

TorahFax: Korach

Rabbi Zalmen Marazov

Monday, Sivan 30, 5783 (Hakhel Year) June 19, 2023

Today is the first day of Rosh Chodesh Tammuz. The Torah portion which we will read in the Diaspora this Shabbat is Korach. It begins with the rebellion which Korach, of the tribe of Levi, led against the leaders of the Jewish people, Moshe and Aaron.

Realizing that the Jewish people of that generation will not go into Israel and that they will stay another 38 years in the desert as a result of their refusal to go forward into the Promised Land, Korach felt that now was the right time to start a rebellion against the leadership of Moshe and Aaron.

Korach, who was a cousin of Moshe and Aaron, was jealous of Aaron being the High Priest. Korach gathered 250 people, mostly from the tribe of Reuben, together they rebelled against Moshe and Aaron. Korach, who wanted to be the High Priest, argued against them by claiming equality for everyone.

Korach said to Moshe and Aaron, "The entire congregation is holy... Why do you exalt yourselves above the congregation?" He used a noble cause to further his argument, equality, but in reality he cared only for himself. Korach caused a tremendous division within the Jewish people and as a result close to 15,000 people died in a plague.

One can be the champion for a good cause, such as equality for all, as Korach did, but at the same time causing tremendous harm. While G-d created us all

equal with a goal of making this world a better place. He gave certain duties to certain people. By fulfilling our obligations in what we excel in, to the best of our ability, we all fulfill our life mission exactly as G-d intended.

For example: If a scholar, whose financial means are limited, will make his life goal to give charity and the wealthy person will excel in teaching Torah, rather than giving charity, the world would be lacking. Each one has to excel in what G-d blessed them with. The rich person should stand out in distributing charity and the scholar in sharing his knowledge of Torah. Only then do we have a win-win situation.

Q. As mentioned, Korach's revolt was supported by people from the tribe of Reuben. Why did the people of the tribe of Reuben join Korach's rebellion more than the other tribes?

A. The family of Kehot, from which Korach was a descendent, was encamped on the south side of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). The tribe of Reuben was also encamped on the south side of the Mishkan, right next to Korach and his family. Being neighbors, Korach was able to influence them to join his revolt.

Korach, who was extremely wealthy and was of the chosen Levite family who served in the Mishkan, had everything one needed, Yet, he wasn't satisfied. He was a jealous person and this was his downfall and he ended up (or should I say..ended down) being swallowed in the ground alive. The story of Korach and his followers encouraged the following lessons of Pirkei Avot:

"Keep a far distance from a bad neighbor; Do not associate with a wicked person." (1,7).

“Envy, extravagant desire, the search of glory and honor remove a person from this world.” (4,28)

Tuesday, Tammuz 1, 5783 (Hakhel Year) June 20, 2023

Today is the second day of Rosh Chodesh Tammuz.

This week’s Parsha is Korach. In the past few Parshiot, the Torah describes many of the episodes in which the Jewish people complained and rebelled against Moshe, which in essence means they rebelled against G-d.

We read how they complained about the manna – their heavenly food that came each day. They also complained about G-d wanting to bring them to the Promised Land, after hearing the negative report from the ten spies. In this week’s Parsha, Korach, we read about another rebellion against Moshe and Aaron, this time by Korach and his 250 men.

Even though the events in the Torah took place over three thousand years ago, Torah comes from the word teaching and lesson. The stories of the Torah contain a lesson for all times.

The Jewish people of that generation had seen great miracles; The Ten plagues, the Exodus, the splitting of the Sea, the pillar of cloud and fire which accompanied them in the desert, the manna, which came from heaven each day and the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai etc., one miracle greater than the other. So how can we understand the fact that they lacked trust in G-d?

The answer is that because they saw miracles continuously, they mistakenly viewed them as nature. They thought, how can it be otherwise? As a result, they took these miracles for granted and stopped appreciating the wonderful miraculous blessings that G-d provided for them daily. They stopped seeing G-d's hand in everything and complained about trivial things.

The lesson for us is that we, too, must realize and appreciate our daily miracles! However, it is essential that we realize them as such and not take them for granted. If we only took the time to think how many breaths we inhale and exhale each day, how many steps we take every day and how many words we speak each day, etc. etc., we would appreciate the magnitude of our daily blessings.

What's more, our appreciation of all these wonderful blessings would automatically alleviate our feelings of anxiety and distress in our day-to-day life.

A mother was once walking along the seashore with her son, when a huge wave carried him out to sea. The mother began praying, "Please G-d, give me back my child!" Shortly afterwards a huge wave deposited her child unharmed at her feet. The mother embraced the child, "Thank you G-d!. Thank you! I will be forever grateful to you!" Then she looked at her child again, looked up to heaven and said sternly, "And what about his hat?"

Every morning, we recite a number of blessings thanking G-d for giving us so many wonderful things in life, which we take for granted when everything is normal. Concentrating on the goods which we receive each day, reminds us not to take things for granted, thus our day will be a happier day!

Thursday, Tammuz 3, 5783 (Hakhel Year) June 22, 2023

Today is the 3rd day in the Hebrew month, Tammuz. Today commemorates twenty-nine years since the great leader of our generation, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, zt"l, passed away.

I will, G-d willing, be at the Ohel (gravesite) of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, of blessed memory, today, together with many tens of thousands more.

I will pray for my family, and I will pray for you and your loved ones, whom I consider my extended Torah Fax family. I will ask the Rebbe to pray on our behalf that G-d bless us all with good health, happiness, success and much Nachas from our loved ones, that we have the will and wisdom to fulfill our G-dly mission in this world to get closer to G-d through Torah and mitzvot and acts of goodness and kindness.

The Rebbe, of blessed memory, made a tremendous impact on our generation, during his more than forty years of leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement.

The Rebbe's impact was not only on his followers, but on a global Jewish scale. The Rebbe's concern was not only for the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, but for every Jew in all walks of life, in every corner of the world. Many Jews throughout the world don't even realize the effect the Rebbe had on them indirectly, if not directly.

The greatness of true leadership and great vision is when the ideas which one stood for continue with the same enthusiasm and vigor even after their passing.

The Rebbe's legendary work, during his lifetime, to bring Jews closer to their roots and bring Judaism to Jews wherever they are, continues to this day.

His network of Chabad Houses, synagogues, schools, and humanitarian institutions throughout the world, continue to flourish in all continents and in every country where Jews can be found.

The Rebbe's impact on Jewish life to this day, through his Shluchim (emissaries) and followers all over the world is immeasurable.

Today is an auspicious time to reflect and strengthen our own commitment to Judaism. To bring more spiritual holiness into our home. It is a time for resolutions to strengthen our support for Jewish education and to our community.

The Torah reading for this week, in Israel, is Parshat, Chukat, We read about the passing of Miriam and Aaron. They were leaders of the Jewish people who cared not only for their spiritual welfare, but also for their physical needs as well. Even after their passing G-d continued to supply the Jewish people with the water from the well and the clouds of glory which were in their merit. With the passing of a Tzadik and leader, the blessings in their merit keep on flowing from on high. May this auspicious day bring blessings to us all. May we merit the ultimate redemption with Moshiach speedily in our days. Amen.