

וְיִשְׂרָאֵל

In this week's *Parashah*, we read about Korach's rebellion. But how did Korach come to rebel? asks R' Ben-Zion Halevi Bamberger z"l (1920-1980; *Mashgiach Ruchani* of the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, Israel). Our Sages describe Korach as an exceptionally wise man; he also merited to be one of bearers of the Aron / Holy Ark, and he possessed *Ruach Hakodesh* / Divine inspiration, so he must have been a great man. How could anyone, let alone such a great man, question the legitimacy of Moshe's leadership after the miracles *Bnei Yisrael* had witnessed, as a result of which, the Torah tells us (*Shmot* 14:31), "They had faith in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant"? Moreover, Korach's rebellion occurred after the incidents described in the previous weeks' *Parashot*, when the various complainers suffered severe punishments. How did Korach not realize that a terrible fate awaited him as well?

R' Bamberger answers: We learn in *Pirkei Avot* (4:28), "Jealousy, lust, and [pursuit of] honor remove a person from this world." R' Moshe ben Maimon z"l (*Rambam*; 1135-1204; Spain and Egypt) explains: As a result of these *Middot* / traits, or any one of them, a person necessarily will lose his belief in the Torah, and he will have neither intellectual attributes nor good character attributes." In other words, R' Bamberger writes, not only will a person not develop a refined character if he has those traits, he will lose whatever wisdom he has.

R' Bamberger notes that these warnings likely sound far-fetched to us, for we are burdened with these bad character traits and are oblivious to their dangers; at the same time, we view ourselves as righteous. Nevertheless, he writes, these ideas help us understand Korach's error. (*Sha'arei Zion*)

קרח

Shabbat

The *Gemara* (*Rosh Hashanah* 31a) teaches: On the sixth day of the week, the *Levi'im* would say in the *Bet Hamikdash* (*Tehilim* 93:1), "Hashem has reigned; He has donned grandeur." The reason for this choice is that *Hashem* completed Creation on the sixth day and reigned over His creations. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

Midrash Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer (Ch.10) elaborates: When Adam was created, all the other creations saw him and feared him, thinking that he was their creator. Adam said to them, "Why should you bow down to me? Come, you and I, let us go and adorn in majesty and might, and acclaim as King over us, the One who created us." At that hour, Adam spoke and all the creatures answered after him, and they adorned their Creator in majesty and might and acclaimed Him as King over themselves, saying, "Hashem has reigned; He has donned grandeur." [Until here from the *Midrash*]

These sources explain why Psalm 93 is the appropriate *Shir Shel Yom* / Song of the Day for Friday. Is it not odd, however, asks R' Shlomo Gotal *shlita* (Israel), that the very same paragraph of *Tehilim* is recited again as part of *Kabbalat Shabbat*?

He explains: If not for Adam's sin of eating from the *Etz Ha'da'at* on that fateful Friday, the world would have attained its perfection on the very next day--the first *Shabbat* in history. Had Adam made the proper choices, Creation's crowning of *Hashem* as King on that *Erev Shabbat* (as the above *Midrash* describes) would have led directly to the state of eternal *Shabbat* and *Menuchah* / rest, which, instead, we are still awaiting.

R' Gotal continues: In the world as we know it after Adam's sin, *Shabbat* is not the "end," it is the "beginning." It is the day from which we draw the strength to sanctify the week that follows and work towards the ultimate goal. (Therefore, *Shabbat* now fulfills the role that Friday was meant to fulfill, so we repeat Friday's *Shir Shel Yom* on *Shabbat*.)

- Continued in box inside -

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"Tell Elazar son of Aharon the *Kohen* and let him elevate the fire-pans from amid the fire . . . they shall make them hammered-out sheets as a covering for the Altar." (17:2-3)

R' Yoshiyahu Pinto z"l (1565-1648; Chief Rabbi of Damascus, Syria) writes: It is *Hashem's* way to create a cure out of the malady itself, as we read (*Yirmiyah* 30:17), "From your wounds I will heal you." For example, when *Bnei Yisrael* encountered bitter water, *Hashem* instructed Moshe to sweeten it by throwing bitter wood into it (see *Shmot* 15:25). Similarly, here, when Korach's 250 co-conspirators died after trying to offer pans of *Ketoret* / incense, which only a *Kohen* may do, *Hashem* commanded that those very same pans be made hammered into a plating for the Altar. This, writes R' Pinto, was meant to demonstrate that it was not because of the pans of incense themselves that these men died; rather, it was because they engaged in *Machloket* / divisiveness.

Bnei Yisrael did not understand *Hashem's* ways, however. When they saw that the pans had been made a part of the Altar, they thought this vindicated the 250 conspirators, and they said to Moshe and Aharon (17:6), "You have killed the people of *Hashem*!"--they died because you, Moshe and Aharon, were angry at them, not because they deserved to die. In response, *Hashem* brought a plague, which ended only when Aharon offered *Ketoret* (17:11), once again demonstrating that the malady, the *Ketoret* over which there was a disagreement, was itself the source of the cure. (Tzror Ha'kesef)

"Hashem spoke to Aharon, 'And I--behold! I have given you the safeguard of My *Terumah*, of all the sanctities of *Bnei Yisrael*.'" (18:8)

R' Aharon Lewin z"l Hy"d (the *Reisher Rav*; killed in the Holocaust) writes: Perhaps this passage was said specifically to Aharon, not to Moshe, because this section deals with the gifts that the Jewish People are obligated to give the *Kohanim*, and the *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 10b) teaches: "When one gives a gift to another, he is obligated to tell him," as we read (*Shmot* 31:13), "So that you will know that I am *Hashem*, Who makes you holy." (*Ha'drash Ve'ha'iyun*)

- Continued from back page -

R' Gotal notes that these two aspects of *Shabbat* are reflected in the *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 69b), which teaches: Rav Huna said, "If a person was traveling in a wilderness and he does not know when *Shabbat* is, he should count six days and then observe *Shabbat*." The sage Chiya bar Rav says, "He observes one day [as *Shabbat*] and then counts six days [until the next *Shabbat*]." What is the basis of their disagreement? the *Gemara* asks. It answers: One says, "Like Creation," and the other says, "Like Adam Ha'rishon." [Until here from the *Gemara*] In other words, R' Gotal explains, one sees *Shabbat* as the culmination of Creation, as it was meant to be, while the other sees *Shabbat* as the preparation for mankind's toil, as it is in reality after Adam's sin. (*Lechtech Acharai Ba'midbar* p.134)

"They stood before Moshe with two hundred and fifty men from *Bnei Yisrael*, leaders of assembly, קראי / those summoned for meeting, men of renown." (16:2)

R' Yaakov Emden z"l (1697-1776; Central Europe) writes: The verse does not say, "leaders of the assembly," for they were minor leaders (for example, "officers of thousands"), not princes of the tribes. For the same reason, the word "קראי" is written with a letter ("Yud") missing and its pronunciation sounds like "*Mikreh*" / "incidental." (*Eim L'binah*)

"Datan and Aviram went out and stood at the entrance of their tents, with their wives, children, and infants . . . The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households . . ." (16:27, 32)

Midrash Rabbah teaches: Come and see how serious is *Machloket* / divisiveness! If one merely assists in fomenting *Machloket*, *Hashem* erases all memory of him, as we read (16:35), "A fire came forth from *Hashem* and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense." [The commentary *Etz Yosef* explains: They did not merit to be buried, for then they would be remembered by those who would see their graves.] Rabbi Berechiah said: How serious is *Machloket*! Ordinarily, the Heavenly court punishes a person only after he reaches age twenty, and an earthly court, only when he reaches the age of thirteen. As a result of Korach's *Machloket*, however, even one-day-old babies were consumed. [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R' Yehonatan Eybeschütz z"l (Central Europe; 1690-1764) writes: Due to our many sins, the participants in every *Machloket*, no matter the subject or the context, claim, "My *Machloket* is *L'shem Shamayim* / for the sake of Heaven." How can a person judge whether the *Machloket* in which he is engaged is, in fact, *L'shem Shamayim*?

R' Eybeschütz answers: If the opposing sides in the *Machloket* love each other heart and soul, and they have no differences except for the specific subject of their *Machloket*, that is a sure sign that their *Machloket* is *L'shem Shamayim*. If, however, they hate each other or they act toward each other with enmity, then their *Machloket* is not *L'shem Shamayim*.

R' Eybeschütz adds: *Pirkei Avot* (5:20) teaches that the paradigm of a *Machloket L'shem Shamayim* is a *Halachic* disagreement between the sages Hillel and Shammai. The *Mishnah* (*Yevamot* 1:4) relates that, notwithstanding the far-reaching *Halachic* disagreements between Hillel and Shammai, and their respective academies after them, the families of their students still intermarried with each other. *Pirkei Avot* teaches further that the paradigm of a *Machloket* that is not *L'shem Shamayim* is the disagreement Korach and his followers had with Moshe. Given the opportunity, R' Eybeschütz writes, Korach's followers gladly would have stoned Moshe.

(*Ya'arot Devash* II, *Drush* 8)