

# Shabbat Korach

## June 12, 2010

### 30 Sivan 5770

Parasha

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Newsletter n° 375

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## News

### ISRAEL FIELD SESSION

The Israel Field hold his triennial this week from June 2 to 5. New plans have been voted, new departmental director have been elected. Everyone who would like to have more information about the departmental directors could just send me an email and I will send this information with pleasure.



Dr. Bertil Wiklander, President of the Trans-European Division was with us, leading this session with all his heart and his great leadership ability.

Among the plans and resolutions it was recommended:

- to produce a Hebrew hymnal for a contextualized worship.
- to generalize the kabbalat Shabbat (on Friday evening) in a Hebrew style in order to be closer to the population of Israel.
- to consider the possibility of opening a health lifestyle center.



### NEW ASSIGNMENT TO PAUL LIPPI

We would like to Congratulate Pastor Paul Lippi who just arrived in his new congregation. Paul was about twenty years in Jerusalem, Israel, Then as American he decided to go back to the States and was pastor in New York for several years. He just arrived in Thousand Oaks, California. We address him all our best wishes of success in his new assignment. May the L-rd be with him and bless his ministry.

### WORSHIP IN THOUSAND OAKS

After his first worship in his new congregation, Paul Lippi sent us this message: "Last Shabbat afternoon we held our first regularly scheduled worship service together. We were some thirty souls committed to reaching out to our Jewish brothers and sisters. This upcoming Shabbat, June 12, we plan to meet again at 5:00 pm at the Thousand Oaks Seventh-day Adventist Congregation The Torah portion this week is parashat qorach (Numbers 16:1-18:32). The prophetic portion is 1Samuel 11:14-12:22. We're encouraging everybody to read the current portions during the week. The sermon topic is frequently based on these weekly readings read by Jews around the world. I, for one, am looking forward to getting better acquainted with everyone who can join us for this uplifting experience."

### TRAINING IN BUDAPEST

I have been invited to worship and to train our members and pastors in Budapest this next weekend (June 11-13). It is with great pleasure that I will meet also a group of people from the Jewish community of Budapest on Friday. Thank you for continuing to pray for this ministry.

### GC SESSION ATLANTA

The General Conference Session will be held in Atlanta from June 22 to July 3. As usual we will be present there in the exhibition hall. Please visit us, Booth 900.

# OVERVIEW

## KORACH

### NUMBERS 16:1 - 18:32

**K**orach, Datan and Aviram, and 250 leaders of Israel rebel against the authority of Moshe and Aharon. The rebellion results in their being swallowed by the earth. Many resent their death and blame Moshe. G-d's "anger" is manifest by a plague that besets the nation, and many thousands perish. Moshe intercedes once again for the people.

Moshe instructs Aharon to atone for them and the plague stops. Then G-d commands that staffs, each inscribed with the name of one of the tribes, be placed in the Mishkan. In the morning the staff of Levi, bearing Aharon's name, sprouts, buds, blossoms and yields ripe almonds.

This provides Divine confirmation that Levi's tribe is chosen for priesthood and verifies Aharon's position as Kohen Gadol, High Priest.

The specific duties of the levi'im and kohanim are stated. The kohanim were not to be landowners, but were to receive their sustenance from the tithes and other mandated gifts brought by the people.

Also taught in this week's Parasha are laws of the first fruits, redemption of the firstborn, and other offerings.

### KORACH'S ENVY

**T**he Torah states: "And Korach, the son of Izhar, the son of Kehas, the son of Levi, took ..." (Numbers. 16:1). Rashi explains that the key reason for Korach's rebellion against Moshe was his envy of a relative who received honor which Korach believed should have belonged to him.

Envy is destructive. It prevents a person from enjoying his own blessings. When you focus on the success of another person and feel pain

because of it, you are likely to do things that are highly counterproductive. Envy is one of the three things that totally destroy a person (Pirkei Avos 4:28). The downfall of Korach was because of this trait. Not only did he not get what he wanted, but he lost everything he already possessed.

How does one overcome envy? The key is to focus on what you have and on what you can accomplish in this world. Envy arises when a person looks at others and compares himself to them. The ultimate that anyone can have in this world is happiness. When you master this trait by focusing on those things conducive to happiness, you need never to envy another person.

### HE WAS PAINED GREATLY

**T**he Torah states: "Isn't it enough that you took us out of a land of milk and honey (Egypt) to cause us to die in the desert? Now, you want to lord over us? You have not brought us to the land of flowing milk and honey (Israel), nor did you give us a field and vineyard! Even if you would threaten to send someone to gouge out our eyes, we will not go up to you!" (Numbers 16:13-14).

Talk about Jewish chutzpah! Datan and Aviram lace into Moshe, cynically calling Egypt and not Israel, 'the land of milk and honey.' Then they brazenly blame Moshe for the sin of the spies and his 'failure' to lead the Jewish People to conquer the land of Israel, not to mention their accusation of Moshe 'lording' over them for his own honor. This was surely a devastating, albeit untrue, critique of Moshe.

How does Moshe react? Seemingly, like any one of us. "Moshe became infuriated" (Numbers 16:15). But Rashi steps in to show us how radically different and how amazingly beautiful Moshe's response actually was. "He was pained greatly." (Rashi, Numbers 16:15). Rashi seems to be saying that Moshe was not angry; rather he was upset and saddened.

Returning to Parshat Korach, Moshe is not angry with Korach, Datan, Aviram, or any of the rebels. His feelings are not personal. Moshe is distressed, saddened, and depressed that these people have steeped themselves into the depths of sin. As Rashi explains, Moshe is not infuriated (as the verse

implies on first glance). He is upset and disturbed at the face of evil, but not at the evildoers.

## REBELLION AGAINST ONE OF THE GREATEST ISRAEL'S LEADERS

**W**hile the story of the rebellion of Korach is well known, the very idea of a rebellion against Moshe seems strange to us. Moshe was surely the greatest leader Israel has ever known. More than that, he was our greatest teacher, prophet, and spiritual leader. Additionally, Moshe was the most modest man to ever live. Adding these characteristics together should produce an extremely attractive package, a leader of unparalleled stature. Rabbi Ari Kahn asks, how was Korach able to convince anyone to join him in a rebellion against such a man? Undoubtedly, Korach was sly and devious; the Midrash stresses his manipulative demagoguery and deception. But how did the movement he spearheaded gain a foothold within the Israelite community?

Rabbi Ari Kahn says that “a number of the steps are clear:

1. Korach gathers the disenfranchised, namely the tribe of Reuven who had lost the rights and privileges and the preferred status and stature of the eldest tribe.

2. The timing is also significant: the people had just been sentenced to wander in the desert for forty years. Although this was not Moshe's doing, there most likely was whispered criticism of Moshe's perceived mismanagement of the spies—murmuring that called Moshe's leadership into question.

3. However, the seeds of the insurrection may go back even farther, to a most unexpected source: **“And Miriam and Aharon spoke against Moshe because of the Kushite woman whom he had married” (Numbers 12:1).** Rabbi Ari Kahn says that perhaps this talk against Moshe from such reputable people burst the bubble of Moshe's unparalleled status in the eyes of the people. It is interesting that while Miriam was immediately punished, Aharon apparently escaped that episode unscathed. Ironically, or perhaps in a masterful moment of cynical manipulation, Korach uses this seeming inequity as a weapon: When Korach wages his war against Moshe, he points his accusations at Aharon as the beneficiary of Moshe's nepotism.

## THE BEAUTY OF THE ALMOND BLOSSOMS

**A**fter Korach and his followers have been killed by God's plagues and punishments, the people shockingly complain to Moshe and Aharon saying, **“You have killed the people of God!”** First, God sends more plagues that destroy many of the complainers, but then He commands Aharon to take a staff, along with the princes of each of the 12 tribes, and place them in the holy tent of the Tabernacle. **“It shall be that the man whom I choose, his staff will blossom, and I will remove the complaints of the Jewish people!” (Numbers 17:20, translated loosely).** Aharon's staff blossoms with buds and almonds the next morning and the complainers are silenced and placated.

Rabbi Boruch Leff says that Israel were lamenting the loss of so many of their brethren and their leaders to Korach's folly and they blamed these horrible events on Moshe and Aharon. They surely knew that Korach's revolt had to be put down strongly but they questioned the methodology. They wondered out loud why Moshe and Aharon didn't pray for Korach and his followers to repent. Was Korach's evil so great that repentance could not have helped? And since Moshe and Aharon did not pray for Korach, doesn't that suggest that they simply wanted Korach dead and 'out of the way' for their selfish and personal interests?

According to Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg *zt"l*, the beauty of the almond blossoms symbolized that Moshe and Aharon acted beautifully, peacefully and lovingly. If indeed Korach had the potential for repentance and change, then Moshe and Aharon would most certainly have prayed for it. But such was not the case. Korach had to be killed because that was the only course of action possible to eliminate his evil.

When we criticize, is our goal to 'pay back' the perpetrator with rage or to change his ways with love?

We must apply the lessons of Moshe in his very difficult saga with Korach. We must learn to act forcefully when necessary, but always with love in our hearts, not hatred.

We must hate actions, not people. At times, we may be forced to kill, but let us do it with love

## CRITICIZING OUR LEADERS

A famous sage was traveling by wagon from town to town. In each place he stopped, crowds greeted him with great honor. Some people asked for his blessing, while others asked for his advice. The sage responded to each person kindly and quickly.

“I want to ask a favor,” said the wagon driver once they were back on the road. “Never in all my life have I received honors such as you receive in each town we visit. Before the next town, could you change clothing and places with me? The people will think I am the sage, and they’ll shower me with honors. I will give them blessings, and I will give them advice. For once in my life, I would like to experience that feeling.”

“As you wish,” said the sage.

They changed clothing and places, and sure enough, the people in the next town greeted the disguised wagon driver with adulation.

One man pushed through the crowd. “I need your advice desperately,” he said to the sage, and he went on to describe his problem.

The wagon driver tried to think of an answer, but every solution only seemed to create more problems.

Suddenly, he had a flash of inspiration.

“This is really a very simple question,” he said. “In fact, it is so simple even my wagon driver knows the answer. Why don’t you ask him?”

In our own lives, we are often ready to criticize those in positions of leadership and authority, whether it be the rabbi, the pastor, the school principal or anyone else in a similar position. From a distance, what they do may seem easy and uncomplicated, and we, of course, see with perfect clarity where they could use improvement. But appearances are deceiving. They spent many years preparing for those positions, and we are not qualified to second-guess everything they do. Better that we should turn that powerful

lamp of scrutiny on ourselves and become the very best that we can possibly be.

## WALKING A TIGHTROPE

A great sage told his disciples for a walk, “Today, we will do something different.” Without another word, he led them to a deep ravine at the end of the town. A taut rope was stretched across the top of the ravine, and a huge crowd was gathered a short distance away.

Presently, a tightrope walker holding a long balancing rod stepped off the rim of the ravine onto the rope and began to walk across the chasm. The crowd gasped in amazement as the tightrope walker made his way steadily along the quivering rope. When he finally reached the opposite rim of the ravine safely, the crowd responded with an audible sigh of relief and an enthusiastic round of applause.

The sage nodded gravely, turned around and started to walk away. “Why did you bring us here today?” one of his disciples asked him. “What are we supposed to learn from the tightrope walker?”

“A very important lesson,” said the sage. “Walking a tightrope is a metaphor of life, because all of us are indeed walking a tightrope. Did you watch that tightrope walker? He was totally focused on what he was doing, and he was confident in his ability to do it. If he had lost focus or confidence he would never have made it across.”

## EDITOR

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## HAFTARA

### 1 Samuel 11:14-12:22

**PARASHA:** In the text of the parasha the people of Israel are not happy that Moses and Aaron are keeping the great responsibilities of Governance and Priesthood to themselves. Moses and Aaron were brothers and it seemed to the people and especially to 250 leaders who were influenced by Korach, that a conflict of interest had occurred. "You have gone too far! All the congregation are holy, everyone of them, and the L-RD is among them. So why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the L-RD? (Num. 16:3).

**HAFTARA:** In our haftara the people of Israel challenge the authority of Samuel and G-d and decide to have a new king. But Samuel is not satisfied and wants to be sure that nobody accuses him of anything wrong during his time of leadership. "I have listened to you in all that you have said to me, and have set a king over you. See, it is the king who leads you now; I am old and gray, but my sons are with you. I have led you from my youth until this day. Here I am; testify against me before the L-RD and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? Testify against me and I will restore it to you." (1Sam. 12:1-3). The people confirmed to Samuel that they have no reproach against him. "You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from the hand of anyone." (1Sam. 12:4). Samuel recalls to the people of Israel all the mistakes they have made during their history from the time of Jacob to the present. The L-rd confirmed Samuel by sending thunder, "and the L-RD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the L-RD and Samuel (1Sam. 12:1-3). Samuel confirmed to the people of Israel that G-d's love is unconditional. G-d has chosen Israel. He will not rebuke him and will not reject him And Samuel said to the people, "Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the L-RD, but serve the L-RD with all your heart; For the L-RD will not cast away his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the L-RD to make you a people for himself. (1Sam. 12:21-22).

## BESORAT YESHUA

### Mark 5:9-20

**PARASHA:** In the text of the parasha we have the story of the rebellion of Korach. When we look carefully at this text we recognize the principle of the first rebellion, the great rebellion of Satan: **You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of G-d ... I will make myself like the Most High."** (Is. 14:13-14).

Korach wanted to make himself like Moses. We know that Moses and Aaron were appointed by G-d and when Korach challenged the authority of Moses and Aaron, he challenged the authority of G-d. This rebellion was possible because Korach was possessed by the same spirit as Satan. He was trying to flatter or to charm the people of Israel when he said "All the congregation are holy." (Numb 16:3) In this story we have a case of demonic possession. That's why the punishment of G-d was so exemplary.

**BESORAH:** In the Besorah of Mark we have a parallel story, a story of demonic possession. It is about the possession of a man, "And when he had stepped out of the boat, immediately a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit met him. He lived among the tombs; and no one could restrain him any more, even with a chain" (Mark 5:2-3). Yeshua recognized that this man was possessed by one or several demons, fallen angels. He asked them a question: "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion; for we are many." (Mark 5:9).

They knew who Yeshua was and begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now a great herd of swine was feeding on the hillside there and the unclean spirits begged him, "Send us into the swine; let us enter them." (Mark 5:10-12). Here we see the great power of Yeshua who gained victory over evil, Satan and all demons, "So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and were drowned in the sea" (Mark 5:13).

