

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

It was a classic struggle for power. The only thing that made it different from the usual dramas of royal courts, parliamentary meetings or corridors of power was that it took place in Burgers' Zoo in Arnhem, Holland, and the key characters were male chimpanzees.

Frans de Waal's study, *Chimpanzee Politics*,¹ has rightly become a classic. In it he describes how the alpha male, Yeroen, having been the dominant force for some time, found himself increasingly challenged by a young pretender, Luit. Luit could not depose Yeroen on his own, so he formed an alliance with another young contender, Nikkie. Eventually Luit succeeded and Yeroen was deposed.

Luit was good at his job. He was skilled at peacekeeping within the group. He stood up for the underdog and as a result was widely respected. The females recognised his leadership qualities and were always ready to groom him and let him play with their children. Yeroen had nothing to gain by opposing him. He was already too old to become alpha male again. Nonetheless, Yeroen decided to join forces with the young Nikkie. One night they caught Luit unawares and killed him. The deposed alpha male had his revenge.

Reading the story I thought of the story of Hillel in *Pirkei Avot* (2:6): "He saw a skull floating upon the water, and said: Because you drowned others, you were drowned; and those who drowned you, will themselves be drowned." In fact, so humanlike were power-struggles among the chimpanzees that in 1995, Newt Gingrich, Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives, included de Waal's work among the twenty-five books he recommended young congressional Republicans to read.²

Korach was a graduate of the same Machiavellian school of politics. He understood the three ground rules. First you have to be a populist. Play on people's discontents and make it seem as if you are

on their side against the current leader. "You have gone too far!" he said to Moses and Aaron. "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?"

Second, assemble allies. Korach himself was a Levite. His grievance was that Moses had appointed his brother Aaron as high priest. Evidently he felt that as Moses' cousin – son of Yitzhar, the brother of Moses' and Aaron's father Amram – he felt that the position should have gone to him. He thought it unfair that both leadership roles should have gone to a single family within the clan.

Korach could hardly expect much support from within his own tribe. The other Levites had nothing to gain by deposing Aaron. Instead he found allies among two other disaffected groups: the Reubenites, Dathan and Aviram, and "250 Israelites who were men of rank within the community, representatives at the assembly, and famous." The Reubenites were aggrieved that as descendants of Jacob's firstborn, they had no special leadership roles. According to Ibn Ezra, the 250 "men of rank" were upset that, after the sin of the Golden Calf, leadership had passed from the firstborn within each tribe to the single tribe of Levi.

The revolt was bound eventually to fail since their grievances were different and could not all be satisfied. But that has never stopped unholy alliances. People with a grudge are more intent on deposing the current leader than on any constructive plan of action of their own. "Hate defeats rationality," said the sages.³ Injured pride, the feeling that honour should have gone to you, not him, has led to destructive and self-destructive action for as long as humans have existed on earth.

Third, choose the moment when the person you seek to depose is vulnerable. Ramban notes that the Korach revolt took place immediately after the episode of the spies and the ensuing verdict that the



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¹ Frans de Waal, *Chimpanzee Politics*, London, Cape, 1982.

² This essay was written in the days following the Brexit vote in Britain, when a struggle was taking place over the leadership of both main political parties. I leave it to the reader to draw any comparisons, either with primate politics or the story of Korach.

³ Bereishit Rabbah 55:8.

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people would not enter the land until the next generation. So long as the Israelites, whatever their complaints, felt that they were moving toward their destination, there was no realistic chance of rousing the people in revolt. Only when they realised that they would not live to cross the Jordan was rebellion possible. The people seemingly had nothing to lose.

The comparison between human and chimpanzee politics is not meant lightly. Judaism has long understood that Homo sapiens is a mix of what the Zohar calls nefesh ha-behamit and nefesh ha-Elokit, the animal soul and the G-dly soul. We are not disembodied minds. We have physical desires and these are encoded in our genes. Scientists speak today about three systems: the 'reptile' brain that produces the most primal fight-or-flight responses, the 'monkey' brain that is social, emotional and sensitive to hierarchy, and the human brain, the prefrontal cortex, that is slow, reflective and capable of thinking through consequences of alternative courses of action. This confirms what Jews and others, Plato and Aristotle among them, have long known. It is in the tension and interplay between these systems that the drama of human freedom is played out.

In his most recent book, Frans de Waal notes that "among chimpanzees, hierarchy permeates everything." Among the females this is taken for granted and does not lead to conflict. But among males, "power is always up for grabs." It "has to be fought for and jealously guarded against contenders." Male chimpanzees are "schmoozing and scheming Machiavellians."⁴ The question is: Are we?

This is not a minor question. It may even be the most important of all if humanity is to have a future. Anthropologists are generally agreed that the earliest humans, the hunter-gatherers, were generally egalitarian. Everyone had his or her part to play in the group. Their main tasks were to stay alive, find food, and avoid predators. There was no such thing as accumulated wealth. It was only with the development of agriculture, cities and trade that hierarchy came to dominate human societies. There was usually an absolute leader, a governing (literate) class, and the

⁴ Frans de Waal, *Are we smart enough to know how smart animals are?* New York, Norton, 2016, 168.

masses, used as labour in monumental building schemes and as troops for the imperial army. Judaism enters the world as a protest against this kind of structure.

We see this in the opening chapter of the Torah in which G-d creates the human person in His image and likeness, meaning that we are all equally fragments of the Divine. Why, asked the sages, was man created singly? "So that no one could say, My ancestors were greater than yours." Something of this egalitarianism can be heard in Moses' remark to Joshua, "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that He would rest his spirit on them."

However, like many of the Torah's ideals – among them vegetarianism, the abolition of slavery and the institution of monogamy – egalitarianism could not happen overnight. It would take centuries, millennia, and in many respects has not yet been fully achieved.

There were two hierarchical structures in biblical Israel. There were kings and there were priests, among them the High Priest. Both were introduced after a crisis: monarchy after the failure of the rule of the 'judges', the Levitical and Aaronide priesthood after the sin of the Golden Calf. Both led, inevitably, to tension and division.

Biblical Israel survived as a united kingdom⁵ for only three generations of kings and then split in two. The priesthood became a major source of division in the late Second Temple period, leading to sectarian divisions between Sadducees, Boethusians and the rest. The story of Korach explains why. Where there is hierarchy, there will be competition as to who is the alpha male.

Is hierarchy an inevitable feature of all advanced civilisations? Maimonides seems to say Yes. For him, monarchy was a positive institution, not a mere concession. Abarbanel seems to say No. There are passages in his writing that suggest he was a utopian anarchist who believed that in an ideal world no one would rule over anyone. We would each acknowledge only the sovereignty of G-d.

Putting together the story of Korach and Frans de Waal's chimpanzee version of House of Cards, the conclusion seems to follow that where there is hierarchy, there will be struggles to be alpha male. The result is what Thomas Hobbes called "a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death."

That is why the rabbis focused their attention not on the hierarchical crowns of kingship or priesthood but on the non-hierarchical crown of Torah, which is open to all who seek it. Here competition leads not to conflict but to an increase of wisdom,⁶ and where

⁵ Following the Brexit vote, the question is being asked in Britain as to whether the United Kingdom will remain a united kingdom.

⁶ Baba Batra 21a.

Heaven itself, seeing sages disagree, says, "These and those are the words of the living G-d."⁷

The Korach story repeats itself in every generation. The antidote is daily immersion in the alternative world of Torah-study that seeks truth not power, and values all equally as voices in a sacred conversation. ©2016 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"**A**nd they rose up in the face of Moses" (Num. 16:2) When is dissension and argument positive, healthy debate and an outgrowth of "these and those are the word of the Living G-d" [B.T. Eruvin 13] and when is dispute negative, a venomous cancer which can destroy the very underpinning of our nation? Apparently Korach's rebellious dissent is negative, as the Talmud maintains: "Rav said: He who is unyielding in maintaining a dispute violates a negative command, as it is written, 'And let him not be as Korach, and his company'" [B.T. Sanhedrin 110a]. But can we glean from this statement operative guidelines as to when it is right and when it is wrong to argue.

We all know the story of Korach, the subject of this week's Torah portion; this rebel against Mosaic authority and Aaronic Priesthood influenced 250 leading Israelite personages to stand up against the established and Divinely ordained leadership.

After a contest between the upstarts and Moses involving the offering of fire-pans of incense to determine the chosen of G-d, which concludes with Korach and his cohorts being consumed by a Divine fire, G-d commands that the 250 pans of the rebels be pounded into plates to cover the altar: "To be a memorial to the children of Israel, that no stranger who is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before G-d; do not be as Korach, and his company, as G-d said by the hand of Moses, concerning him" (Num.17:5).

Rav's prooftext regarding an unyielding disputant comes from this verse; the Bible is therefore saying, according to Rav's interpretation, that no one should ever again maintain a dispute, as G-d said concerning him, that is, concerning Korah. This view would maintain that the problem of Korah was that he would not give in and continued the argument; one may raise a dissenting opinion, but when the accepted leader rejects it, the dissenter must back down.

Rashi suggests a differet understanding . He takes the pronoun "him" to refer to Aaron; the problem with Korah's argument was that he was challenging G-d's chosen Kohanim—descendants of Aaron—as the only legitimate priests. Such a challenge can never

be allowed in the future, "as G-d said concerning him," that is concerning Aaron.

Rav Isaac Bernstein, z"l, of London, in a masterful lecture, cited the Hatam Sofer, who claims that it is the attitude of the dissenter—and not the subject of his dissent—which makes the difference. This Sage bemoans the fact that all too often, when two people argue, one (or both) of the parties involved will claim that only he has a direct pipeline to G-d; consequently only he has the only right opinion, and the other view must be totally de-legitimized. These individuals claim that they are arguing "for the sake of heaven, in the name of G-d and Torah".

Supporting his view, the Hatam Sofer reads the verse, "don't be like Korach, and his company, (who argued that) G-d spoke by the hand of Moses (only) to him;" to Korah; it is forbidden for any individual to maintain that G-d speaks only to him, that only he knows the truth, and that there is no possibility of truth to his opponent. Hence an illegitimate and therefore improper debate is one which seeks to de-legitimize the other side, declaring that only one side has the whole truth!

The Hatam Sofer proves his point from the case of R. Eliezer in the Talmud—who actually did have a pipeline to G-d [B.T. Bava Metzia 59b]—but nevertheless was bested in debate by the Sages because, in the final analysis, halakha is determined by the logic of the majority of the Sages, not by voices from heaven.

The Talmud records how R. Eliezer disagreed with his contemporaries on the status of a particular oven. He was absolutely convinced that he was right, and to prove his claim, he asked and received a series of signs from heaven demonstrating the accuracy of his halakhic opinion. Nevertheless, since his was a minority view in the face of a majority ruling, his refusal to relent led to his excommunication. The case of R. Eliezer is brought to teach that even if you are certain that G-d is on your side, you dare not read the other view out of the realm of legitimacy.

Rabbi Bernstein further directs us to another fascinating source. We have a mishnah in Tractate Sukkah with the following law: "If a man's head and the greater part of his body were within the sukkah and his table of food and within the house, (this outside of the Sukkah) Bet Shammai declared such a meal on Sukkot to be invalid and Bet Hillel declared it valid... Bet Hillel says to Bet Shammai: 'Was there not an incident wherein the elders of Bet Shammai and elders of Bet Hillel went to visit R. Yochanan the son of the Hurani, and they found him sitting with his head and the greater part of his body in a sukkah, and the table of food inside the house, and they did not make any comment about it. Did this not imply that the Academy of Shammai had acquiesced in this case to the

⁷ Eruvin 13b; Gittin 6b.

Academy of Hillel! ' Bet Shammai said to them: 'Here (specifically) is the proof (to our position).' In actuality the elders of Bet Shammai did say to R. Yochanan 'If it is in such a way that you always perform (the mitzvah of Sukkah), then you never (successfully) performed the commandment in your life-time' [Mishnah Sukkah 2:7]." And so Bet Shammai never gave in to Bet Hillel!

How are we to understand the mishnah?

This issue is addressed in the work of R. Naftali of Vermaiser, "Maleh Ratzon", in which he explained the mishnah as follows: the elders of Bet Shammai and the elders of Bet Hillel had indeed been present together at the sukkah of R. Yochanan, and they all saw that their host conducted himself in accordance with the law of Bet Hillel. Bet Shammai, although of a different opinion than Bet Hillel, said nothing—because of their respect for Bet Hillel and because they understood the validity of a dissenting opinion different from their own. Only after the elders of Bet Hillel left the sukkah did the elders of Bet Shammai clarify their alternative position by presenting another viewpoint. This sensitivity displayed by the representatives of the two major and opposing Academies in Mishnaic times emphasizes the fundamental pluralism in the Talmud: two views may be at loggerheads, but all must respect and learn from—rather than revile and de-legitimize—our opponents. And two opposing sides in a debate can and must respect and socialize with each other, even to the extent of marrying into each others families!

As we now approach the 21st century, can we say that we have adequately absorbed the lessons of the dangers of dispute and dissension? Has Korach and Korachism truly been consumed by fire, never to be heard from again? Would that it were so! ©2016 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

Apparently there were influential sections of the Jewish people that found it difficult to have a proper relationship with their leader Moshe. The minimalist Jews – the eiruv rav - could not get enough of Moshe. They constantly needed him and his presence and when they felt that he was absent, and perhaps would not return, they substituted a golden calf in his stead.

This week we read of great and learned Jews, led by Korach, that felt that they had too much of Moshe in their lives. They wanted the bonds of his leadership over them to be loosened if not even completely dismantled. We saw in last week's parsha that even his beloved and holy sister and brother found it difficult to come to terms with the unique greatness and prophetic stature of Moshe.

Moshe was not to be judged by ordinary human standards, even by the standards of the greatest and most holy of the congregation. The rabbis titled Moshe

as being the father of all prophets, both those that preceded him and those who were to come after him.

It is one of the principles of Jewish faith that Moshe, though human and mortal, was the most unique and singular person in Jewish and general human history. We find it difficult to deal with people who are our peers and who we feel we can understand and even judge. How much more therefore is it difficult to try and assess the greatness and character of the most unique person in civilized history. The error of Korach and his followers lay in somehow seeing themselves as equal to Moshe and ignoring the fact of his uniqueness.

This distinction of Moshe is emphasized throughout Jewish history and tradition. The Torah itself is called on his name – the Torah of Moshe. A millennia after his passing, the prophet Malachi will still state: "Remember the Torah of my servant Moshe." It is as though Moshe and Torah are synonymous one with the other. Even in general non-Jewish society, Moshe is remembered and renowned as the world's greatest lawgiver.

A fundamental error in understanding Jewish life and tradition is to deal with Moshe as an ordinary mortal, as just another great man among many in history. It is no wonder that Maimonides listed the belief in Moshe, the conduit that brings the Torah to the people of Israel, as being one of his thirteen principles of Jewish faith.

This idea is so central to Jewish continuity that we see in this week's Torah reading that a special miracle was created – something that did not happen at the punishment of the worshipers of the Golden Calf – in order to reinforce the idea that Moshe was special and that his status and uniqueness was not to be tampered with. Millennia later, we could all state with pride and certainty that Moshe is true and that his Torah is true as well. ©2016 *Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com*

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Guarding the Temple

*Translated for the Encyclopedia Talmudit
by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss*

In this week's portion the Torah States "And you and your brothers with you before the tent of meeting" ("V'atah uvanecha Itcha lefnei Ohel Moed") which we derive that the Kohanim and the Leviim were commanded to guard the Temple. This was done not to necessarily actually guard the Temple, but rather as an act of respect and honor ("Kavod"). In fact the Kohanim and Leviim when carrying out this task wore their priestly garments (kohanim and Leviim were not permitted to wear their priestly clothes when sleeping).

Children were not allowed to accomplish this task, only a Kohen or Levi that was above the age of twenty, even though they are forbidden to carry out any other assignment in the Temple at this age.

Because this was classified as a task ("Avodah") one must theoretically, out of respect, stand while performing it. However our sages, because of the great strain on the individual, allowed one to sit while carrying out this task, (though in all cases one was not permitted to sit in the courtyard of the Temple) because sitting was a pre-requisite to guarding the Temple properly.

Our sages differ as to the time that this "guarding" took place. The Rambam (Maimonides) states that it was only applicable in the evenings, however according to the explanation of the sages of the Mishna in Tamid, it would seem that this was prevalent all the time.

Additionally, there is controversy as to whether in all places designated, the Temple was guarded during all hours of the day and night, or there were certain areas that were only guarded during the day but not a night. ©2016 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

The story of Korach's rebellion contains echoes of the golden calf narrative. Each involves insurrection. In the golden calf episode, the Jews aspire to replace Moshe (Moses). (Exodus 32:1) In the Korach story, Aharon's (Aaron) priesthood is also challenged. (Numbers 16:10)

The relationship between these two episodes is pointed out by the Ibn Ezra. Following the golden calf incident, the privilege to lead the temple service was removed from the firstborn. Korach, being a firstborn himself (Exodus 6:21), along with two hundred fifty other firstborn, revolts after the first sacrificial service in the Temple, when Korach most deeply feels his exclusion.

Interestingly, in both incidents, Aharon and Moshe react differently. Aharon is the peacemaker who attempts to calmly bring relief to an explosive situation.

Thus, in the golden calf event, Aharon instructs the people to bring gold from which he fashions the golden calf. (Exodus 32:2- 4) Rather than confronting the Israelites, a tactic Aharon felt would fail, Aharon decides to bide for time, in the hope that Moshe would soon return. He declares, "A festival for the Lord tomorrow," (Exodus 32:5) predicting that by the morrow, the people would change their ways and worship G-d.

In the Korach story, Aharon plays a similar role. Placing incense upon his fire pan, he once again acts as a peacemaker, and stops the plague that killed

thousands subsequent to the punishment of Korach. (Numbers 17:11-14) In fact, it is Aharon's staff that blossoms and sprouts, proving in the most powerful, yet peaceful, way, that G-d had given the tribe of Levi the role of ritual leadership. (Numbers 17:23)

Moshe, on the other hand is far more aggressive. Without a prior command from G-d, he shatters the tablets in reaction to the golden calf. (Exodus 32:19)

In the Korach episode, Moshe acts similarly. Without a word from G-d, Moshe declares that the earth would open up and swallow Korach and his cohorts. The earth does just that. (Numbers 16:30-32)

What emerges from these two episodes are two different ways to deal with communal crisis. Aharon's approach is one of calm, quiet diplomacy. Moshe's style is bold, strident, pointed and even militant.

Throughout history, Jews, when facing challenges, have debated which of these two philosophies – Aharon's or Moshe's – is more valid. These discussions are still very much alive, as we are faced daily with barrages on the safety of Jews in Israel and in other places in the world.

From my perspective, it would seem that since both approaches are found in the Torah, we learn that each has value. It can be argued that both of these tactics strengthen the other - both quiet diplomacy and public protest yield results. On the one hand, you need those on the inside, working within the organized system to effect change. On the other hand, it is public protest that is the fuel that allows quiet diplomacy to work. ©2016 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

RABBI DANIEL STEIN

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Even after the Earth itself opened its mouth and devoured Korach and his family (Bamidbar 16), the nation was not entirely convinced that Moshe and Aharon were their true leaders. It wasn't until a second miracle occurred (Bamidbar 17), when the staff of Aharon was the only staff to blossom and produce almonds, that everyone became confident that Korach was indeed wrong. Rav Leibel Eiger (Toras Emes) asks, why was the second miracle, which was blatantly less dramatic and extreme than the first, so much more compelling and persuasive? He explains that what is most effective in influencing and inspiring people to improve is not when they are intimidated by the looming threat of terrifying punishments, but rather when they see the fruits and the benefits that lay in store, when they see the almonds. It is only when they recognize that it is in their own best interests to listen and to

change, when they see that they are the ones who have something to gain, that people are most likely to act.

Perhaps this idea was in fact first taught to us at the time of the creation of the world, when Hashem declared to his ministering angels "let us create man" (Breishis 1:26). Rashi explains that the pasuk is in the plural, "let us", because Hakadosh Baruch Hu included the angels in the decision making process before creating man. This is not because Hashem needed the permission or assistance of the angels, chas v'shalom, but rather it was in order to instruct us to consult with our subordinates before making decisions instead of unilaterally imposing edicts upon them. Rav Wolbe (Shiurei Chumash) explains that this is not only proper derech erez and middas anavah, but it is also the most effective tool in rallying the support of others. Only when one includes others in the decision making process can they have the ability to understand why a certain course of action was chosen, and why that course of action is ultimately for the greater good. That in turn is the best way to secure their support and collaboration moving forward.

The Nesivos Sholom claims that this is critical when disciplining young talmidim in the classroom as well. He compares the process of maintaining classroom decorum to a lumberjack attempting to clear a forest. He can begin chopping one tree at a time, but by the time he is done cutting down one tree, three more will have sprouted in its place. The better strategy would be to light a fire in the forest and burn down the trees of the forest all at once. Similarly, a rebbe or teacher can discipline each individual child, but they risk abandoning the other students in the process and the classroom can precipitously spiral out of control. However, if the rebbe can successfully light a "fire" of excitement within the talmidim and genuinely "ignite" their interest in what they are learning, the classroom can be more easily controlled. At that point the talmidim will behave and pay attention not because they are being told to do so, but because they want to, because they have come to realize that they are the ones who have something to gain.

This perspective defines our very relationship with avodas Hashem and shmiras hamitzvos in general. At the end of Parshas Shelach (Bamidbar 15:40) the Torah juxtaposes the mitzvah of tzitzis with the prohibition of avodah zara and the mitzvah of Shabbos. Rashi explains that this is because, just as chilul shabbos and worshiping avodah zarah are tantamount to violating the entire Torah, so too, one who performs the mitzvah of tzitzis is considered as if he has fulfilled all of the mitzvos of the Torah. This is further reflected by the fact that the gematria of tzitzis is 600, which together with the 8 strings and 5 knots on each corner, adds up to 613. However, if wearing tzitzis is in fact so central and fundamental, why is one only

obligated in the mitzvah of tzitzis if he first chooses to wear a four cornered garment? Why is wearing a four cornered garment in the first place not mandatory (see Menachos 41a)? Rav Moshe Feinstein (Darash Moshe) explains that since the mitzvah of tzitzis corresponds to all of the mitzvos of the Torah, in a certain sense it represents our entire relationship with Hashem. Having a relationship with Hashem can't be compulsory or forced, it has to be something that we chose, that we want, because we recognize that it is we who stand to benefit from that relationship the most.

The gemara (Shabbos 88a) tells us that when Klal Yisrael proclaimed "naaseh ve'nishmah -- we will do and then we will hear", at the time of kabbalas haTorah, a heavenly voice responded and exclaimed, "mi gila le'banai roz zeh -- who has revealed this secret to my children?" The gemara does not elaborate any further on the nature of the secret of "naaseh ve'nishmah", or justify why it is a secret in the first place. The Me'or Vashemesh explains in light of the only "secret" mentioned by the Rambam in all of his Mishnah Torah: the Rambam writes (Hilchos Teshuvah 10:5) that when first initiating a child to Torah and mitzvos, they should be motivated to perform the mitzvos out of fear of punishment and the prospect of reward. However, as they mature and develop, slowly and cautiously, "megalim lahem roz zeh -- we reveal to them this secret." Namely, that the ideal form of worshiping Hashem is when it is done out of love not fear, because we want to not because we have to. Similarly, the manner of avodas Hashem implied by "naaseh ve'nishmah", performance before command, is a commitment spawned out of love not fear. However, since universal adherence to the Torah and mitzvos must be uncompromising and unwavering, this notion can't be shared prematurely and indiscriminately. Nonetheless, to have a mature, healthy, and enduring relationship with Hakadosh Baruch Hu, we must at some point and on some level learn to perform the mitzvos out of love. Not just because we have to but because we want to, because we recognize that is for our own benefit and that we are the ones who stand to gain. ©2016 Rabbi D. Stein and TorahWeb.org

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

"So shall you also separate T'rumah" (Bamidbar 18:28). Although the intent of the verse is to instruct the Levi'im that they also must give T'rumah to the Kohanim, the Talmud (Bava M'tziya 71b) says these words (especially the extra word "also") teaches us that "sh'luchos shel adam k'moso," something done by an authorized representative is considered as if it was done by the person he is representing. However, the main "sugya" (in depth discussion) of "sh'luchos shel adam k'moso" is in Kiddushin (41a-b), and there the Talmud gives a

reason why this concept cannot be applied elsewhere. Not only that, but the concept of “sh’lichus” (representation) working when separating T’rumah is learned from other source-texts, with the extra verbiage in the T’rumah verse teaching us something else! How can the Talmud in one place say that the source that “sh’lichus” works is from T’rumah if as part of the main discussion about the topic it says that it isn’t?

This becomes more puzzling when we consider that Rashi (Bava M’ziya 71b) says the source that we learn the concept of “sh’lichus” from T’rumah is in Kiddushin! How can Rashi refer us there if that’s where the Talmud says that not only don’t we learn that “sh’lichus” works elsewhere from T’rumah, but we don’t even learn that “sh’lichus” works for T’rumah from T’rumah? Rashi reiterates that the source for all “sh’lichus” is T’rumah elsewhere as well (Shabbos 153b, Y’vamos 113a, Bava M’ziya 22a and 96a and Chulin 12a), as does Tosfos (Gittin 23b). Rambam (Hilchos T’rumah 4:1) also says that T’rumah is the source that “sh’lichus” works for separating T’rumah, and (in Hilchos Ishus 3:17) strongly implies that it is the source that “sh’lichus” works elsewhere as well. Why is the source for “sh’lichus” constantly presented as being from our T’rumah verse if the Talmud explicitly says it isn’t?

Rashbuh (in Kiddushin) is among the commentators who reinterpret the Talmud in Bava M’ziya, so that instead of meaning that the verse in T’rumah is the source for “sh’lichus” (all over), it is only the source for limiting when “sh’lichus” works (which is what the Talmud in Kiddushin says the extra T’rumah verbiage teaches us, at least according to the first opinion there). Nevertheless, this is difficult to read into the Talmud’s words in Bava M’ziya, and next to impossible (if not impossible) to read into Rashi’s words (or those of Tosfos or Rambam).

P’nay Y’hoshua (Gittin 23b) suggests that when it’s said that the source for all “sh’lichus” is T’rumah, it really means from a combination of T’rumah and Geirushin (a “tzad ha’shaveh”). Aside from this not being what the Talmud in Kiddushin says (it says it is learned from a combination Geirushin and Kodshim), Geirushin is not mentioned as a source with T’rumah by anyone else, most notably perhaps, not even by Rambam (in Hilchos Ishus) when that is the topic of discussion.

Rabbi Yosef Korkos, in his commentary on Rambam’s Hilchos T’rumos, makes two suggestions to explain how Rambam could say the T’rumah verse is the source that “sh’lichus” works for separating T’rumah (rather than the “tzad ha’shaveh” the Talmud presents as the source). His second suggestion, based on certain cases where “sh’lichus” will not work for T’rumah, is that the extra verbiage is needed to teach us that not all cases of “sh’lichus” for T’rumah are being excluded, which means it teaches us that “sh’lichus” will

work most of the time. While this is a valid approach to explain how Rambam can say it is the source for “sh’lichus” when separating T’rumah, it will not explain how this makes T’rumah the source for all “sh’lichus” when the Talmud says it can’t be extended to other situations. Rabbi Korkos’ first approach is that the verse’s extra verbiage teaches us not only certain limitations regarding who can be a “sh’lichus,” but also that “sh’lichus” works when separating T’rumah. This approach has the same issue to overcome as his second approach, and also has to explain how the extra verbiage can teach us both things, that “sh’lichus” works when separating T’rumah and that certain people cannot be that “sh’liach.”

I would therefore take his second approach a step further, and re-explain the Talmudic discussion. The Talmud had asked why we need a verse to teach us that “sh’lichus” works when separating T’rumah if we would know this anyway from the combination of it working by Geirushin (serving divorce papers) and Kodshim (bringing offerings). Instead of the answer being “you’re right, it doesn’t teach us that; rather, it teaches us who can’t be a ‘sh’liach,” the answer is really “you’re right, we don’t need the extra verbiage to teach us that ‘sh’lichus’ works when separating T’rumah, but it needs to be taught here for a different reason, so that ‘sh’lichus’ is included in the verse, which allows us to make a comparison between the person who can be a ‘sh’liach’ and the person who makes him the ‘sh’liach.” Just as the Talmud’s answer according to Rabbi Shimon is that the extra verbiage (“also”) teaches us that we can appoint a “sh’liach” to separate T’rumah even though the word “you” excludes certain cases of separating T’rumah from “sh’lichus,” so too according to the Talmud’s first answer does the extra verbiage (“also”) teach us that “sh’lichus” works for separating T’rumah (even though we would know that anyway from Geirushin/Kodshim) so that the “you” can teach us a limitation in “sh’lichus.”

Once “sh’lichus” is also (pardon the pun) learned from T’rumah, the limitations that are also (pardon the reverse pun) learned from T’rumah apply to all situations of “sh’lichus,” making T’rumah a primary source for “sh’lichus” (and its limitations). © 2016 Rabbi D. Kramer

SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayan

R' Yitzchak Arama z"l (Spain; died 1494) writes that, as a foundation of our faith, the account of Korach's rebellion is equal in importance to the account of the Giving of the Torah. He explains: The more important something is, the more protection it requires. Thus, for example, the greater a general is, the more officers and soldiers he has protecting him. And, the more important an organ of the body is, the better protected it is; for example, the heart is in the

center of the body surrounded by bones and flesh.

Similarly, the more important a concept is to our faith, the more it must be defended vigorously against challenges. Nowhere is this true more than when the validity of prophecy is challenged. At Har Sinai, all of Bnei Yisrael experienced prophecy, and, thus, three fundamental principles were established. The first fundamental principle is that Hashem pays attention to mankind's deeds. This is demonstrated by the fact that, because of His love for the Patriarchs, Hashem chose their descendants to elevate them above all other nations and He gave those descendants the Torah amidst great fanfare. The second principle demonstrated at Har Sinai is that G-d speaks to man and gives him directions for conducting his life. The third principle established is that Moshe's Torah is the true Torah, and that he is greater than all other prophets.

These are the very truths that Korach called into question when he challenged Moshe. The ultimate proof of these truths, supplementing the Revelation at Sinai, was the definitive disproof of Korach's challenges. (Akeidat Yitzchak)

"Korach son of Yitzhar son of Kehat son of Levi separated himself." (16:1) Midrash Rabbah comments: "Korach was very intelligent and was one of those who carried the Aron / Holy Ark."

R' Aharon Lewin z"l Hy"d (the Reisher Rav; killed in the Holocaust in 1941) explains: The Gemara (Sotah 35b) teaches that the Aron "carried those who carried it." [Not only it was weightless, those who carried it did not have to exert any of their own energy to move.] This, R' Lewin writes, symbolizes a fundamental tenet of our faith. Except for the Torah, all legal systems in the world are man-made. Accordingly, they must be adapted and improved over time to fit mankind's changed circumstances. About them it can be said that man must bear the burden of carrying them, for without man's continuous support, they would collapse. In contrast, the Divine Torah never requires updating or correcting. It is we who must adapt ourselves to it, not the other way around. Thus, the Torah does not need us to support it. To the contrary, its spirit supports us.

It follows, R' Lewin continues, that those who carried the Aron, one of whom was Korach, knew better than anyone else that the Torah is eternal. And, from there it follows that they had to recognize that Moshe was the greatest of all prophets and it is not possible that another prophet will come along and change anything that Moshe taught. [If that were possible, the Torah would not be eternal.] Thus, the fact that "Korach was very intelligent and was one of those who carried the Aron," as the midrash teaches, is very relevant to understanding the gravity of his sin in rebelling against Moshe Rabbeinu. (Ha'drash Ve'ha'iyun)

Midrash Rabbah teaches that Korach was led astray because he had seen prophetically the distinguished descendants that would come from him, including the prophet Shmuel. R' Nosson Sternhartz z"l (1780-1845; foremost student of R' Nachman of Breslov z"l) explains: It is fitting that a tzaddik who reveals Hashem's da'at (literally, "knowledge") to the world should be honored, just as the da'at he disseminates is worthy of honor. Moreover, if a tzaddik is honored, his words will be listened to. However, such a tzaddik must be exceedingly humble, like Moshe Rabbeinu, so that he flees from honor and, when he receives honor, he accepts it solely for the sake of honoring Hashem. Korach lacked that humility. Also, he mistakenly thought that Torah leadership is hereditary. If his descendant Shmuel would be honored as a custodian of Hashem's da'at, then, Korach reasoned, he too must receive such honor. And, Korach thought, he must already possess true da'at. In reality, however, Torah leadership is not hereditary. Rather, it awaits whomever comes to claim it through his toil in Torah, accompanied by humility. (Likutei Halachot: O.C. Hil. Netilat Yadayim 6:67)

"Korach son of Yitzhar son of Kehat son of Levi..." (16:1) Rashi writes: "The verse does not mention Levi's being 'the son of Yaakov,' because Yaakov prayed that his name not be mentioned in connection with Korach's quarrels, as it is written (Bereishit 49:6), 'With their assembly may my glory not be united.'"

It is told that two litigants once came before R' Eliyahu Kletzkin z"l, the 19th century rabbi of Lublin, for a din Torah. One of the litigants began his presentation by relating his yichus / pedigree to the rabbi.

R' Kletzkin replied: Rashi writes that Yaakov prayed for himself so that he would not be mentioned together with Korach. Why? Shouldn't Yaakov have prayed that Korach's yichus would save him from punishment?

The answer, said R' Kletzkin, is that when a person has yichus and he nevertheless behaves improperly, his punishment is even greater. (Quoted in Ve'karata La'Shabbat Oneg) ©2016 S. Katz & torah.org

