



Ohr Yerushalayim News

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T NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Dr & Mrs Howard Sacho on the recent birth of a grandson, born to Mr & Mrs Zvi Sacho in London.

T NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

An Open And Shut Case Dani Epstein

It might defy the imagination observing a large group of otherwise sane people sitting around watching two people facing each other who appear to do absolutely nothing for ages; yet competitive chess has maintained its fans despite the numerous new and thrilling sports one can observe these days, such as freestyle snowmobile jumping or semi-pro Tiddlywinks.

At the start of the chess competition, the crowd will be waiting with baited breath as a grandmaster sits pensively with chin in hand, debating how to open the game. Will he open with the Sicilian defence, they wonder? The queens gambit? The English opening?

As the cognoscenti are quite aware, the opening move in chess potentially has an enormous value, both strategically and psychologically. It can create confusion, sow the seeds of doubt in one's opponent; create the beginnings of a highly fortified position or start an inexorable slide to a loss. Likewise in life, the opening move plays such a significant role.

The opening move in Korach's fracas is quite well known. Mortally offended by the appointment Elizofon as Nossi, he gathered a possie of 250 of his homies and dressed them in cloaks that were fabricated entirely out of Techeiles wool. They then walked into Moshe's office with a simple query: "Do we need to put tzitzis on these cloaks or not?"

When Moshe replied in the affirmative, they all burst out laughing. "If a cloak that is made out of some other fabric can be satisfied with just one thread of Techeiles, surely these cloaks that are made entirely out of Techeiles will satisfy themselves?"

Now, if one pauses to consider this for a moment, this whole shenanigan was quite an undertaking. As we know, Techeiles wool was a very expensive product simply because the manufacturing process was so arduous and skilled, the creature used to produce the die was difficult to get hold of, and the process itself was quite time-consuming. It is quite possible that there was a glut in the Techeiles market at the time, what with so many yieden needing the precious material all of sudden, yet somehow or another this seems unlikely since they would have all used up the excess at this point. Even allowing for such a possibility, it was very likely that the sheer amount of Techeiles required to make entire cloaks was a pretty big order, even by the standards of the multitude in the desert. After all, for tzitzis one only needs four threads; for a cloak, that's thousands of times more material.

Even supposing Techeiles at that moment in history was easy to come by, all these cloaks had to be woven up at some point as well – Prêt à Porter talleisim were not exactly the rage yet. Weaving a clock is not something one accomplish while-you-wait. So, this was not someone storming into Moshe in a fury, waving his fist and demanding his rights;

this was a carefully orchestrated, tactical assault using a plan devised by one of the most brilliant minds of the generation.

What exactly were they thinking of when this idea was drawn up? How on earth did they think that this was a logical argument? If one were to ask any ten year old child the same question they would reply in much the same way as Moshe without any hesitation – of course one has to put tzitzis on a cloak or tallis, never mind what colour it is! Where was Korach coming from in that case?

Let's fast-forward to a few months time when we will have reached the sedrah of Ki Seitzei and read about the mitzvoh of Shiluach Hakein. At first glance one might assume that the purpose of this particular commandment is to inculcate traits of kindness and mercy upon us.

Whilst this apparently obvious, the mishnoh in Brochos (33b) states the following: "Someone (i.e. a chazzen) who says Your mercies reach even until a bird's nest [...] one silences him."

The gemoroh records an argument regarding this mishnoh between Rav Yosi bar Ovin and Rav Yosi bar Zvidoh. Someone saying something like this "induces jealousy in the creation", that is to say that one creates the impression that Hashem favours mother birds over other creatures, and clearly this is not so. The other argues that one misrepresents the middos (mitzvos – see Rashi) of Hashem as mercy and they are but decrees.

So, we have two opinions here: one that one may not distort the focus of Hashem's mercy, and the other that this has nothing to do with mercy, we simply do what we are told and do not interpret.

This is a pivotal argument that is far-reaching and really touches the very essence of every mitzvoh.

What is the purpose of mitzvos? To make this a little easier to digest, let us set aside those mitzvos which are unequivocally chukkim, hence inherently obscure in their meaning.

Why do we have so many mitzvos, and what are they supposed to accomplish? One might simply argue that every mitzvoh that one accomplishes creates nitzozos (spiritual "sparks") that wear away the

The Week Ahead	
פרשת קרח	שבת מברכין תמוז
Mincha	7.30pm
Candle Lighting	7.56 - 8.00pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
סוף זמן ק"ש	8.54am
Shacharis	9.00am
Mincha	2.00pm / 6.00pm / 9.55pm
Rov's Mishnayos Shiur	following
Motzei Shabbos	11.00pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Monday / Thursday	6.45am / 7.10am
Tuesday / Wednesday / Friday	6.45am / 7.20am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.50pm
Mincha & Maariv Next Shabbos	7.30pm

klipah (the “shell” of tumah) and that we have no idea what mitzvos accomplish and we simply have to perform them since this is what we agreed to do when we signed on at Sinai etc. Essentially, ours is not to reason why. This is what I was taught at school.

On the other hand, this of course begs the question why we said “naaseh venishma, we will do and we will comprehend”, which quite simply means that first we will learn the halocho and then the meaning/cause/purpose of the mitzvoh.

At the heart of the previously-mentioned machlokes lies this conundrum; so which way do we go? Do we try to understand the mitzvos or do we simply perform them and leave things at that?

The Ramban comes to our rescue here with the mitzvoh of Shiluach Hakein, which he says is paralleled by another mitzvoh, that of not slaughtering the mother and calf on the same day (Oisoi v'es bnoi). Both of these mitzvos, he says, are there to prevent us developing cruel and merciless character traits.

He summarizes the Rambam in Moreh Nevuchim (3:48): “The reason for Oisoi v'es bnoi (the prohibition of slaughtering the mother and calf on the same day) is to prevent the slaughter of the calf in front of its mother, and there is no difference between the worry of a human or that of animals over the offspring”. He points out that these are preventative measures and their purpose is to avoid learning cruelty – to which we can add: if so to animals, how much more so to humans!

If we cast our minds back to the argument from the gemoroh in Brochos, it would appear that the Ramban is taking one side of the argument; after all, the other side of the dispute is that these mitzvos are all gezeiros – decrees – before Hashem, and we simply have to follow His dictates blindly.

Pre-empting this argument, the Ramban continues to say: “Do not argue to me from Chazal's statement in Brochos [regarding the chazzan and shiluach hakein]...since that is only one of two theories...and we follow the latter, in that every mitzvoh has a reason to it.”

He then proceeds to explain how the purpose of the mitzvos is to purify the soul, in the same way one refines silver to purify it. In the case of shiluach hakein and shechitoh, these are designed to subdue out inherent cruelties.

So, having said all this, it is clear that not only does every mitzvoh have a reason that we can comprehend, but that we are compelled to understand them in order for the mitzvoh to have its maximal effect, since the greater one's knowledge of the purpose and reason of the mitzvoh, the greater an effect it can have on oneself. The implication is that we have to strive to fathom these reasons for ourselves as best as we can.

Loath as I am to quote Yoda, he did say: “Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering.”

I believe that it was this concept that proved to be a stumbling block for Korach. When he was passed over as a potential leader, he feared for his status and standing. So when he thought into the mitzvoh of tzitzis, his pride and anger prevented him from learning from Moshe with the depth of humility and respect that one requires in order to acquire Torah from one's rebbe; and Moshe was the consummate rebbe. The more Korach pondered the mitzvoh of tzitzis, the broader became the distortions and schisms in his thinking. It came to the point that he was challenging Moshe on the philosophy of the mitzvos, which led him to deny some of the mitzvos themselves as fabrications on the part of Moshe.

Essentially what he was arguing was this: “If the reason for tzitzis is ultimately to remind ourselves of the mitzvos, then this is a silly commandment. After all, here is a simple case that breaks its rationale altogether – the cloak made entirely of Techeiles – and therefore your reasoning, Moshe, is philosophically unsound. We are forced to conclude that you made up the mitzvos!”

Learning Torah is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, one must delve deeply to the greatest depth one can. But just like a scuba diver who fails to study his lessons fully will probably end up drowning when literally out of his depth, we can easily end up distorting the Torah. The

only way to avoid that is to ensure that we are learning Torah from an authentic source. Just look at the mess the Reform, Conservatives and Liberals have made by “learning” Torah.

Why 14,700

Rav Ahron Krococki (maggidofmatityahu.com)

In this week's sedra, Korach, following the death of Korach and his cohorts, Hashem brought a plague upon the Jewish People. As the pasuk states: “Those who died in the plague were fourteen thousand, seven hundred, aside from those who died because of the affair of Korach.” (17:14)

Is there any significance as to why specifically 14,700 people died in this plague?

The Meshech Chochma offered the following explanation: Yaakov Avinu ordered that after his death all of his sons should carry his coffin except for Levi. Why was Levi excluded? The reason was that in the future, when the mishkan would be erected, it will be the job of the tribe of Levi to carry the holy Aron. Thus it would be improper for Levi to carry the coffin at the present time.

In other words, Yaakov had already in his time preordained that Levi would become a holy tribe. Accordingly, now when a group of people from Am Yisrael got up to question the legitimacy of the holiness of the Tribe of Levi, as they claimed (16:3): “It is too much for you! For the entire assembly — all of them — are holy...”, they in essence were questioning the validity of Yaakov Avinu's decree.

This is why specifically 14,700 people died: For this number is one-hundred times the life span of Yaakov Avinu who lived to the age of 147 (Bereishis 47:28).

With this we can also understand the reason the above quoted pasuk emphasized that the fourteen thousand and seven hundred people who died in the plague were: “...aside from those who died because of the affair of Korach” — for the ones who were stricken by the plague died because they challenged Yaakov Avinu's selection of the Tribe of Levi as being the holy tribe. As opposed to those who perished with Korach himself, they didn't contest the holiness of Levi, rather they questioned the appointment of Aharon as being the Kohen Hagedol.

Blinded!

The Chill Weekly (Shortvort.com)

Korach had many outstanding qualities. He hailed from a distinguished family, was a talmid chacham, possessed extraordinary wealth, and was a very wise man. How then could he have fallen so low to accuse Moshe of selfishly taking power and prestige for himself, especially after the Torah testifies about Moshe, “Now the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth.”? How could he possibly accuse him of possessing the contemptible trait of arrogance?!

There are two types of people; there are givers - people who are constantly looking for opportunities to where they can give and assist others. Then there are takers - people who are continuously looking how to further add to their possessions, how to satisfy their own needs and how to obtain more honor. The latter are never satisfied; they always desire more. The Parsha, right at the beginning informs us what the root of Korach's downfall was: Vayikach Korach- Korach was a taker ; he wanted more honor for himself. He was already a Levi but that wasn't enough, he wanted more. He wanted to have a prominent communal position and was jealous of the honor that Moshe and Aharon were getting. He knew no bounds and did whatever he could to obtain that honor, even if it meant starting a rebellion against Moshe.

When one is self-centered, and has a specific desire, his intellect gets corrupted and he can't think rationally. He gets blinded by the desire and will do anything to attain it. All Korach was able to focus on was achieving a rank of special importance, which caused him to lower himself and do everything he could to achieve his goal. The gemara refers to the mosquito as a “puny creature”. The gemara explains, that it is called a “puny creature” since it has an opening through which food is ingested, but it does not have an outlet through which waste is excreted. Chazal are relating to us; someone who only takes in and doesn't give out is called a tiny creature!