

In this week's *Parashah*, we read about Korach's rebellion. Korach was no ordinary rebel. *Midrash Rabbah* notes that he was "an intelligent man and one of those who carried the *Aron*/Holy Ark." What is the significance of these two descriptions?

R' Aharon Lewin z"l *Hy"d* (the *Reisher Rav*; killed in the Holocaust) explains: The *Gemara* (*Sotah* 35b) teaches, "The *Aron* carried those who carried it." Not only was the *Aron* weightless, the people carrying it expended no energy at all, as if they were floating. This miracle was meant to teach a foundational principle of Judaism, R' Lewin writes. All societies have laws, but those laws are not eternal. As a society develops, as it grows, and as the world around it changes, it needs to tinker with its laws or to replace them entirely. About such systems of law it can be said that the people carry the laws with them as they go (or they decide to abandon their laws and start over).

Not so the Torah's laws, which are eternal, R' Lewin continues. The Torah is not influenced by our desires or feelings. As we move through history, we are called upon to design our societies so they meet the Torah's expectations, not the other way around. In this sense, the Torah carries us.

Those, such as Korach, who carried the *Aron* were expected more than others to understand this lesson. And, says the *Midrash*, Korach was an intelligent man. He should have known that a corollary to the eternity of the Torah is the uniqueness of Moshe's prophecy, and he should not have challenged him. (*Ha'drash Ve'ha'iyun* 155)

## Shabbat

The *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 118b) relates: Rabbi Yosé said, "May my lot be with those who bring in *Shabbat* in Teveryah and end *Shabbat* in Tzippori." *Rashi* z"l explains: Teveryah is located in a valley, so the visible sunset (when the sun sets below the surrounding mountains) occurs relatively early. Tzippori, on the other hand, is on a mountaintop, so the visible sunset occurs relatively late. Thus, Teveryah brings in *Shabbat* early, while Tzippori ends *Shabbat* late.

R' Eliezer Ben-Zion Brok z"l (1904-1985; founder and Rosh Yeshiva of the Novardok-Bet Yosef Yeshiva in Yerushalayim) writes: The typical busy person finds it difficult to complete his *Shabbat* preparations while substantial time remains in the day. He constantly looks at the clock and thinks, "I have more time!" Only when the sun is beginning to set and the *Shofar* is blowing, warning the populace to stop its work and light candles, does he finally tear himself away, out of necessity, from his weekday activities.

At the other end of *Shabbat*, R' Brok continues, the typical person is eagerly awaiting the appearance of three stars in the heavens. He rejoices when he sees them, and he hurries to throw off the holiness of *Shabbat* and return to his weekday pursuits.

But this is not the Torah way, R' Brok writes. Someone who feels the preciousness of *Shabbat* eagerly anticipates its arrival. He prepares himself early and hurries to come to *Shabbat* before it comes to him. He also finds it difficult to take leave of *Shabbat*. He holds on to *Shabbat*, he delights in it, and he delays its departure. He values and cares about every single holy minute of *Shabbat*. Such was Rabbi Yosé's wish: Let me have such feelings.

(*Hegyonei Mussar* I p.29)

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### “On son of Pelet, the offspring of Reuven” (16:1)’

The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 109b) interprets the name of this person who was originally part of Korach’s conspiracy, but who withdrew, as follows: “On”--he sat in a state of *Aninut* / mourning. “Pelet”--*Pela’ot* / wonders were done for him. “Reuven”--*Ra’ah ve’haiveen* / he saw and understood. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R’ Yisrael Garber *z”l* (1921-2019; New York and Yerushalayim) asks: Shouldn’t the order be reversed--first he saw and understood that Korach’s way was wrong, then wonders were done for him, etc.? The answer is that the *Gemara* is explaining why he merited to see and understand: because he was a person who was in a constant state of mourning over his shortcomings and always focused on how to improve. (*Tal L’Yisrael*)

### “Hashem spoke to Aharon, ‘. . . Of all the sanctified items of *Bnei Yisrael*; I have given them to you for distinction and to your sons as an eternal portion.’” (18:8)

The *Gemara* (*Chullin* 132b) teaches: The gifts given to the *Kohanim* may be eaten only roasted and with mustard. Why? Because the verse says, “For distinction”--They should be eaten the way that kings eat. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

Rabbeinu Nissim ben Reuven Gerondi *z”l* (Spain; 1320-1376; known as “*Ran*”) writes: This cannot be meant literally, for the *Gemara* (*Zevachim* 90b) teaches that *Kohanim* may eat sacrificial meat roasted over a fire, pot-roasted, steamed, or boiled. Rather, the *Gemara* means that a *Kohen* should eat the meat in a way that he will enjoy it, just as kings enjoy their food.

*Ran* asks, however: There is a general prohibition on bringing non-consecrated items into the *Azarah* / Temple courtyard. How, then, can mustard be brought in to the *Azarah* to be put on the sacrificial meat?

He answers: The prohibition on bringing non-consecrated items into the *Azarah* applies only when one then treats the item as consecrated--for example, if he performs *Tenufah* / waving as is done to certain sacrifices. Proof that one may, under some circumstances, bring non-consecrated items into the *Azarah* is the fact that *Kohanim* would arrive to work wearing their street clothes, which were not consecrated. Also, the sage Hillel had a practice of bringing an unconsecrated lamb for the *Korban Pesach* and only sanctifying it when he was already in the *Azarah*. (Quoted in *Perushei Ha’Ran Al Ha’Torah Ve’Nach*)

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How was Korach’s logic faulty? The *Satmar Rebbe* explains: The injunction to follow the majority applies only when there is a doubt to be resolved after hearing arguments one way and the other way. When it came to the legitimacy of Moshe Rabbeinu’s prophecy and Aharon’s appointment as *Kohen Gadol*, however, there was no doubt. The truth was clear without resort to decisional rules such as “Yield to the majority.” (*Divrei Yoel*)

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

A *Midrash* asks: What did Korach see that led him to challenge Moshe? The *Midrash* answers: He saw the *Parah Adumah* / red heifer.

R’ Yoel Teitelbaum *z”l* (1887-1979; *Satmar Rebbe*) explains: The *Gemara* (*Chullin* 11a) teaches: From where do we learn that we should follow the majority? From the verse (*Shmot* 23:2), “Yield to the majority.” The *Gemara* continues: That verse teaches that we should follow *Ruba d’ita kaman* / a majority that is in front of us (*i.e.*, a majority that is observable)--for example, when the majority of the *Sanhedrin* votes one way and a minority votes the other way. How do we know, however, that we should follow *Ruba d’leta kaman* / a majority that is not in front of us (*i.e.*, is not observable)? We learn this from *Parah Adumah*, which the Torah instructs us to burn whole without inspecting it for any internal injuries that would render it a *Treifah* / non-kosher. Since the majority of bulls are not *Treifot*, says the *Gemara*, the injunction to follow the majority dictates that we should not be concerned in this case, even though that majority is not in front of us--*i.e.*, the majority of bulls are not observable at one time; rather, we are relying on a statistic. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

The *Satmar Rebbe* continues: R’ David Lida *z”l* (rabbi in Ostrog, Mainz, and Amsterdam; died 1696) asks in *Ir David* why we need the verse in *Shmot* (“Yield to the majority”) to teach us to follow the majority in a case where the majority is observable once we have already learned from *Parah Adumah* to follow the majority even when it is not observable. He answers: Indeed, it follows logically that if we must follow the majority when it is not observable, we must also follow the majority when it is observable. The verse in *Shmot* is needed for something else--specifically, to teach that the *Halachah* follows the majority even when the minority is sharper intellectually. This, say our Sages, was precisely the basis for the many disputes between the academy of *Bet Hillel* and that of *Bet Shammai*. It was undisputed that the members of *Bet Hillel* were more numerous and that the members of *Bet Shammai* were sharper. Ultimately, however, we rule in accordance with *Bet Hillel*, who were more numerous.

In short, writes the *Satmar Rebbe*, the fact that we learn from *Parah Adumah* to follow the majority in general leaves the verse, “Yield to the majority,” free to teach us to follow the greater number over the greater intellectual sharpness. As such, the *Parah Adumah* led Korach astray, for he acknowledged that Moshe Rabbeinu was greater intellectually than he was, but he (Korach) thought that the majority of *Bnei Yisrael* were on his side. This is what the *Midrash* means when it says, “What did Korach see that led him to challenge Moshe? He saw the *Parah Adumah* / red heifer.”

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