

Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Korach

3 Tammuz, 5775/June 20, 2015

Vol. 6 Num. 37

**This issue of Toronto Torah is sponsored by Esther & Craig Guttman
in honour of the engagement of their daughter, Sarah Gomolin,
to Moshe Freedman, son of Trana and Daniel Freedman of Englewood, New Jersey**

In Search of a Non-Liberal Humanism

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

"Korach, son of Yitzhar, son of Kehath, son of Levi, took, and Datan and Aviram, sons of Eliav, and On son of Pelet, descendants of Reuven." (Bamidbar 16:1)

Rashi, explaining the problematic role of the verb 'took' in this context, suggests two explanations; the second approach is, "He attracted the heads of the Sanhedrin with words." What were Korach's arguments, such that they were strong enough to "take" the wisest, the heads of the Sanhedrin?

The essence of Korach's argument is recorded by the Torah, and it may ring attractively to our ears even to this day: "for the entire congregation is holy, and Hashem is in their midst. So why do you raise yourselves above Hashem's people?"

Korach's argument seems to be the humanistic argument for liberty from authority: We are all human beings; all created in G-d's image, and in our case – all of us stood beneath Mount Sinai and experienced the existence of the Mishkan in our midst. All of this considered, argued Korach, how can Moshe and Aharon claim superiority? How is it that Aharon claims to be the only priest, rendering others foreign to the Temple, and how can it be that Moshe claims to be the sole teacher of the Torah, rendering all other opinions heretical (see Sanhedrin 50a)?

Not only might Korach's arguments sound true to our ears, but a rather similar stand was taken by no other than Shemuel haNavi, who was even identified by the Sages as a descendant of Korach. (Rashi to Bamidbar 16:7) When asked by the

people to appoint a king, Shemuel answered, "You said to me, 'No, but a king shall rule over us,' when Hashem your G-d is your king!" (Shemuel 12:12) Shemuel seems to echo Korach's words: Hashem is in our midst, so how could someone raise himself above Hashem's people?

What, then, is the difference, between the 'wrong' equality professed by Korach and the 'right' one advanced by Shemuel? In order to answer that, let us turn our attention to two western philosophical concepts, which are usually strongly linked: Humanism and Liberalism. Both of these are rooted in ancient history, but emerged as fully developed ideas in pre-modern and modern times.

Humanism is the acknowledgment of the virtue in the human being, and mostly in his intellect. The rise of Humanism led to "a sense of personal autonomy... An intelligence capable of critical scrutiny and self-inquiry was by definition a free intelligence... the experience of the individual had taken on a heroic tone. Parallel with individualism arose... the idea of the dignity of man" (Encyclopedia Britannica, Humanism).

Liberalism implies recognition of the freedom of the human individual, "a liberation of the individual from complete subservience to the group, and a relaxation of the tight hold of custom, law, and authority" (ibid, Liberalism).

Liberalism is a means of producing the ideal of Humanism – a perfect, free and virtuous individual. Humanism is the ideological fuel of Liberalism,

supporting and justifying Liberal institutions and policies. But can the two be separated?

My mentor and teacher, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l, stated more than once that he saw himself as a "non-liberal humanist". That is, he believed in the virtue of man and in our commitment to enable its development, but he held that such virtue would not be acquired by liberation and relaxation of custom, law and authority, but rather by the acceptance of such duties. Human dignity lies not within the authenticity of man's expressions, but within the extent of moral responsibility that these expressions demonstrate. Indeed, the source of human dignity is the image of G-d engraved onto us, and this image is best shown through emulation of G-d's acts and assumption of responsibility for His creation. (For more: <http://bit.ly/1N0murO>)

Perhaps such a position can account for the difference between our responses to Korach and Shemuel. Both rejected human leadership, based on belief in the special destiny dictated by G-d for Man. The difference lies in the purpose – Korach aimed to gain rights, to enrich his individual religious experience; Shemuel aimed for assuming more responsibility. Facing people demanding a king to take care of them, Shemuel emphasized individual commitment. Greatness is not to be achieved by the celebration of rights, but by the acceptance of duties. Or as we recite in the Shabbat morning liturgy, "Moshe will rejoice in the gift of his portion, for You called him a faithful servant."

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Horeb

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch
English tr. Dayan Dr. I. Grunfeld
Soncino 6th ed. 1997

Mission of the book

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch was born in Hamburg in 1808, to a family that valued Torah study. He learned under Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Ettlinger, who was among Germany's leading rabbis of the time, and he attended University of Bonn. Rabbi Hirsch became Chief Rabbi of Oldenburg in 1830.

From an early age, Rabbi Hirsch felt driven to publish Torah which would combat the influence of the secular Enlightenment on the Jewish community of his post-Napoleonic day. As he put it, "I see a child enveloped in flames. The bystanders are afraid; they do nothing, or else they are only trying to save the building. I see the child. I rush in... 'But,' you might ask, 'what if you are too late? What if the building collapses on top of the child in a roaring conflagration before you reach it?' To this I reply: 'Were I to be buried under it, I would at least have done my duty.'" (Nineteen Letters, #19)

Horeb, published in 1838, was Rabbi Hirsch's first effort in this regard (although its publication was delayed

due to the publisher's doubt that a market existed for the text). The book's title, *Horeb*, is a biblical name for Mount Sinai (see Shemot 33:6). As Rabbi Hirsch explained in a letter, he intended to write a prequel called *Moriah*, named for the mountain on which Avraham offered Yitzchak as a sacrifice, detailing the Torah's philosophy of G-d, Man, the Jewish nation, and the Divine goals for human history. *Horeb* was intended to serve as a sequel, presenting the duties of the Jewish nation in fulfilling those Divine goals. However, Rabbi Hirsch never actually wrote *Moriah*.

Horeb is an essential book for the reader seeking a presentation of practical Judaism which is sensitive to post-Enlightenment sensibilities.

Structure of the book

Rabbi Hirsch divides up the mitzvot into six categories: *Torot* (doctrines), *Edot* (Symbolic rituals), *Mishpatim* and *Chukim* (statutes, largely devoted to elements of Justice), *Mitzvot* (largely devoted to social interactions) and *Avodah* (service of G-d).

Each category is divided into sections, which include multiple, related mitzvot. For example, Section 50 (under *Mishpatim*) includes

prohibitions against lying, flattering, and deceiving. Each section begins with biblical verses, as the basis for the themes in that section. The text then lays out philosophical themes appropriate to the section at hand. Unlike many earlier philosophical works, *Horeb* does not speak of the abstract and speculative; Rabbi Hirsch focuses exclusively on practical ideas, expressed in poetic but readable language. Following the expression of ideas, Rabbi Hirsch presents a brief explanation of the practical mitzvot involved, with references to Talmud, Rambam and Shulchan Aruch for further research.

The Soncino Sixth Edition

The single-volume, sixth edition from Soncino Press is user-friendly. The text includes a long, thorough introduction by Dayan Dr. Grunfeld, explaining Rabbi Hirsch's philosophy and, at times, comparing it to the ideas of others of his era. Also, this edition includes Rabbi Hirsch's cover letter, in which he explains his goals for the book, and a foreword in which he explains his approach to creative interpretation of Torah (*shmait'ta* and *aggadata*). The General Index at the end is also quite useful.

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613 Mitzvot: #442, 443, 444, 473 - Maaser Sheni

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

The Torah mandates that we separate a set of tithes, in a particular order, from Israeli produce. (Sefer haChinuch #72) Until we separate those tithes, our produce is *tevel*, and we may not eat it. (Sefer haChinuch #284) In the first, second, fourth and fifth years of every seven-year *shemita* cycle, that order of tithing is:

- Separate approximately 2% of your produce and give it to a kohen, as *terumah*;
- Separate 10% of the remaining produce and give it to a levi, as *maaser rishon*;
- Separate 10% of the remaining produce and designate it as *maaser sheni*.

The Torah (Devarim 14:22-27) instructs us to bring the *maaser sheni* to Jerusalem and consume it there. However, those who live far from Jerusalem may redeem the produce for money, and bring the money to Jerusalem. We then spend that money for food, and eat that food in Jerusalem. This is the Torah's 473rd mitzvah, according to the count of *Sefer haChinuch*. The mitzvah of separating *maaser sheni* from *tevel* applies today, even though we are currently unable to eat the produce in purity in Jerusalem.

The Torah states that a principal benefit of this mitzvah is that it will lead us to "revere G-d for all time." (Devarim 14:23) Tosafot (Bava Batra 21a *kt*) explains that spending time in Jerusalem, in an environment of service for G-d, will influence us to immerse ourselves in reverence for G-d and study of Torah.

Similarly, *Sefer haChinuch* writes, "Undoubtedly, all people

are drawn to establish their dwellings where their property is found. Therefore, when each individual will annually bring the tithe of his cattle and sheep to the place of wisdom and Torah, Jerusalem, where the Sanhedrin – possessors of knowledge and comprehenders of wisdom – convenes, and when we will also bring the tithe of our produce there during four years of the *shemita* cycle... then either the owner of the property himself will go there to learn Torah, or he will send one of his children to learn there, and the child will be supported by that produce. As a result, every Jewish home will include a wise person, knowledgeable in Torah, who will then teach his wisdom to his entire household, and so the land will be filled with knowledge of G-d. For if there were only one sage, or even ten sages, in a city, then many of the city's men, women and children would not meet these sages but once per year. Even if they would hear a sage's words every week, they would then return home and cast the words of the sage behind themselves. However, with a teacher in every home, dwelling there evening, morning and afternoon and perpetually instructing, then all of them, men, women and children, will be instructed, and no sin or iniquity will be found among them...." (Mitzvah #360)

Perhaps this emphasis on the benefit of travel to Jerusalem is the reason why the Torah allocates three mitzvot to prohibit consumption of *maaser sheni* outside Jerusalem. As counted by *Sefer haChinuch*, the Torah separately prohibits consuming the *maaser sheni* tithe of grain (#442), wine (#443) and olive oil (#444) outside of the city.

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Biography

Rabbi Betzalel Stern

Rabbi Josh Gutenberg

Rabbi Betzalel Stern was born in 1911, to a rabbinical family living in Slovakia. He was one of five boys, of whom only he and his younger brother survived the Holocaust. His younger brother, Moshe, moved to New York, and later became known as the Debreciner Rebbe.

Rabbi Stern lived in numerous countries during his lifetime. As a child, he studied in the Pressburg Yeshiva in Hungary. During the Holocaust he served as Rabbi of a community in Romania, where he survived together with the majority of the community. In 1948 he returned to Hungary, but soon afterwards he moved to Italy and opened a yeshiva. In the subsequent years he served as a Rosh Yeshiva in Israel and as head of batei din in both Melbourne and Vienna. In 1982, he returned to Israel where he once again served as a Rosh Yeshiva.

Rabbi Stern wrote a set of responsa, titled *B'tzel HaChachmah*, between the years of 1959 and 1986. In this six-volume set, he discusses a wide range of halachic issues. In one responsum (Vol. 4 No. 104) he discusses the appropriate time to recite Shema and observe Shabbat while aboard a spaceship. He suggests that despite making several revolutions around the world each day, one would only need to recite Shema twice every 24 hours, and to observe Shabbat one out of every seven Earth days. In another responsum (Vol. 3 No. 35) he discusses under what circumstances it is permissible to fly out of Israel after Yom Tov if the plane will land in a city which is observing the second day of Yom Tov.

Rabbi Stern died in Israel in 1989.

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Torah and Translation

The International Date Line and Re-Praying

Rabbi Betzalel Stern, B'Tzel haChochmah 5:103

Translated by Rabbi Josh Gutenberg

שאלה: במי שהתפלל ערבית מוצאי שבת קדש במעלבארן וכן התפלל שם למחרתו בבוקר תפלת שחרית, שוב אח"כ טס משם לוואנקווער ובאמצע הטיסה חצה את קו התאריך הבין לאומי, שם הוחזר התאריך יום שלם והגיע לוואנקווער במוצש"ק, ונסתפק כהדר"ג שליט"א אם עליו להתפלל עוד פעם ערבית ליל מוצש"ק בוואנקווער וכן תפלת שחרית למחרתו בבוקר, או דילמא כיון שהתפלל כבר ערבית של מוצש"ק וכן שחרית של יום ראשון בהיותו במעלבארן לא יתפלל תפלות אלה - דהיינו ערבית דמוצש"ק ושחרית דיום ראשון - עוד פעם, כי לא חייבו חכמים להתפלל פעמים מעריב או שחרית באותו יום.

תשובה: לפמש"כ לעיל (סי' הקודם אות ב') כי שקיעת החמה וצאת הכוכבים חשיבה לילה לגבי כל הנמצאים במקום השקיעה וציאת הכוכבים וזה גם אם על ידי טיסתו בכיוון מזרח יתקצר היום ומקדים החמה לשקוע, אם כן בנד"ד החל מהשקיעה וצאה"כ שבאמצע הטיסה הו"ל יום אחר ונמצא תפלת ערבית שאח"כ הוי תפלה של יום אחר ואינה תפלה באותו יום שכבר התפלל בו ערבית ושחרית במעלבארן לכן פשיטא דבכל כי האי גוונא עליו להתפלל ערבית מוצש"ק של וואנקווער וכן שחרית למחרתו בבוקר.

בודאי אם היו חז"ל מחייבים להתפלל בראשון בשבת, בשני בשבת, בשלישי בשבת וכו' היה מקום לומר בנד"ד דכיון שכבר התפלל תפלות של יום ראשון בשבת בהיותו במעלבארן שוב לא חייבוהו להתפלל עוד פעם באותו יום שהוא ראשון בשבת... אבל הרי לא חייבו חז"ל להתפלל ג' תפלות בראשון בשבת, בשני בשבת וכו', אלא חייבו להתפלל ג' תפלות כל יום ויום וכל ששקעה החמה ויצאו הכוכבים הרי הוא יום אחר וחובה להתפלל בו זמנין תלתא, ערב ובקר וצהרים.

Question: [Regarding] someone who prays *Maariv* (the evening service) on Saturday night in Melbourne and the next morning prays *Shacharit* (the morning service), then afterwards flies from there to Vancouver and mid-flight crosses the International Dateline, where the date goes back one full day and he arrives in Vancouver on Saturday night. Your honour has a doubt whether he is required to pray *Maariv* again on Saturday night in Vancouver and also *Shacharit* the next morning, or perhaps since he already prayed *Maariv* on Saturday night and *Shacharit* on Sunday when he was in Melbourne he should not pray these prayers - namely *Maariv* on Saturday night and *Shacharit* on Sunday morning - again because the sages never obligated one to pray *Maariv* or *Shacharit* twice in one day?

Answer: I wrote above (*B'tzel haChochmah* 5:102:2) that sunset and the emergence of stars determines nightfall for anyone in the place where the sun has set or the stars have emerged. This [traveller], through his flight travelling eastward, has a shortened day and advances the sunset. If so, in our case the sunset and the emergence of stars [that he witnesses] in the middle of the flight mark the beginning of a new day. It seems that the next *Maariv* is a prayer for a different day, and is not for the day on which he already prayed *Maariv* and *Shacharit* in Melbourne. Therefore, it is obvious that in such a case he is required to pray *Maariv* on Saturday night in Vancouver and *Shacharit* the next morning.

Certainly, if our sages had obligated us to pray on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, etc... there would be room to say that in our case, since he already prayed the prayers for Sunday when he was in Melbourne, there would be no further obligation to pray again on that day which is Sunday. However, our sages did not obligate us to pray three prayers on Sunday, Monday, etc... Rather, they obligated us to pray three prayers every single day, and as long as the sun has set and the stars have emerged it is a different day and he is obligated to pray three times; evening, morning and afternoon.

This Week in Israeli History: 10 Tammuz 1939 Rabbi Ben Zion Uziel Appointed Rishon l'Tzion

Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig

10 Tammuz is next Shabbat

Rabbi Ben-Tzion Meir Chai Uziel was born on 13 Sivan, 1880 in Jerusalem, to an influential rabbinic family. By the time he had reached the age of twenty, Rabbi Uziel was teaching in Yeshivat Tiferet Yerushalayim and had helped create Yeshivat Machzikei Torah, a new yeshiva for Sephardic students. Rabbi Uziel was the head rabbi of Salonika, Greece (1921-1923), followed by Tel Aviv (1923-1939), before being appointed Rishon l'Tzion [Sephardic Chief Rabbi].

Rabbi Uziel was selected by his predecessor, Rabbi Yaakov Meir, the first Rishon l'Tzion to serve under the British Mandate. Rabbi Uziel rose to this position upon Rabbi Meir's passing, being officially installed on 10 Tammuz, 1939. As Rishon l'Tzion, he served in tandem with Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yitzchak Herzog. Rabbi Uziel played an important part in the establishment of the State of Israel,

acting as a representative of the Jewish community to the Mandate Government. Rabbi Uziel was also among the members of the Assembly of Representatives and the Jewish National Council, both governing bodies within the Jewish community during the time of the Mandate.

The defining features of Rabbi Uziel's approach to life and, in turn, leadership were peace and truth, following the instruction of Zechariah (8:19), "Love truth and peace." These words guided Rabbi Uziel as he strove to address complex issues, such as those concerning conversion to Judaism. This is brought out most dramatically by his final will, which includes the instruction, "[G]uard in every shift the peace of the nation and the peace of the land, 'Love truth and peace'... Remove anything that may cause estrangement and dispute from our camp and our land, and in their stead erect that which brings about peace and brotherhood amongst us."

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Weekly Highlights: June 20 — June 26 / 3 Tammuz – 9 Tammuz Many of our classes are now on hiatus, but opportunities remain!

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
June 19-20				
After hashkamah	Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig	Meshech Chochmah	Clanton Park	
6:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Pirkei Avot	Email info@torontotorah.com	University girls
Before Pirkei Avot	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Not this week
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah: Of Mountains and Trees	BAYT	
Sun. June 21				
8:45 AM	R' Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachic Issues	BAYT	Not this week
9:15 AM	R' Shalom Krell	Kuzari	Zichron Yisroel	With light breakfast
10:00 AM	R' Aaron Greenberg	Olam Haba, Mashiach and Gan Eden	Yeshivat Or Chaim	University boys
Tues. June 23				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Book of Job	Shaarei Shomayim	On summer hiatus
Wed. June 24				
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Jewish Medical Ethics 101	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Week 2 of 4: Pain, and Physician- Assisted Death
10:00 AM	Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig	Contemporary Halachah: The Bodies Exhibit	Yeshivat Or Chaim	University boys
12:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	From FIFA to Pan Am Bribes and the Public Trust	SLF 2300 Yonge St	Lunch served; RSVP jonathan.hames@slf.ca
Thu. June 25				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Book of Yehoshua	49 Michael Ct.	On summer hiatus
Fri. June 26				
10:30 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Advanced Shemitah: Prozbul	Yeshivat Or Chaim	

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