the upper worlds through his *Mitzvot* or his sins. The Giving of the Torah thus repaired the foundational *Machloket*.

It follows, concludes the *Lubavitcher Rebbe*, that our simple understanding of Korach's sin as a challenge to Moshe's legitimacy as the Torah-giver, and our Sages' deeper perspective that Korach was a funder of *Machloket* in general are one and the same. The Torah is meant to bring peace, to erase *Machloket*. One who engages in *Machloket* denies the Torah's purpose and the legitimacy of Moshe Rabbeinu's giving of the Torah, and vice versa. (*Otzar Likkutei Sichot* Vol. V)

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10815 Meadowhill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 / 301-593-2272

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on the *yahrzeit* of his mother, Sarah bat Yitzchak Hakohen a"h

Nathan and Rikki Lewin, on the *yahrzeit* of his grandfather

Harav Aharon ben Harav Nosson Lewin z"l Hy"d (the Reisher Rav)

“You shall safeguard the charge of the *Kodesh* / Holy and the charge of the *Mizbai’ach* / Altar, and there shall be no more wrath against *Bnei Yisrael*.” (18:5)

The *Mishnah* (*Middot* 1:1) states: “The *Kohanim* stood watch in three places in the *Bet Hamikdash* . . . and the *Levi’im* in twenty-one places.”

R’ Yehoshua Yosef Hakohen Feinberg z”l (19th century; rabbi of Mordy, Poland) writes: Commentaries offer many reasons for establishing these watches. They certainly were not because of a fear of theft, for our Sages say, “*Ain Aniyut B’Mekom Ashirut*” --literally, “There is no poverty in a place of wealth.” In other words, the *Bet Hamikdash* held such fabulous riches that it would be beneath its dignity for us to worry about petty theft. Rather, the reasons offered for the watches include the following:

- It is a decree of the Torah (in the verse quoted above).
- The watchmen were responsible for keeping people who were *Tamei* / ritually impure out of the *Bet Hamikdash*, and keeping non-*Kohanim* out of areas where they did not belong.
- *Kodashim* / meat, flour, and wine offered as sacrifices require, as a condition of their holiness, that someone always be paying attention to them, and that was a responsibility of the watchmen.
- It is a way of showing respect.
- To protect against the *Zohamat Ha’nachash* [see below].

(*Ezrat Kohanim: Middot* 1:1)

R’ Naftali Katz z”l (Eastern and Central Europe; 1649-1718) writes: When the *Nachash* / snake or serpent enticed Chava to eat from the *Etz Ha’da’at* / Tree of Knowledge, it introduced 24 types of *Tum’ah* / ritual impurity into the world -- known collectively as the “*Zohamat Ha’nachash*,” literally, “the filth of the snake.” [R’ Katz explains the nature of these 24 types of *Tum’ah* in Kabbalistic terms that are beyond our understanding.] As a result, Creation became “unstable,” its future existence in doubt. The construction of the *Mishkan* and, later, of the *Bet Hamikdash*, was intended to return Creation to the “stability” it had before Adam and Chava’s sin. Thus, our Sages say that the day the *Mishkan* was dedicated was as joyous in *Hashem*’s eyes as the day the world was created. This connection between Creation and the *Bet Hamikdash* is why the *Shir Shel Yom* / the song that the *Levi’im* sang each day during the Temple service paralleled the aspect of Creation that occurred on that day. This also is why King Shlomo sang 24 songs of praise on the day the *Bet Hamikdash* was dedicated -- paralleling the 24 aspects of the *Zohamat Ha’nachash*. Finally, this is why there were 24 *Kohanim* and *Levi’im* standing watch.

(*Semichat Chachamim* p.251/57b)

“Korach son of Yitzhar son of Kehat son of Levi separated himself . . .” (16:1)

Midrash Rabbah applies to this incident the verse (*Mishlei* 18:19): “A brother distanced from a *Kiryat Ohz* / fortified city; they quarrel like a palace bolt.” Says the *Midrash*: “A brother distanced from a *Kiryat Ohz*” refers to Korach, who separated himself from the Torah, which is called “*Ohz*” / “power” (see *Tehilim* 29:11 -- “*Hashem* will give *Ohz* to His nation”). Did Korach not realize that his opponent -- Moshe -- was as stiff as a “bolt”?! [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R’ Aharon Lewin z”l *Hy”d* (the *Reisher Rav*; killed in the Holocaust) asks: Where do we find that Korach distanced himself from the Torah? Seemingly, Korach’s dispute was with Moshe, not with the Torah!

He answers: R’ Yosef Albo z”l (Spain; 1380-1444) writes that the single most important foundation upon which our belief in the eternity of the Torah rests is the premise that Moshe was the greatest prophet who ever lived, and that there will never be another equal to him. Since there is not, never was, and never will be a prophet as great as Moshe, there is no one who can countermand Moshe’s teachings; therefore, the Torah itself is eternal and cannot be countermanded.

It follows, continues R’ Lewin, that one who challenges Moshe’s unique status is challenging the authority of the Torah itself. Thus, says the *Midrash*, Korach distanced himself from the Torah’s *Ohz*--specifically, its power to be obeyed eternally. And, he picked a fight with Moshe, the “bolt” whose authority holds the Torah together. (*Ha’drash Ve’ha’iyun*)

R’ Yitzchak Shmelkes z”l (1828-1906; rabbi of Lvov, Galicia; R’ Lewin’s grandfather) asks: Where did Moshe, the humblest of all men, find the strength to stand up to Korach and his cohorts?

He answers: The *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 88b) equates a person who remains silent when he is insulted with the sun at its full strength. Why? Though the moon sometimes eclipses the sun’s rays briefly, the sun “understands” that the moon doesn’t detract from the sun’s strength and cannot stand in the way of the sun’s ultimate mission. Likewise, a humble person understands that someone who insults him is no more than a nuisance; in the big picture, the one who gives insults generally cannot stop the one he insults from fulfilling his calling. Therefore, the latter remains silent when he is insulted.

That is the general rule, continues R’ Shmelkes, but there are exceptions. And, Moshe understood that Korach’s rebellion was such an exception. As the above *Midrash* teaches, Korach’s rebellion threatened the legitimacy of the Torah itself. Korach was more than a nuisance to Moshe; he threatened Moshe’s entire mission. Therefore, Moshe had to make an exception to his usual humble demeanor and respond with *Ohz*. Korach did not realize that Moshe had this within him, that Moshe was like a bolt that joins together two traits--humility, when appropriate, and pride, when appropriate. (*Bet Yitzchak*)