

ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL

By Ozer Bergman

“You arrogate too much for yourselves, for the entire community—each of them—is holy” (Numbers 16:3).

“All who toil on behalf of the community should toil with them for the sake of Heaven” (Avot 2:2).

Who are you going to believe? This is not a theoretical question. This is literally, as Korach & Company showed us, a life-and-death question. And it’s an old question. When considering a path in life, a set of values and practices to live by, people have to make choices between the likes of Avraham/Nimrod, Yitzchak/Yishmael, Yaakov/ Esav.

Notice the progression. Avraham Avinu (our Patriarch) and the evil emperor Nimrod were people with clearly different backgrounds and histories. Yitzchak Avinu and Yishmael were half-brothers, sharing the same fatherly example. Yaakov Avinu and Esav shared the same home and even the same womb. As the candidates and the choices become more and more alike, the confusion grows and it becomes more and more difficult to discern: Where’s the truth?

What happens when the confusion creeps into the Jewish people? This, too, is not a theoretical question. We all know that Rebbe Nachman emphasized over and over the absolute necessity of affiliating oneself with a tzaddik. In the Rebbe’s teachings, one’s affiliation has the most powerful impact on one’s eternal destiny. Finding and maintaining the connection to the right tzaddik is always on one’s A-list of things to pray for. (Reb Noson, in his collection of prayers, is constantly praying to find the tzaddik. Why? Though you may know who the tzaddik is, you don’t really yet know who the tzaddik is!)

The Rebbe tells us that he is not the only one who is aware of how crucial it is to choose the right tzaddik as a guide. Our constant companion, the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination), also knows this. And he’s going to do anything he can to keep us away from

connecting with the right tzaddik. Near the end of *Likutey Moharan* II, 78, the Rebbe teaches:

Presently, the Evil Inclination has made this his mission, to confuse the world, because the Jewish people are now very close to the End. The Jews now have great longing and yearning for God, the likes of which never existed in earlier times. Each individual has great yearning for God. The Evil Inclination therefore roused, and instigated conflict among the tzaddikim. He established many false leaders in the world and also instigated great conflict among the true tzaddikim, such that no one knows where the truth is. Therefore, we have to plead a great deal with God to be worthy of drawing near to the true tzaddik.

While we’re pleading to draw near to the true tzaddik, we have to remember to use our God-given intelligence* to eliminate some of the more obvious “runners-up.” At the beginning of his rebellion, Korach famously declares himself a populist: “The entire community—each of them—is holy. Why do you raise yourselves above the congregation?” (Numbers 16:3).

Beware of rabbis—and anyone else!—making political statements. The Maharal of Prague writes that someone whose work for the community is motivated by a desire for self-promotion or fame is not working for the community, even though the community benefits (*Derekh Chaim* on Avot 2:2). Serving the community means taking care of what it needs *because* it is a society, not merely “a lot of people,” an aggregate of individuals.

The essence of a Jewish community is so great that God is automatically attached to it and work done for it is for the sake of Heaven. This is why it is permitted on Shabbat to hold a public forum to discuss community concerns (*Shabbat* 150a)—community projects are Heaven’s concern. But politicians, because of their importance and esteem, hold themselves aloof from the rest of us and are not part of the community. They do not work for the sake of Heaven.

* “Don’t pray and bother your Creator when you can do it yourself” (*The Aleph-Bet Book, Tzaddik* A:71). “Don’t bother God when you can be helped in some other way” (ibid., A:106).

*a gutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!*

—Based on *Likutey Halakhot, Birkhot HaShachar* 3:8–9

SIDEPATH

Music clears the mind and makes us happy. Music has the power to help us pour out our heart before God. It also has the power to sharpen our memories and enable us to concentrate on our goals (*Advice, Joy* 14, 15).

Therefore the Rebbe taught that it’s a very good habit to inspire ourselves with a melody. The spiritual roots of music and song are very deep and can arouse our hearts and raise our spirits (*Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom* #273).

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

16:1 Korach took

Right Versus Left

“Korach took”—he took himself to one side with the intention of separating himself from the community (Rashi).

Aaron was a Kohen, who is associated with *chesed* (kindness) and corresponds to the spiritual reality called the “right side.” Korach was a Levite, who is associated with *gevurot* (judgments) and corresponds to the spiritual reality called the “left side.”

God’s decree “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3) corresponds to the right side. “And there was light” (ibid.) corresponds to the left side.

“God separated between the light and the darkness” (ibid., 1:4)—this refers to the difference between Aaron and Korach (LM I, 44).

16:2 They rose up before Moses with two hundred and fifty Israelite men, leaders of the community

More Than Meets The Eye

Korach gathered 250 heads of the Sanhedrin and dressed them in *talitim* of pure *tekheilet*. He stood them before Moses and asked, “If a *talit* is made completely out of *tekheilet* threads, does it require *tzitzit*? Since a single strand of *tekheilet* on the *tzitzit* is sufficient for the mitzvah, shouldn’t an entire garment

made of *tekheilet* be exempt from *tzitzit*?" (Rashi on Numbers 16:1).

Food and drink cost less than clothes; therefore it is easier to feed a person than to clothe him. In a spiritual sense, the Evil One tries to catch a person "by his garment" (by pushing him to a more expensive desire), causing him to pursue the material cloaks of this world. A deeper meaning is that people naturally assume that "what you see is what you get." They cannot fathom that the tzaddik—who looks like an average person—actually possesses a far loftier essence that is cloaked by his outward appearance. "Garments" and property are areas in which people fall victim to jealousies that tarnish their thoughts and divert them towards material pursuits.

Korach, too, failed to see beyond Moses' and Aaron's external appearances. Jealous of Aaron who dressed in the royal robes of the Kohen Gadol, Korach dressed himself and his men in garments of pure *tekheilet*, believing he had attained purity of soul and was worthy of the position he sought. He failed to understand that Moses' and Aaron's true levels were cloaked by their outward appearances (LH VII, p. 139a-278-140a).

16:32 The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them

The Soul Illumines The Body After Death

Man's mission in this world is to gather as many good deeds as he can, paving the way for his soul to ascend on high after his passing. Then, in Heaven, his soul can still illumine the body that performed those *mitzvot*, sustaining it until the time of the Resurrection when body and soul will be united once again.

Korach, however, was swallowed alive by the earth, cut off from the opportunity for his soul to illumine his body after death. His rectification came about through his descendants who participated in the Temple sacrifices. Among those sacrifices were the *nesakhim* (libations) that were poured onto the Altar and seeped down into the abyss, reaching and elevating the souls lost in the depths (LH VII, p. 79a).

18:8 My elevated-gifts

Terumah And Tithes, Thought And Speech

When separating tithes, one must first separate the *terumah* (approximately one-fiftieth of the yield) for the Kohen, then *ma'aser* (one-tenth) for the Levite, then *terumat ma'aser* (another one-tenth of the remainder) for the Kohen. Since both types of *terumah* are given to the Kohen, why can't they be separated at the same time? Why must the tithe be given to the Levite first so that he can separate the *terumat ma'aser*?

There are two spirits of holiness: a transcendental power and an immanent power. These represent the process of bringing something from potentiality to actuality, from thought to speech to action. *Terumah* represents thought. It has no designated amount; its measure is assessed according to each person's thought. *Ma'aser*, the tithe to the Levite, represents speech, since the Levite represents *gevurot* (judgments and constrictions), which correspond to speech (see LM I, 207). Once one's thoughts are articulated in speech, they can be brought into action. Thus, only after the tithe is given to the Levite can we separate the *terumat ma'aser* (LH V, p. 498-250a).

18:19 An eternal covenant of salt

Why The Tzaddik Is Compared To Salt

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

Just as salt is a condiment for foods, so too, the tzaddik adds a joyful flavor to our lives—for his teachings help us sweeten the bitterness of earning a living by lessening our desire for material pleasures (ibid., I, 23:2).

KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

13 — "Happy is the nation that knows the shofar blast" (Psalms 89:16); Divine Providence (continued)

13. There exist souls that are extremely blemished. Even when these souls come to the tzaddik, they are nevertheless still sunken in all of the physical desires and have not yet moved from the profane in the direction of holiness by even a hairsbreadth. It is certainly not possible to elevate and

rejuvenate, "as a fetus in the womb," souls such as these.

But there do exist tzaddikim who have attained such wondrous and awesome spiritual levels that they are able to elevate even blemished souls such as these, "as a fetus in the womb," and effect a positive, spiritual renewal for them. Therefore, a person who knows in his own soul that he has done a great deal of spiritual damage, and who wishes to take pity on himself and return to God, must ask and plead profusely before God to allow him, in His kindness, to draw close to a tzaddik like this—one who is strong enough to elevate and rejuvenate even his soul for the good. Fortunate is he who merits to find a tzaddik like this!

14 — To Draw Peace

1. God's greatest honor is when the people who are furthest from Him draw themselves closer. For at that time, "The Name of the Holy One, Blessed be He, is exalted and honored above and below" (*Zohar* II, 69a), and God's honor [in the world] is greatly increased. Therefore, each person must work very hard to draw close those people who are far from God. Furthermore, a person must never say, "How can I come close to God when I am so distant from Him as a result of my many evil deeds?" For the truth is just the opposite: The further away a person is, the more God's honor will be magnified when he tries to come back and to draw close to Him. For this is God's greatest honor.



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