

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

KORAH

JUNE 22-23, 2012

3 TAMUZ 5772

DEDICATIONS: Mazal Tov to Mariyah – Happy Bat Mitzvah and Happy Birthday!

Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach Schedule and Announcements
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Friday Night: Candles: 8:11PM - Afternoon and Evening service (Minha/Arbith): 7:00 PM

Morning Service (Shaharith): 9:00AM – NATI ABITTAN will be reading the Torah this Shabbat
Please say Shemah at home by 8:15 AM

No Kiddush sponsor this week. We will have coffee and cake. We need Kiddush dedications.

After our request this week, we have three Shabbats covered, but we have plenty more. Without sponsors we can't have a Kiddush each Shabbat. Last year around this time we made an appeal which took us through the Holidays. We again need you to step up and donate a Kiddush. You can email back, or call IDA or go on to our website BenaiAsher.org. Dairy Kiddush starts at \$200 for a simple Kiddush, \$300 deluxe and \$400 with Bourikas. Meat Kiddush starts at \$350, \$450 for deluxe and \$600 for the works! Please dedicate one this summer in memory of a loved one, or in honor of a birthday, anniversary, or other happy occasion. We also need Seudah Shelishi sponsors at \$100 per week.

Pirkei Avot with Rabbi Aharon at 6:40 PM –
Childrens program at 6:40 with Rabbi Colish followed by
Minha: 7:20 PM
Seudah Shelishi and a Class 8:00 – With Rabbi David ... The Korach Opportunity – a test and the results.
Evening Service (Arbith): 9:00 PM - Shabbat Ends: 9:11PM

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit Sunday 8:00,
It seems Sunday, when almost everyone is around is the hardest day to get ten to come on time
Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

Sunday Morning, Halacha Class at 9:00, Kosher Kitchen 9at :30
Daily 6:30 AM class – Shelah Hakadosh on the Perasha

Monday Night Class with Rabba Yanai – Mincha 7:30 followed by class at 8PM – Thanks Greg & Boris Safaniev
Men's Halacha Class Tuesday Nights 8:30-10:30: Basar BeChalav – With Michael and David
Hebrew Reading Crash Course 8-9 PM and continuing Monday Nights throughout the Summer. Beginner and intermediate levels welcome!

Ladies Shabbat Class at the home of Tina Lemberger – each Shabbat at 5:30

Daniel Wagner will be running a volleyball club every Sunday morning on the beach for kid Starts this Sunday 17th. 9:30 - 11:30. ages 6-18. All summer long. Speak to Yosef or Dan to sign up.

GREAT ADVENTURES: This Monday the 25th of June, we are taking all the Kids who earned a trip by participating in Tefilot and helping in the Synagogue to great adventures. We asked for sponsors and we are grateful that Hindy and Bobby stepped up with a \$360 donation. We also have a donation from the Azizio and Bibi Family. We need more. We're hoping to raise at least \$1000 more. If any of you can match the Mizrahi donation, it would be great. If not, can we get at least ten of you to pledge \$100 towards the trip. Its so important to encourage the kids who are the future. So far Rabbi Colish and Sam will be chaperoning. We also need a lady to go, please volunteer. It would be great if a few more parents volunteered to come. Please speak with Yosef or Sam or email back to me.

please reply to
ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com

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**My daughter Mariyah
 celebrated her Bat Mitzvah this
 week.** Everyone working the party
 said they had been at hundreds
 or thousands of bar or bat
 mitzvahs and they had never
 seen anything like it – as creative
 or meaningful. But hearing that
 about something Chantelle plans
 and executes is not unusual.
 There are few people as creative
 at doing something with meaning
 and emotion.

Seventy girls showed up.
 Chantelle wanted them to
 appreciate the sacrifice of those
 in the army and how much we
 needed to support them, both
 Israeli troops and American
 forces. Upon arrival, they
 received uniforms and dog tags
 and had their faces painted, while
 out on the beach surrounded by
 sandbag fortifications. They then
 entered a large military tent where
 they heard on the screens from
 soldiers in the Israeli army
 including Mikhayla's good friend
 Chantal Low who has been in the
 IDF for a year. They prepared
 packages to send to Chantal's
 platoon. Then under the direction
 of Warren Levi and his staff, the
 girls headed out beyond the dune
 to boot camp. They graduated
 and received Berets. Went back
 to the tent to wash for dinner, eat,
 and say birkat hamazon,
 Mariyah's speech come next and
 an awards ceremony. Finally they
 headed back to the beach to
 dance and celebrate. Special
 thanks from Chantelle to Reut
 and Orin, to the Hermann
 Brothers, Hapina Restaurant,

Howie Bodner, Yigal of MIX
 Entertainment and everyone else
 who helped.

Mariyah wanted to speak about
 being responsible for one's self
 and those around you and the
 unique responsibility of women in
 this day and age. She asked if
 she could leave out all the fluff
 and thank yous and focus on a
 message. We worked with her for
 a few hours and this is what she
 came up with

My Dear Friends.

**I had the pleasure of studying
 pirkei avot with Leah Colish for
 my bat mitzvah learning. I want
 to focus on one mishna. [Hillel]
 used to say, if I am not for me
 who is for me, if I am for myself
 what am I, and if not now
 when."**

We girls today seem to be
 different than any of the woman
 who came before us. We live in a
 different time in what seems to be
 a different world.

For the past year we have been
 doing the bat mitzvah circuit. How
 many of our mothers had bat
 mitzvah parties or celebrations.
 And if a few of them had one, did
 any of our grandmothers
 celebrate theirs? The world is
 changing.

We live in a time where women
 have incredible opportunities.

From the operating room to the
 courtroom, from higher education
 to the military. From the supreme
 court to the senate from the board
 room and soon enough in the
 white house. . We find ourselves
 in the last few decades breaking
 through all sorts of glass ceilings.

Today in Israel although the vast
 majority of religious women in
 Israel choose national service
 over the army, the number of

religious women enlisting in the
 IDF is expected to be up from last
 year by nearly 25%.

Religious women are becoming
 an integral part of the army in key
 positions and especially as
 teachers and trainers.

We must appreciate their sacrifice
 in Israel along with the sacrifice
 made by so many of our fellow
 Americans in the past ten years in
 Iraq and Afghanistan. Its strange
 when we consider that many of
 those soldiers are only 6 years
 older than us.

In the army soldiers go through
 12 weeks of basic training. While
 training, they make mistakes, they
 learn and they grow. But once
 they are out in the field, a soldier
 must be responsible for himself
 and as an extension to all those
 around him.

We girls have gone, not through
 12 weeks of training, but 12 years
 of training. And we are at the
 point in life that we must stand up
 and assume a role in this world.
 We are bat mitzvah, daughters of
 the commandments. We have to
 become the leaders of tomorrow.
 We have to take our roles in this
 new world. But is the world really
 so different from the world of the
 past? After all King Solomon
 taught – that there is nothing new
 under the sun.

My Dad often quotes the following
 especially when he has to make
 some speech about women..
 "The man is the head but the
 woman is the neck. She can turn
 the head any way she wants."
 Although he says he learned it
 from Rabbi Abittan z'sl, I am not
 do sure he didn't hear it in My Big
 Fat Greek Wedding.

In some ways, women have
 always been the necks deciding
 which way to go.

Hashem clearly commands Abraham, "All that Sarah says, listen to her voice." Abraham obeys God's command to listen to Sarah his wife.

It is Rivka who manipulates the situation so that Yaakov receives the blessing from Yishak.

It is Rachel who watches over us from her Kever.

It was Miriam who convinced her parents to remarry and allow Moshe to be born and it was Miriam who watched over Moses when his mother placed him in the basket into the river.

It was to Slalponit and not to her husband Manoach, that the angel appeared telling of the birth of Sampson.

It was the prayers of Chanah that brought the great prophet Shemuel.

It was Ruth who was willing to give up everything to be a Jew who was able to redeem the soul of King David and the Mashiach from Sedom.

It was Esther who instructed her uncle Mordechai and thus saved the Jewish people from Haman. In every generation it is the Jewish mother who as the core of the home has been the primary force in extending the Jewish chain from generation to generation.

The gemarah in Baba Metzia: page 59 teaches us: "A man should always be careful to respect his wife, because the blessing in the home is not there but for her"

We are the source of Beracha. And with that comes tremendous responsibility.

After all the same Gemara teaches (Page 42a) that Bracha only rests on that which is "hidden from the eye".

So in this changing world let us remember. We have opportunities today that we never had before. We can become the heads if we want to and by all means, let's not be afraid to become doctors and lawyers, business owners and politicians.

But let's not forget that it's the neck the guides us, that we have a greater responsibility as women, we have the responsibility to raise and guide the next generation, we have the responsibility to be the link to those that follow us.

Let us not forget that we bring the blessing and let us remember blessing comes to that which is hidden from the eye. We should all be blessed to be successful; we should be blessed to achieve whatever we dream. But we shouldn't forget our most important role. We shouldn't forget the importance of doing things quietly. And we shouldn't forget that we are the future.

We are all so proud of Mariyah. May she grow from strength to strength.

As I sit down putting together the newsletter, I am reminded of a verse and a story I would tell Moses and Mariyah every year as we approached this portion. It is the story of two women. Of the wife of Korach and of the wife of On Ben Pelet of whom King Solomon writes, "The wisdom of women builds her house.". The story follows and is placed right after the summary of the Perasha.

I spoke with Mr Sam Zalta today. What an incredible guy. At 98 he talks to me like he did when I was a kid playing ball or at the kids minyan on Shabbat. He told

me how he remembered my great uncle Dave Bibi who was very close to me as a child. He remembered when David and my great uncle Morris arrived in America with their mother and came to his father for a haircut before my own grandfather's wedding. (My grandfather Reuben and his father Joseph had arrived many years prior.) Its so important to take the time to speak with our parents and grandparents and if not our own with other grandparents just to understand the world they came from and lived in. They put everything in a different perspective.

On Monday night, we commemorated the Sheloshim – 30 days – for Mr. Sonny Gindi.

It was very special to hear the rabbis, but more so to hear from his son Isaac who spoke so well and really gave us a different perspective on a very special man. Ricky Sutton also spoke and between the two of them I was brought to tears a number of times. We pray that Hashem will bless Sonny's wife Irene, his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren that they should continue the charitable work of their father and make a difference as Sonny did for the community and klal Yisrael.

In Rabbi Mansours Daily Halacha, he addressed two issues in the last few days and these brought lots of emails and questions. Playing ball and riding a bicycle on Shabbat. I told Rabbi Mansour today that I never has so many newsletter people write me asking me to on something I never wrote about.

With regard to playing ball, I met with a couple of well-known poskim last year in Lakewood after our youth director instituted a kids program which included ball playing, I was curious to determine how to handle this and

was told that if it was part of getting the kids to participate on Shabbat its OK. We are more lenient and allow kids handling and paying with a ball on Shabbat. Rabbi Mansour explained this as well when he commented on inflating a ball.

As to the bicycle, Rabbi Mansour pointed out as he did in Daily Halacha some five years ago that Hacham Ovadia is certainly against it. Considering the fact that so many in the community do continue to ride their bikes within an Eruv, usually based on, "this is how we always did it – but like millers cheese on pizza in Vic's – everything eventually changes ...and at some point, the this is how we always did it argument dies- ", or on other opinions (The Ben Ish Chai ruled that one may ride his bicycle in the streets of Baghdad on Shabbat.), Rabbi Mansour was very respectful in noting that, "It hopefully goes without saying that we in no way intend to insult or offend any individuals in the community. We do not judge and we respect each person's individual decisions."

Bottom line ... ask your local rabbi! And remember to respect each other no matter what.

Shabbat Shalom, David Bibi PS ... Thinking about how we must respect each other no matter what, my Cousin Morris pointed out an article in Jewish World magazine on Monday, titled: Can We All Get Along? I tweeted the link. I found Dr. Erica Brown's article very interesting. She talks about the community that was. Why could they get along so much better than we do?

I grew up as an Ashkenazic Jew in a predominantly Sephardic town: the square mile spit of sand and streets of Deal, New Jersey on the shore. I don't look Syrian,

and when people asked me if I was Syrian, I would joke about being a wannabe. It was not because I saw myself ritually or materially like the Jews around me, but I saw something in the Syrian culture that made me very envious. The community had a certain kind of intimacy, an easy sort of connectedness that allowed people with very different customs and behaviors to sit at the same Shabbat table without judgment. At the time, only a small percentage of the Jews in Deal were really Sabbath observant (now the number is much larger), but almost everyone I knew kept a kosher home, had Friday night dinner and observed the holidays in some way. Rumor had it that every woman went to the mikvah. As I grew older and became more of a student of Jewish history, I understood that this kind of acceptance was common in other Sephardic communities. Certain commandments were central to maintaining the integrity of one's Jewishness, but the bonds of family and community were even stronger than any distance created by differing ritual practices or levels of observance. Unity was paramount, and in order to achieve it, certain individual predilections had to be compromised for the ultimate sake of the wholeness of the community. The community is your family, and everyone in a family does not look alike or behave alike, but there is room at the table for them all. I was not seeing that in most of the Ashkenazic communities I lived in or visited. Often very small differences of ritual practice created what seemed like untraversable distances among Jews. The Ashkenazi air always seems thick with judgment: too much to the right of me, too much to the left of me, not close enough for friendship. Family? Forget about it.

This is not a sociological study of religion. These were my naïve childhood observances of the way different communities function and achieve or miss the goal of unity. Even so, I still believe the only way unity and true ahavat Yisrael can be achieved is to believe in one's heart and to illustrate through one's actions that family comes first. We are immensely lucky to be part of an extended family that is thousands of years old. Religion is a critical glue in keeping family together, but we have to remember that it is not the only glue. I mean this as no heresy. Being Jewish is a faith, a nationality, an ethnicity and a layer of identity. Whichever layer you choose as your outer garment determines much of what lies beneath.

I work with many Jews who are not observant of Jewish law but are proudly committed to the Jewish community. They give more tzedakah than most Orthodox Jews I know, and they donate more of their time to making sure that Jewish adults with serious disabilities can live independently or that seniors have Meals on Wheels or that new transplants to the area are contacted by the Jewish community and welcomed. They are part of my family, but I would venture to say that they are not seen as part of the family for many of my coreligionists. And that is sad. Because family is family, and family members come in all stripes and colors, irrespective of how they dress or what rituals they observe. I have learned a great deal from my extended family, and I have not forgotten what it means to grow up near the ocean where it takes a lot of grains of sand to make up a beach.

Dr. Erica Brown is the scholar-in-residence of the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: Korach, along with Dattan, Aviram, and 250 men from Shevet Reuven, challenged Moshe and Aharon's leadership. Moshe set the next day for a showdown, hoping that the rebels would reconsider their rebellion.

2nd Aliya: After attempting to convince Korach to reconsider, Moshe attempted to sway Dattan and Aviram. Moshe's efforts were rebuffed.

3rd Aliya: The next day Hashem instructed Moshe and the nation to separate themselves from the tents of Korach, Dattan, and Aviram. Moshe proclaimed that his and Aharon's leadership would be divinely confirmed through the way in which Korach and his followers would die. Korach, Dattan, and Aviram, along with their entire families were swallowed up by the earth, while the 250 men from Reuven were consumed by a heavenly fire.

4th Aliya: A rebellion broke out among the people, and Aharon had to intervene in order to stop the plague sent as a punishment against the people. 14,700 people perished in the plague.

5th Aliya: Aharon's appointment as Kohain Gadol is reconfirmed through the test of the staffs. Aharon's staff was the only staff that miraculously sprouted almonds.

6th Aliya: Aharon's staff is placed in the Holy of Holies. The duties of the Kohanim and Leviyim are stated along with a list of the Kohain's share in the nations produce and live stock.

7th Aliya: The Levite's share of the nation's produce and the gifts

given by the Leviyim to the Kohanim are stated.

Samuel 1 11:14 - 12:22: This week's Haftorah takes place after Shmuel the Navi had anointed Shaul to be the first king of Israel. Shmuel, who was a descendent of Korach, exhorts the nation to follow the ways of Hashem. He criticizes them for wanting a king while at the same time, pointing out that everyone, including the king, is subject to Hashem's law.

Tale of Two Wives--Torah Tots

Korach was a man who had it all. He was so rich that it took 300 animals to carry the keys for his chests of gold and silver. He was an outstanding Torah scholar, a wise and learned man. He was the descendent of one of the most prestigious Jewish families, the sons of Kehat, who were given the special privilege of carrying the covers of the Ark. They were known for their Torah knowledge and warranted these privileges. Additionally, Korach was on intimate terms with both Moshe, the leader of the entire Bnei Yisroel, and his brother Aharon, the Kohain Gadol.

By contrast, one of Korach's followers, a man by the name of Ohn ben Pelet, was none of these. The Torah mentions nothing by which Ohn ben Pelet was distinguished. Ohn ben Pelet was neither particularly clever nor highborn. It is therefore surprising that each of their lives took such an unexpected turn. In fact, the fates of Korach and Ohn ben Pelet were the exact opposite of what one might anticipate!

The well-connected and intellectually gifted Korach met a bitter end. Not only did he bring himself to ruin, but hundreds of his followers met with the same fate. On the other hand, Ohn ben Pelet was saved, together with his

entire family. Indeed, he was the only follower of Korach who escaped punishment.

What was the reason for these different outcomes? None other than the conduct of their respective wives, and the influence they wielded over their husbands.

Korach had a wife who fueled his resentment and humiliation over his secondary status. This led Korach to instigate a rebellion against Moshe and Aharon, for which the earth swallowed him and his 250 followers. In contrast, On ben Pelet's wife advised him not to participate in Korach's insurrection and at the very last second, his wife rescued her entire family from destruction. Her unseemly actions saved her husband from the same end as Korach and his 250 followers. His wife was a true "Akeret Habayit" (mainstay of the home), the embodiment of the highest ideals of Jewish womanhood.

Korach's wife, by contrast, aided and abetted her husband and his group of rebels through her actions and words. Instead of being an Akeret Habayit, the main component and underlying foundation of the Jewish home, she chose to be an "O'keret Habayit," literally a woman who destroys and uproots her home.

Here's the Story. Moshe had just been teaching the Bnei Yisroel about the Mitzvah of tzitzit.

So when Korach returned home and his wife asked him "What's new?" Korach replied, "Today Moshe taught us the Mitzvah of tzitzit, putting on fringes of blue-wool."

"What does this Mitzvah of blue wool mean?" asked his wife.

And Korach replied, "He told us that Hashem commanded that we place fringes on each of the corners of a four-cornered garment: three threads of white wool and one of techelet (blue) wool."

"He is playing games with you, that Moshe," said his wife. "Every day he comes to you with something new and says that Hashem has so commanded him. But it sounds to me like he's got a wild imagination." If blue wool is so magical that with one thread the obligation is fulfilled, let me make you a tallit (prayer shawl) entirely of blue-wool. Take it over to Moshe and ask him if a four-cornered garment dyed techelet blue requires tzitzit - fringes."

This was just the beginning! She reminded Korach that Moshe made his brother Aharon the Kohain Gadol and his nephews as Kohanim. Where does the Terumah go? To the Kohanim. The Leviyim only receive the scrawny Maaser portions. And a tenth of that goes back to the Kohanim!

"If that is not enough, he ridicules you. Didn't he force all the Leviyim to shave the hair from their heads? And what about when he and his brother Aharon lifted each and every Levi and shook them like a lulav in all directions? Surely that was meant to ridicule and humiliate you!"

Korach finally gave in to his wife's arguments and decided to challenge Moshe. All that night Korach walked around the camp. He wasn't recognizable, since his hair was completely shaven off, moustache, beard and lashes. When anyone asked him why he was clean-shaven, he took the opportunity to complain about Moshe: "Moshe did this to me," he declared! "And not only to me, but to all the Leviyim. He also

shook each of us as if we were lulavim. Meanwhile, his brother Aaron is all dressed up in fancy-shmancy outfits."

Korach convinced the men from Shevet Reuven to join him. That's where On ben Pelet of Shevet Reuven comes in. He's so impressed with Korach's words that he decides to go along with him. When On returned home, he tells his wife, "I have joined Korach in his fight against Moshe."

On's wife knows that Korach is evil. She tells her husband that he is being foolish for becoming involved in Korach's insurrection. "What do you gain by joining Korach? Even if he wins, he will take the leadership for himself and not share it with you. If Moses is the master and teacher, you are his student; and if Korach becomes the master and teacher, you will still be his student. You have nothing to gain by becoming involved in the quarrels of others."

On replies, "It is too late - I already swore to Korach that I would help him. I have already participated in the pep rally and have to show up for the main event. I swore to it, and you know that swearing falsely is a grave sin."

On's wife, however, is not deterred, and she assures her husband that she will take care of the situation. "I have a plan to save you," she answers. "It will prevent them from coming to get you, and you will not have to violate your oath."

That evening, On's wife proceeds to mix strong wine into her husband's drink until he becomes intoxicated. He immediately falls into a deep, heavy sleep.

Knowing that the zealous members of Korach's band would

not approach to look at a married woman grooming her uncovered hair, she sits at the entrance of her tent, lets her hair down and begins to comb it.

Korach's people come to take her husband to Korach's gathering. When they see On's wife sitting there combing her hair, they immediately turn around and leave. Korach sends a second set of messengers to get On. But they, too, won't come close because of On's wife. So when later, Korach and his band are swallowed up by the earth, On ben Peleth is saved.

This story teaches us the critically important role that a wife plays and the extent to which her behavior affects her husband and family. Korach's wife incited him to revolt against Moshe. On's wife saved her husband from a terrible mistake.

Of this wife who acted with intelligence to keep her home intact, and who applied wisdom to save her husband, King Solomon says in Proverbs (14:1), "The wisdom of women builds her house." On the other hand, of Korach's wife, King Solomon continues..., "But folly plucks it down with her hands." For by her evil advice, his wife caused the ruination of her own home and led to the destruction of Korach and his entire party

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"And he shall not be like Korach and his followers." (Bemidbar 17:5)

Our perashah records the most devastating argument the Jewish people ever had. In order to end it, Hashem performed a miracle that the ground opened up and all of Korach's people died. This should not go to waste. It's important to learn the lesson of

this story. Jews can disagree and even compete but it must end there.

On August 14, 2002, there was a major blackout in much of the eastern part of the United States. This created financial loss for many companies. Power was restored to the Klein's kosher ice cream company in Brooklyn (a Chalav Yisrael ice cream company). The power was restored early the morning after the blackout began, and they did not suffer any loss.

Abba Klein's first thoughts, then, were how his main competitor, Mehadrin Dairy (another Chalav Yisrael company), was faring. Upon hearing that Mehadrin's power had not yet been restored, Mr. Klein called the owner and offered him space in his freezers. Mehadrin accepted the generous offer.

Mr. Klein also hooked up special cables to the Mehadrin trucks, which precluded their suffering any loss. What could have been an opportunity for great gain between two rivals was used instead as a great opportunity to sanctify Hashem's name.

Mr. Klein clearly learned the lesson of the perashah. I hope and pray that we all can learn the lesson as well. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"It's enough for you, sons of Levi." (Bemidbar 16:7)

When Korah, Datan and Abiram came to Moshe and questioned his authority, they also expressed their wishes to become like the Kohanim, and serve G-d in a closer way. Moshe tried to diffuse the issue by saying that they already have a special status by being Leviim (Levites), so why ask for more? Ultimately,

this became a major rebellion, and the only way it could be squashed is by an open miracle of the earth swallowing up Korah and his followers. This was Divine proof that Moshe was correct in his decision.

However, the Midrash tells us that forty years later, when Moshe begged and pleaded with Hashem to try to enter Israel, Hashem refused him with the same words that Moshe used to Korah, "Rav Lachem - It is enough for you," which is similar to "Rav Lach" Hashem was saying to him, "Moshe, it is enough for you to be the leader here. You don't have to go to Israel." The reason these same words were used was that Moshe was being shown that it is incorrect to tell someone not to strive for a greater position in spiritual matters. Although Korah used the wrong methods and ultimately paid with his life, he still wanted an opportunity to get closer to Hashem, and Moshe seemed to be telling him, "It's enough. You don't need more."

We learn from here an important lesson. If we see someone getting close to Hashem more than we are able to handle for ourselves, we should never hold him back. Sometimes we see people learning more Torah than we do, or praying Amidah for a longer time. Even if we cannot be like them, we should not discourage them. We should understand that everyone has to be comfortable on his own level and ideally, we should be happy that Hashem is being served in a better way. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR Korah's Mistakes

Parashat Korah tells of the uprising led by Korah against the authority of Moshe and Aharon,

which ended in the death of Korah and all his followers. Together with his cohorts, Korah came before Moshe and Aharon and proclaimed, "The entire congregation – they are all holy! So why do you raise yourselves above the assembly of God?" Korah's contention was that all Beneh Yisrael are endowed with sanctity; each and every Jew is holy by virtue of the sacred soul contained within him or her. As such, Korah claimed, there was no need for Moshe and Aharon to assert their authority over the rest of the people.

Truth be told, Korah's assumption of "Kol Ha'eda Kulam Kedoshim" – that all members of Beneh Yisrael are holy – is absolutely and indisputably correct. Each one of us contains a sacred soul, no matter who we are and even if we fall short of our religious obligations. Halacha very clearly establishes that if somebody orders us at gunpoint to kill a fellow Jew, we must disobey the order even at the expense of our own life. As the Gemara explains, one Jew's blood is no "redder" than that of another Jew; no Jewish life is more valuable than another. Even if the person being threatened is a major Jewish philanthropist who sits on the board of ten prominent Jewish organizations, and he is told to kill a Jew with a severe mental disability, he must refuse the order. Despite his extraordinary accomplishments and great influence on the Jewish world, has no right to assume that his life is worth more than that of any other Jew, including people with mental disabilities. All members of Beneh Yisrael are equally holy, because we all contain a sacred soul.

The question, then, arises, what was Korah's mistake? If, indeed, "The entire congregation is holy," then why was he wrong for

protesting against Moshe and Aharon's leadership?

Korah's contention was fundamentally flawed for several reasons. First, he failed to recognize that there are two forms of Kedushat Yisrael – the sanctity with which we are endowed. Although it is true that we all share a basic quality of holiness by virtue of the sacred soul within us, there is an additional dimension of Kedusha that each of us creates through our actions. Moshe and Aharon were, in one sense, holier than the rest of the nation because of their piety. It is true that regarding one aspect of Kedusha they were no different than anybody else, but there is another type of holiness that depends on one's character. And since they were the great Sadikim of the generation, they were worthy to lead the rest of the nation.

Korah's second mistake was in thinking that because we are all sacred we do not need religious leaders. Even great Torah Sages consult with other Sages for guidance and direction. The fact that we are all sacred does not mean we have all the answers we need to live a proper Torah life. We need the guidance of the "Moshe and Aharon" of each generation to help ensure that we conduct ourselves the way we should.

Korah also made another mistake. The Midrash says that he and his followers put on garments dyed in Techelet and then came to Moshe and asked whether these garments require a Techelet string with the Sisit, like ordinary garments do. Moshe ruled that they do, and Korah and his followers then began ridiculing him. If a single thread of Techelet suffices for a white garment, they argued, then why would a garment that is entirely Techelet

require a Techelet string? Korah's mistake was in trying to apply intuitive logic to Halachic reasoning. Halacha operates on its own internal logic, and we accept its authority even we do not fully understand its rationale. We cannot understand, for example, why a woman who was educated in Harvard and holds a Phd in Jewish law cannot serve as a witness in Bet Din, any more than we can understand why a Jewish king – such as Mashiah himself – may not serve as a witness in a Bet Din. Korah thought he could write his own Halacha based on his own logic and intuition, and this, too, was a grave mistake.

Finally, Korah erred in focusing on the goal and purpose of Misvot, without regard for its details. The Sages teach that the purpose of the Techelet string – whose color resembles the heavens – is to remind us of the divine throne so that we always remain cognizant of our obligations to God. Korah argued that if a single Techelet string serves this purpose, then certainly an entire garment of Techelet is a far more effective reminder. While the argument sounds reasonable, it is wrong because God demands more than just realizing the purpose of the Misva. The act itself, the faithful observance of all details and intricacies, is a critical component of any Misva. Yes, the purpose of Techelet is to remind us of the heavenly throne, but the Torah demands compliance with all the detailed Halachot irrespective of this goal.

Unfortunately, many people today repeat Korah's mistake, thinking that they can realize the spiritual goals of the Misvot without abiding by their Halachic requirements. To take an extreme example, we can imagine a Jew who decides that he can best

experience the spiritual feeling of Shabbat by listening to relaxing music while lying on the beach. Of course, this is very wrong. The Torah's goals are to be realized in the way the Torah tells us to, and not however we feel like it. We cannot assume the right to decide for ourselves the best way to be "spiritual." This goal is achieved by observing Halachic guidelines, and not by following our own ideas of "spirituality." This, too, is a crucial lesson we must learn from Korah's tragic mistake.

This dibre torah is based on a derasha by Rav Soleveitchik.

Rabbi Wein

The litany of disappointments and failures, of the generation of Jews that left Egyptian bondage, continues in this week's parsha. Except, this parsha relates to us not so much in describing a direct confrontation with God and His express wishes, so to speak, but rather tells of a challenge to Moshe and his authority to lead the Jewish people. Korach essentially engages in a coup, a power-grabbing attempt to replace Moshe from his leadership role and Aharon from his position as the High Priest of Israel.

Throughout the ages, the Torah scholars and commentators of the Jewish people have attempted to appreciate and understand what Korach's true motivations were, to engage in such a clearly suicidal attempt. After all, Korach was also aware that Moshe's countenance radiated Heavenly light that forced him to mask that countenance when dealing with human beings.

Korach was also undoubtedly aware that the High Priesthood and its incense offerings could be deadly to those not entitled to serve in that public role. Again, he

saw his relatives, Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aharon struck down by a heavenly fire, for overstepping their proper bounds in the ritual service of the Mishkan.

So what drove Korach to knowingly risk his life in this doomed and completely unnecessary confrontation with Moshe and Aharon? In the words of Rashi in this week's parsha: "What did Korach see or think that drove him to commit such a foolish act?" That question has puzzled all of Jewish scholarship for millennia.

It would be brazen of me to say that I somehow have the answer to this deeply troubling question. Nevertheless, I do wish to contribute an insight into the narrative as it appears in the parsha. Like many ideologues, Korach is convinced that God agrees with him – that God also has realized that Moshe is too autocratic and given to nepotism in his rule of the people. He saw that even Aharon and Miriam were willing to criticize Moshe, and even though Miriam was punished, the precedent of being able to criticize Moshe was set and established.

Korach may have thought that Miriam was punished because, in essence, she and Aharon were interfering in Moshe's private personal life. But Korach believed that he was embarking on a national crusade to break the power of autocratic rule over the Jewish people. On such a vital national issue, one where he believed himself to be morally and practically undoubtedly correct, he convinced himself that God was also in agreement, so to speak, with him.

And, when one is convinced that his own thinking represents God's opinion on any given matter or

issue then there can be no holding back in pursuing one's goals. The one main cause for all religious strife, wars, bans and exclusivity of opinion and actions, is the belief that God also follows that given opinion or belief. Naturally, Korach's personal ambitions and agenda helped convince him that God was on his side in the dispute with Moshe. One should always be wary not to confuse personal wishes and opinions with God's will.

**Sir Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of the United
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The Leader as Servant

Korach had a point. "You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the Lord's assembly?" (Num. 16: 3). At the heart of his challenge is the idea of equality. That surely is a Jewish idea. Was not Thomas Jefferson at his most biblical when he wrote, in the Declaration of Independence, that "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal"?

Of course Korach does not mean what he says. He claims to be opposed to the very institution of leadership, and at the same time he wants to be the leader. "All are equal, but some are more equal than others" is the seventh command in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, his critique of Stalinist Russia. But what if Korach had meant it? If he had been sincere?

There is, on the face of it, compelling logic to what he says. Did God not call on Israel to become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," meaning a kingdom each of whose members

is a priest, a nation all of whose citizens are holy? Why then should there be a cadre of priests and one High Priest?

Did not the military hero Gideon say, in the era of the judges, "I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The Lord will rule over you" (Judges 8: 23)?

Why then should there be a single life-appointed Moses-type leader rather than what happened in the days of the judges, namely charismatic figures who led the people through a particular crisis and then went back to their previous anonymity, as Caleb and Pinchas did during the lifetime of Moses? Surely the people needed no other leader than God Himself?

Did not Samuel warn the people of the dangers of appointing a king? "He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots ... He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves ... When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the Lord will not answer you in that day" (1 Sam. 8: 11-18). This is the biblical anticipation of Lord Acton's famous remark that all power tends to corrupt. Why then give individuals the power Moses and Aaron in their different ways seemed to have?

The Midrash Tanhuma, quoted by Rashi, contains a brilliant commentary on Korach's claim. It says that Korach gathered his co-conspirators and issued Moses a challenge in the form of a halakhic question:

He dressed them with cloaks made entirely of blue wool. They came and stood before Moses and asked him, "Does a cloak made entirely of blue wool require

fringes [tzitzit], or is it exempt?" He replied, "It does require [fringes]." They began laughing at him [saying], "Is it possible that a cloak of another [colored] material, one string of blue wool exempts it [from the obligation of techeleth], and this one, which is made entirely of blue wool, should not exempt itself?" (Tanhuma, Korach 4; Rashi to Num. 16: 1)

What makes this comment brilliant is that it does two things. First it establishes a connection between the episode of Korach and the immediately preceding passage, the law of tzitzit at the end of last week's parsha. That is the superficial point. The deep one is that the Midrash deftly shows how Korach challenged the basis of Moses' and Aaron's leadership. The Israelites were "all holy; and God is among them." They were like a robe, every thread of which is royal blue. And just as a blue robe does not need an additional fringe to make it bluer still, so a holy people does not need extra holy people like Moses and Aaron to make it holier still. The idea of a leadership hierarchy in "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" is a contradiction in terms. Everyone is like a priest. Everyone is holy. Everyone is equal in dignity before God. Hierarchy has no place in such a nation.

What then did Korach get wrong? The answer is contained in the second half of his challenge: "Why then do you set yourselves above the Lord's assembly?" Korach's mistake was to see leadership in terms of status. A leader is one higher than the rest: the alpha male, the top dog, the controller, director, dominator, the one before whom people prostrate themselves, the ruler, the commander, the superior, the one to whom others defer. That is

what leaders are in hierarchical societies. That is what Korach implied by saying that Aaron and Moses were "setting themselves above" the people.

But that is not what leadership is in the Torah, and we have had many hints of it already. Of Moses it says that "he was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth" (Num. 12: 3). Of Aaron and the priests, in their capacity as those who blessed the people, it says "So they will put My name on the Israelites, and I will bless them" (Num. 6: 27). In other words the priests were mere vehicles through which the divine force flowed. Neither priest nor prophet had personal power or authority. They were transmitters of a word not their own. The prophet spoke the word of God for this time. The priest spoke the word of God for all time. But neither was author of the word. That is why humility was not an accident of their personalities but of the essence of their role.

Even the slightest hint that they were exercising their own authority, speaking their own word or doing their own deed, immediately invalidated them. That, in fact, is what sealed the fate of Moses and Aaron later, when the people complained and they said, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" (Num. 20: 10). There are many interpretations of what went wrong on that occasion but one, undeniably, is that they attributed the action to themselves rather than God (see Hizkuni ad loc.).

Even a king in Jewish law – the office that comes closest to status – is commanded to be humble. He is to carry a Torah scroll with him and read it all the days of his life "so that he may learn to

revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites" (Deut. 17: 19-20; and see Maimonides, Laws of Kings, 2: 6).

In Judaism leadership is not a matter of status but of function. A leader is not one who holds himself higher than those he or she leads. That, in Judaism, is a moral failing not a mark of stature. The absence of hierarchy does not mean the absence of leadership. An orchestra still needs a conductor. A play still needs a director. A team still needs a captain.

A leader need not be a better instrumentalist, actor or player than those he leads. His role is different. He must co-ordinate, give structure and shape to the enterprise, make sure that everyone is following the same script, travelling in the same direction, acting as an ensemble rather than a group of prima donnas. He has to have a vision and communicate it. At times he has to impose discipline. Without leadership even the most glittering array of talents produces, not music but noise. That is not unknown in Jewish life, then and now. "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17: 6, 21: 25). That is what happens when there is no leadership.

The Torah, and Tanakh as a whole, has a marvellous, memorable way of putting this. Moses' highest honour is that he is called eved Hashem, "the servant of God." He is called this, once on his death (Deut. 34: 5), and no less than eighteen times in Tanakh as a whole. The only other person given this title is Joshua, twice. In Judaism, a leader is a servant and to lead is

to serve. Anything else is not leadership as Judaism understands it.

Note that we are all God's servants. The Torah says so: "To Me the Israelites are servants; they are My servants whom I brought out of Egypt" (Lev 25: 55). So it is not that Moses was a different kind of being than we are all called on to be. It is that he epitomised it to the utmost degree. The less there is of self in one who serves God, the more there is of God. Moses was the supreme exemplar of Rabbi Johanan's principle, that "Where you find humility, there you find greatness."

It is one of the sadder features of Judaism we tend to forget that many of the great ideas appropriated by others are in fact ours. So it is with "servant leadership," the phrase and theory associated with Robert K. Greenleaf (1904-1990). Greenleaf himself derived it from a novel by Hermann Hesse with Buddhist undertones, and in fact the Jewish concept is different from his. Greenleaf held that the leader is the servant of those he leads. In Judaism a leader is the servant of God, not of the people; but neither is he their master. Only God is that. Nor is he above them: he and they are equal. He is simply their teacher, guide, advocate and defender. His task is to remind them endlessly of their vocation and inspire them to be true to it.

In Judaism leadership is not about popularity: "If a scholar is loved by the people of his town, it is not because he is gifted but because he fails to rebuke them in matters of heaven" (Ketubot 105b). Nor is a true leader eager for the job. Almost without exception the great leaders of Tanakh were reluctant to assume the mantle of leadership. Rabban

Gamliel summed it up when he said to two sages he wanted to appoint to office: "Do you imagine I am offering you rulership? I am offering you avdut, the chance to serve" (Horayot 10a-b).

That, then, was Korach's mistake. He thought leaders were those who set themselves above the congregation. He was right to say that has no place in Judaism. We are all called on to be God's servants. Leadership is not about status but function. Without tzitzit, a blue robe is just a robe, not a holy garment. Without leadership, the Jewish people is just a people, an ethnic group, not a holy nation. And reminders that we are a holy nation, who then will we become, and why?

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"And Moshe was very wroth and he said to Hashem: Do not turn to their offering". (16:15)

This seems to be an entirely unnecessary request. Why would Hashem honor the offering of those that rebelled against Moshe the servant of Hashem? But we must note that the usual 'Vayiktsof' ("And he was angry"- Shemot 16:20, Vayikra 10:16, Bemidbar 31:14) is not used. Because 'Vayiktsof' expresses a superficial anger which Moshe displayed externally. However, 'Vayichar' expresses genuine distress and wrath because these opponents were men of worth and good deeds. Moshe actually feared lest Hashem might respect their offering.

We see that Korach and his party were sterling personalities. And here we learn an invaluable lesson. Not as generally thought by most men, that if they would be convinced of the truth by open miracles, they would surely be perfectly righteous men. But here

we see that even more than the test of belief in Hashem and in His management of men's lives, there is still a more difficult test of overcoming ones own character traits such as jealousy and the desire for glory.

Korach saw all the miracles. He stood on the shore of the Sea as it was split and sang together with the entire Nation. At Har Sinai he heard the Voice of Hashem and had shouted "We shall do and we shall listen!" together with all Israel.

Belief was no obstacle.

But the test of Envy and the desire for Glory, this was overpowering.

Quoted from
"Journey Into Greatness" by
Rabbi Avigdor Miller ZT'L

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