



Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy



שמע קולנו

“יתגבר כארי לעמוד בבוקר לעבודת בוראו”

Parshas Korach

פרשת קרח

Mah Nishtana?

Senny Cohen (23)

In this week's *parsha*, *Parshas Korach*, the main topic is the rebellion that Korach led against Moshe and Aharon as emissaries of *Hashem*. There are a couple of things that are different about this rebellion compared to all the other rebellions members of *Bnei Yisroel* led against Moshe and *Hashem*. One difference is how this rebellion was led by respected people in *Klal Yisroel*, namely Korach, Dasan and Aviram, and the 250 princes. Because of this, although there is practically no violence against Moshe, his response is even sharper and harsher than when there was violence. Another difference is that Moshe doesn't "fall on his face" in prayer for the troublemakers, as the *Torah* describes him as doing during other rebellions. (Moshe did eventually fall on his face in *tefillah*, but only after *Hashem* said he would punish the wrongdoers, not after they initially complained.) The punishment given to the rebels is also strange. Why in this instance does the earth swallow the sinners, but in a case like the *meraglim* they just died by plague, with no special punishment? Why did Moshe call for something so beyond nature to end this dispute? What exactly is Moshe so angry about here as opposed to by the *meraglim* or any of the other incidents over the course of *Bnei Yisroel's* wanderings in the *midbar*?

The most basic answer is the closeness to Moshe. Korach was Moshe's first cousin, and therefore it was more painful for Moshe that his own cousin was rebelling against him. Dovid *Hamelech* clearly illustrates this in *Tehillim* when referring to how his son Avshalom rebelled against him. Dovid writes "My ally in whom I trusted, even he who shares my bread, has been utterly false to me (*Tehillim* 41:10). Dovid's feeling of pain is completely different from when he fights Goliath the giant compared to when he is fighting his son, or his father-in-law, Shaul. Similarly, Moshe felt the sting of this

rebellion more so when it came from his own family.

Another reason why this incident was treated so harshly could be the uniqueness of the claim being against Moshe's status specifically. In all other complaints or rebellions, the people directed their complaints for food or comfort towards *Hashem*. This case, however, is different. Here, the rebels are claiming that Moshe would add his own content to *Hashem's* command. This claim was the first time that anyone had directed their complaint directly and only to Moshe and his status as a messenger of *Hashem*. This incident was therefore a far more personal and painful attack towards Moshe. For these reasons, Moshe responded to this uprising in such a distinct manner.

A Jewish Debate Team

Shimi Kaufman (21)

כל מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים, סופה להתקיים. ושאינה לשם שמים, אין סופה להתקיים. איזו היא מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים, זו מחלוקת הלל ושמאי. ושאינה לשם שמים, זו מחלוקת קרח וכל עדתו (אבות ה:יז)

"Any machlokes which is for the sake of heaven, will eventually be upheld, but any machlokes which is not for the sake of heaven will not be upheld. What is an example of a machlokes for the sake of heaven? The debates of Hillel and Shammai. What is an example of a machlokes which was not for the sake of heaven? The dispute of Korach and his followers (Avos 5:17)

It is interesting to note that the *mishnah's* two cases are not parallel. In speaking about the *machlokes* which is for the sake of heaven, the *mishnah* lists both parties in the dispute, namely Hillel and Shammai. However, regarding the *machlokes* which is not for the sake of heaven, the *mishnah* lists only one side of the argument, name-

ly Korach and his assembly. The *Tosfos Yom Tov* explains this discrepancy based on the fact that Moshe's involvement in the dispute with Korach was completely for the sake of heaven, so it would not make sense to mention him in this *mishnah*. This raises another question: How can we say the entire fight was not for the sake of heaven if one of the parties involved really had no ulterior motive? A fight isn't a fight if only one side is angry (as my *bobbi* likes to say, "it takes two to tango"). It therefore follows that the disputes referred to in the *mishnah* really are parallel, with both parties of the dispute being listed in both cases. The *mishnah* is therefore not referring to the *machlokes* between Korach and Moshe, but between Korach and his followers. Our *mishnah* tells us that the paradigm case of a *machlokes leshem shamayim* was that of Hillel and Shammai, and the paradigm of a *machlokes shelo leshem shamayim* was the infighting within Korach's ranks. Why are these two cases chosen as the epitome of their respective categories?

Rav Yisroel Salanter (*Ohr Liyisroel* 1:28) has a fascinating take on the personalities of Hillel and Shammai. Throughout *Shas*, we find that Shammai comes across as blunt, strict, and firm, while Hillel is far more kind, lenient, and understanding. There is a famous story (*Shabbos* 31a) about a gentile who wished to be taught the entire *Torah* "on one foot". Shammai chased him away with a yardstick, while Hillel agreed to his request, informing him that the entire *Torah* is really just commentary on how to best perform the principle "love your brother as yourself" (*Vayikra* 19:18). Indeed, we find that in most cases (save for those outlined in the fourth *perek* of *Maseches Eidyos*), the disci-

ples of *Beis Hillel*, Hillel's *beis medrash*, were almost always more lenient than their companions from *Beis Shammai*. Based on this, one might be tempted to assume that Hillel was by nature more kind, whereas Shammai was by nature more firm. However, Rav Yisroel Salanter informs us that this is not the case. The only reason that Shammai and Hillel acted as they did was based on their *halachic* dispute over the best way to serve *Hashem*. Hillel believed that the way to serve *Hashem* was primarily through patience and kindness, while Shammai believed that we are meant to serve *Hashem* as powerful and unyielding representatives of the Divine Will on earth. However, if Shammai had held that kindness was more important than strength, or if Hillel had held that strength was more important than kindness, then their entire personalities would have shifted to reflect that. They did not allow their individual personalities to interfere with their interpretation of the Torah perspective. Each one acted as they believed was proper based on their understanding of the Torah.

This is the paradigm of a *machlokes leshem shamayim*, an argument purely for the sake of heaven. Hillel and Shammai would not, could not, allow their individual personalities to get in the way of what they viewed as the *Torah* path. For all we know, Hillel may have been extremely hot headed by nature, while Shammai could have been timid and gentle. But that did not matter to them. They worked on themselves and perfected their personalities to reflect what each of them felt the *Torah* required of them. Their arguments were purely for the sake of heaven, free from any biases or personal leanings they may have had themselves. This was why, as the *Gemara* (*Yevamos* 14b) tells

A Short Vort

Akiva Ezra (21)

In this week's *parsha*, the *posuk* says, after recording the complaint of Korach's group, the "Moshe heard, and he fell on his face." Many commentaries discuss why Moshe fell on his face after Korach made his first public speech challenging how the Jewish leaders were chosen. Rashi writes that Moshe fell on his face because this was the fourth time that the Jews defied *Hashem*, and Moshe felt he couldn't plead yet again on their behalf. The Rashbam and Ibn Ezra both write that Moshe fell on his face to daven to *Hashem*.

These two ideas appear to be unrelated to each other, but we can suggest that they are actually connected. Moshe did feel that he was asking too much from *Hashem* (like Rashi says), but he also knew that there really isn't such a thing as "too much" for *Hashem*. Therefore, he was able to daven (like the Ibn Ezra and Rashbam say) to Him.

This lesson is extremely powerful. We should never feel as if we can't reach out to *Hashem*. We can ask of Him anything we want to. If we are in a bad position, we should always *daven* to *Hashem*.

Rav Adin Steinsaltz writes, "G-d probably understands [that] we are too stressed out to be *davening*. He probably doesn't understand why we don't *daven* to Him about that." We should always know that we can, and should, reach out to *Hashem* as often as we need.

Good Shabbos!

us, the students of *Beis Hillel* and *Beis Shammai* were comrades and friends. For them, it was never about the other person in the argument, as they knew that they too were simply doing what they felt was right in *Hashem's* eyes. Never was there a personal stake or grudge in their *machlokes*. Their only intent was to discover the true *ratzon Hashem*.

Of course, Korach was the exact opposite of this. Korach did not let the *Torah* influence his positions, but rather let his positions influence the *Torah*. As is well known, Korach came to Moshe to ask if a garment made entirely of blue material still required a *techeiles* string in its *tzitzis* (*Yerushalmi Sanhedrin* 10:1). It is worth noting that Korach did not suggest subtracting something from the *Torah*, as is common for "Jewish reformers" nowadays. Rather, the suggestion was to add something; why have just one blue string, when you can have an entirely blue garment? In another story, Korach asked if a room full of *sifrei torah* still required a *mezuzah* on the door. Again, Korach was not attempting to subtract from the corpus of the *Torah*, but to add to it. Korach felt that he was able to enhance the *Torah* through his own suggestions. This quickly led him to reason that if he could improve the *Torah*, it would only make sense for him to be in charge. His efforts did not come from a desire to understand the *Torah*, but rather to fit his own personality into what *Hashem* had already said.

Unfortunately for Korach, his entire posse had this mindset as well. Many of them began to come up with their own suggestions on what the *Torah* had said, thereby deducing that they too were fit to be in charge. This was what led to 250 people offering up *ketores*, each one believing that *Hashem* would accept their offering. All the members of Korach's rebellion deluded themselves into thinking that they could enhance the *Torah* with their personality and experience. This is why the *mishnah* refers to the *machlokes* within Korach and his assembly. Each person tried to take their own personality and cram it into the *Torah*, which often led to differing opinions as to how things should be run. However, unlike the arguments of Hillel and Shammai, these feuds were personal. Each person had poured their preferences and beliefs into the shell of a *Torah* perspective, to the point where any disagreement could not but become deeply personal. The entire rebellion was doomed to fail from the start. Nobody cared about finding out what *Hashem* wanted, only getting what they wanted.

The *mishnah* tells us that a *machlokes leshem shamayim* will be upheld, but a *machlokes shelo*

leshem shamayim will not be. The members of Korach's assembly destroyed themselves from within. Their individual preferences could never have lasted the test of time, since they would have been discarded by the next group of strong-willed individuals who felt themselves capable of improving on what was left to them. The only one who remained was Aharon, who truly had no personal stake in the fight outside of *Hashem's* honor. The rest of the group inevitably perished. The *machlokes* of Hillel and Shammai, however, a *machlokes* entirely dedicated to discerning the true *ratzon Hashem*, still rings in our *batei medrashim* to this day.

All this is not to say that one's individuality has no place in their service of *Hakadosh Boruch Hu*. To the contrary, one's unique skills and talents are what make their *avodah* special in the eyes of *Hashem*. However, we must be exceedingly careful not to confuse our personal preferences with the *Torah* perspective. As my Rebbi, Rabbi Baruch Pesach Mendelson *shlit"a*, often says, "our outlook is often determined by the fifty *blatt gemara* we've seen, and hundreds of hours of social media and movies." We cannot assume that our natural inclinations reflect a *Torah* view. We must be sure to consult with those whom we know truly have no other intention other than to fulfil the *ratzon Hashem*, with *talmidei chachomim* and *yarei shamayim*, to ensure that all of our actions are based in a *Torah* outlook. There may then be disagreements, and they may even be fiery, but those disagreements will always have an undercurrent of respect and camaraderie, maintained by the knowledge that both sides are acting based on what they believe *Hashem* wants. Only once we do this can we be sure that our names will be forever enshrined in the *machlokes kayemes*, the eternal debates of the *ovdei Hashem*.

Promoting Peace

Yaakov Weinstock (22)

Parshas Korach mainly deals with the story of Korach and his followers and their downfall. The *Torah* tells us, at length, about the complaint of Korach and his group as they approached Moshe and Aharon. They complained that there is no reason why the two brothers should hold a higher position than anyone else, because every person in *Bnei Yisrael* is holy. However, the response to this complaint is somewhat perplexing. The *possuk* says "*vayishma Moshe vayipol al panav*"-

And Moshe heard, and he fell on his face. One can ask, why didn't Aharon fall on his face? Furthermore, throughout the rest of the encounter, Moshe speaks to Korach alone, without his broth-

er. In fact, at no point does Aharon confront Korach himself. Why isn't Aharon more involved in the defense against Korach's complaint?

The *mishna* in *Pirkei Avos* (1:12) tells us that one should try to be a *talmid* of Aharon *Hakohen*, and strive to emulate his love for peace. Rashi and Rabbeinu Yonah expand on this *mishna*, saying that "loving peace" means to go and proactively try to achieve it. The notion of creating harmony between fellow human beings should be on one's mind every moment in order to make this world a more peaceful place. Aharon epitomized this *mid-dah* of trying to create peace among everyone. For example, in *Avos Dirabbi Nassan*, it says that when Aharon would encounter two people fighting, he would approach each of the people and say that the other party wanted to reconcile. Each party would then feel bad and go apologize to the other, thus ending the argument and bringing peace between them. Now, as Aharon was embroiled in this terrible *machlokes* between Moshe and Korach, it can be assumed that Aharon's inaction was done in the name of trying to preserve peace as best as possible. He stayed quiet because he believed that was the best thing he could do to maintain peace.

This can be taken a step further. Not only was Aharon's abstention of action a promotion of peace, but his behavior is also a model for how all Jews should when involved in *machlokes*. Aharon models the idea of foregoing one's honor and bearing the pain that *machlokes* can cause. In *Derech Eretz Zuta*, it states that if one forgoes his honor, Hashem forgoes his sins. The ability to keep the pain of insult internal and externally control himself is a valued trait. We find this idea in *Sefer Orchos Tzadikim*, where it says that one who forgoes his honor merits to have his *tefillos* heard.

In our lives, there will always be moments where we feel hurt or insulted, and there will be an urge to retaliate one way or another. However, Aharon is teaching us the importance of foregoing our honor for the sake of preventing arguments. We must be like Aharon and focus on preserving peace in a proactive way. We must follow his model, and understand that controlling ourselves when faced with the tensions of *machlokes* is key to promoting the preservation of peace.

5 Minute Lomdus

Shimi Kaufman (21)

Q. The *Magen Avraham* (*Orach Chayim* 184) writes that if one only knows one of the *brachos* of *birchas hamazon*, he should not *bentch* at all, since it is a *machlokes* whether all the *brachos* of *birchas hamazon* are dependent on each other, and in cases of an uncertainty of *brachos*, we are lenient. However, we *pasken* (*Orach Chayim* 184) that if one was unsure if they said *birchas hamazon*, they must go back and say it again, since *birchas hamazon* is a *dioraisa*, and we say that *safek dioraisa lichumra* (in cases of uncertainty of a *dioraisa*, we are strict). What is the difference between an uncertainty if the different *brachos* are dependent on each other, where we are lenient, and an uncertainty if one said the *brachos* at all, where we are strict?

A. The general principle of *safek dioraisa lichumra* only applies when one will be able to remove the uncertainty by being strict. For example, in our case, if one is unsure whether they *bentched*, by *bentching* again, he can be sure that he fulfilled his obligation one way or another. However, if one only knows one *bracha*, then even if he says that one *bracha*, there will still be uncertainty if he fulfilled his obligation, since we do not know if all of the *brachos* of *birchas hamazon* are dependent on one another. Therefore, in such a case, the *Magen Avraham* says that we are lenient.

- Source: *Mishmeres Chaim Chelek I*, "Brachos" 10

Gedolim Glimpse : Rabbi Dovid Tzvi Hoffmann

Meir Morrell ('22)

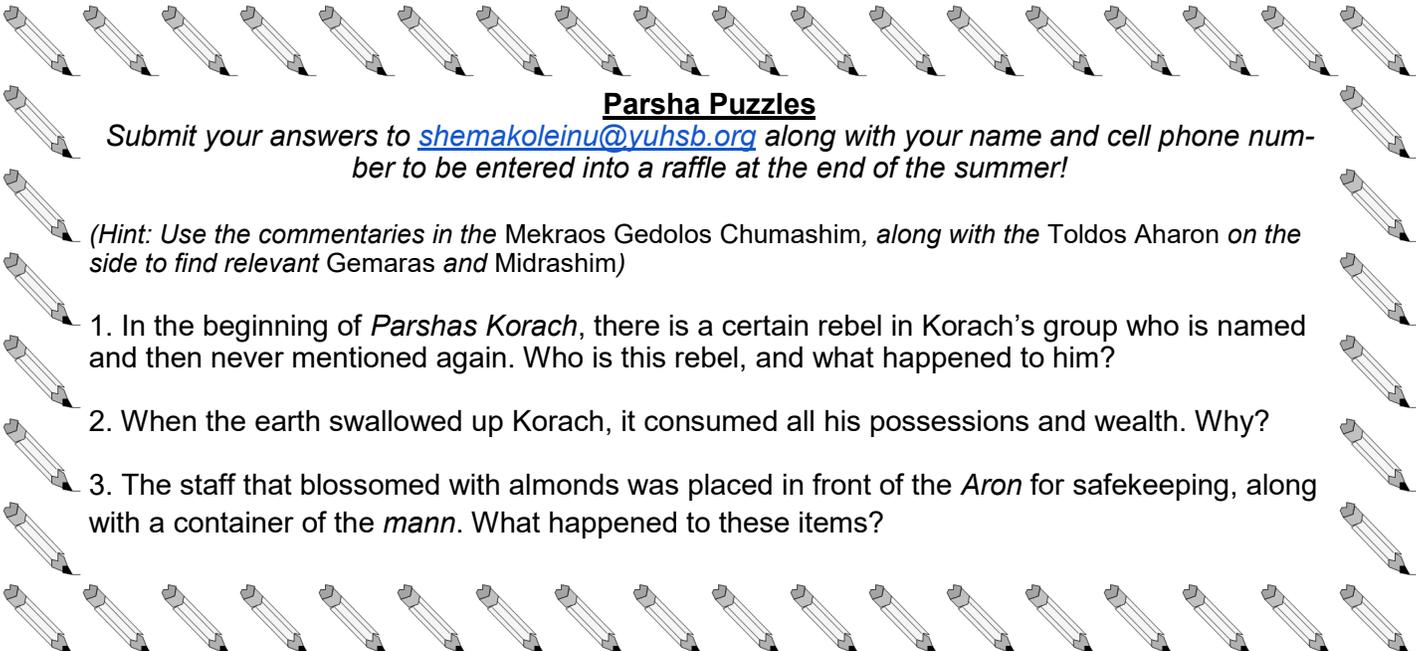
Rabbi Dovid Tzvi Hoffmann (1843-1921) was born in Verbo, Slovakia. He went to a few yeshivos before attending the college at Pressburg, from which he graduated in 1856. He then studied philosophy, history, and Oriental languages at Vienna and Berlin, taking his doctor's degree in 1871 from the University of Tübingen. In this time, he also received *semichah* from Rav Moshe Schick and Rav Azriel Hildesheimer.

Shortly after obtaining his degree, he was hired as a teacher in Rabbi Shmshon Raphael Hirsch's *Realschule* school in Frankfurt am Main, and in 1873 moved to Berlin to join the faculty of the Rabbinical Seminary of Berlin, where he eventually became *Rosh Yeshiva* in 1899 after the death of Rav Azriel Hildesheimer.

He adapted the German-Jewish approach of *Torah Im Derech Eretz*, which preached openness towards general culture, world and society. He employed a critical, scientific method in learning *Gemara*, and wrote about the history of the development of the form of the *Torah Shebaal Peh*. Despite these more “modern” tendencies, he was an original member of the more traditionally oriented *Moetzes Gedolei Hatorah* (gathering of *Torah* greats), and was known to be of great moral conduct and piety.

Rav Hoffman was the leading authority on traditional *halacha* in Germany in his lifetime, as well as an expert in the area of *midrash*. He was also known for his efforts to disprove the Documentary Hypothesis (a common model used to deny the divine nature of the *Torah*), as expressed by the Graf-Wellhausen theory, with his arguments presented in the work *Die wichtigsten Instanzen gegen die Graf-Wellhausensche Hypothese*.

In addition, he authored *seforim* such as *Die Erste Mishna, Melamed Le-ho'il*, a commentary on the *Chumash*, and many others. He died on November 20, 1921, in Berlin.



Parsha Puzzles

Submit your answers to shemakoleinu@yuhsb.org along with your name and cell phone number to be entered into a raffle at the end of the summer!

(Hint: Use the commentaries in the Mekraos Gedolos Chumashim, along with the Toldos Aharon on the side to find relevant Gemaras and Midrashim)

1. In the beginning of *Parshas Korach*, there is a certain rebel in Korach's group who is named and then never mentioned again. Who is this rebel, and what happened to him?
2. When the earth swallowed up Korach, it consumed all his possessions and wealth. Why?
3. The staff that blossomed with almonds was placed in front of the *Aron* for safekeeping, along with a container of the *mann*. What happened to these items?

Parsha Summary

Korach, along with Dasan, Aviram, and 250 men from *Shevet Reuven*, challenge Moshe's right to lead the nation alone. Moshe attempts to reason with them, but they persist in their rebellion, so Moshe suggests a test. Each member of the rebellion, along with Aharon *Hakohen*, would bring a *ketores* offering. Whoever's offering was accepted by *Hashem* would clearly be the one chosen to do the *avodah*. The test was carried out, and *Hashem* caused the 250 men from *Shevet Reuven* to be burned by a heavenly fire. Korach, Dasan, and Aviram, as well as their families and possessions, were swallowed by the earth. This incident sparked a revolt among the nation, and Aharon was forced to bring an additional *ketores* offering in order to stop a plague which *Hashem* had unleashed as retribution. *Hashem* then confirms Aharon's status through another test. All the tribal leaders, as well as Aharon, leave their staffs in the innermost chamber of the *Mishkan*, the *Kodesh Hakedoshim*, overnight. In the morning, only Aharon's staff sprouted almonds and flowers. The *parsha* concludes by outlining the duties of the *kohanim* and *levi'im*, as well as the laws of *terumah* and *ma'aser*, the gifts given to the *kohanim* and *levi'im* respectively.

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