

## KORACH'S MISTAKE: DOTS

By Ozer Bergman

"The earth opened its mouth, swallowing them and their households, along with all the men who were with Korach, and their property" (Numbers 16:32).

"A tempest passes in a sudden and the villain is gone, but the tzaddik is the foundation of the world" (Proverbs 10:25).

Last week we talked about some benefits of *hiskashrut l'tzaddik*, being "bound" to a tzaddik. This is a good week to talk about a disadvantage, perhaps *the* disadvantage, of being dis-connected from tzaddikim.

My *chavruta* (Torah-study partner) recently reminded me, we cannot study Torah, even (or especially) the weekly reading, superficially. We must realize there is much more than what meets the eye. We must probe as deeply as we can in order to have even the faintest glimpse of what is really taking place.

I'm no linguist, but as a native English speaker there is something I find curious about Hebrew: all its letters are consonants. When you see a word all by its lonesome self, you cannot be certain of how it is to be pronounced. Even in a sentence, when the word has context, the correct reading may not be obvious. The correct pronunciation and proper meaning of a word depends on its *nekudot*, vowels. The *nekudot* are to the letters what the soul is to the body: they give it life.

A Torah scroll has many, many letters, but no *nekudot*. Nu? So what gives life to the letters, to the words and to the Torah? It is how well one lives by the Torah in general, and especially how *kadosh*, holy, one is in regard to his moral behavior. "How well" and "how holy" depend on "how much"—how much, how truly and sincerely one desires to live according to the Torah.

The desire and desires one has, for the Torah or for anything, are the life and soul of the Torah. When you study Torah, the

conclusions you reach depend very much on what it is you want from life. The letters, the body of the Torah and how it is intellectualized, cannot be safely separated from the *nekudot*, the soul and desire to live it as it should be lived, the way the genuine tzaddikim live it.

That was Korach's fatal error. He thought the letters, which all Jews and every Jew has equally, were also the soul of the Torah. "I have the letters. I—anyone who uses his mind—can know the life these letters contain and how to live it. We are all holy enough. We do not need a tzaddik!"

But it isn't so. The letters of the holy Torah receive their life, their soul, only via the *nekudot*. The *nekudot* themselves are the positive desire and longing of the tzaddikim, and of us ordinary Yidden, who want (or at least, want to want) to live up to the Torah's ideals. We know that just as we need a Moshe Rabbeinu to give us the Torah's letters, the body, we need him for the *nekudot*, the soul, in order to have a Torah that lives.

Without such a tzaddik, God forbid, we have nothing to stand on and the entirety of our lives gets swallowed up. We're as good as dead.

Where is Korach today? The Talmud (*Bava Batra* 74a) tells us that he and his community are still in the hole that swallowed them alive. Every *rosh chodesh* (first of the Jewish month), they rise close enough to the surface so that those standing nearby can hear their message: Moshe and his Torah are true.

May our attachment to genuine tzaddikim be kosher and sincere, so that we live the Torah the way it ought to be lived. Amen!

*agutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!*

—Based on *Likutey Halakhot, Hodaah* 5:8

## PARSHA PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

**16:1 Korach, son of Yitzhar son of Levi, separated himself. Haughtiness is Concomitant with Idolatry**

## SIDEPATH

### *On the service of G-d*

Someone once asked Rebbe Nachman why the Baal Shem Tov held his daughter, Rebbetzin Udel, in such high esteem. The Rebbe explained, "My great-grandfather admired his daughter so much because she went about constantly with a heart full of yearning for God. She always asked herself, 'What else can I do to please the One Above?'" (*Siach Sarfey Kodesh*, Vol. II, 1-72).

Our Sages declare that Korach was a heretic. He was haughty, which is concomitant with idolatry (LM I, 10:9).

### **The Difference Between Aharon and Korach**

Aharon was a Kohen, associated with chesed. As such, he corresponds to the spiritual reality called the "right side." Korach, on the other hand, was a Levi, associated with gevurah. As such, he corresponds to the spiritual reality called the "left side."

God's decree, "Let there be light," corresponds to the right side. "And it was light" corresponds to the left side.

"God then separated between light and darkness." That refers to the difference between Aharon and Korach (LM I, 44).

### **A Person Must Strive to Develop the Nature That God Has Given Him**

All strife is drawn from the strife of Korach against Aharon.

Korach wanted to be like Aharon. They were separate entities, each with his own unique qualities. But Korach rebelled against being who he was and thus made strife his way of being.

A person must be himself. He must create unity and peace between opposing sides

within himself]. That mitigates Divine decrees (LM I, 46).

**16:32 The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them.**

### **Sinning Leads to a Feeling of Humiliation**

The Talmud relates that every Rosh Chodesh Korach declares, "Moshe and his Torah are truth, and I and my followers are liars" (Bava Batra 74b).

Rosh Chodesh is the source of repentance, for on Rosh Chodesh God Himself "repents" for having diminished the size of the moon (see Chullin 60b).

Since Rosh Chodesh is a day of repentance, there is no Gehinnom. There remains, however, punishment on Rosh Chodesh in the form of the humiliation of confessing and regretting one's sins (LM I, 10:9; see also below, Chapter 29).

**17:23 Aharon's staff, representing the Tribe of Levi, blossomed.**

### **For Kindness to Blossom, It Must Be Paired with the Fear of God**

Aharon is associated with chesed. For kindness to blossom and spread, it must have a vessel in which to be received. That vessel is the fear of God. The fear of God corresponds to the trait of Gevurah, which is associated with Levi (LM II, 4:4; also end).

**18:19 A covenant of salt.**

### **The Tzaddik is Compared to Salt**

The tzaddik is compared to salt, which preserves meat. This is because the tzaddik guards the covenant, which preserves his flesh from sin (LM I, 4:10).

### **The Tzaddik Adds a Joyful Flavor to Our Lives**

Just as salt is a condiment for foods, so too does the tzaddik add a joyful flavor to our lives, for his teachings help a person temper the bitterness that comes in life (LM I, 23:2).

## **KITZUR L" M WEEKLY**

### **Preface to the Likutey Moharan**

#### **Come and look upon the works of G-d!**

#### **An awesome revelation concerning the mystery of the greatness of the holy Tanna, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, of blessed memory**

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai promised that through him, the Torah would not be forgotten from the Jewish people. As it is explained in the words of our Sages, of blessed memory, "When our Sages entered the *Kerem beYavneh* [a vineyard in Yavneh where the Sanhedrin met], they said, 'A time will come when the Torah will be forgotten by the Jewish people: However, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said that it would not be forgotten, as it is written, 'For it will not be forgotten from the mouth of his offspring' (Deuteronomy 31:21; *Shabbat* 138b). And it is stated in the *Zohar*, "With this treatise - namely, the *Zohar* - they will come out of exile" (*Zohar* 11l. 124b).

Now come, see and understand the hidden wonders of our holy Torah. There is a definite reason why Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai supported his assertion with the verse, "For it will not be forgotten from the mouth of his offspring." For the verse itself hints at and conceals the secret meaning of what he is saying - that through the seed of Yochai (that is, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai), the Torah will not be forgotten from the Jewish people' For the final letters of the Hebrew words *kl lo tishakhaCh mipiY zarO* (it will not be forgotten from the mouth of his offspring) spell out *YOChAI*. And this is precisely what this verse hints at and reveals - that "it will not be forgotten from the mouth of his offspring;" from the mouth of the offspring of this very person who is alluded to and [whose name is] hidden right there in the

verse, the *Tanna Yochai!* For through the offspring of Yochai, who is alluded to by the final letters of the words of this verse - that offspring being Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai - the Torah will not be forgotten. For "With the *Zohar* they will come out of exile:'

Know, however, that the mystery of Rabbi Shimon himself is hinted at in a different verse. Know that the holy *Tanna*, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, is described by the verse, "A holy angel come down from Heaven (*Ir vekadish Min Shemaya Nachiti*" (Daniel 4:10), whose initial letters spell out his name, *SHIMON* [the Hebrew letter *Vav* can produce the sound of *V* or *O*, depending on its vocalization].

#### **1 - "Fortunate are they who go with simplicity" (Psalms 119:1)**

1. Through Torah study, all prayers and requests are accepted, the grace and importance of the Jewish people are elevated and raised before all who need in material and spiritual matters.



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