



LOUGHTON SHUL
 HEBREW COMMUNITY CENTER

INSPIRE

KORACH 5 TAMMUZ - 27 JUNE

EVERYONE IS SO POLITICALLY CORRECT.

Despite all the drama of a world in turmoil, I sometimes get the feeling that we live in a boring world. Everyone is so politically correct. G-d forbid, we should say what we really think! Recently, I attended a dinner for a local organization and the entertainer was a comedian. He got up and told the audience that the rabbi had called him and made him promise he wouldn't use any risqué material. Then, another committee member reminded him not to be racist or anti-religious or gender discriminatory. A third made him promise not to offend any minority groups. Having been duly stripped of every opportunity for satire, the comedian just said, "Ladies and gentlemen, good night," and walked off the stage. The argument of Korach, the mutineer in this week's Torah reading, smacks of such inane political correctness. Korach accuses Moses and Aaron of nepotism, of grabbing positions of power for themselves. In doing so, he insists that "The entire community is holy. Why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of G-d?" In fact, the very same argument could be used against Jews in general. "Who do you think you are? Chosen People! Aren't all men created equal?" The fact is that Jews are different. Ask any anti-Semite and he'll confirm it. The blatant hypocrisy of the nations of the world and the international media in constantly holding Israel to a higher standard of morality than it does its Arab neighbors only reaffirms that Jews generally do adhere to a value system that is distinctive and unique. Indeed, we do. The Chosen People concept means greater responsibility, not privilege. Rather than making them pompous and condescending about it, it has molded Jews into the most sensitive, humane nation on earth. And that is precisely why if we do occasionally veer from those principles, it is such an aberration that it is considered front page news. Our belief in and respect of the inherent worth of every human being does not contradict our conviction that Judaism is unique. Does not every single religion maintain that its path is the correct one? Almost all, besides Judaism, actively evangelize to graciously save the lost souls of other faiths. We Jews do not seek converts because we believe that "the righteous of all nations have a share in the world to come" and they don't need to become Jews to get a slice of paradise. Some years ago the University of Cape Town was considering building a student religious facility which would unite all three major faiths in one house of worship. It was to service Muslims, Christians and Jews in a combined Mosque-Church-Synagogue to be known as a "MosChuraGogue." I was asked by a local newspaper what I thought of the idea. My answer was that the mistaken presumption in the founders' thinking was that three separate faiths could not possibly get along. There was therefore a need to combine them into one composite. The fact is that we are each distinct with our own set of beliefs and practices but there is no good reason why each specific faith should not respect the other. Why must we suppress individuality to achieve harmony? The Rebbe OBM thus explained the midrashic account of Korach's rebellion. Korach gathered his men and they donned garments made of the t'chelet (blue wool) used for the tzitzit, the fringes a Jew is commanded to tie on the corners of a four-cornered garment. "Does a garment made wholly of t'chelet still require tzitzit?" they challenged Moses. Moses answered in the affirmative and they laughed and mocked him. "If one strand of t'chelet exempts an entire garment, does not a whole garment of t'chelet exempt itself?" Said the Rebbe, this was precisely the argument of Korach. The entire "garment," i.e. the entire congregation, is holy. We are all t'chelet, holy wool. There is no need for distinctions between us. Why do you, Moses and Aaron, appoint yourselves leaders and exalt yourselves over us? The fact is, however, that distinctions are a necessary reality of life. While we don't look to create divisions between people, not everybody is a doctor. Imagine if every fellow who felt like playing physician would hang up a sign outside his house and start dispensing medicine! We'd have a very sick society. The Rebbe was a great humanitarian. He was concerned about every nation and every single individual — Jew or Gentile — and tried to make a difference to the broader society, as evidenced by his efforts for a sacred "moment of silence" in American public schools and his emphasis on education for all. Simultaneously, he was adamant that Israel needs to be uncompromising in its territorial strategy to safeguard the security of its citizens. Humanitarianism need not mean blurring all the lines. Imagine, John Lennon's peace song where there are no more religions, is not only impractical and anarchic, it is a denial of truth. We don't all have to be the same to get along. Within our own people, some are "Kohanim," others "Levites" while most of us belong to the rest of the tribes of Israel. There are doctors and lawyers, priests and prophets. The challenge of those who hold legitimate, genuine high office is to keep the distinctions from disintegrating into divisiveness.

Joel Cohen's Question:

Korach, along with Dathan, Abiram and On, supported by 250 leaders, confronted Moses and Aaron: "It is too much for you...why do you exalt yourselves over the Congregation of G-d?" In response, Moses fell on his face, and said: "In the morning G-d will make known who is His own, and the holy one He will draw close to Himself..." Moses and Aaron prayed that G-d not become angry with the overall assembly and instructed the assembly to remove themselves from Korach and his collaborators to save themselves. Then, curiously, Moses—without G-d describing to him the means of the rebels' destruction—warned the assembly that G-d would open the earth and swallow the rebels. And it occurred precisely as Moses foretold. This story presents a rebellion against earthly leaders. Doesn't it demonstrate the flaw in a theocratic state, whose leaders can't be challenged? Was it right for Moses to importune G-d to destroy his personal enemies? Doesn't this incident show that Moses was a poor leader? After all, Korach couldn't possibly have won over the group if the Nation at large didn't resent Moses.

Rabbi Adam Mintz Responds:

Joel, I think that you have raised some interesting questions regarding Moses' leadership as reflected in the story of the rebellion of Korach. Most importantly, does Moses' response to Korach signify a weak leader as he would have been much better served had he ignored Korach? I would like to suggest two answers: First, Moses felt that this rebellion was not only against his leadership but also against G-d's leadership. In this vein, Moses felt the obligation to announce to the people that G-d was the ultimate leader and that Korach had sinned by questioning G-d and His choice of Moses as leader. This approach would explain the dramatic splitting of the earth and the swallowing up of Korach. What better way than a miracle to signify that G-d is right and Korach is wrong? However, there is a second way to understand the story. According to this explanation, following the story of the spies, Moses was indeed a weakened leader. Throughout the year since they had left Egypt, Moses had proven to be an amazing leader who defended his people before the Almighty, and every act they took at his instruction had been blessed. Suddenly, though the spy mission had Moses' blessing, the people ended up being punished by G-d with forty years of wandering, and the spies themselves died instantly. Moses seemed to have failed in his representation of the people over a fiasco that he had brought about. While the people had asked for the spies, couldn't Moses have orchestrated the mission more appropriately to avoid the problems that ensued? At this point, Moses is very vulnerable as a leader. And to make matters worse, he is once again challenged, this time by Korach, a member of his own family about his qualifications for leadership. And, at that decisive moment those criticisms hurt the institution of leadership that Moses had stood for more than we can imagine. Given this background, we can understand why Moses did not allow the rebellion to run its course and fizzle. He did that by annihilating Korach and his supporters. As we watch the unfolding saga of the world's leaders at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we can't help but realize that the challenges of leadership remain very similar to the challenges that Moses felt over three thousand years ago.

SHUL TIMES

Shabbat Times

Candle Lighting 9:12pm

Shabbat Ends 10:40pm

Friday, 19 June

7pm with our dear Rev

Jonathon Lorraine

Kabbalat Shabbat on
zoom

Sunday, 28 June

10:00 am Cheder

PARSHA SUMMARY

Korach incites a mutiny challenging Moses' leadership and the granting of the kehunah (priesthood) to Aaron. He is accompanied by Moses' inveterate foes, Dathan and Abiram. Joining them are 250 distinguished members of the community, who offer the sacrosanct ketoret (incense) to prove their worthiness for the priesthood. The earth opens up and swallows the mutineers, and a fire consumes the ketoret-offerers. A subsequent plague is stopped by Aaron's offering of ketoret. Aaron's staff miraculously blossoms and brings forth almonds, to prove that his designation as high priest is divinely ordained. G-d commands that a terumah ("uplifting") from each crop of grain, wine and oil, as well as all firstborn sheep and cattle, and other specified gifts, be given to the kohanim (priests).

HAFTORAH SUMMARY

I Samuel 11:14-12:22. The prophet Samuel (a descendant of Korach, the protagonist of this week's Torah portion) gathers the Jews to firmly install Saul as king of Israel. During the course of his address to the Jews he called out, "Here I am; bear witness against me before G-d and before His anointed; whose ox did I take, or whose donkey did I take, or whom did I rob; or whom did I oppress, or from whose hand did I take a bribe..." This echoes Moses' statement in this week's Torah reading: "I have not taken a donkey from a single one of them, and I have not harmed a single one of them." The nation gathers at Gilgal for a second coronation of King Saul—the first one having lacked a convincing consensus. They offer sacrifices and rejoice together. The prophet Samuel then delivers a talk: he asks the people to testify that he never committed crimes against the people, and they confirm. He discusses how G-d saved and aided them every step of the way and chastises them for wanting a flesh and blood king. He assures them that G-d will be with them if they follow in His ways, and of the consequences they will face if they do not follow G-d's word. To underscore the seriousness of his words, Samuel asks G-d to send a thunderstorm, although it was not the rainy season. The Jewish people got the message and asked Samuel to intercede on their behalf and to have the thunderstorm cease. The haftorah ends with a reassurance: "For G-d will not forsake His people for His great name's sake; for G-d has sworn to make you a people for Himself."

WISHING ALL THOSE WITH YARTZEIT THIS WEEK CHAIM ARUCHIM

Irwin Bernard Father Eliezer ben Moshe 5 Tammuz

Wolfryd Mandy Mother Julie bas Yosef 5 Tammuz

Lavender Paul Father Gedalyer Shlomo ben Binyamin 6 Tammuz

Ward Madalyn Father Michael ben Avraham 6 Tammuz

Wrightman Geoffrey Father Moshe ben Yaakov 9 Tammuz

Bradley Sarah Father 10 Tammuz

Osborne Kay Husband Boruch Meir ben Yaakov 11 Tammuz

JEWISH HUMOR

Berel, Schmerel & Chaim Yankel went on a trip together & they decided to splurge on a large suite on the top of a 75-story skyscraper. After a long day of sightseeing, they were shocked to hear that the elevators in their hotel were broken & they would have to climb 75 flights of stairs to get to their room. Berel said to Schmerel & Chaim Yankel, "Let's break the monotony by concentrating on something interesting. I'll tell jokes for 25 flights, Schmerel can sing songs for the next 25 flights and Chaim Yankel can tell sad stories for the rest of the way." At the 26th floor, Berel stopped telling jokes & Schmerel began to sing. At the 51st floor Schmerel stopped singing & Chaim Yankel began to tell sad stories. "I will tell my saddest story first," he said. "I left the room key in the car..."

RIDDLE OF THE WEEK

What can you keep after giving to someone?

**Answer to last week's Riddle.
The temperature**

STORYTIME

A follower of the great tzadik Rabbi Aryeh Leib of Shpole, known as the Shpoler Zeide, came to him weeping bitterly. "Rebbe," he cried, "what am I to do? Stolen property was found in my courtyard, and I am being accused of being a thief. My lawyer tells me that I will not escape with less than three months in prison." The Shpoler Zeide, listened and replied, "I will be a better lawyer for you, and you will receive only one month in prison." "But, Rebbe," the man continued, plaintively, "I am an innocent man. Why must I be punished for a month?" "I will tell you a tale of a similar incident which occurred to me, and you will understand. Once I was staying at the home of a very hospitable Jewish customs officer. I became friendly with another guest there, and when Shabbat ended, we made plans to continue our journey together. Unbeknownst to me, the other man had stolen some valuable pieces of silver from the house." As we proceeded down the road, we heard the sounds of a carriage approaching very fast. The man asked me to watch his pack for a moment and he disappeared in the mass of trees. The carriage stopped in front of me and I recognized the customs officer and a gentile officer. "Seize him," the Jew cried. "He is the thief!" And before I knew what was happening they threw me into the back of the carriage and we drove away. When I recovered from the initial shock, I tried to explain that it was not I, but the other man who had stolen the silver, but they scorned my words. It was obviously nothing would avail, and I accepted it as the will of Heaven. "I was thrown into a cell full of frightening criminals who found my appearance an occasion for great mirth. They pulled at my sidelocks and beard, and I could only entreat the One Above to rescue me from their evil clutches. They tried to extort money from me, but when they saw I had none, they set out to beat me." The first one laid into me as two others held me down. As soon as his hand touched me, he cried out in pain. His hand swelled and gushed with blood. The thieves and murderers who surrounded me took conference with one another. One said I was a sorcerer, another claimed I was a saint; regardless of their opinion, they all agreed to leave me alone. "When the immediate danger had passed, I looked around at the other prisoners. One, called "Gypsy" turned out to be, instead, a Polish Jew who had been imprisoned for horse-stealing. I realized that I had been incarcerated precisely in order to help this pathetic man repent. Little by little we spoke and I gained his trust. He related a sad tale of being orphaned and then falling in with a band of Gypsies, whose ways he adopted. "One morning the man came to me in a state of terror. He had dreamed of his dead parents who told him to do whatever I would instruct him. They said if he refused, he would die in his sleep. From that moment on he was the most willing penitent." Slowly, I instructed him in the Jewish religion. He stopped eating forbidden food, began to recite prayers, and begged the Al-mighty to forgive his errant ways. After several weeks passed, he even began sleeping near me and became completely attached to me in word and deed. "A few days later I dreamed that Elijah the Prophet told me to flee from that place and go to the town of Zlotopoli where I would be offered the position of beadle of the town. But then I remembered the "Gypsy," and my promise not to abandon him. But, I reasoned, if a miracle could come about for me, it could come about for him, too." I told the repentant man to follow me. When we came to the first door, we saw it was open. He held my belt and we passed through the door together, and continued into the black night, with no thought as to where we were going. Many hours later, we stopped at the house of a Jew who told us that we had found the path to Zlotopoli. "Three days later, we arrived in the town, and I was appointed to the position of beadle. So you see, don't complain about the judgements of G-d, for they are very deep and beyond the understanding of men. Just be strong in your faith, for I can assure you that everything that happens, no matter how it appears, is only for the good. And, as I promised, you will sit in prison no more than one month."

FOOD 4 THE SOUL

Do not be dismayed by the hypocrisy of others, nor by your own inconsistencies. Our lives are all journeys through hills and valleys—no person's spiritual standing is a static affair. But the good each person achieves is eternal, as he connects to the Source of All Good, Who is infinite and everlasting. The failures, on the other hand, are transient and superficial, fleeting shadows of clouds, as stains in a garment to be washed away.