



Parsha Perspectives

RABBI BARUCH LEDERMAN

ויקהלו על משה ועל אהרן ויאמרו אלהם רב לכם
כי כל העדה כלם קדשים ובתוכם השם...

"They gathered together against Moses and against Aaron and said to them, 'It is too much for you! For the entire assembly—all of them—are holy and G-d is among them. Why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of G-d?'" (Numbers 16:3)

Korach's rebellion was no ordinary uprising of the masses. Korach was a prominent figure in the tribe of Levy, and the other challengers included 250 outstanding leaders of the Jewish people.

Despite Korach's brilliance, he was blinded by disappointment and anger over having been passed over for a position of even greater prominence. Korach's downfall illustrates the power that emotions have to lead a person astray. When utilized properly, emotions also have the power to lead a person back to a path of spiritual enlightenment.

Diego Francisca was a Jewish teenager who had emigrated from Argentina to Israel with his mother. Diego's father, who was not Jewish, had abandoned the family years ago. His mother was Jewish but had very little connection with Judaism. She abhorred the fact that Diego stole; but when the rent was due and she had no other money, she turned a blind eye to Diego's "career." By the time he was 10 years old, he was an accomplished burglar.

Diego climbed into the villa. It was gorgeous from the outside, yet inside there was no booty—no jewelry, no silver, no money. How could such a mansion yield no valuables? Before giving up, he took one last sweep of the premises, and spotted a briefcase on top of the refrigerator. "Bingo!" He made his getaway. But the briefcase was stuffed with old newspapers and a single envelope containing two, 100-dollar bills, along with a letter dated 15 years earlier:

Dear Thief,

I'm glad you found the \$200 I left you. It's compensation for the disappointment you must feel after all the time you spent rummaging through my home and finding nothing. Now you won't walk away empty-handed. Allow me to enlighten you, my friend. It is a cornerstone of Judaism that G-d runs the world and provides for all. On Rosh Hashanah, the income of each Jew is decreed down to the last penny. When a person steals, he actually steals from himself—because the \$200 could have been yours without stealing it.

I am eager to get to know you, my friend. I have no doubt that we'll have a lot to talk about. I have no hard feelings. I simply want to make my small contribution towards getting you out of the vicious cycle of theft. You can call me any time. My phone number is...

*Cordially,
Shraga Avigad*

Bizarre as this letter was, something about the warm, personal tone tugged at Diego's heart.

The next night, Dr. Shraga Avigad, a senior surgeon in Beilinson Hospital, received a phone call.

"Uh, I'm the thief..."

"I'm so happy you called..."

And thus began a beautiful friendship. With Dr. Avigad's patient, loving guidance, Diego embraced a new life committed to Jewish observance.

Emotions influence our actions. Korach, once a great and powerful individual, gave in to negativity and visited pain and destruction on the Jewish people. Diego, a poor boy raised in a negative environment, grabbed on to kindness and inspiration. We would do well to follow his lead.

-Ed. Diego's story was documented in Ha'ltonai, and verified by Binah Magazine.

Rabbi Lederman can be reached at parsha@partnersintorah.org

WORD of the WEEK
by Rabbi Mordechai Becher

פרח

"And it [Aaron's staff] brought forth פרח—perach..." (Numbers 17:23). Targum Onkelos translates this as *lulvevin*, meaning sprouts or blossoms, and Rashi also understands the term as either a flower or a blossom. Rabbi David Kimchi (*Sefer Hashorashim*) renders it as leaves, whereas Josephus (*Antiquities* 4:4:2) describes the term as buds and branches. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch connects *perach* phonetically to *paratz*—"break forth" and "emerge from constraints"; *parah*—to produce, and *barah*—to create (*Etymological Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew*, Clark).

Table Talk FOR DISCUSSION AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE

Korach, along with a group of 250 leaders, challenged Moses's authority. They charged, "It is too much for you! For the entire assembly—all of them—are holy and G-d is among them. Why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of G-d?" (Numbers 16:3)

א) A simple reading of Korach's arguments makes them seem logical and reasonable. What did our Sages see in Korach's words which indicates that his true intentions were for his personal honor and glory?

ב) After unsuccessfully appealing to Korach and his followers to call off their rebellion, Moses became extremely angry. During his 40-year leadership of the Jewish people, Moses endured a tremendous number of tests and personal affronts with tremendous humility. Why did he specifically get angry at this time?

HEY, I NEVER KNEW THAT by Rabbi Mordechai Becher

The Levites were "given" to the *kohanim* as those who were to help them in their service in the Temple (Numbers 18:6). The Levites would open and close the doors of the Temple, play music during the services, sing in the choir, and guard the Temple. According to some commentaries the purpose of the guard duty was to ensure that no non-*kohen* could enter to perform the services, and similarly to prevent anyone who was impure from entering the Temple (*Sefer Hachinuch*). According to others, the purpose of the guard duty was to bestow honor on the Temple (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Laws of the Temple*, 8:1), The Levites were also dedicated to studying Torah and to teaching the Torah to the Jewish people (*ibid, Laws of Shmita and Yovel* 13:12) as well as being on the Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court (*ibid, Laws of Sanhedrin* 2:2)

A QUESTION FOR THE RABBIS

by Rabbi Mordechai Becher

Is one obligated to leave an area where an infectious disease is rampant? Rabeinu Bachya (commentary on Numbers, 16:21) cites the verse in our *parsha* in which G-d tells the Jews to "separate from the midst of this evil congregation [of Korach]." He says that even though G-d has the power to save an innocent person in the midst of a disaster, nevertheless He either wanted to the Jews to stay away from the "poisonous air" that would surround Korach, or He was informing them that once the attribute of just punishment is unleashed, it does not distinguish between the righteous and the evil. This idea is mentioned in the *Code of Jewish Law (Yoreh Deah* 116:5) which rules that one must leave a city if there is a plague there, and one should do so at the beginning of the outbreak and not wait until it progresses.



**PARTNERS
IN TORAH**

A DIVISION OF TORAH UMESORAH

Rabbi Eli Gewirtz, National Director
Mrs. Shoshana Schwartz, Editor
Rabbi Mordechai Becher, Contributor

For information call **800-STUDY-4-2** or
email **INFO@PARTNERSINTORAH.ORG**
Distributed in UK by **Phone and Learn (PAL)**, a division of Partners in Torah
WWW.PHONEANDLEARN.ORG — **0800 055 3276**

LOOK *who made* PARTNER!

EMONA EMUNAH, Brooklyn, NY (Partner #57,807)

DAVID MASSERI, Lakewood, NJ (#52,294)

STEPHEN GREEN, Toronto, Ontario (#52,034)

GABE ESSES, West Long Branch, NJ (#52,027)

SYLVIA DAVIS, Saugerties, NY (#50,980)

**SIGN UP TODAY: www.partnersintorah.org/signup OR CALL: 1-800-STUDY-4-2
MAKING PARTNER HAS NEVER BEEN THIS EASY!**

STUDY ANY JEWISH TOPIC OVER THE PHONE OR IN PERSON WITH A KNOWLEDGEABLE, CAREFULLY SELECTED PERSONAL TORAH TRAINER.

TO POST COMMENTS ON THIS PARSHA SHEET, VISIT US AT: partnersintorah.org/parsha-partner/korach5773#comments