

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Korach

3 Tammuz, 5782/July 2, 2022

Vol. 13 Num. 41 (#542)

This week's issue is dedicated by Tova and Allan Gutentberg to commemorate the yahrtzeits of Tova's parents, Rabbi Joseph and Mrs. Ruth Kelman z"l

הרב חיים יוסף בן הרב צבי יהודה ז"ל ורחל בת חיים ז"ל

And by Annie and Shloimie Romberg for the yahrzeits of Annie's father, Isidore Schindelheim, Yisroel ben Yosef u'Malka Frimet z"l; Shloimie's mother, Rae Romberg, Rachel bat Yosef v'Roizel Miriam z"l; and Shloimie's uncle and aunt, Pinya and Hendel Rondberg, HY"D, who perished in the Kielce pogrom on 5 Tammuz 1946

Choose Your Own Staff

Korach and his followers challenged the political and religious hierarchy of the Jewish people. The rebellion demonstrated suspicion on the people's part about Moshe and Aharon's legitimacy. It also demonstrated the people's strong desire to relate directly to G-d, without Levite intermediaries. Then things started to happen to the rebels. The ground swallowed up Korach and his associates. The two-hundred and fifty people who offered incense in a challenge to Aharon were burned alive. When the people complained that Moshe and Aharon had intentionally killed 'the people of G-d', they were struck with a plague. By all accounts, G-d's support for the existing hierarchy should have been crystal clear by this point, but apparently it wasn't.

After all of these drastic and miraculous signs, G-d tells Moshe to gather staffs from the leaders of all the tribes, each inscribed with their names. These would be placed in the Mishkan overnight. Whoever's staff would flower would be G-d's clearly chosen leader. Aharon's staff, submitted for the tribe of Levi, won the competition. His staff not only flowered but bore almonds.

After everything that had already happened, why was this sign needed? Why was it effective when the other miracles were not? Let's consider two approaches:

The Dangers of Cynicism

Ramban (Bamidbar 17:6) explains that the Jewish people were in fact still suspicious of Moshe and Aharon. They accepted Korach's punishment as proof that he was not the true leader, because Moshe had clearly communicated G-d's desire for this punishment. The people also accepted Aharon's claim to the priesthood, since in the past G-d had miraculously sent fire to burn his sacrifices. What was in question, then, was the status of the Leviyim. Had G-d really commanded that they alone could serve in the Mishkan? The fact that the incense-offering protesters had been miraculously burned up wasn't proof that they were illegitimate. Perhaps Moshe and Aharon had accomplished this by some trick. Perhaps this was simply an improperly offered incense of the kind that had resulted in the deaths of Aharon's sons Nadav and Avihu.

The only way to settle the people's suspicions was with a sign that was unequivocally from G-d, and that equally unequivocally communicated G-d's selection of the Leviyim. This is what the sign of the staffs accomplished. Read in this way, the story highlights the danger of skepticism. While skepticism has its place, it's also a Pandora's box that can totally undermine one's faith in people and institutions. In this case, the people were so suspicious of Moshe and Aharon that only a clear sign from G-d could help.

Rabbi Adam Friedmann

Varieties of Jewish Leadership

Rabbi Mordechai Yosef Leiner offers a different reading. He explains (*Mei haShiloach* to 17:17) that Korach and the people's desire to take on the positions of Moshe, Aharon, and the Leviyim stemmed from a misunderstanding of their own spiritual potential. When I desire someone else's role, it's because I don't understand my own role, or perhaps even that I have one.

Collecting symbols of leadership together in the Mishkan symbolized that each tribe would eventually play its own unique role in Jewish leadership. Some of these "staffs", like that of Yehudah which would produce King David, would be greater than Aharon's. But these forms of leadership were down the road; they would have to wait for their time on the historical stage. At that time, the only staff ready to bear fruit was that of the Leviyim. Once the Jews understood that all of them had a role to play in the people's historical relationship with G-d, the underlying cause for the rebellion dissipated.

This reading emphasizes the importance of understanding our own unique spiritual capacities. We need to embody the roles we were made for, and not seek to stuff ourselves into someone else's.

afriedmann@torontotorah.com

OUR BEIT MIDRASH

ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

RABBI MORDECHAI TORCZYNER

SGAN ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

RABBI JARED ANSTANDIG, RABBI YEHUDA MANN

AVREICHIM

RABBI STEVEN GOTLIB, IDAN RAKOVSKY, RABBI CHAIM METZGER

SEDER BOKER DIRECTOR

RABBI MOSHE YERES

WOMEN'S BEIT MIDRASH

MRS. SHIRA METZGER

ISRAELI CORRESPONDENTS

RABBI ADAM FRIEDMANN, RABBI JONATHAN ZIRING

CHAVERIM NATHAN DIENA, EITAN MARKUS, ANDER MOSS, DANIEL SHEINIS, NATAN SNOWBELL, ELI WELTMAN

CHAVEROT ORLY AZIZA, MAXINE EWASCHUK, MADELEINE FERRIS, BECKY FRIEDMAN, LEA GOLDMAN, TEHILLA HELFENBAUM, CHAYA JUNI, ARIELLA MARKUS, AILEEN MORRIS, HADASSAH NAUENBERG, YEJIDE OMOTOSO, FEIGA WERNER, RIVKA WERNER, KINNERET WITTY



An affiliate of
Torah MiTzion and YU

Find Toronto Torah online at
tiny.cc/torontotorah

We are grateful to
Continental Press

Summary

This chapter continues the rebuke towards the northern kingdom that began in chapter 9. They are impugned for perverting justice – using forged documents and wicked edicts - as well as for deliberately twisting the law to steal from the poor, take spoils from widows, and plunder orphans. The decreed day of reckoning is coming. A *shoah* – translated by Malbim as “sudden darkness” – will arrive from afar, and the idols once sought out for help will be of no aid. Even though the northern kingdom will bow in chains to their oppressors and fall down before those who killed them, G-d’s anger will not be calmed and His Hand will be outstretched. (1-4)

Assyria will be G-d’s means of punishing the Jews, serving as the staff and rod of His anger towards His nation. (5-6)

Assyria will be unaware of its mission, instead filling its heart with a will to destroy and cut down nations, and justifying itself because each of its officers are worthy of being kings. (Ibn Ezra) Assyria has lauded itself for conquering

city after city in the Levant and boasting that it will do the same to Shomron in Israel. Each of those conquered cities had far more idols than Jerusalem or Shomron, but they were to no avail. Assyria continues to boast that Jerusalem and the idols it worships will meet the same fate of being destroyed that befell Shomron and its idols. (7-11)

G-d will call to account all of Assyria’s actions in Zion and Jerusalem, as well as their haughtiness. The king of Assyria attributed all of his success in conquering nation after nation to his own strength and ingenuity, claiming all of the credit no matter how mighty the foe they defeated. The Assyrian king found conquest as easy as gathering eggs from a forsaken nest, with nary a peep or movement from the weak birds. G-d mocks Assyria for being comparable to an axe, saw, rod or staff that doesn’t realize that whoever wields it truly has the power. As a result of Assyria’s haughtiness it will be punished with famine and fire. (12-16) Israel’s light (Rashi: King Chizkiyahu’s Torah) and G-d’s Holiness will swiftly

devour Assyria in flames like thorns and briars. Assyria will be reduced to but a handful of trees that even a child can count, from the impressive forest that had been there before. (17-19)

Insight

How can Assyria be punished for doing what G-d commanded and prophesied them to do? Didn’t Bnei Yisrael deserve their fate? A similar question is asked in regards to Egypt, for the enslavement of Bnei Yisrael for hundreds of years. The answer given by Yeshayahu is that if Assyria had acknowledged that their actions and success came from G-d they would have been excused. The malicious intent of Assyria is what sealed their fate. [For other views on this question, see Rambam, Laws of Repentance 6:5, and Raavad there.]

cmetzger@torontotorah.com

It Happened in Israel: Rabbi Tarfon’s Dangerous Shema

A mishnah (Berachot 1:3, Talmud 10b) presents a dispute between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel as to the proper way to recite Shema. Based on the verse describing the obligation to recite it “when you lie down and when you rise” (Devarim 6:7), Beit Shammai rules that at night one must lie down for Shema and, in the morning, he must stand up. However, on the other phrase in the verse, “and when you walk along the way”, Beit Hillel derives that one may recite Shema in any position. The “lying down” and “rising” refer to the times at which one must say Shema. This mishnah then records the story of Rabbi Tarfon, who insisted on acting like Beit Shammai:

*With regard to this halakha, **Rabbi Tarfon said: Once, I was coming on the road when I stopped and reclined to recite Shema in accordance with the statement of Beit Shammai. Although Rabbi Tarfon was a disciple of Beit Hillel, he thought that fulfilling the mitzva in accordance with the opinion of Beit Shammai would be a more meticulous fulfillment of the mitzva, acceptable to all opinions. Yet in so doing, I endangered myself due to the highwaymen [listim] who accost travelers. The Sages said to him: You deserved to be in a position where you were liable to pay with your life, as you transgressed the statement of Beit Hillel.*** (William Davidson Translation)

However, it is unclear what Rabbi Tarfon did wrong, as according to all positions one is allowed to recite Shema in such a position. There are two general explanations for what Rabbi Tarfon did improperly:

Endangering himself (Rambam, Bartenura)

As Maharam Schick (ad loc) notes, the implication of the mishnah is that it was only wrong to endanger himself because the law is not like Beit Shammai. However, this is

problematic; even if the law was that one must lie down, this would not legitimize endangering himself! Three justifications are offered:

- 1) Rav Elyashiv (ad loc) suggests that the lesson is that one may not risk one’s life to be extra pious.
- 2) Rabbi Yosef Engel (*Gilyonei haShas*) cites *Beer Sheva* #21 to say that this passage implies that the law is in accordance with Tosafot, that for all mitzvot besides the cardinal sins, one has the right, but not obligation to risk one’s life.
- 3) Maharam Schick concludes that the danger was minimal, and a mitzvah would have protected him from that danger. It was only because the law was against Beit Shammai that he did not have protection from that minimal danger.

Contradicting Beit Hillel

The simpler view, however, follows the language of the mishnah – that he was liable for having violated the words of Beit Hillel. As the Vilna Gaon (*Shenot Eliyahu*) contends, by insisting on lying down, he was actively opposing Beit Hillel and the rule that the law always follows Beit Hillel. (Erubin 13b)

One may also add that the actions of rabbinic figures themselves have halachic weight, perhaps more than teachings, and that made this act more egregious. [See Bava Batra 130.]

jziring@torontotorah.com

Biography

Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk Rabbi Dovid Zirkind

One of the earliest figures in Chassidic history, and one of its most influential thinkers, was Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk. Born in 1717 in Galicia, Rabbi Elimelech was recognized as one of the great students of the Maggid of Mezerich.

Prior to the death of the Maggid, the early Chassidic movement was unified as a single group of the Baal Shem Tov's students. However, after the Maggid's death Chassidut was fragmented, and Rabbi Elimelech returned to Lizhensk to spread the thought of his teachers in southeastern Poland. His students include the Chozeh of Lublin, the Maggid of Koznitz and Menachem Mendel of Rimanov. He is commonly referred to as "the Noam Elimelech", the name of his mystical commentary to Torah.

Many legends speak of the unique relationship of Rabbi Elimelech and his brother Reb Zushya. Both were known to be extraordinarily pious individuals, but their contrasting personalities made their tales legendary. Here is one such story:

Rabbi Elimelech and Reb Zushya were once falsely accused of a crime and placed in prison with a group of other inmates. At one point in their stay, Rabbi Elimelech started to cry. Zushya asked, "Brother, why are you crying?" Rabbi Elimelech explained that he was saddened because he could not daven minchah in a room where prisoners had relieved themselves. Reb Zushya challenged his brother's reaction: "Is it not the same G-d who commanded you to pray, who is now forbidding you from doing so? Then you should not despair!" With that, Rabbi Elimelech took his brother by the hand and began to dance in great happiness.

The guards came running when they heard the commotion coming from the cell. They asked one of the inmates what was happening, and he explained that the two brothers had been arguing over the pail in the corner of the cell until they had suddenly begun to dance. The guards replied, "If the pail makes these brothers so happy, we will remove it!" The pail was removed and Rabbi Elimelech davened minchah.

The Noam Elimelech died in 1787, on the 21st of Adar. His yahrtzeit is observed by many who visit his grave each year, and some communities do not recite tachanun on that day.

dzirkind@rjconline.org

Torah and Translation

Moshe's Mercy for Korach Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, Noam Elimelech, Korach Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

"ויחר למשה כו' אל תפן אל מנחתם לא חמור אחד מהם נשאתי ולא הרעותי את כו' (במד' טו:טו) ויש לדקדק הלא המה העוברים על עיקר הדת שאמרו "אין תורה מן השמים" (ירושל' סנהד' י:א), ומה אמר "אל תפן"? הלא בוודאי ידע באמת שהם מנחותי שאול חיים, ואיך היה ההוא אמינא אצלו שיפן ד' אל מנחתם? ועוד האיך תלוי בזה שאמר "לא חמור אחד כו'"; דמשמע אם הוא לוקח מהם חמור או הרע להם לא היה ראוי להם עונש על אמרם "אין תורה כו'?" והענין מופלא.

אך נראה, דהנה מדרך הצדיק שאינו יכול לראות בצער בני אדם כלל וכלל, וגם בבני אדם רשעים אין רוצה שיענשו בזה העולם, כי אינו יכול לראות בצערם, וכן הטבע הצדיקים. ואם אמנם שחטאו וההכרחי שישולם להם עונשם, רוצה שיענש בעולם הבא ולא שיראה בצערם בעולם הזה.

וזה שאמר "אל תפן אל כו' לא חמור כו'"; בתוך הדברים התנצל לפניו יתברך שלא יענשו בזה העולם, ולימד זכות עליהם באמרו "לא חמור אחד מהם כו'"; דהנה כן הוא המהנה תלמידי חכמים וצדיקים מנכסיו אז ההנאה הזאת תביאהו שלא במהרה הוא חוטא להיות רשע גמור לכפור בתורה חלילה:

וגם זאת אם הצדיק גוער באיזה אדם גם הגערה הזאת פועל בו שלא ישתקע בחטאו, כי הצדיק בגערותו שגוער בו הוא משבר הכח הקליפה של הרשע.

וזהו שאמר "לא חמור כו'"; כלומר אני גרמתי להם זאת שעל ידי שלא לקחתי מהם זה גרמה להם שחטאו שאם נהייתי מהם היה מגין עליהם זאת לבלתי יחטאו, "וגם לא הרעותי את אחד מהם," בשום רעה וגערה, ונמצא אינם חייבים כל כך לעונש בעולם הזה, וגם עולם הבא ראוי ליתן להם, אחר העונש שיענשו על חטאם...

"And Moshe was angered... Do not turn to their offering! Not a donkey of theirs have I taken, and also I have not harmed [one of them]. (Bamidbar 16:15)" One should examine: They were the ones violating the essence of the religion, saying, "Torah is not from Heaven" (Jer. Talmud Sanhedrin 10:1), so why did he say, "Do not turn?" He certainly knew the truth, that they were among those who would go to the depths alive; how could he have a thought that G-d would turn to their offering? Further, why should this depend on his saying, "Not a donkey of theirs, etc.," which sounds like had he taken a donkey from them, or harmed them, they would not have deserved to be punished for saying, "Torah is not [from Heaven]?" This is hard to understand.

But it appears that it is the way of the righteous that he cannot bear to see people suffer in any way. Even wicked people, he does not wish them punished in this world, for he cannot bear to see their pain. And such is the nature of the righteous. Even though they have sinned and it is required that their punishment be meted out to them, he wants them to be punished in the next world, and not to see their pain in this world.

When he said, "Do not turn, etc. Not a donkey, etc.," in his words he presented before G-d an excuse, such that they should not be punished in this world. He presented merit for them, saying, "Not a donkey of theirs, etc.," for it is true that when one benefits Torah scholars and the righteous from his assets, then this benefit causes him not to sin soon, to be a fully wicked person, denying Torah, G-d forbid.

Also this: If the righteous person scolds someone, that scolding also affects him, to not be embedded in his sin, for the righteous person, in his scolding that he scolds this person, breaks the force of the [impure] shell of the wicked person.

When he said, "Not a donkey, etc.," that meant, "I caused this for them. For since I did not take from them, that caused them to sin, for had I benefited from them, that would have protected them from sinning." "And also, I have not harmed one of them" with any harm or scolding. So they are not that liable for punishment in this world, and they should also be given the next world, after they are punished for their sin...

COME LEARN WITH US!

Click Underlined Lines to Open Zooms. Clickable links also at www.torontotorah.com/letslearn
All times ET. Classes are free & open to all, unless otherwise noted.

Many of our classes are now starting summer hiatus, but learning opportunities remain!

Monday-Thursday

10:00 AM - Noon: Adult Seder Boker with Rabbi Moshe Yeres at Yeshivat Or Chaim!

Monday/Wednesday: Talmud Succah, Orot of Rav Kook

Tuesday/Thursday: Parshah, Tanach: Sefer Melachim

Shabbat July 1-2

After hashkamah R' Yehuda Mann, Halachah from the Parshah, Clanton Park

7:30 PM R' Chaim Metzger, Siddur Shiur: Lecha Dodi, BAYT (Gruda Beis Medrash) (women)

20 min before minchah R' Steven Gotlib, Pirkei Avot, Village Shul

After minchah Idan Rakovsky, Weekly Class, Shaarei Tefillah

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gemara Ketuvot, BAYT (Gruda Beis Medrash) (men)

Sunday July 3

9:00 AM R' Zev Spitz & R' Yehuda Mann, Semichat Chaver Program, Clanton Park (men)

9:15 AM Idan Rakovsky, The Torah of Rav Shagar, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university) *not this week*

Monday July 4

8:45 AM Idan Rakovsky, Likutei Moharan of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

2:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Into the Song of Songs, ZOOM <http://tiny.cc/idanrak> #4 of 5

7:30 PM Prielle & Idan Rakovsky, Song of the Week, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklysong>

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Rescue in Halachah, Shomrai Shabbos (men)

Tuesday July 5

7:00 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 15), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men)

Wednesday July 6

6:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Talmud: Avodah Zarah, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/idolsarebad>

10:00 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, When Will Mashiach Come? Part II, Week 1 of 2
In Person Only at Yeshivat Or Chaim, register at <https://torontotorah.com/wednesdays> **NEW!**

7:45 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah, Clanton Park

7:50 PM Idan Rakovsky, The Laws of Shabbat, Shaarei Tefillah

8:15 PM R' Chaim Metzger, Barriers to Belief, Week 1 of 3, BAYT (Jarvis Freedman Library)
And on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/chaimmetzger> **NEW!**

Thursday July 7

9:00 AM Idan Rakovsky, Mei haShiloach, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 25), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (women)

8:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Gemara Beitzah, email yman@torontotorah.com for rotating location

Friday July 8

9:00 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Parshah, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

10:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, R' Mordechai Torczyner, R' Yehuda Mann, Bava Batra Perek 2 *advanced*
In-person at Yeshivat Or Chaim, on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/frishiur>

COMING UP 8:00 PM Monday JULY 10: S. Y. Agnon's *v'lo Nikashel* ("That we not stumble")
With R' Mordechai Torczyner, ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/agnon>

THANK YOU!

to all of the high school students, returnees from Gap Year programs and university students
who learned with us for the month of June in our Summer Beit Medrash at Yeshivat Or Chaim!