



Ohr Yerushalayim News

קרח - ר"ח תמוז תשפ"ד - 6th July 2024 - Volume 16 - Issue 52

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Charles and Joyce Khan on the birth of a grandson to David and Sigalle Lachs

Mazel Tov to Meir and Ruth Possenheimer on the engagement of their grandson, Zevi Heimann, to Ayelet Adler

Mazel Tov to Michael and Bayla Brandeis on the wedding this Wednesday of their granddaughter, Shifra Brandeis, to Ari Steinberg

Chaim Aruchim

We wish Chaim Aruchim to the following who have Yahrtzeit this week:

Mon, 2nd Tammuz - Rafi Green for his father

Mon, 2nd Tammuz - Michael Freedman for his father

Lost Property

A reminder that personal property left on the Shul premises will be disposed of every Rosh Chodesh

The Importance Of Flexibility

Rabbi J Rubinstein

The extraordinary story of the children of Korach is like a beacon of hope, in the middle of the depressing and devastating story of Korach's rebellion. Rashi in his commentary on Psalms 42 tells us; Asir, Elkanah, and Aviosoph, the sons of Korach, were originally involved in their fathers plot. But during the dispute, they separated from it and when the earth swallowed up (the rebels and) all around them, their place remained, as it says "And the children of Korach did not die" (Bamidbar 26:11). They sang to Hashem there, they composed the group of Psalms, from Psalm forty-two onwards, which commence, קרח למוצח לבני קרח - "For the conductor for the sons of Korach" and they ascended from there, and prophesied about the future exiles and the establishment of the kingdom of the house of David. One can add, that in fact the great prophet Samuel, was a descendant of Aviosoph the son of Korach!

The dramatic transformation of their destinies was brought about, because in the words of Psalm forty-five, רחש ליבי דבר טוב - "My heart was moved (to feel) a good thing" The Medrash explains that this means, in the midst of the destruction they were unable to speak but their hearts were moved to feelings of repentance, and Hashem accepted their repentance.

We can be sure that feelings of repentance alone, are only effective, when they are utterly and absolutely sincere, and therefore if circumstances allowed, would certainly lead to deeds of repentance. Nonetheless it is a great teaching. In 1934 when the great Rosh Yeshivah Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein was approaching the end of his life, he cried out to his son-in-law Rav Sarna, he does not know how to repent. Rav Sarna replied with this quotation, from רחש ליבי דבר טוב we learn, even feelings of repentance can be considered to be a complete repentance.

Perhaps the key to understanding the story of the sons of Korach, is the description given of them in Psalm forty-five as שושנים - "Roses". The Vilna Gaon says, other fruit when hit, develop a bruise or a hole, but the rose because it is soft, bends and then goes back to being a healthy rose. The symbolism of this is, people who are stiff, unbending, and unprepared to admit they have been wrong, become irreparably damaged by the mistakes they make. But those who are soft, and prepared to bend and change, when their mistakes are pointed out to them, can survive errors and mishaps. (Vilna Gaon on the verse in Song of Songs Chap. 2 verse

two, "Like a rose amongst the thorns")

This quality symbolised by the rose, of being flexible and sincerely prepared to learn from our mistakes, leads to רחש ליבי דבר טוב - "My heart was moved (to feel) a good thing". It is what distinguished and saved the children of Korach. It is a quality we can all try and emulate. (Based on Sefer Shiras Dovid by Rav A.D. Goldberg)

A Perception of Uncaring Leadership Fueled Korach's Rebellion

Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Torah.org)

There is a dispute among the Rishonim as to when exactly the story of Korach transpired. The Torah places it after Parshas Shelach, immediately following the gezeira (heavenly decree) that Bnei Yisrael must wander in the desert for forty years as a punishment for the incident of the meraglim (spies). The Ibn Ezra holds that this parsha is not placed in its correct sequential order, and the story of Korach actually happened prior to the incident of the meraglim.

There is a certain logic behind the Ibn Ezra's theory. Chazal say that Korach was motivated to start his rebellion by jealousy over the appointment of Elitzafon ben Uziel as the nasi of Shevet Levi. Korach resented a perceived slight on the part of Moshe Rabbeinu. Korach figured that there were four sons of Levi. Amram (the father of Moshe and Aharon) was the oldest. Yitzhar (the father of Korach) was the second son. Chevron was the third son. Uziel (the father of Elitzafon) was the youngest of the four brothers.

Rashi notes that Korach was willing to accept that Moshe was the "king" and Aharon was the "Kohen Gadol" (High Priest), because they were both sons of Levi's eldest son. However, Korach, who did not recognize that the appointment of Elitzafon as nasi was by the word of Hashem, felt that he deserved the next honorific appointment, owing to the fact that he was the next oldest cousin in the family! This is what irked Korach and prompted him to lead his rebellion against Moshe and Aharon.

Based on the fact that Elitzafon's appointment happened at the beginning of Sefer Bamidbar, it makes a lot of sense to suggest that Korach's rebellion occurred prior to the story in Parshas Shelach. Why would Korach suddenly start his rebellion now after Parshas Shelach?

There is a very important Ramban that addresses this question. The Ramban writes that up until this point, Moshe Rabbeinu was able to ride out any crises that developed in leading the nation. Even after the aveira (sin) of the Eigel Hazahav (Golden Calf), Moshe was able to pray for the nation and acquire Divine forgiveness. He writes that Moshe achieved extreme popularity amongst the people and they would not countenance any challenge to his leadership. The people loved Moshe Rabbeinu and would stone any person who attempted to question their beloved leader.

Davening Times

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.30pm
זמן שבת & Candle Lighting	7.54pm - 8.00pm
Shacharis	7.25am / 9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.01am
Mincha	2.00pm / 6.00pm / 9.48pm
Rov's Shiur	Following Mincha
Motzei Shabbos	10.53pm
ראש חודש	7.00am / 8.00am / 9.30am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.45pm

According to the Ramban, Korach suffered in silence while Moshe's popularity was at its peak. Korach "kept his powder dry" so to speak. However, when they arrived at Midbar Paran, things started falling apart. People were burned by fire at Taveirah and there were many deaths at Kivros haTa'avah. After the aveira of the meraglim, Moshe did not even pray for forgiveness and was unable to cancel the Heavenly Decree. At this point, the people's spirit plunged and they had complaints about their leader. Korach felt that this was the time to make his move. He thought that now the people would listen to his message of rebellion.

This Ramban sheds light on another Rashi. Rashi comments that Korach was a pikayach (clever person). Where do we see that Korach was so clever? I believe we see it because a fool "rushes in." A fool has no patience. An idea pops into his head and he immediately wants to implement it, whether the time is ripe or not. The ability for a person to bide his time and pick the right moment and the right spot to make a move requires wisdom and cleverness.

However, it is surprising that this Ramban writes that Moshe Rabbeinu did not pray for the people after the decree of death in the wilderness for the generation that accepted the evil report of the meraglim. This statement seems to be refuted by explicit pesukim in Parshas Shelach (Bamidbar 14:13-19). In fact, Hashem responded to Moshe: "...I have forgiven according to your words." (Bamidbar 14:20). So what does the Ramban mean that Moshe did not pray for them after the sin of the meraglim?

The Ramban clarifies his intention: Moshe Rabbeinu was, in effect, able to get the punishment decree for the aveira of the Eigel Hazahav nullified. "...On the day that I make My account, I shall bring their sin to account against them." (Shemos 32:34). While the Ribono shel Olam did, in effect, leave that aveira on the back burner, His original threat of total annihilation was withdrawn. However, by the aveira of the meraglim, the Ramban writes: "Perhaps Moshe knew that the decree was stretched out against them and would never be rescinded." Moshe understood that the best he could accomplish was to mitigate Hashem's decree of wiping out the entire nation right then, followed by rebuilding Klal Yisrael just from Moshe Rabbeinu and his descendants. Moshe did accomplish getting rescinded the decree for the nation to be wiped out immediately. It took forty years for that generation to die out, but at least the following generation was permitted to enter Eretz Yisrael.

The people, however, did not realize all this. They thought that Moshe Rabbeinu had supreme powers of prayer, and that if he would have only davened intensely enough, the entire decree would have been nullified. It must be, they concluded, that Moshe did not daven for them at all. It was this erroneous sentiment that Korach was able to stoke among the discontented in the nation and get them to conclude: If Moshe Rabbeinu won't daven for us, then who needs Moshe Rabbeinu?

There is a great irony here. The people loved Moshe Rabbeinu and had the greatest respect for him. They had so much confidence in him they felt that if he would only have davened, he could have nullified the decree. Therefore, since the decree was not nullified, they concluded he was not using his powers to defend them, and consequently they were ready to depose him from his leadership role.

We can make two observations about this scenario advanced by the Ramban:

First, what happened to hakaras hatov? Moshe Rabbeinu has been with the Jewish people through all their trials and tribulations. He took them out of Mitzraim, brought them across the Yam Suf (Red Sea), and saved them from the aveira of the Eigel Hazahav. And now, because he can't totally gain Divine forgiveness for their grievous aveira, they toss him overboard?

Many years ago, General Motors had a commercial advertisement, which began: "It is uniquely American to ask, 'What have you done for me lately?'" This always bothered me. This attitude may be uniquely American but it is totally an anathema to the fundamental attitudes of Klal Yisrael. When someone has a long track record of service and accomplishment, he should not be instantly tossed for one error, particularly by those who do not understand the full picture of what has transpired.

The second observation: Why did the people turn against Moshe? It is because they came to the conclusion that he did not daven for them, and if he did not daven for them, it must be because he did not care about their fate. They were wrong about Moshe not caring, but they were right that it is a cardinal crime for a Jewish leader not to care about the people. A leader who doesn't care cannot be my leader!

President Theodore Roosevelt once expressed a very important maxim:

"People do not care how much you know, until they know how much you care." This is a very powerful rule, basic advice for any rebbe, any rav, for any teacher, and for any person in any educational position. The people, unfortunately, came to the erroneous conclusion that Moshe Rabbeinu did not care for them anymore. If he doesn't care anymore then he can't be our leader. Therefore, when Korach came and told them it is time for a new leader, they were ready to agree with him.

Internal Combustion

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Torah.org)

"Any quarrel," says the Mishnah in Pirkei Avos (5:20) "that is made for the sake of heaven shall, in conclusion, last. However, if the argument has selfish motivation it shall not last." The Mishnah offers Hillel and Shamai as an example of heavenly opponents. Their arguments will last forever. On the other hand, Korach and his congregation are the examples given for those whose debate stemmed from egotistical motivations. "Those types of disputes," says the Mishnah, "are doomed to fail."

The Mishnah, is of course referring to the episode in this week's portion. Korach, a first cousin of Moshe, contested the priesthood. He gathered 250 followers, formed a congregation, and openly rebelled against Moshe and Ahron, claiming that Moshe and his brother underhandedly seized both temporal and spiritual leadership. Moshe, in his great humility, offered a solution in which divine intercession would point to the true leader. Korach and his followers were swallowed alive by a miraculous variation of an earthquake.

Yet two questions occur on the Mishnah. By using the expression that, "an argument for the sake of heaven will last," it seems to show that an ongoing argument is a proof of its sanctity. Shouldn't it be the opposite? The other anomaly is that in referring to the kosher argument, the Mishnah refers to the combatants, Hillel and Shamai. Each was on one side of the debate. Yet, in reference to the argument that is labeled as egotistical, it defines the combatants as Korach and his congregation. Weren't the combatants Korach and Moshe? Why is the latter part of the Mishnah inconsistent with the former?

On the week following Passover 1985, I began my first pulpit in an old small shul in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The scent of herring juice permeated the building, and the benches did not creak as they swayed, they krechtsed. As old as the furnishings were, the membership was older. But the Congregation's spirit of tradition of was feistier than its physical appearance.

My first week, I was asked to bless the new month of Iyar, Mevarchim HaChodesh. Then the trouble began. Every Shabbos, a somber prayer, Av HaRachamim, which memorializes Jewish martyrs during the era of the crusades is recited. On holidays or other festive occasions such as Shabbos Mevarchim, in deference to the spirit of celebration, the prayer is omitted. However, the month of Iyar is considered a sad time for Jews. 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva perished in that period. Many congregations recite Av HaRachamim on Shabbos Mevarchim for the month of Iyar. I assumed my new congregation did the same and began reciting, "Av HaRachamim." Immediately I heard a shout, and an uproar began.

"We don't say Av HaRachamim today. We just blessed the new month," announced the President.

"We say it this month! It's sefirah, a period of mourning," yelled back the Vice-President.

"You know nothin'. We never ever say it when we bench (bless) Rosh Chodesh," yelled the Treasurer.

"We always did!" asserted the Gabbai.

The argument was brewing for five minutes when they all began to smile and instructed me to say the prayer as I had planned. Before I continued the service I sauntered over to the old Shammash who was sitting quietly through the tumult and asked, "what is the minhag (custom) of this shul?"

He surveyed the scene and beamed. "This shul is 100 years old. This is our minhag."

The Mishnah gives us a litmus test. How does one know when there is validity to an argument? Only when it is an argument that envelops eternity. The arguments of Shamai and Hillel last until today, in the halls and classrooms of Yeshivos and synagogues across the world. Each one's view was not given for his own personal gain, it was argued for the sake of heaven. However, Korach's battle with Moshe was one of personal gain. Moshe had no issue with them. It was a battle of Korach and his cohorts. Each with a completely different motivation – himself. It did not last. A battle with divine intent remains eternal. In a healthy environment there is room for healthy differences. And those differences will wax eternal.